

DETECTIVE

FICTION WEEKLY

FORMERLY FLYNN'S

JUNE 12
10¢

Blade
SPEAR
EDITOR



OPPOSITION SHEET

An Exciting Mystery
by Edward S. Williams

Richard Sale - Edgar Frank

So he nailed the chair to the floor



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DETECTIVE

FICTION WEEKLY



TITLE REGISTERED U. S. PATENT OFFICE

Formerly FLYNN'S

VOLUME CXI

JUNE 12, 1937

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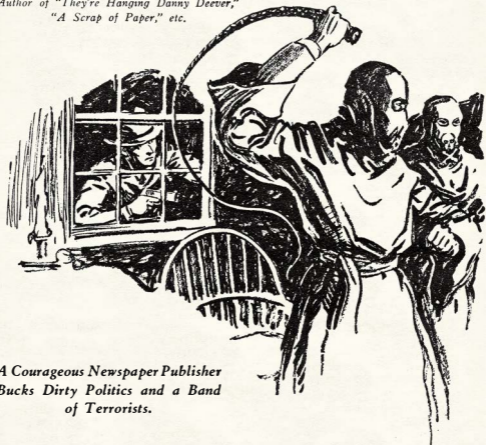
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In answering advertisements it is desirable that you mention DETECTIVE FICTION.

OPPOSITION SHEET

By Edward S. Williams

Author of "They're Hanging Danny Deever,"
"A Scrap of Paper," etc.



*A Courageous Newspaper Publisher
Bucks Dirty Politics and a Band
of Terrorists.*

THE man in the baggy tweeds turned in at the Post Office, his mien casual, affable.

A battered hat, reduced to limp and flapping comfort by years and inclement weather, was pushed well back on his head. His teeth, when he smiled—and he was always smiling—were strong, regular, clamped on the bit of a scarred and ancient pipe. Raw-boned, angular, there was a hint of the scarecrow in Phineas Spear as he bent his long frame over a lock-drawer in the bottom row. But nobody laughed—or

even smiled! He opened it, scooped up the half dozen letters therein and straightened.

"Gentlemen," he announced genially, "good morning!"

There was a sticky silence.

Unruffled, the only apparent cause for that silence glanced through his mail. His eyes—smoky grey, whimsical—acquired an added touch of mild, good-humored cynicism. He glanced up finally at the cluster of men who watched him, not with open hostility,



The masked fioure stood,
whio raised to flav Cara

but with a guarded, stony coldness. Phineas Spear was new to Liberty—but it was not his newness that marked him. It was his new ideas that Liberty was finding it hard to swallow. No one answered his greeting. Phineas Spear smiled more broadly.

"Nevertheless," he remarked, "it *is* a good morning." And he went out with his peculiar, loose-jointed stride that was almost an ambling lope. Morning gossip in Liberty's new Post Office was resumed, though not in customary vein.

"Is that him?" somebody asked. "The guy that runs the *Blade* now?"

"Yeah!" was the answer. "Runs it

now is good! Way he's started, he won't last long. Flyin' in Major Bardin's face like he's done—attackin' the Courts—printin' stuff that just as good as says Abel Parkes didn't kill ol' Senator Southard. I tell you men it ain't American! This guy Spear's no better than Abel Parkes himself—a damned Red—an' somethin' oughta be done about it."

Another voice cut in, harsh, rasping, "Maybe—somethin' will!"

There was a furtive silence. No one looked at anyone else. Then: "Seen the *News-Herald*



this mornin'? Read what Major Bardin said?"

"Sure! The Major sorta rubbed this fella's nose in it. The *Blade* used t'be a good, respectable newspaper, but . . . Well, the Major'll straighten him out soon—or run him out!"

They agreed, and turned as one man to watch Spear cross the street and turn toward the dingy brick building that housed the offices of the *Liberty Blade*—the one that used to be a good, respectable newspaper. And at the corner they saw him stop to talk to a small, thin man who looked like a shabby child beside Phineas Spear's slim height.

"Randall Pierson!" somebody said. "Wonder if he's drunk yet. Birds of a feather, I guess!"

There was a guffaw.

But Randall Pierson wasn't drunk—yet! In spite of the sickly sweet odor of gin that hovered about him in a palpable aura, Randall Pierson held his thin body erect, walked steadily. He looked old. His cheeks were hollow, ghastly pale and mottled with the interlaced, fine veins of an alcoholic. Randall Pierson, attorney at law, was nearer forty than the sixty his appearance indicated. Ill-kempt, needing a shave, there still lingered in the man the shattered remnants of breeding, intelligence not yet wholly consumed by liquor's slow destruction. In his sober moments, Randall Pierson was still shrewd, still capable. He raised an almost transparent hand in greeting as Phineas Spear called out:

"Hi, Counselor!"

"**M**ORNING, Spear," he smiled one-sidedly. "So you're still among the living! Weren't murdered in your sleep last night. I thought you might be after reading your editorial.

It was fine, my boy, but wasted! Liberty is dead to such truthful blasts, even when they carry the punch you give them."

He paused. Phineas Spear's smile grew somewhat vague, his eyes grimly reflective, but he did not speak. The lawyer shook open the folded paper he carried—the *News-Herald*, Bardin's paper. Three-inch headlines announced:

**VERDICT EXPECTED TODAY
IN SOUTHARD MURDER**

**Acquittal Deemed Impossible in Light
of Evidence**

Spear took the paper, nodded. He opened it to the Editorial page and pretended to read, his voice bitter mockery:

Already tried and convicted in the Court of Public Opinion (Judge Bardin and the *News-Herald* presiding) we await only the rubber stamp of a guilty verdict to bring the crucifixion of Abel Parkes to a satisfactory conclusion. With nothing but the flimsiest of circumstantial evidence in this brutal murder of our—beloved—Ex-Senator Southard, we have battled to a fitting climax. We have elevated a broken and harmless old man to the scaffold. We have . . .

He broke off suddenly, then grated, "Pierson, it makes me sick! Abel Parkes no more killed the Senator than I did. He's psychologically incapable of it—even physically incapable of driving a pair of rusty grass shears completely through the heart of a man as big as Southard was. Why it's—"

"Libel, my lad!" Pierson cut in. "What you just read between the lines of Bardin's editorial is splendidly obvious, but it's also very close to libel if anyone else heard it! You know that, of course."

Phineas Spear grinned again and they paused in front of the building with its dirty brick front, and brightly new plate glass windows lettered in

gold: *The Blade*, P. Spear, Editor and Publisher.

"You're not," he inquired gently, "telling me to lie down and be good, are you, Counselor? You're not advising me to quit and let the *Blade* sink back to the colorless, timid rag it was?"

"By no means!" Pierson's voice acquired for a moment a ghost of its old ringing clarity. "But don't give Bardin a chance to smash you for some small offense—such as libel. This town needs an opposition sheet. Give it to 'em, Spear—but build slowly, carefully." The fire in his eyes died slowly. He drooped all at once. "Quite a speech," he finished, "from the village drunk! Well—I'll see you later."

He turned away abruptly, crossed the street toward the back stairway leading to his own squalid, back-room office. And Phineas Spear watched the thin, stooped figure. Randall Pierson, once the most brilliant trial lawyer in the State. Destined for a great future—and caught in the maelstrom of the dirtiest political deal of the century! An unproven charge—never actually disbarred as a lawyer—it was enough to ruin his career. Until, in his own bitter words, he was the "village drunk."

But out of that same deal, Spear knew, others had come into prominence. From it, Major Joe Bardin—owner and editor of the *News-Herald*—had risen to influence. "Build slowly, carefully," Pierson had said. But as Phineas Spear turned and entered the *Blade* building, he thought: Slowly! When a man was being railroaded to the death-house. When others were climbing to ruthless power on a ladder of murder and terrorism?

"Mornin', Chief! Look—this ad. Is it . . ."

"See Miss Collin." Spear cut him

off, and the grimy typesetter who had spoken looked at him again, then scratched his head. He turned toward the door next to the one through which Spear vanished. Two minutes later he emerged again, followed by a girl. She hesitated at Phineas Spear's closed door, then opened it.

HIS eyes lighted, smiled. "Hi, Cara," he said. "I know—I'm late, but I won't let it happen again today! Stopped to talk to Pierson. I see there was a—"

"Phineas," she cut in, "what's wrong?"

"Wrong?" he inquired. "Why?"

"I heard you snap at Pete when you came in, and saw your face. You looked—"

"Oh! That. Just the usual, Cara. This Southard thing. Pierson and I were talking about it. He advised caution and the long pull to fame and fortune. And it got me—Wait a minute! What's wrong with *you*?"

"Nothing," she said hurriedly. "Only—Phineas, I wish you'd take that advice! Pierson's right. You've only been here three months—you've had the *Blade* only six weeks. And—and you simply don't know Liberty! How smug it is, how cruel and vindictive and set in its ways!"

Phineas Spear heaved his lean body out of its slouch with effortless ease. He came around his desk and stood smiling faintly into the dark eyes, the perfect, upturned oval of her face.

"Cara," he said irrelevantly, "you're a pretty little thing—but to get back. I don't know the town—you say! Now I'll tell you a secret. I *do* know the town, and it's just like any other town of twenty thousand—or two million! I spent my first month here in the local barber shops and gin-mills, the street

corners and back alleys and hotel lobbies—where you meet people in the raw. I read the *News-Herald* and the *Blade* every day, from cover to cover, and maybe I could tell you some things about Liberty that you don't know! But anyway, I wanted to buy a newspaper—one that was down at the heel, preferably—that I could have some fun in building up. And the *Blade* was the answer to all that."

"Yes, Phineas, I know, but . . ."

"Then," he went on as though he hadn't heard her, "old Senator Southard was murdered, and that poor wretch, Parkes, was caught without an alibi. Oh, I know they've got a motive against him, but forget that, Cara. I'll tell you why Southard was killed! Because he had the courage to stand up and tell this smug and cruel and vindictive town just what was happening to it! Tell it what to expect if it kept on letting the *News-Herald* gang do its thinking, run its affairs. And Southard's death proves he was right! By Heaven, Cara, there's something afoot in this town that won't stop at *one* killing—to get what it wants. There's something—"

"I know, Phineas," she said. "They—*they won't* stop at just one killing! But I don't want the next one to be—you! I found—this—pinned on the door of your office when I came in this morning."

In silence Phineas Spear's gaze dropped to the sheet of paper she held out to him tensely. For an instant he stood motionless, taut as drawn wire, before he snatched at the sheet, read aloud the crudely printed message:

LIBERTY WANTS NO WISE GUYS

We stand back of our city—and our courts

100 %

Those who don't like it

Get Out

GUARDSMEN OF AMERICA

As he finished he crumpled the thing in a fist that quivered with the fierce pressure of his grip.

"Guardsmen of America!" he grated, then: "Cara! Get Pete in here, get Hanley, Johnson! Kill whatever we've got on today's front page. I want an extra on the streets as soon as you can get it there. Headline—take this—'War Declared!' Eight column spread, Cara. Under it print a facsimile of this note, and an explanation at the bottom as to how and where you found it. You write it. I'm going to do a sizzling editorial and print that—"

"Hello!" He scooped up the jangling phone. "Yeah . . . *What?* Oke, I'll be there." And to Cara again, "Court just convened. The Southard jury's coming in. You write the editorial too. Make it—you know—hot! S'long."

The door banged. A gleam of excitement blotted out bewilderment, anxiety in Cara Collin's face. She threw open the door again. "Pete!" she called. "Here—Hurry! Extra edition."

IN THE court-room a silence that was heavy with a surcharge of electric tension brought jammed spectators to their toes. Phineas Spear made no attempt to reach the Press table. The trial judge—Blake—was already on the bench, the jury had just filed back into the box. He heard the voice of the clerk intone that fateful question: "Gentlemen of the jury, have you reached a verdict?" And the solemn answer, "We have."

Using elbows and shoulders, Spear ignored muttered objections, reached a window sill and climbed on it. Clinging precariously, he looked over massed heads to the railed enclosure below the bench. His eyes focused upon the defense's table, upon Max Horstmann, counsel appointed by the court to de-

fend Abel Parkes. And Parkes himself, his thin, emaciated face turned upward to the jury with terrible, hopeless intensity.

"And what is that verdict?" the clerk droned on.

To Phineas Spear, it was grotesque, unreal. The man spoke his lines in this set and unvarying drama apathetically, with no feeling for the depths of human emotions that were being plumbed. The foreman looked once at Abel Parkes and the old man's head dropped, his thin shoulders trembled. He knew before the words were said.

"We find the defendant guilty as charged."

An indrawn, multi-throated breath sighed like a gust of wind through a broken window. No one heard the rest of it. Very few of them heard Judge Blake postpone the pronouncement of sentence until the following day. But Phineas Spear heard. He slid down from his window sill, his eyes bleak, his mouth thinly determined.

CHAPTER II

Suspicion

THE bar was crowded, heavy with smoke, loud with talking. Everyone talked at once. Only in the immediate vicinity of Phineas Spear was there any silence, and that was soon overwhelmed in the contagion of words. But Phineas Spear didn't talk. His hat low over his eyes, nose buried in a half empty beer glass, he listened.

"Naw! There won't be no appeal. Horstmann won't appeal."

"Why should he? Parkes is the guy!"

"Parkes did it—the rat! Bit the hand that's fed him."

"After the Senator kep' him all these years."

"Guilty as hell. Oughta be lynched."

"I ain't so sure!"

In the split second of startled silence that followed that last statement, Spear marked the man who had made it. Big, level-eyed, slow-spoken, the doubter was garbed in overalls. His hand on a beer glass was grimy-nailed. He looked like a mechanic. The fierce storm of protest that burst about him did not alter his somberly reflective face, nor his posture.

Behind him, Phineas Spear heard, "Somebody oughta—sorta talk to Charley Vargas, shouldn't they?"

"Yeah," was the reply, "somebody will!"

Spear's glass thudded on the bar. He pushed back his hat, turned and caught the smouldering stare of the man who had spoken last. Spear smiled narrowly, and shouldered his way out. A muffled yodel from the street filtered through the chaos inside. At the curb he bought one of his own extras, regarded it with grim pleasure and watched the faces of others who bought. He wondered how Charley Vargas—the man who wasn't so sure—would look when he read the Guardsmen's note. What would he think when somebody came around to "sorta talk" to him? Spear crossed the street, strode half a block to the tall, elaborately facaded *News-Herald* building. He left the elevator at the tenth floor, entered the door marked Max Horstmann. And the attorney for the defense—Horstmann himself—turned away from a window to eye him.

Slowly the lawyer crossed the room. The girl at the switchboard stopped chewing to watch, her mouth hanging open. Horstmann said:

"Well, what d'you want?" He was tall, black-haired, glowering.

Phineas Spear drawled, "I'd like to get your confirmation that there'll be

no appeal in the Southard case, Counselor. I've heard—"

"You've heard lots, haven't you?" the lawyer blasted. "But so far you've not got anything straight in that sensational, yellow-dog sheet of yours! Get out, Spear! You'll have no statement from me!"

Still smiling, Phineas Spear spoke musingly, as though he read from a sheet before his thoughtful eyes. "Obviously displeased by a verdict utterly unjustified by the pitiful evidence presented in the case of the People vs. Abel Parkes, Defense Attorney Horstmann refused today to confirm persistent rumors that no appeal will be taken. In view of the—somewhat strange—conduct of the defense, it is the opinion of this observer that Attorney Horstmann has been saving his case for an appeal. It is incredible that Mr. Horstmann would permit his client to go to the electric chair with no more effort on his behalf than was evidenced at his trial, and thus the only logical inference is that an appeal is planned." He paused, then clipped, "That's fine, Counselor! Makes good reading—front page stuff—publicity! Keep it up and you'll be Governor some day . . . And you'd like to be Governor, wouldn't you, Horstmann?"

"Spear—" he choked—"If you print that after what—" But he caught himself, stood breathing hard.

"After — what?" Phineas Spear grated softly. He spread out the *Blade* extra, held it so that Horstmann could see the whole of the front page. "After that, you mean?"

For an instant the lawyer stared, his eyes unguarded. Then he rasped, "You'd better heed that warning, Spear! You know as well as I that Parkes murdered Senator Southard. And you'd better learn—fast—that this

town won't tolerate the kind of journalism you're trying to give it! Understand?"

"Perfectly!" he smiled. "There will be no appeal."

"No!" he roared.

"Then I can print that!"

Phineas Spear went out and closed the door.

NO APPEAL. . . . But he'd expected none! It was merely the final, the complete confirmation of his own belief that Abel Parkes was being made the goat in a murder that would rock the country—when the truth was known! They didn't have to appeal! Every formality, every small detail of the law's requirements had been met. Appeal was not mandatory here, as it was in some states. No review by higher courts was called for—and so there'd be none!

Phineas Spear strode rapidly, his smile a bit more grim, his eyes a shade more steely. He passed his own office, crossed the street and took the stairs leading to Randall Pierson's. Pierson would be drunk, more than likely, but if he could only sober him, keep him that way. . . . Spear knocked and the voice that told him to come in was thinly fuddled, hoarse.

Randall Pierson said, "Ah-ha, my boy! You come, no doubt, from the Courts of Justice to tell me that once again Justice has been done. That—"

"Not exactly," Spear grinned mirthlessly, slouched into the only remaining chair. "How drunk are you, Pierson?"

The man winced visibly. His eyes fell. He said, "Not like you, Phineas. Heretofore you have ignored—as a gentleman must—what is patently not your affair. I am drunk. I have always been drunk. Unquestionably I shall con-

tinue to be drunk. How drunk I am at any given time is . . ."

"I'm sorry, Pierson," he cut in. "As you say, it's not my affair—none of my business. But drunk or sober, you know what's going on here in Liberty."

"Of course!" he grated. "So does any man of intelligence! Southard knew—and they killed him for it! It's going on all over the world. The people—the sovereign people—have at times a strange dislike to thinking. They are only too glad to turn the job over to any nickel-plated jackass who claims—provided he claims it loudly enough—the God-given ability to do it for them. But what about it? Why bother me with it? I am in the process of becoming drunk—which is the only escape for a man of intelligence."

Phineas Spear said grimly: "Escape from what? Yourself, Counselor?"

"No. . . ." He spoke slowly, distantly; his eyes were bleak. "You can't do that. But does it matter?"

"It matters, Pierson," Spear said, "only if you'd like to clear Abel Parkes! Only if you'd like to strike a body-blow at some nickel-plated jackasses among those present—here—in Liberty! And perhaps get the people down to some unwilling thought on where they're headed."

"Go on, Phineas. I'm not too drunk to hear you."

"Then listen! I don't know how closely you've followed this case but I've followed it until I know it backward. Old Parkes was odd-job man about Senator Southard's home. Probably not worth his salt, but the Senator must have felt that he needed the money. He'd kept Parkes on for years—provided for him in his will—and that's the motive they've set up for the murder. Twenty-five dollars a month, and a tumbled-down shack.

PIERSON nodded. Spear went on: "Southard lived alone—you know that. You know he had a housekeeper. She testified that on the afternoon of the killing, Parkes was cutting the grass of the Southard place. She said she left the house at about 6:30, and he had almost finished the job. She said that when she came back later, it was dark, Parkes was gone, the Senator was dead. But have you wondered, Pierson, where that housekeeper is now? Has anybody?"

"No," Randall Pierson said. "Where is she?"

"I tried to locate her yesterday," Spear rapped, "and she's not available—to me, anyway! But just keep that in mind. Listen some more: Southard was killed by a stabwound to the heart. A jagged, brutal wound! The print of a bloody hand on the door-knob leading from Southard's study—more of them were on the wall of the staircase—lots of them! All the way downstairs as though the killer had steadied himself against the wall. And another was found on the knob of the side cellar door. That's the door, according to testimony, that Parkes always used in coming and going from the house. And in all that mess there wasn't a single fingerprint—but that *may* be all right. According to testimony—his own—Parkes wore an old pair of kid gloves to work in. He plays the violin and doesn't want to coarsen his hands. But get this, Pierson.

"They found the death weapon in Parkes' tool shed. A pair of grass-shears, obviously wiped clean, but still retaining traces of human blood that could be identified. And on the basis of that—the State proved that Abel Parkes, seventy if he's a day old, a physical wreck who doesn't weigh over a hundred and ten pounds, plunged

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this or that from his boss—an' pay twenty per cent more for it. Or else my restaurant is smashed! Only he don't say that, but I know! So I buy this or that from his boss.

"But what the hell?" he shrugged expressively. "I have to up my prices—people beef about it—but I go along some more, get a little ahead again—Socko! Some other hard guy come in. He say I got to have protection. Lots o' places like mine been wrecked lately—by the mobs. It don't cost me but fifty bucks a month, an' I gotta have protection—or else! He don't say so either, but I know that gag, too! I buy protection. Then I go along some more, but now I can't even pay my bills, let alone gettin' a little ahead. An' I got a wife, two little Nicks—so I come here where there ain't no gangsters—maybe."

Phineas Spear shook catsup over the smoking hamburger, bit into it and munched silently. His eyes were distant, reflective. Nick spread both hands palm down on the bar, leaned over and finished softly:

"Funny though, ain't it, Mr. Spear? Wherever you go I guess they have hard guys. In New York they call 'em racketeers. Here they call 'em some-thin' else. You know? But it's all the same if you don't pay. Black coffee, y'said?"

Spear drawled, "Yeah, Nick. Black. Which costs the most—Racketeers or Guardsmen of America?"

"They cost . . . about the same, Mr. Spear."

The door opened and two men came in, ordered food. Both of them eyed Spear, but neither spoke.

HE Poured water in his coffee to cool it, drained the cup in long, thirsty gulps. Rising, he tossed

a dollar on the counter and went out into the half-dark of early evening.

He walked slowly. "The *Blade* accepts this challenge to Freedom."

Cara had written that! All in all the most stirring editorial the paper had ever printed, and Cara had written it! Phineas Spear felt no envy, felt rather a surge of grim, sardonic humor. Cara Collin, graduate of the best school of journalism in the country, had tried for months to land a job. Bardin had offered her one—in a nice little apartment that wouldn't cost her a cent—if! But Cara had just paid him off for that!

She had, he reflected, got out the *Blade* alone today. After leaving Pierson, Spear had spent the afternoon at the jail, waiting to see old Abel Parkes. Waiting! No one had said he *couldn't* see him. They told him he'd have to wait, that was all. But after a while he got the idea. While he waited, a *News-Herald* got through to Parkes' cell. A press photographer was passed in. Phineas Spear smiled politely and left. There was another way of getting at Parkes—as soon as it grew dark! He stopped in at the first hardware store he passed, then strode on toward the *Blade* building. There'd be nobody around this late, but he could leave some notes for Cara to write into tomorrow's paper.

Without consciousness of stealth, he let himself in without a sound—and then stopped inside the door, tense, fiercely thankful he had come in quietly. From Cara's half open office door light filtered, a suave voice reached his ears.

"Now Cara, you've known me almost all your life. You can trust me—my judgment, my experience. After all, what do you know about this Spear? Why a man who would print such stuff as this . . ."

Spear heard Cara's clipped, contemptuous words:

"Major Bardin, it happens that I not only printed, but also wrote the *stuff* you're referring to. Mr. Spear had enough faith in my ability—as a newspaper woman—to—"

"Oh!" A harder note crept into Bardin's smooth tones. "So Spear turned his editorial writing over to a woman! Nice trick—one I might have expected from a yellow—"

From the door, unseen himself in the shadowy outer office, Spear saw them. Saw Cara Collin's flaming eyes when she said quietly, "Get out of here!" But Bardin laughed.

He stepped closer and a powerful arm encircled her suddenly, jerked her against him. He kissed her, laughed again—and laughter vanished swiftly from his eyes. He cursed incoherently, raised a hand to the cheek she had raked from hair-line to jaw with manicured, sharp nails. Then he ground between clenched teeth:

"You little hell-cat! Don't think you'll get away with this! Don't think you and Spear can—"

"Well, Major?" Phineas Spear stood in the doorway, blocking it. He spoke pleasantly but his eyes blazed. "Fraternalizing with the opposition, what? Can I show you around our plant? Our back yard, perhaps. We have a lovely back yard. Practically no one can see into it and I doubt if sounds would carry far."

Bardin's teeth flashed. He was a big man, beefy, thick-bodied. He spat the words savagely, "Get out of my way, Spear! I should've known better than to try to reason with you. I should've—"

Phineas Spear smiled and stood where he was. "Yes," he drawled, "if that's what you call it, you should've

brought your gang! I thought we might spare Miss Collin the actual fisticuffs, but if you don't want to see our back yard—"

BARDIN moved swiftly. In spite of his size he handled himself well, like a boxer. To the watching girl—taut as a bow-string, eyes wide, and scarcely breathing—it seemed that his weight alone must break through Phineas Spear's almost negligent guard. To Cara, the storm of stabbing, probing fists that Bardin threw furiously were all landing. But Bardin knew better! He felt the blocking elbow, the lean wiry shoulder that caught every blow he started.

His attack shifted. Feinting viciously he unleashed a poised and waiting right, crossed it with all the weight of a heavy body behind it. And Cara Collin gasped, her hand at her throat. For a split second, she shut her eyes, opened them again.

The whistling grunt had been Bardin's. It was Bardin who was down, or almost down. Half through the doorway, knees sagging, he hung on Spear's left arm, looked up into mocking, glinting eyes. There had been no effort to block that blow. The chin at which it was aimed had moved backward two inches—and Bardin had literally thrown himself out the door. Surprise—then something akin to fear—flashed in his face.

Phineas Spear drawled: "He can hand it out! Now let's see if he can take it." And he heaved suddenly. Bardin reeled upright, staggered back and slammed into Cara Collin's desk.

Spear hit him twice—light blows—fast. Incredibly fast! They stung rather than hurt, stung the man back into roaring fury. Again he charged and Phineas Spear's lithe body recoiled in

the crouch of a panther—sprang forward and in behind the ripping right hand that met Bardin's jaw with the dull thud of a maul. And the man dropped where he stood. Dropped on his face and lay still.

For an instant there was quiet. Cara Collin's voice quivered a little, but she smiled when she said:

"Th-thank you, Phineas."

"It was a pleasure!" he bowed, gently mocking.

He grinned at his bloody knuckles, then stooped and caught Bardin's coat collar. The girl watched him, still deathly pale, but in eyes the flame of thrilled delight. She heard the street door close, then Spear came back. He sat on her desk.

"Y'know, Cara," he mused, "Canada has a swell climate this time o' year! Banff—Lake Louise—you've no idea! We could use some good vacation copy on the woman's page. Clothes, sports, local color—feminine viewpoint."

"No!" she clipped, "I won't go, unless—"

"What?"

"Unless you go, too, Phineas!"

"Okay," he sighed. "At least I can take you home. That's where you're going to stay unless there's somebody else here at the office with you."

"But—"

"I said yes!"

HE SAID goodnight ten minutes later. After he had left her, when he was alone again on the pleasant, maple-bordered street, his humorous half-smile faded. Cara was probably in no immediate danger, but even though he'd known she would refuse, he wished she had accepted that vacation offer. The fat, he reasoned grimly, was in the fire. Bardin was the sort who would never rest until that personal

humiliation had been avenged ten times over. And to his satisfaction!

What form would that take? He could not erase from his memory the mad, black fury that had raged in Bardin's eyes.

A neon Western Union sign caught his glance and Spear turned in there. The telegram he sent cost an astonishing amount for one telegram. It was long, addressed to a man named Jake Wolcott. He told the girl to rush it in all the ways he could think of, then left and continued down Bank Street to Court Avenue. The County Jail loomed on his left, but Spear passed it without a glance, continued on downhill to the river and darkened warehouses. If he were, by any chance, being tailed, it shouldn't be hard to find it out—and lose it—in the deserted alleys of the water-front.

Fifteen minutes later a dim and cautious figure approached the jail, from the rear, across a rubbish-littered vacant lot. Ahead of him was a wall twelve feet high topped with broken glass set jaggedly in cement. Phineas Spear slid a light rope from where it lay hidden under his vest, coiled around the curve of a bent, hook-like metal rod. Like a gigantic fish-hook with the rope fastened to its shank. The curve and point of the hook was carefully wrapped in friction tape.

For a silent minute Spear hugged the base of the wall, watching, listening. From beyond came the muted wail of a violin—haunting, nostalgic. He straightened suddenly. The hook shot upward and caught on the wall top, the grating of steel on glass and concrete muffled by the tape. Tentatively Spear shook the rope. The hook settled more firmly. He pulled hard and it sank home. His coat came off. Holding it in his teeth, he went up the wall hand over

hand. At the top his folded coat protected him against knife-like points of glass and he threw a leg across, hung thus while he turned the hook and rope inside. Then he slid down into the dismal yard of the jail.

The violin was the only sound. Old Parkes had worn gloves at work to save his fingers for his violin! Phineas Spear smiled and followed the sound to the third lighted window from the end. The ledge was scarcely a foot above the tips of his reaching fingers. He crouched, sprang upward and hung precariously until he grasped solid bars in a firm grip. The violin stopped abruptly at his third light tap.

ABEL PARKES peered blankly toward the window, his bow poised—and Spear cursed that sudden cessation of the music. Why didn't he have sense enough to play on! Slowly the old man rose and approached the window. He raised it quietly enough and sank to his knees, his eyes level with Spear's strain-distorted face. Hoarsely Abel Parkes faltered:

"Who is it?"

"Go on playing, man!" he said fiercely, "or I'll be in there with you! It's Phineas Spear—you know, the *Blade!*"

A quavering discord was torn from the violin as his bow crossed it. Then it sang again, softly, plaintively. Abel Parkes' lips moved. "Phineas Spear? Oh yes! I remember you. But I didn't kill him! I didn't kill my friend. They try to make me say so—for that other paper—but I cannot! Not even for you, Phineas Spear. I didn't kill him. I didn't."

Spear's face contorted with added effort as he let go one hand and reached in his vest pocket. He laid the folded letter Pierson had given him—the retainer—on the window sill. He got a pen, un-

screwed the top with his teeth and laid that beside it.

"Listen, Parkes!" he panted, "I know you didn't kill Southard. I can prove it."

"You . . . can!" the music faltered again. Watery, red-rimmed eyes lighted dully, "Then why . . . ?"

"Don't talk! Play—listen. Horstmann wasn't trying to help you. He didn't want to prove you innocent, but Randall Pierson does."

"Randall Pierson," he breathed, "wants to help me?"

"That paper"—Spear's face was purpling slowly—"says that you consent to Pierson's acting for you as your attorney. Read it. Sign it. Drop it down to me!" And he vanished.

It was almost as though the violin were part of his emotions. He played slowly, tensely, while he must have been reading. Then the tempo quickened, the music became ragged, raucous—stopped! A white square of paper fluttered to the ground and Phineas Spear crouched as footsteps grated on the gravel of the yard.

The guard almost passed—then paused.

His coat! The coat that he had left on the wall-top! It broke that serrated skyline, broke it with a bulge that looked mountain high to Spear. How did it look to the patrolling guard? The man turned toward it, toward the dangling, invisible rope that was Spear's only means of escape. But before he reached it a whirlwind hit him from behind, left him groaning faintly in a heap upon the ground. When he recovered and rose shakily, the bulge on the wall was gone.

PHINEAS SPEAR stood in Pierson's dingy office and looked down at the inert body of Randall Pierson.

The letter that Abel Parkes had signed slid slowly back into his own pocket, and he bent over the lawyer, lifted him and heaved him with a grunt across his shoulder. He kicked an empty gin bottle under the desk. Pierson's breathing was labored, heavy.

The village drunk!

Out like a light!

Expressionless, his eyes smouldering, Spear went out with his burden. He crossed to the *Blade* building, went in and emerged again shortly, alone. As he relocked the door, he muttered, "But you're going to be sober, fella, for tomorrow's court appearance!" And Phineas Spear went home, and wearily to bed.

His body ached. Every bone and muscle in him cried out for rest, sleep. And every atom of his brain refused feverishly. The luminous hands of the alarm clock on the table beside him crawled from midnight to one o'clock. At a quarter of two he turned the clock around, and he didn't know how much later it was when his phone rang. He took it before he was fully out of the doze into which he had fallen, said:

"Yeah?" Then, "What?"

"Phineas!" The very timbre of Cara's voice sent a shock through him, prepared him for anything. In a half second he thought of everything but what she told him, frantically, "Phineas—the office! It's burning!"

His feet hit the floor. Light flared. "How bad, Cara? Is it—"

His heart pounded.

"Oh, it's the whole building. They say it's hopeless—gone!"

"Cara . . ." His voice was hoarse. "Where are you? Are you near there?"

"Yes. I'm in Randall Pierson's office."

"Then tell 'em—tell 'em quick! Pierson's in that fire! I left him, dead-

drunk, in my office. Locked in! Hurry, Cara—I'm coming!"

CHAPTER IV

Sentence of Death

AGAIN THE court-room was jammed. People stood on one another's toes, or sat two in a seat intended for one. People waited, panting in air grown unfit to breathe, crowded intolerably while still more tried to enter. And no one would have left willingly as long as he could retain consciousness. The mob that had assembled to hear a verdict of guilty pronounced upon Abel Parkes was apathetic compared to that which had gathered to hear him sentenced to die. But it was not only the morbidly curious who had come, not alone the sensation seekers!

Men who had not attended a single session of the trial of Abel Parkes—who had been satisfied to read about it—were there now. Business men: bankers; doctors. And their wives. And some of them seemed a little ill at ease, a little dazed. More than one glanced again, furtively perhaps, at the printed single sheets—like cheap hand-bills—that were scattered through the room, through the streets, throughout the town for anyone to see and read, free of charge.

Those handbills bore the masthead of the *Blade*. They were marked "Extra." They said simply:

Pending completion of alterations to Plant and Equipment, *The Blade* will appear in its present form. However limited in scope, *The Blade* will continue to report the news.

There was no reference to fire, no mention of presses smashed into twisted junk before fire ever touched them. There was no statement of the fact that the pungent reek of burned

kerosene still permeated the smouldering ruins of the *Blade* building. But those things were not necessary to be printed. Rumor had them! Rumor flung them, amplified by the clamoring tongues of repetition, to all the town.

Rumor said that Randall Pierson had died. That Spear had killed him. That Pierson had started the fire. That Major Bardin had been found, beaten and robbed. Rumor said that a guard had been half killed under Abel Parkes' cell window. That Phineas Spear had bought an antiquated hand-press in a neighboring town and had set it up in an empty loft.

That seemed to be a fact—a bald rock of reality in the surrounding sea of rumor. And the sentence of death about to be pronounced upon Abel Parkes faded into the background, became suddenly but the opening move on a chessboard of grim conflict. Instead of the yellow cur, snapping at the fringes of respectability, beyond the pale of recognition, the *Blade* loomed as a tiger challenging those lions of civic virtue: public opinion and the *News-Herald!*

But they sat passively while the preliminaries were done. They rose when Judge Blake entered, and sat down when he did. They tolerated the bustling activity of court attendants, whispered conferences among attorneys. They had eyes only for Abel Parkes and the subtle change that had taken place in him. Instead of the hopeless futility that had marked him throughout his trial, he had now a breathless quality of dog-like eagerness.

His eyes wandered from crammed doorways to press table, with its full quota of *News-Herald* men, and its two vacant chairs where the *Blade's* representatives might sit. Major Bardin was there with his contingent. Spear was

not—nor Randall Pierson. But rumor had not penetrated to Abel Parkes' cell. He hadn't heard that a besotted lawyer had been trapped in the *Blade* inferno.

Then the drama had been acted out. The letter of the Law had been appeased and the clerk broke the waiting silence.

"The defendant will rise."

Slowly, his face like a frightened child, uncomprehending, Abel Parkes wavered to his feet. Judge Blake's voice was resonant, sternly uninflected.

"Abel Parkes," he said, "you have been found guilty by a jury of your peers of the wilful and felonious murder of Justin Southard. Under the Criminal Code of this State, the penalty for such murder is death by electrocution. Have you any reason to give why that sentence should not be pronounced upon you?"

There was the quiet of death. The old man's eyes went slowly from judge to jury, rested briefly on press table and prosecution, reached Max Horstmann's darkly handsome face. Then, "Your Honor," he panted, "please, Your Honor, I—I didn't do it! I . . ." and Abel Parkes' throat closed in a racking sob.

"Is that all?" the Judge asked. "Is there—nothing else?"

Max Horstmann spoke. "Your Honor, that is all."

IT WAS getting dark. They stood together at a dusty window with a broken pane and looked out over the street. Behind them the dim emptiness of the warehouse loft was broken only by the bulk of a dilapidated hand-press, a limited stock of printers' supplies. But such as it was, the *Blade!* Phineas Spear turned slowly and looked at it.

His face was soot-grimed, gaunt, ink-streaked. A livid gash over one eye

had been stitched, bandaged earlier in the day, but the dressing had long since been lost. His hair was singed and ragged; remnants of tweed hung on him in charred shreds—mute evidence that if Randall Pierson had died, at least he had not gone without an effort to save him! His gaze dropped to Cara Collins, almost as dirty as he.

She breathed, "Why—Oh, why doesn't somebody phone!"

"It's a good sign, Cara!" he said. "If he'd been thrown out, we'd have known it long ago! But now"—his teeth gleamed white in the dimness—"we'll beat 'em! We'll smoke 'em out with the very fire they thought was burning us into oblivion!"

"But Phineas," her voice was almost a sob, "how can we go on? The insurance won't buy a third of the equipment we need. We can't last—like this—" Her hand, in a hopeless gesture, swept the bare loft. "No advertising—not a cent coming in. And—nobody'll even work for the *Blade*! I saw old Pete this morning, Phineas—and even he's turned against us!"

He nodded grimly. "So did I, Cara. I got him by himself, got a few drinks into him. Word for word, this is what he told me! See what you think of it. Pete said, 'Mr. Spear, I reckon I'm gettin' old, an' mebbe soft in the head. All old people think the same, I reckon, but it do seem like things is not what they once was. Mind ye, Mr. Spear, I ain't accusin' no un—but a man ain't free any more t'come an' go as he pleases. Y'know, sometimes I used t'get thinkin' 'bout them furrin countries where they have dictators an' such-like, an' I'd wonder why the people puts up with 'em. But now I—I think I know! I'm sorry, Mr. Spear, but I got a wife an' my daughter's two kids t'look out fer.'"

He stopped, and his face in the semi-gloom was harsh, thin-lipped. Cara's voice was taut. She said:

"The—the Guardsmen!"

The phone on the small table beside their press shattered quiet. And they looked at each other as though life itself depended on that call. Phineas Spear crossed to the table in long strides and jerked the receiver off the hook. The mouthpiece quivered with the tension of his grip, but his voice was steady.

"Yes!" he clipped, then shouted, "He did! Coming back now? Man, we've won! If Blake's let him go this far—we've won, I tell you! Send the kids down—all you can get. The extra's ready and there's ten bucks apiece in it for the boys. Get 'em here fast, Charley—*fast!*"

He dropped the phone, seized Cara bodily in his arms and whirled her about the room. She clung to him, eyes wide, lips parted, until he placed her once more on her feet and made a lunge for his hat.

"Cara!" he panted then, "Charley Vargas—one guy who's not afraid to work for the *Blade*! That was Vargas! Blake let Pierson argue a motion for an appeal. There was hell in court, but Blake's a man! He cleared 'em out—declared a half-hour's adjournment to study Pierson's brief. He's coming back in five minutes with a decision and you know what it'll be—what it's *got* to be! I'm going."

SHE seized the top sheet from a pile of more handbills—ranked piles of them—thousands of copies of the second extra edition. Printed and ready—waiting for the moment that was almost upon them. Her voice husky, trembling on the verge of hysteria, Cara Collin read:

Pierson Wins Appeal For Abel Parkes
Blade Holds Key to Southard Mystery—
Arrest Promised

"Phineas—who is it? Who murdered Senator Southard? Was it—"

"I dunno," he grinned, "yet! But I do know Abel Parkes didn't. And I'm going to find out who did! Hold everything, Cara. Charley Vargas is sending his kids down to broadcast the extra, and they're bringing their gang. When they come— Here they are now! Let 'em in."

A confusion of scraping feet on the stairway drew Cara to the door. She opened it—and recoiled before the man who stood there. He was short, fat. He wore his hat low over irritable, snapping eyes. He clipped:

"Why—hello, sweetheart!" He came in. He had a suitcase that he dropped heavily.

Cara Collin backed slowly away. Others followed the squat one: a dark man, tall, with a thin moustache and a sallow, expressionless face; two more: one bearded, bear-like, and the other a weazened man with a beak of a nose and queuing black eyes. Another came in, lumbering, grinning at her. He was the biggest of the lot. He had the swollen ears and flat nose of a fighter. His hands were splayed, shapeless knobs.

Cara retreated to where Spear stood beside the press. She stopped then, in front of him, as though to protect him from them. The fat man rasped:

"So you call this a newspaper, huh?"

"Who are you?" Cara gasped. "What do you want?" The tall dark man grinned faintly.

"Who's the dame?" he asked. "Your sob-sister—or do you just keep her around to look at?"

Phineas Spear laughed. "Your boss, Lou!" he rapped. "Cara Collin—until

I have time to change her name. City editor of the *Blade*! And yeah—I call it a newspaper! The best in town!"

"Phineas Spear!" She whirled on him. "I hate you! They scared me half to death—and you knew them all the time! I thought they were— Who are they?"

"The fat one," he grinned, "is Jake Wolcott—after me, the best newsman in America! The gent with the moustache and the gangster face is Lou Rosetti. He thinks he's the greatest feature-writer in the world, but he isn't. I am. These two—the guy with the beaver and the one with the nose—are Boswell and Epstein. They'll tell you they know all there is to know about linotype and rotary presses. And"—Spear moved toward the door, bobbed a stiff left into the fighter's ribs that brought a grunt and a grin—"the only gentleman of the lot: Lefty Crooks, ex-champion and your personal slave from this time on! Put 'em to work, Cara. Tell 'em the set-up. I bought a plant a month ago and the new machinery'll be here soon. Then you gorillas'll wish you were back in Manhattan. S'long."

The door slammed.

Jake Wolcott grinned at her. Wrinkles of fat spread from his small mouth to his ears, fine crow's-feet creased the corners of his eyes. He said, "That's a great guy, Miss Collin! Why, when Socker Spear was workin' for the—"

"Socker?" she said.

"Sure. That's what we called him in New York. And I guess he hasn't changed much. What's he got into here? He didn't say in his telegram."

"Telegram!" Cara's breath caught. "But—but I don't understand! How are we going to—pay you? How can Phineas get new machinery? He—we were wiped out last night—in the fire!"

Lou Rosetti's cold, hard face softened in a sardonic smile. "Wiped out?" he said. "Sister—you don't know your Phineas! Socker Spear had an uncle. See? The uncle had about ten million bucks and a will. He died. Get it?"

"Ten—million—dollars!" she whispered.

CHAPTER V

The Cane Clue

CLOUDS and spreading, gigantic elms obscured the grounds. The Southard home bulked huge, larger than it was in daylight—forbidding, lonely. Forgotten since the furor of investigation that had followed the murder of the old senator, his home stood empty on the knoll that overlooked the town. But if only walls could speak . . . !

Phineas Spear felt the mysterious, eery presence of the man Justin Southard had been. Felt it in the dark silence, the ghostly rustling of leaves. The harsh grate of a steel jimmy on a window sill, the sudden snap of a broken catch, seemed almost a desecration. But Spear hesitated not at all. He vanished through the open window, and the stalking noiseless figure that stole from the cover of nearby shrubbery followed cautiously, crouched beneath the window he had forced.

If walls could speak . . . ?

But walls can speak—to those who have ears to hear them! They had spoken—unmistakably, incontrovertibly—the walls of the very stairway up which he climbed! Now, if others could add their testimony . . . those of the panelled, dignified study where Southard had died!

A faint suggestion of light winked from the small flash he carried. Satisfied that curtains were drawn, that inner, folding walnut shutters were

closed, Phineas Spear snapped on the light on Southard's desk. He stood beside it, motionless save for darting eyes that scanned rapidly a room, every detail of which he knew already.

That room had been gone over a dozen times. Books, from the hundreds that lined the walls, had been taken down one by one. Rugs, pictures had been removed. Desk drawers and files had been searched, every inch of the room gone over for a secret panel, a hidden safe, or even a thread—a hair! The police had searched well, honestly. He knew that. The trouble was that they had found only what they were supposed—or allowed—to find. In the study of the man who had devoted himself to a fight against individual, secret power, against gag-rule and the apathy of the people, had been found not one scrap of evidence of that fight. Not a single hint to point to anyone as his murderer!

But Phineas Spear was not looking for something definite. He was almost convinced that there was nothing of that nature here. He had come—almost superstitiously—with a deliberately emptied mind, just to look. On a hunch! And abruptly he left the study. Southard's body had been found there. It was assumed that he had been killed there. Had he?

His bedroom adjoined the study. Spear entered, using his flash sparingly until he saw that this room also was closed and shuttered. In the somber light of wall brackets he searched it. A four-poster bed, massive, carved, canopied in some rich tapestry. A mahogany high-boy contained nothing of interest—not even personal effects. All of those, he knew, had been impounded pending the finish of the trial of Abel Parkes, the settlement of Southard's estate. A clothes closet offered . . .

A cane—standing alone in one corner!

INSTANTLY Spear recognized it. A heavy cane, carved from some dark wood into the semblance of three smaller canes twisted together. The head was of antique gold, its lavish encrustation of ornament worn smooth by years of use. It was the cane old Senator Southard carried habitually—not for support, but with a courtly flourish . . . Southard's favorite cane—of many that had been found and taken away with his other personal belongings. Why had this one been overlooked?

He didn't touch it. His nostrils flaring with quickened breath, Spear knelt over it. Full-force, brilliant in that dark corner, his flash started at the gold knob, moved slowly down to the worn metal ferrule—and found nothing. Gingerly he turned the cane around, repeated his scrutiny. But this time the beam stopped halfway down. Stopped, and Phineas Spear swore aloud in staccato, sharp tones. He grasped the cane at the top. Flashlight and wall brackets went dark and he strode back into the study. He stopped there—hand on lamp, he turned rigidly.

"I said *reach!*" the masked man repeated, hoarsely soft, and Phineas Spear's hands rose shoulder high. His right still grasped the cane.

The man in the doorway was average size—medium height, thickish. The hair on the hand that held the gun was light, sandy—and Spear's eyes gleamed. So was the hair that adhered to the cane he held, stuck there by a small, dark, scab-like particle that looked like dried blood! The masked man came closer. His eyes behind the slit handkerchief were restless, uneasy. He rasped:

"You can drop the cane, wise-guy!"

Spear did—but he never let go of it. It fell lightning fast. The iron ferrule hit the gunman's wrist and the silence of the vast, old house was blasted with a roaring shot that shattered the lamp on the desk—banished light.

They fought silently in utter darkness. Deliberately Spear dropped the cane. A formidable weapon—but also a clue to murder. And as he swung—and stopped—desperately flung fists, he wondered if the blow he had already struck had dislodged the hair—ruined the one bit of evidence he had found at long last.

Panting, the masked man fought with the fury of a trapped animal. Fought to escape, to reach the door, the stairs. The terror of darkness, of uncertainty, was in him. Spear sensed it. His first mad lunge had put him at the door. He stood there, letting the other come to him, beating back rush after rush, hoping for the lucky punch that would put the man out. But it worked the other way! It was he who stopped the hardest punch of the fight!

He went backward—broke nails, ripped skin from finger-tips, in an un-availing grab at the doorjamb. Then he tripped, smashed into the opposite wall with sickening force. He hung there fighting for consciousness, aware that the other was groping in the dark, feeling for his gun. Then suddenly the wave of paralysis broke. Spear remembered his flash. The beam caught the other full in the face, limned the half raised gun and Phineas Spear flung himself forward in a desperate dive.

HIS hand on the telephone was bloody. For an endless second he waited, not breathing—until the operator's impersonal voice told him that the phone had not yet been disconnected.

There was another moment before Jake Wolcott snapped:

"Blade. City desk."

The irony of it brought a quick grin that hurt his bashed lips. He said thickly, "Jake—Phineas. I want another extra."

"Right, Socker!" came back. "Are you at—?"

"Never mind where I am! Take this: *Headline: Further evidence unearthed in Southard murder! Blade investigator assaulted in senator's home.*"

"Are you," he lashed back suddenly, "at the Southard place *now?*"

"Yes. Why?"

"Then listen—get hold of yourself! Five minutes ago a guy who said he was Randall Pierson phoned here. He said—"

Spear tensed fiercely. "Go on. Go on!"

"Said *you* were in his office and wanted the girl to come over."

"You—didn't let her go!" he ripped. "Damn you, Jake, if you let her go I'll—"

"Wait a minute, Socker!" Wolcott pleaded. "I know it looks bad, but you didn't say to keep her here. You didn't tell us—"

"I told you that Lefty was to look out for her! He went too, didn't he?"

The hesitancy in Jake Wolcott's voice answered him before Wolcott responded, "She—wouldn't let him go! Socker, I'm—sorry. But she said it was just a block away. She said—"

Phineas Spear's voice cracked over the wire, "Get to Pierson's office, Jake! Take the boys and tell 'em to take their guns. If Cara isn't there, wait for me."

He spun away from the desk, and the sandy-haired man cringed under the searing whip of his eyes. Slowly Phineas Spear dropped the gun he held into the one pocket of his coat

that remained intact. When he spoke, his tone was metallic.

"Want to talk, fella? Want to tell me where they've taken the girl? Because if you don't—"

He hovered over him, knees flexed, hands like blood-stained talons. The man in the chair half sobbed:

"I dunno—what you're talking about! I dunno—"

The talons struck. Jerked erect, the man went down heavily under the impact of a cutting right hook. Not crushing! None of the blows that followed was a knockout punch. Phineas Spear was grimly careful to avoid that. The already bruised face of the man with the sandy hair went sickeningly to pulp. He wallowed on the floor, refused to get up and each time Spear lifted him sapped his remaining strength. Nauseated, his own head spinning, he tore the telephone from its wires, ripped the wires from the box. Holding them doubled in a four-lashed whip, he grated between set teeth:

"Talk! Or so help me God I'll cut you to ribbons—with this! Talk—killer!"

He raved, "I—I tell ya I dunno . . . but wait! I—I'll talk! There's a huntin' lodge—Barrow's Point. That's where—they always meet. Ah-h-h . . ." He fainted from sheer terror. Spear used the wire to tie him up.

RANDALL PIERSON sat at his desk. The men of the *Blade* filled his office. They were silent, grim. Jake Wolcott said, "He wanted it like that, Socker. We tried to get him out—to a doc, a hospital—but he wouldn't have it. He says he's done for, and I think he is. I think he just doesn't want to live."

Spear stood over him, himself a blood-marred savage. But the un-

quenchable fire in his eyes was not reflected in Randall Pierson's. The lawyer sat slumped, knees lax, one hand limp and powerless on the arms of his chair. The other was clenched in a fist as rigid as though all the strength left in him were there. Slowly he lifted his head. There was a crimson blotch on his white shirt, a spreading red stain that plastered the cloth to his thin body.

Spear said gently, "How hard are you hit, Randall? Man, you can't give up now. We've only—"

"How hard"—the words themselves came hard; he gasped them a few at a time—"must a man be hit . . . to die, Phineas? How much . . . must he endure? They . . . they thought I was dead. They took . . . Cara with them. What . . . are you waiting for?"

"Bardin?" Spear whispered hoarsely.

A ghastly smile twisted Pierson's grey lips. With agonized effort he lifted the clenched hand, opened it—and suddenly it fell—powerless. His head dropped. Randall Pierson died and Jake Wolcott bent over, recovered the black button that Pierson had held in his hand. It was an ordinary button such as is found on many a man's coat. It still had ragged thread running through the holes—as though it had been torn off violently. Phineas Spear dropped it into a vest pocket. His voice, when he got police headquarters, was harsh, flat.

CHAPTER VI

The Clean-Up

EVANS was his name. He sat in his own speeding, official car with Spear beside him and Jake Wolcott on the other side. Lou Rosetti's thin face, inscrutable, almost sinister in the occasional glow of his cigarette was

half turned toward them. He sat in one of the folding seats. A uniformed cop occupied the other. Police Chief Evans spoke thoughtfully:

"These men of yours, Spear—they look capable."

Wolcott chuckled mildly. Rosetti turned his head, inhaled and flipped the cigarette out of the open car. In the last light of the close-burned butt he had smiled thinly.

"I hope you're right, Spear! If you are, it'll be the answer to a lot of things. An answer most of us—didn't expect." Evans paused. "I owe you an apology, I think."

"Forget it."

Evans said: "No! Ever since you brought this Guardsmen thing out into the open, I've had the feeling you weren't the yellow-sheet journalist people thought you. Things have been brought to my attention. Some of them have looked like just plain racketeering, but there have been other elements that were hard to figure! Floggings apparently without reason. A knifing six months ago that didn't look like the ordinary crap-game wrangle. I don't think they'd even considered the possibility that you'd publish their note. Who is it, Spear? D'you know?"

"How much farther is it," he flared harshly, "to this duck-shooting lodge?"

Evans shot a glance at the speed-merged scrub pine, the occasional darkened farm house that flashed past the hurtling car. "Slow down, Peters!" he ordered his chauffeur. To Spear he said:

"We turn off into the swamp in another few minutes. After that it's a corduroy road and I don't know how far we'll get. Anyway, it'll be best to surround the place on foot."

"Who owns the lodge?" Wolcott asked.

"It's been abandoned for a long time," Evans clipped. "A group of wealthy sportsmen built it, but they lost interest—went broke—something. They haven't been back, never sold it so far as I know."

Lou Rosetti said, "Duck-shooting!" softly, and laughed. He fondled the barrel of the sub-machine gun across his knees.

When they parked, the other two cars pulled in behind them. More uniformed men got out. Gas-guns were in evidence, and that deadliest of all short-range weapons: the sawed-off shotgun. Spear's men sought him out, moved forward at his back; Evans sent policemen to right and left in flanking parties.

The swamp sucked at feet grown heavy with mud. Briars reached out tenuous, detaining hands. But they moved almost silently. Only a muttered curse, a threshing fall now and then broke the dismal, lifeless hush. Then, plaintively:

"Vat am I—a fish? Vy can't these gangsters come out and fight on paved streets like gentlemen?"

"Shut up, Epstein!" Boswell, the bearded man, rumbled.

THEY smelled smoke presently. Spear quickened the pace and a point of light gleamed through the surrounding thicket. The black bulk of parked cars—many of them—was revealed. The silence became absolute as the swamp gave way to solid ground. In a death-like hush men stalked the rambling, forgotten lodge from three sides. On the fourth lay the dim, misty vastness of the Bay. And a scream from the lodge brought them in without orders, running.

Spear was the first to reach the window from which the light came. What

he saw brought a choking, wordless snarl to his throat, brought a .45 he carried to a line between his eyes and the masked figure who stood, whip up-raised. Cara Collin was bound to a pillar that supported the roof. Her hands were over her head, lashed to a wooden crosspiece. Her dress was ripped to the waist, but her naked back was yet unmarked.

Men filled the room, all of them masked. One man, the obvious leader, stood spread-legged in boots and breeches, a high-collared Russian tunic of black satin that fell beyond the wide belt at his waist. His hood was of the same material. His voice came, measured, muffled:

"Your last chance, Cara Collin! What is the clue that Spear has? To whom does it point? I shall count to three. If you have not answered by that time—you know what to expect!"

He nodded to the man with the whip. Its leather coils unbound, quivered as though with serpentine life of its own.

"One . . ."

"Two . . ."

Flame from the .45! Shattered glass and a roar that paralyzed them all where they stood. The man with the whip stiffened, fell slowly forward full-length. And that broke the spell. Flame from all sides—from windows, but not into them. Gas-guns thumped heavily, but bullets from the outside in were impossible with Cara Collin in the center of that room!

Phineas Spear's flung shoulder hit the door—and made no more impression than an idle breeze. From the window over the door—unseen from the porch—a machine gun chattered. Splinters leapt from the shingled porch roof, jumped viciously from the floor all around Spear's feet, seeking him blindly. Then fire streaked from the

darkness beyond the porch. The gun above ceased.

"Duck-shooting!" Lou Rosetti's voice penetrated the roar. He raced up onto the porch. "Get back, Socker! I can cut the lock from this side—shooting away from the kid!"

They crouched on either side of the doorway. From an angle, held hip high, the gun shattered wood and steel. It stopped and the impact of two hundred and twenty pounds burst through. Lefty Crooks plunged headlong into a storm of lead. Spear stumbled over the fighter and went down. Boswell roared through with the high-pitched battle cry of Epstein for shrill accompaniment. Lou Rosetti crouched in the doorway. His bucking gun cleared the windows of the whole front of the place. And when he lurched forward, went down, his lips still smiled in sardonic amusement.

"Duck . . . shooting!" he gasped.

SOMEbody crawled over him in the dark, dragging a leg, cursing. "Yeah! Looks as though you forgot to duck. So did I!" It was Lefty Crooks. He crawled on. Holding his ripped left side, Rosetti groped for his gun—any gun.

"Cara!" Holding her, Spear tore down the nailed crosspiece by sheer frantic strength he didn't know was in him. "Cara!" he choked again. "You—you're not hit!"

"I—I'm all right, Phineas. But you?"

Abrupt silence returned—silence of surrender, of death all around them. And Evans' voice broke it. "Light!" he bellowed. "Any man who wants to live step to the middle of the room—and reach high! Round 'em up, boys."

Gas fumes wavered into dissolution in the draft from broken windows,

wrecked doors. Sudden light blinded momentarily the streaming gas-tortured eyes of prisoners and victors alike as seven men huddled together under police guns, hands held high. Phineas Spear fought blindness. Vaguely he saw the sprawled motionless forms on the floor. He recognized Lefty Crooks, still cursing as he sat braced against the wall of that shambles, holding with both hands the spouting hole in his thigh. He saw Lou Rosetti, deathly still, collapsed over the gun that had done grim execution. He scanned the prisoners, but the man in the boots and satin tunic was not among them. Then masks were ripped off, cringing faces were revealed—well known, some of them, in Liberty. And the last one, the twisted, dark face of Max Horstmann.

There was a button missing from the coat of his suit—torn off, with ends of thread hanging loose. Spear's fingers plunged into his vest, reappeared gripping a black button. Silently he held it out, pointed to the missing button on the lawyer's coat and Horstmann's eyes followed his tense finger. He paled. The hands over his head shook.

"Horstmann," Spear grated, "this button was found in Randall Pierson's hand. And Pierson is dead—*murdered!*"

"No!" he choked, "No! I tell you I didn't kill him! Bardin. Bardin killed him—when he jumped at me. It was Bardin, I tell you! I . . ."

Spear whirled to Evans. "We've lost him! Somehow he got away. The man in the boots was Bardin. We've got to search."

"No, you don't!"

He stood in the doorway, the madness in his eyes—madness that had driven him in his ever growing greed

for power—changed now into a flame of sheer insanity. Gripped in his hands was a machine-gun that threatened them all, but it bore directly on Phineas Spear and Cara Collin. Until she screamed, fell a dozen feet away under the impact of his outflung arm. She tried to rise. Jake Wolcott caught her, held her. Spear faced the maniac with the gun.

Bardin swayed drunkenly. His face beneath streaked mud and grime was livid. The once polished boots were briar-torn, water darkened. The gun trembled in his hands and every man in that room knew that when he touched the trigger Phineas Spear would not die alone. That knowledge held them frozen, indecisive. No one but Spear moved. He walked straight into the muzzle of the gun.

Bardin laughed. He spoke in a voice that was hardly human, barely coherent: "You thought you could beat me—*me!* You thought you could stand between me and my goal! Well—others have thought so. Southard did—and he died! So will you, Spear—*now!*"

The gun shivered in his hands. Stabbing tongues spoke eloquently of death. The roar was of many guns, but Phineas Spear halted where he stood, stumbled, and pitched slowly forward.

"MR. ROSETTI," the cool, impersonal voice so many miles away assured him, "is definitely off the danger list. Naturally it will take some time for him to regain strength."

"Thank you," he said softly.

He replaced the phone without noise and relaxed luxuriously in his own bed. His fingers touched gingerly the two inch groove—almost completely healed, now—that had been ployed across the top of his head by a bullet from a madman's gun. A man whose grinding ob-

session for power had completely unbalanced a mind that must never have been entirely rational.

Phineas Spear lay in somber thought. The full revelation of Bardin's madness would never cease to amaze him, its flaming finish could never be entirely forgotten. And yet it had happened—he remembered Randall Pierson's bitter words—it was happening all over the world. Whole nations had surrendered all their human rights to such men as Bardin! The man had wanted to be king!

In a hidden safe at his almost fortress-like home, Bardin's plans had been found—staggering in their scope. Laughable, perhaps—to some—but tragically so! The Guardsmen of America was Bardin's brain-creature. It was to be a national organization—an army of terrorists—his storm-troops. The battle that had ended his insane ambition had been but a drop in the oceans of blood of a civil war—a smashing of democracy—a dictatorship!

Impossible! Not in America!

Phineas Spear had felt that himself. Yet he had seen the thing come perilously close to success in an American town! It had come slowly, insidiously—as it had come elsewhere. Criminal syndicalism was the name the law gave it—mingled with arson, murder and a hundred other crimes. Funny about "isms," he thought grimly. Fascism, Communism, all the other isms with which the world deluded itself. Democracy—Liberty—Freedom—no "isms" in them, none necessary!

But that was over and done with—at least so far as Bardin was concerned. Doubtless there were others. But doubtless there would be men to deal with them, too. Men like Lou Rosetti—half-killed himself, he had found the

strength somehow to turn his gun upon Bardin, had riddled him before the man could fire more than the first wild burst that had downed Spear. Men like all the rest of them: slow, sometimes, to fight, but fighters all when the time for fighting came.

His mind returned to Abel Parkes—the minute pawn whose helplessness had first aroused Phineas Spear's curiosity. Abel Parkes was free now, freed by a hair! Literally! A hair stuck on Senator Southard's cane—the cane with which he had struck his last blow at the Guardsmen! For his murderer had been a Guardsman, and the light colored hair on the cane had trapped the man who had tried to trap Spear in Southard's empty house.

HE thought, too, of what walls had told him! Speaking walls. The walls of a stairway, stained all the way down with the prints of a bloody hand. An impossible detail unless deliberately done! For blood—or any thick liquid—wipes off quickly with contact. And each succeeding print will be lighter, less heavily marked. But on the wall

of the Southard stairway there were a dozen hand prints—and they seemed to become more gory as they progressed instead of less. As though the killer had gone back and reddened his hand again in order to mark a trail to the door old Parkes always used.

But it was over, and the sun rose higher over Lake Louise in the Canadian mountains, transforming it into a jewel, radiantly brilliant from the window of their room. Phineas Spear grew restive. Smiling faintly, he nudged the coverlet hidden figure beside him.

It stirred. A mop of dark hair appeared and a yawn was audible.

"Don't do that," he grinned, "or I'll go back to sleep. And it's too nice outside. Take a look at the Lake, Mrs. Spear."

She sat up. "Gorgeous!" She yawned again, and dropped back.

He said, "Woman—in the name of starvation, will you have me eat alone?"

Cara stirred comfortably.

"Eat?" She sat up again, smiled. "Make mine ham and eggs!"

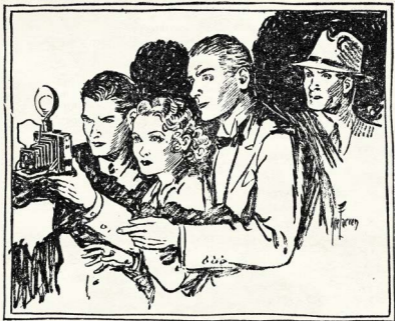


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Ghost in C-Minor

By Richard Sale

Author of "Flash!" "One Herring—Very Red," etc.

Daffy Dill Tackles the Case of Mad Music in a Mad-man's House and the Restless Ghost of a Cocker Spaniel . . . !

IT was about five p. m. on a Friday evening and I was cleaning up my desk in the city room of the New York *Chronicle*, the metropolis' best (self-termed) newspaper, when the telephone buzzed a couple of times in its merriest tune.

Dinah Mason, the light of my life, was standing by the desk at the time. She looked ravishing and she looked hungry. When she heard Alexander Bell's folly speak its piece, she scowled darkly. "Don't answer it," she or-

dered. "You've invited me to dinner and I intend to eat. From the tone of that musical chime, it sounds as though the Old Man had plans to send you garnering news."

"On the other hand," I returned blithely, "it might be a pair of lawyers calling to inform me that my long lost uncle has kicked the bucket and left me his estate of a hundred thousand dollars Mex. It is a code of the Dill family never to turn down a telephone call. If you will kindly attend—" I picked up the handset and said hello.

Dinah—unhappily—was correct. It was the Old Man, that bald-headed little gnome who city edits the *Chronicle*—who sits behind his desk with a dark green eyeshade down over his face.

"If I am speaking with D. Dill," he opened sardonically, "it is merely to say that his presence is required quicker than he can present himself."

"If you will glance at the mechanism you call a clock which rests on the southwest corner of your desk," I replied with fervor, "you will note that Eastern Standard Time says five o'clock—which same is the hour that said Daffy Dill stops working and begins to play."

"Ha-ha!" the Old Man chortled sadly. "That was very funny. Even odd. I ask you to consider the human wreck lounging across the street by Pier Twelve. You can see him from your window. That is what unemployment does to a guy. Get in here fast or it's your neck."

"Listen, Rasputin—"

"I'm telling you, Daffy—"

"But I've got a date with Dinah for dinner and she'll disown me if I don't keep this one—"

"I wouldn't give a damn if she decapitated you. I've got a yarn for you to cover and—"

"Okay, okay!" I snapped. "And I hope your next herring bone has a slow passage through your Adam's apple."

"May the levees that hold the water off your brain have weak moments," he finished, and slammed up.

Dinah and I shrugged at one another. I got up, put on my hat and coat, and we both went over to the Old Man. He said hello brusquely. "Never mind the black looks, Dinah," he said. "There'll be plenty of time for the free dinner."

"Thanks," she said dryly. "Free for me or for Daffy?"

"Never mind that," countered the Old Man. He turned to me. "Do you know what this is?"

"Why," I said, ogling at the black object which he held up. "It looks like one of those things that takes pictures."

"It's a camera," agreed the Old Man snappily. "It's a speed Graphic with a Kalart Synchronizer, lens Tessar f/4.5 and a focal shutter with speeds from 1/10th to 1/100th of a second."

"Very interesting," I said. "I have a Brownie snapshot camera myself which I bought in 1909. Sometimes it makes pictures. I don't know much about it. I care even less. And I'm hungry."

"You're going to operate this machine tonight," barked the Old Man. "I'll make it as simple as possible. I've set the shutter at 1/50th of a second, same timing as the photoflash bulb. All you have to do is sight through this range-finder and when you see what you're shooting clearly, press this lever and you'll have a picture. The lens is already stopped to f/8."

"My friend," I replied suavely, "I am a newspaper reporter. I garner news, not pictures. If you want pictures, use a staff fotog. If you want especially good pictures, hire Candid Jones to shoot 'em. If you want no pictures, I'll handle the camera."

THE Old Man sighed and rubbed his hand across his face. "This isn't the time to be funny, Daffy. There's a good yarn in this thing and if you can get anything at all with the camera, it'll be terrific."

"What is he supposed to shoot?" Dinah asked, curious.

"A ghost," answered the Old Man calmly.

There was a long silence. Dinah and I stared at him. The Old Man

is not superstitious and hardly a romanticist. He was as cynical an old guy as had ever been spared by the buzzards. There wasn't an ounce of flumduggery in his skull. There wasn't an ounce of tomfoolery in his makeup. And it was plain that he was absolutely on the level.

"A g-ghost?" Dinah faltered. "You don't mean a real g-ghost?"

"A real ghost," affirmed the Old Man. "Remember, Daffy? The last time we had ghosts in the *Chronicle* was when old Major Culpepper came back from the grave with his .31 caliber grave-scratcher. That was a phony. Maybe this is, too. I don't know."

"For a possible phony," I said, "you take it pretty seriously. What is all this anyway?"

"It begins with Walter Nurbeck," said the Old Man. "You know—the big-game hunter who brings 'em back more or less alive. I know Walt pretty well myself. After this last trip to Malaya, he delivered a cargo of animals to the Rachenbach Circus quarters out on Long Island. He was pretty much fed up with traveling around and figured he'd stay in New York for a spell until the winter was over."

"Go ahead."

"Now you may remember something about Walt Nurbeck. He was married to Gloria Canova back in 1921—"

"Gloria Canova, the actress?" Dinah breathed reverently.

"That's the one," said the Old Man.

"But she disappeared about eight years ago!" I said. "I remember all that fuss. I was a mere stripling at the time, but it had the country gaga. Nurbeck was in Africa at the time."

"Here's how it happened," ex-

plained the Old Man. "Walt was in Africa with Akeley on a job for the Natural History Museum. His wife was playing in *The Taming of the Shrew*, a revival at the Broadhurst Theater. She came home from the theater this particular night with her agent, Karl Anderson, and her producer, Philip de Mare. They were sitting in the living room and the maid was serving them liqueurs when suddenly Miss Canova rose, said she was going to change her clothes, and went upstairs. *She never returned!*"

"I remember," I said.

"I don't want to remember," Dinah said, shivering. "What happened to her anyhow?"

"I wish I knew," said the Old Man wistfully. "It would make a sweet yarn . . . As a matter of fact, Dinah, no one knows what happened. She was never found. She went upstairs with her white cocker spaniel—the dog was faithfully devoted to her—and she was never seen again."

"And the dog?"

"The cocker disappeared with her. Never seen either. Walt Nurbeck came home, grief-stricken—offered rewards which were never claimed. No trace of the girl was ever found. It was established that Gloria Canova could never have left by the front door because her agent, Karl Anderson, could see it from where he sat. She didn't leave by the back door because the cook was there and would have seen her. She could have lowered herself out of a window with rope and sheets, along with the dog, and made an exit into eternity that way, but—well—where did she go? What happened to her?"

"There's murder in it," I said.

"Baloney," said the Old Man. "Always a nose for sudden death. Keep

this one sane. I'll resume. Now during the time that Walt Nurbeck was on his way home from Africa, the maid and cook kept up housekeeping there in the house, waiting for him. They telephoned the police one night after the disappearance, terrified. When the cops got there, the maid was a case. She'd seen a ghost—the ghost of the cocker spaniel. She heard deathly wails—the wails of her missing mistress. And a strange satanic organ had played a ghastly tune during the whole thing. Needless to say, the cook and maid both left the premises. The police found nothing. And Walt Nurbeck arrived home to an empty house, already steeped in tragedy, and quickly acquiring a nasty reputation."

I SAID: "The newspapers had a field day with that case. It comes back like a picture now. They called the place the Old Dark House and they referred to it thereafter as New York's number one haunt. Gloria Canova's spook was supposed to walk the place, moaning loudly, the white ghostly cocker at her side, and sometimes unseen hands would touch an unseen organ and the results would be terrific. Cops on the beat heard the organ. I remember that. They said it was terrible!"

"The organ," remarked the Old Man sagely, "was another red herring. Nobody could figure it out. Of course, the guy who owned the house before Walt Nurbeck was an organist and also a nut. He killed himself with a straight razor one night. So, naturally, the story went around that he came back to play in spectral form."

It was getting late. Outside the night had come down and you couldn't see the Hudson River anymore, out

the window. You couldn't see much of anything, as a matter of fact, since a greasy fog had seeped in over a greasy sea, and all the lights of Manhattan were clotted with the white cotton mist; they stood out like dim fuzzy balls up off the sidewalk.

"Well," I said presently, "and what has all this talk about ghosts to do with the nocturnal assignment?"

The Old Man stared at the calendar on the wall and pecked at a front tooth with his right forefinger, frowning as he thought. "Walt Nurbeck is a close friend of mine," he said. "That's why I'm doing this. He doesn't believe in ghosts either."

Dinah asked: "So what?"

"He telephoned me this afternoon." said the Old Man. "I told you: he wants to stay in town for the winter. So he has opened up the Old Dark House on East 72nd Street. It hasn't been open since he closed it up after Gloria Canova disappeared, eight years ago. He hired some help—a male cook and a valet. He had the gas and water and light turned on yesterday morning. He spent his first night there last night."

I began to feel goose pimples forming down my spine as if I had an intuition of what the Old Man was going to say. I choked and then gulped: "Yeah?"

"He hasn't got a cook nor a valet this evening. They hauled out of the Old Dark House bright and early this A. M."

"Why? Ghosts?" Dinah asked breathlessly.

"Ghosts!" said the Old Man firmly. "And the startling fact is that Walt saw one himself. He saw the cocker spaniel last night, shortly after midnight. He'd been in the living room. He turned off the lights as he left the

room. As he started for the stairs in the hallway, he saw the cocker run down from the upper floor, pause on the first landing, then scoot up to the second floor again. The dog was there all right, but he could see right through the beast, as though it were running around in a coat of ectoplasm. He was quite shaken, put it down to imagination, and went to bed. At intervals throughout the night, he heard the organ—no practiced hand playing it—just a lot of minor chords, jumbled, horrible, filling the whole house and yet, not being there at all.

I took a deep breath. "And I, foul fiend," I protested, "am supposed to lay the banshee of the Old Dark House all by my lonesome tonight?"

"Not exactly," the Old Man replied. "Walt didn't believe his ears nor his eyes. He wanted me to send up one of my best men to cover the place. And he wanted a camera along for a quick picture of the cocker's spook. You're the man."

"Thanks," I said dryly. I glanced at Dinah. "Want to come along, Angel-Eyes? Your sex appeal might help."

Dinah set her chin out firmly. "I don't believe in ghosts," she said, her voice a trifle tremulous. "I think it's all a fake. I think you're trying to rib Daffy on this one. And just to prove it, I will go along!"

"So will I," boomed a big new voice. We all wheeled, startled, and who should we find standing there but Captain Bill "Poppa" Hanley of the New York Homicide Bureau.

"Poppa!" I said, sighing in relief. "You, too? What a pleasure!"

"The pleasure's all mine," Poppa Hanley said, smiling slightly as he tilted his red homely face toward us. "Couldn't help overhearing you. And

if you ask me, there's something that isn't quite so phony about the whole business. Why should the same things happen after eight years? There's something in that house. And I'd like to find what it is. After all, wouldn't it be nice to get a lead on what happened to Gloria Canova eight years ago? I'd like to break that case, by thunder!"

"May you, may you!" I said. "But have you got a rod?"

"You'll probably need it," said the Old Man, smiling as though he were enjoying a huge joke. "Look at the calendar!"

We all had a look. And we suddenly learned that this particular Friday fell on a thirteenth and that it was a night of the full moon, despite the fog. I felt lower than a catapillar's tummy.

"Huh!" Poppa Hanley grunted noisily.

No more was said. I picked up the Speed Graphic, took Dinah's arm, and Hanley followed us out.

IT was a nasty night. The fog had closed down so that you couldn't see the lights of buildings a short block away. It was that thick drizzling type of fog which seems to pick up the soft coal dust over the city and lay it down on everything—windshields, faces, clothes—until you felt like a second-hand soda straw.

We rode uptown in a cab to East 45th Street and we had dinner at the Divan Parisienne. It was a good dinner, but somehow, it didn't give us a lift. Dinah Mason was very nervous. She kept chewing celery stalks and staring at me. I didn't like the way she stared at me. You'd have thought I was a candidate for lilies or something.

Ghosts, however, did not affect Poppa Hanley's appetite at all. He put it all away and looked for more.

As for myself, the story which the Old Man told seemed to reach me more than I liked. It was a depressing sort of thing. If some departed soul had staged a spectral spree in the Old Dark House, I'd have known it was a phony and it would have been fun to lay the banshee. But the fact that the spook was the shade of a faithful cocker spaniel—that kind of got me. Just like it had got Dinah and the Old Man.

There was something rather sad in the ghost of a dog.

When we finally left the Divan Parisienne and went uptown even further, to East 72nd Street, my spirits were lower than the fog. I had a feeling I wasn't going to like the entire business. The night was worse; rain had started to needle down in a fine spray. When we reached the place, it was nearly eight-thirty P. M.

We got out. I paid off the cab driver and made a mental note, duplicating the sum for the swindle sheet.

We gave the Old Dark House a once-over lightly.

It was a fine mansion for spooks. Surviving as a relic of the ancient régime of New York, it stood in East 72nd Street like an anachronism in a shining city. It was medieval, compared with the two ultra-modern apartment houses which flanked each side of it. It was a dreary gray-stone house, with gingerbread effects all up the front of it, including a bizarre Byzantine fencing around the flat surface of the roof.

There were three floors. Only the lower floor was lighted. The amber glow behind the drawn shades of the

windows downstairs made the windows resemble two huge eyes, softly veiled by the rain and the fog of the night.

We went up the four steps to the front door and we rang the bell.

The man who answered was Walter Nurbeck himself. I recognized him from motion pictures of his various safaris in Africa. I had never met him before in my life. He was older than his pictures had indicated. There were weather lines in his face and a touch of maturity at his temples, a fine pepper-and-salt sprinkling of gray hair. He looked at us, quietly surprised, and then said: "I beg your pardon. I hadn't expected—"

"I'm from the *Chronicle*," I said. "The Old Man sent me. The handle is Daffy Dill. The job is taking pictures of a ghost while an organ plays in C minor."

"Yes," Nurbeck nodded. "But—" "This is Miss Mason," I said. "She's to write a story on what she sees in case I'm busy with the camera. And this is Captain Hanley of the homicide bureau; he figures the ghost may have a lot to do with the disappearance of Gloria Canova eight years ago, and he'd like a chance to prove it."

"By all means!" Nurbeck exclaimed, his voice quivering. "Do come in, gentlemen and Miss Mason. Sorry to have been impolite, but—my nerves aren't at their best tonight. You'll just have to drop your coats here in the hall. No servants around. They departed after last night, poor souls, and I can't blame them."

There was a Chinese teak chest in the hall by the door and we laid our hats and coats on it before we had a look around.

"Before we go into the living

room," Nurbeck said, "I'd like you to glance up at the staircase. We'll come out here later on. The dog came down from the top landing there to the intermediate landing, stood still momentarily, then turned and ran to disappear into the wall behind its back."

I LOOKED hard. It was a gloomy house at best. The most modern furniture wouldn't have changed it. The walls were all of paneled oak, stained very dark like mahogany. The staircase—very narrow—went up to a small landing on the left side of the hall. Here, at the landing, it made a ninety-degree right turn and went up to the second floor of the house. All around the left side of the staircase as it descended, the paneled oak motif held.

"Hmmm!" said Poppa Hanley with profundity.

"Let's go inside," Dinah suggested, because her knees were knocking together with the speed of a rolling drum and she had to sit down.

Nurbeck led us into the living room. It looked cheerful, which was a nice change. He had a fire going in the big stone fireplace and the furniture looked comfortable, and there was a flagon of port wine which Nurbeck immediately served to us. We all sat around the fire and we drank the wine slowly and didn't say much, and I kept the Speed Graphic close to me, set at hyperfocal distance and loaded with a flash bulb and ready to go.

Then I began to feel it . . .

I felt it twice before. Once when I visited the little green room at Sing Sing where the electric chair sits in the room and rows of benches stretch out before it for witnesses. The time I saw it the room was empty, except for my guide and myself. But I felt

death there, as distinctly as if a man had been dying while I watched. You couldn't get away from its actuality. It was *there* in that little green room.

Another time I felt it was in an operating room when I was watching a very simple appendectomy. There was no reason on earth why the operation should not have been successful and the patient should have lived, regardless. But I felt death that time, close, sure, its presence making the small of my back prickle like a desert cactus and get cold and bloodless. The patient died on the table.

. . . It was here, too, in this house, suddenly. The cactus flourished once more down my spine and breathing came hard and my veins felt cold despite the roaring fire, and death visited the premises.

The vigil for a ghost went on for three hours while we chatted idly, or, for long periods, said nothing at all. At eleven-thirty, the room was entirely silent and we were all staring motionlessly at the dying flames in the fireplace; Nurbeck's head had fallen to his chest and his eyes shone glassily in the fire's reflection, as he stared intently at the embers; Dinah watched the flames too, her chin on her hands, her face very white. Poppa Hanley leaned back in his chair as he chewed stolidly on an unlighted stogie, for Poppa liked to chew, but never smoked.

"What is it?" Dinah asked suddenly, sitting up straight and rubbing her elbows briskly.

"What's that?" I snapped, nerves on edge.

"I—I heard something," Dinah quavered.

"Yes," said Nurbeck, his face very pallid, even in the red touch of the fire flare. "You *did* hear something!"

"I didn't hear anything," affirmed

Poppa Hanley. "Not a doggone thing."

I said: "Nor I."

"It's time," Nurbeck said, disregarding us completely. "A little earlier tonight than last night, but it's started." He rose and began putting out the lights of the living room. Soon we were completely in the dark, seeing each other only by the glow of the moribund hearth embers.

"What's to happen?" I asked.

"Mr. Dill," Nurbeck began, his voice high and thin and unsure, "above all else, you must get a picture tonight. I've had doubts about my own mind after what took place last night. Tonight, I want a picture. I must have a picture and the testimony of reliable witnesses. You won't fail me?"

"I'll get the picture," I said, "if there's one to get. But for pete's sake, will you give me an in on what's to come off?"

He held up his finger in a solemnly prophetic manner.

"Listen!"

I heard it and froze. Dinah heard it and gasped. Poppa heard it, slowly removed the cigar from his mouth and drawled: "Well, blow me down, it's on the level!"

AT first, it was only the hoarse whisper of rushing wind, filling the house in one tremulous gust, emanating from nowhere yet reaching everywhere. A vibrant reedy concussion which could only be felt inside your mind; then: a rush of sound which broke the trembling silence like a splitting crack of thunder. The sound of a pipe organ welling up to a ghastly crescendo throughout the house, within the walls of the house, everywhere!

C minor—then a horrible crashing

discord! B flat—and another rending discord! C minor—and a series of tripping de, de, dum, dum, do, do, DUM! like spectral rivulets of mistaken melody falling from the mad fingers of a madder madman as his hands tripped along a keyboard without rhyme or reason.

Without warning, all sounds ceased. It was as though a magician's hand had passed over the Old Dark House and had left it without life, without pulse, without breath. We were all standing on our feet at that point, wild-eyed, gasping, pale. My ticker was hitting against my ribs until I thought it would crack one of them.

"It—it seemed to come from the hall outside," Dinah faltered.

"It comes from everywhere," Walter Nurbeck declared soberly. "I've tried to trace it down but I can't. It's in the walls themselves and it's—it's terrifying—"

"Judas!" Poppa Hanley grunted, holding up his hand.

Again sound. This time, a single wavering soprano note, penetrating, sharp, holding onto its pitch for ten eternal seconds before it broke into a series of mashed notes all struck at the same time and ending in a crash of discordant noise which shook us.

"Let's see the hall," Hanley snapped.

"Yes," said Nurbeck. "But go quietly. It's time. And Mr. Dill—your camera—"

We moved into the hall. The reflection of the embers did not reach out there. The hall was solidly black now. We could not see the staircase at all. We moved in the intangible pitch by feeling our way against each other.

"Wait and watch," Walter Nurbeck whispered hollowly.

"And listen," Dinah added hoarsely. "There goes little Joe on the organ again."

She was right. The organ crashed out for the third time, and this rendition was almost entirely played on the bass keys of the ectoplasmic instrument, cannonades of rumbling sounds whose vibrations—mute but strong—played themselves upon our bodies as we stood, bathed in the blackness.

It was Poppa Hanley who spoke next.

We had waited for the canine ghost for something over ten minutes. The vigil had been something to go through, sitting in a lonely, gloomy hallway, waiting for a spectre others had seen, knowing it would come, disbelieving in its reality, yet believing in its presence, and all the time, at frequent, unexpected intervals, the horrific crash of the unseen organ while hands crashed across an unseen keyboard.

For the first time in my life, I didn't feel very funny. And then Poppa Hanley said slowly and strangely quiet: "There's death in this house. I can feel it as though I could see it."

"I know," I whispered, holding the Speed Graphic up in front of me, waiting for a picture of a ghost.

"I'll find it," Hanley said. "It's here somewhere and I'll find it." And none of us knew what he meant just then.

None of us paid any attention to what he said at that particular moment, in fact. For Dinah interrupted him with a knife-like hiss, a gasp caught as it was born: "On the stair! Good!—"

It came from the top landing lightly, that ghost, skipping down sure-footed and nimble and low to the ground, a white cocker spaniel by slight stretch

of the imagination. You could see through it—the stairs were suddenly visible behind it, and the hall seemed to glow a little bit in reflecting the whiteness of the beast.

I became aware that the hair on the back of my neck was standing out like quills on a porcupine's spine, and I could hardly breathe. I was gripping the Graphic camera so damned hard that my knuckles were hurting.

The white shadow ran down the stairs to the intermediate landing and paused here. It seemed to turn and bark at the oaked panel behind the landing. It couldn't be described: it was just there. A nucleus of lights and shadows which made a cocker, made dark spots in the shadow where there might have been eyes and a mouth and a nose. It had a flowing quality like liquid.

I snapped the plunger on the Graphic.

There was a blinding flash of light which illumined the entire place with startling clarity for one-fiftieth of a second, and I had a picture.

WHEN the flash had faded and we could focus once more—a tough job after a photoflash—the ghost was gone, vanished completely.

"Lights!" Poppa Hanley roared.

"But it'll return!" Nurbeck said.

"The hell with that!" said Hanley. "I want lights and let's have 'em. That spook kept looking at that panel. Maybe it's a hunch. Maybe Fate works it this way. Gimme lights!"

Nurbeck gave him lights. The moment they were on, Hanley dashed up the stairs to the intermediate landing and began to pound the oak panel there—the one the dog had looked at. It sounded solid enough but it was oak and you couldn't tell.

"Come on up here," Hanley said. "Everybody feel around and see if anything opens here—never mind! *I've got it!*"

We were all up on the landing in a flash. The panel had shot inward and Poppa Hanley had nearly catapulted in after it. He'd been leaning against it when he found the wood piece—a carved leaf in the border of the panel—which, when depressed, unlocked the panel. A concealed spring pulled it in. You had a good chance of diving in head first. Hanley darn near did.

"Take it easy," Hanley said from where he stood beyond the panel. "There's a stone stairway here. It leads down to a room. And there's your organ down there. An electric light is on. There—" he paused.

"Let me in," I said.

"You come, Daffy," said Hanley. "Dinah, stay out of this. There's something down here you won't want to see. Nor you, Mr. Nurbeck. Stay up here and we'll have a look and be right up."

"You couldn't get me down there," Dinah said, "for a permanent wave with a million bucks thrown in."

"I'll—I'll stay—" Nurbeck faltered.

He looked thin and gaunt and piqued suddenly. He knew what we would find.

We went down the stairs. There were fifteen of them and they led to a subcellar which had been cut out of the ground beneath the front of the house. The concrete room wasn't large. Couldn't have been more than six by six.

But there was a single bulb on and it showed four things in that six-by-six tomb. It showed an organ. It showed two bodies. It showed rats . . .

I took a couple of pictures for the paper while Poppa Hanley had a

closer look. I finished when he did. "Do you get the lay of this thing?" he asked.

"You tell me," I said. "I'm still shaky."

"That's Gloria Canova," said Hanley. "And that's the cocker dog you've heard so much about."

She was in a silver fox collared coat, wrapped tightly around what was left of her body. The dampness of the cellar hadn't been kind. There was only a skeleton left along with a fetid, heavy smell. I could see the fracture in front of the skull, and the right leg, snapped in two. She was lying face down on the concrete floor close to the organ and she had one hand extended up to the organ bench. The dog lay close beside her, skeletal in form, on its right side.

"When she left to go upstairs that night," Hanley said, "she must've leaned against that panel and opened it when she reached the middle landing. She wasn't prepared for it and she fell straight through and down these stairs. You can see: she busted a pin and cracked her skull. But that didn't kill her."

"No?"

"No," said Hanley. "She must have regained consciousness at one time with just enough strength to turn the electric switch on the organ and push down some of the keys. Maybe she hoped some one would hear it and come looking for her. That switch has been left on for eight years from the night she died."

"The motor for pumping couldn't have lasted for eight years of constant turning over."

"I don't know about that," said Hanley. "But the juice was all turned off when Nurbeck closed the house. So the organ motor hasn't been run-

ning in eight years. It is now. It started running when Nurbeck had the electricity turned on again and opened up the house. Since then, at night, the rats come out and run across the keyboard and that's why the damned spine-chilling sounds we heard."

"What about the dog?"

"Died of starvation, I figure," said Hanley. "There he is; he stuck to the last."

"I mean the ghost!" I said.

"Let's go downtown and develop that plate," said Poppa, "and I'll explain about the ghost."

We went upstairs and told Dinah and Walter Nurbeck what had happened. It broke Nurbeck all up. We didn't want to leave him alone there, so we took him along to headquarters.

POPPA HANLEY had one of his police fotogs develop my plate and while he was doing it, I telephoned the Old Man at the *Chronicle* office and spilled the whole yarn to him. It was one I wasn't pleased to call in. It was one which did not elate the Old Man. Somehow the picture of those bodies in that cellar was pathetic.

When the police fotog had the plates ready, he printed them and gave us a soaking wet job to look over. The shots I'd taken in the subcellar were all perfect. But it was the one of the ghost in the hall that knocked me on an ear.

There were the stairs, all in perfect focus. The walls with all their detail. The paneling. The bannisters. The rug.

But on the middle landing where the cocker had been when I snapped the picture—there was *nothing!*

"Uh-huh," said Hanley.

"What do you mean 'uh-huh'?" I

demanded. "You saw the thing. We all saw the thing. I caught it with the flash. And there's nothing there!"

Hanley smiled.

"What'd you expect? A ghost isn't anything to begin with. This was just a regular ghost. That is to say: nothing. And that is what you took a picture of."

"But what did we see then?"

"We saw light," said Hanley. "Light that could be anything we wanted it to be. In this instance, I will admit, it was a dead ringer for a white cocker. I don't know but what you could call it a ghost at that. It led us to the right panel."

"But what caused it?"

"Three things," said Hanley. "Defective glass, an automobile, and a mirror. Neat, eh? But while you people watched the ghost, I watched to see what made it. The car that came by had high lights on. Those high lights caught a whorl in the living room window on the right side, and focused a blob of light into the hall mirror which—in turn—shot the light up the stairs. As the car moved past the light came down the stairs and when it had reached a ninety-degree angle with the window, the ghost vanished.

"However, your photoflash was a bright light. It deleted the lesser light which made the ghost and thus you had no picture at all of the ghost. Light versus light. The flash won. If you could have made a time exposure, you'd have had a picture. You still can make a shot if you want. I'll drive the prowler car up and park it just right for the ghost to be on the landing. Then you can make a time—"

"Skip it," I said.

"Sure," said Poppa Hanley quietly, "I know how you feel, Daffy. Lights of

no lights, that cocker was the only ghost I ever saw in whom I'd like to believe. After all, it was as though he were trying to break through and let us know about his mistress. It was as though—having been unsuccessful in keeping her alive—he was doing his best to see her buried. And it worked." He turned to Nurbeck: "I'm sending the squad up along with the medical examiner, Mr. Nurdeck. The house'll be cleared shortly and you can go home."

"No," said Nurbeck. "No. I'll never

live in the place again. It murdered her. I've had an offer. I'm selling it to be razed. The man who owned it before me was mad, they said. Killed himself. Some sort of wealthy musician who felt he was being persecuted. Of course he had the room built where he could play the organ in solitude. But who would have thought—"

Hanley's office was very still and very sad.

"Let's go home," Dinah said, sniffing slightly.

And we went. . .

Cipher Solvers' Club for March

(Continued from last week)

†Mrs. H. A. Seals, Cleveland, Ohio; †Kay Vee See, Seattle, Wash.; *O. I. See, Caroleen, N. C.; Shalmaneser, Manchester, Iowa; †Sherlac, Philadelphia, Pa.; R. E. Shipman, Chicago, Ill.; †Logan Simard, Pasadena, Calif.; †Box Six, Lapeer, Mich.; *Sleepy, Bryn Mawr, Pa.; *A. W. Smith, Oklahoma City, Okla.; *Nick Spar, Lynchburg, Va.; †Speck, Little Rock, Ark.; †C. H. Spencer, Washington, D. C.; *Jack-Stay, Tucson, Ariz.; Louis Stephens, Homestead, Pa.; Tap, Brooklyn, N. Y.; *Dick Tate, Battle Creek, Mich.; *Old Timer, Guthrie, Okla.; *F. E. Tinkham, Ripon, Wis.; Tobey, Fairmont, W. Va.; †A. Traveller, Washington, D. C.; †Tramsobend, South Bend, Ind.; †Paw Tucket, Orlando, Fla.; Elsie A. Turner, Leesburg, Fla.; D. Freeman Tyler, South Richmond, Va.; †Tyro V, Perrysville, Pa.; *Uuem, Dayton, Ohio; †Mrs. James Walen, Hartford, Conn.; †Little Willy, Johnstown, Pa.; *E. A. Wilson, Oakdale, Pa.; *Sam Wilson, Chicago, Ill.; H. W., Salt Lake City,

Utah; †Curly, Spearfish, S. Dak.; W5FYL, New Orleans, La.; Charing X, Brooklyn, N. Y.; *Doctor X, Kansas City, Mo.; Ziptax, Hartford, Conn.; †Charles E. Zirbes, Clinton, Iowa; *Lew Zirn, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.; *A. R. Zorn, Perris, Calif.

Twenty-three—†P. J. B., St. Petersburg, Fla.; The Barron, Chicago, Ill.; Biff, Point Lookout, N. Y.; *Mrs. W. C. Bird, San Francisco, Calif.; *Gold Bug, Newburgh, N. Y.; †Mabel B. Canon, Philadelphia, Pa.; †Donald P. Crane, Quincy, Mass.; Mrs. George E. Currie, Gulfport, Miss.; W. E. Deen, San Antonio, Tex.; Ellcan, Orangeburg, N. Y.; Enbay, Chicago, Ill.; Rupert Graves, Douglaston, N. Y.; *Hitch, Boonton, N. J.; †H. H., Coventry, Ohio; †Herbert J. Huthwaite, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Jatcy, Greensburg, Pa.; *Jayem, Bellingham, Wash.; S. Kransby, Chicago, Ill.; Edward McGauley, New York, N. Y.; A. Meredith, Jr., Lynchburg, Va.; †Gene Miller, Petersburg, Ind.; Miny, Cedar Rapids,

(Continued on page 85)

America's Favorite
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From Ten To Three

By Edgar Franklin

Author of "All You Can Lug," "Johnny Dolan
—Live Wire," etc.



Johnny Dolan and "Rosy Cheeks" tumbled to the bottom of the stairs, and somehow hit one of them large iron suits of armor

"POSITIVELY, John," Mr. James (Red) Binney said very earnestly, addressing that dumbest and utterest of all crime's utterly dumb failures, pug-nosed young Johnny Dolan, across the bar of his fearful little cellar saloon, "this last coupla days since you been stringin' wit' Sniffy O'Toole you are gettin' as nutty as himself. What I mean, the slug has so many bats in his dome you can hear them squeak wit' the radio goin' in the room. What I mean, any party which keeps sayin' 'Psst!' an' actin' like somethin' in a detectatuf

story is that sour in the noggin you can catch the smell o' vinegar if he stands wit'in ten feet o' yuh!"

"Yeah?" Johnny Dolan smiled.

"Absolutely! So lissen, John. A punk like you, which has not the brains of a cockroach to start wit', cannot afford to get them put any further on the fritz, so here is what you do: take a nice little drink on the house o' this new Seven-X, which is absolutely pure rye, an' then beat it as fast as possible; an' if O'Toole comes lookin' for you I will say you was called out o' town on account of your grandmother suddenly died."



Mr. James (Red) Binney was certainly very upset over his pal.

Johnny Dolan tossed off a scant tumblerful of the Seven-X, rocked back on his heels for a moment, dashed away the water which had spurted from his eyes, and smiled again, just as mysteriously.

"Thanks, Red," he said, "but I will nevertheless wait for Sniffy, on account of it cannot be helped. What I mean, you would probably not understand, but this job I been discussin' wit' Sniffy can easy be somethin' which was all set up maybe fifty thousand years ago, or maybe even a million years ago!"

"What is this?" Mr. Binney grunted.

"Positively, Red! You would get the angle if you knew about storology. What I mean, if you knew about storology you would see why Sniffy cannot help gettin' here no more'n I can help bein' here, see, on account of that is how it was all doped out by the stars, even before George Washington was born."

"Yeah—sure. Why not?" Mr. Binney muttered.

"WELL, look, Red," Johnny Dolan smiled patiently. "I dunno if I can explain it so a dumb cluck like you can get it, but lately I am very much interested in storology. What I mean, Pinhead McGovern is sellin' around a book about storology for one buck, so I finally give him thirty cents for one, on account of he practically guaranteed it would make me rich. Well, it is all about stars, see? Take for instance, you would probably not know what stars you was born under, but—"

"One second!" Mr. Binney broke in with some heat. "It so happened

my old man was workin' steady long-shore at the time an' the rent was consequently paid, so I was positively not born under no stars. I was born on the fourt' floor front o' the same house on Tenth Avenyer near Thirty-eighth street, where we lived till I was near nine years old."

"Y' got it all wrong, Red," Johnny Dolan sighed, "on account of it ain't that kind of stars in storology. Look, takin' it another way. In this book it says how there is, like, all different signs, 'see, which you could get born under. Well, supposin' a person would get born under this, now, Scorpions, say, he would naturally have to do thus an' so, on account of he couldn't help doin' it no other way, could he? Okay! Now, supposin' you was born under Cancer—"

"Hold that, Dolan!" Mr. Binney barked. "An' if you don't wanna get that ugly puss slapped through the back o' your coco, you can lay offen any more o' them cracks at my family! See? There was never no healthier people lived in Hell's Kitchen than my old man an' my old lady!"

"Well—it seems you still got it wrong," Johnny Dolan muttered, and scratched his head. "Well, look, Red, puttin' it yet another way. Maybe half o' this book is all about days, see? What I mean, good days an' bad days for certain persons which is born in different signs; an' this part is absolutely on the level, on account I know certain parties which played them good days an' bad days an' picked a winner every time. Take for instance Moey the Mutt, which also has this book. It seems he is gonna open a certain clothin' store on a Monday night, an' he looks in the book to make sure it is okey doke, an' the book says he should hop to it, on account of this

night he will prosper an' all obstacles will be removed. So Moey opens this clothin' store an' what does he find? The watchman has a'ready dropped dead o' heart disease some hours ago!"

"Aha?" Mr. Binney mumbled.

"An' also Gimpy Smith, which also has this book an' is gonna cool a certain lad wit' a payroll—only the book says he will do much better stayin' home this day, an' he finally stays an' so what? So he is settin' on the front steps, wonderin' is he goofy or otherwise, to be neglectin' business like this, an' the lad wit' the payroll comes by, soused to the gills, an' goes to sleep on the sidewalk in front o' Gimpy, so it is not even necessary to bust his skull."

"Lissen, John!" Mr. Binney began gently.

"Wait! This is the ninth o' this month, ain't it?"

"So I heard," Mr. Binney sighed.

"An' Sniffy O'Toole has yellow hair, ain't he?"

"The same as some floosie that'd be doin' a strip-tease, but John—"

"Okay, y' poor iggernant lug!" Johnny Dolan shouted. "Then here it lays. In the book it says how, up to noon tomorrow at least, I must have dealin's only wit' blond persons. An' it says how between ten o'clock tonight an' three tomorrow mornin', great success will attend all my undertakin's, see, if only I am darin' an' persistent, an' I have nothin' to fear whatsoever! An' still furthermore, it says how tonight is very suspicious for all my love affairs an' I will find great happiness. . . . Of course, that is only for people like me, which is born in an aquarium. Get the idea?"

"John, I got no more notion what the hell you are talkin' about than you have yourself," Mr. Binney answered.

His gimlet eyes were strangely moist and there was a distinct quaver in the steel-rasp sound-effect he used for a voice. "But me an' you has been pals for many years, so we will now leave Sam to look after the joint an' we will step down to the croaker's an' see is this somethin' that can get fixed or do they really have to dust out a place for you in the booby-hatch at last."

JOHNNY DOLAN annoyedly shook off the hand that patted his arm.

"Kindly tie a can to the comedy, Red," he said. "How this adds up, from what I am readin' in the book an' what Sniffy tells me o' this job we have on hand, I will probably be retirin' from business tomorrow an' I think I will then go straight. What I mean, I will open some kind o' fashionable clip-joint, wit' a swell floor show an' probably a dizzy wheel an' a couple o' good dealers upstairs, y' know; an' supposin' we can get one o' them plaster surgeons to fix over your map so it will not scare away trade, it might be you could take over the bar an'—oh, hello, Sniffy."

Mr. Sniffy O'Toole indeed had arrived. He was an odd-looking youth, lean, weak-muscled, twitchy, with stringy yellow hair and pale blue eyes that darted from side to side. He peered about warily for an instant and then glided over to the bar.

"Well?" he asked huskily, from the corner of his mouth. "So?"

"Well?" Johnny Dolan said, also from one corner of his mouth. "So what?"

"So was there one long an' two shorts?"

"There was nothin' you wouldn't hear any evenin' about this time," Johnny Dolan said.

"Was you lissenin'?"

"Absolutely!"

"Was you lissenin' careful?"

"Lissen, Sniffy," Johnny Dolan said, "if I would'a lissened any harder, the insides o' my ears would now be stickin' out like the feelers on a bug."

"Strange—strange," Mr. O'Toole muttered, with a long, thoughtful sniff. "He should'a been here before this an'—psst!" he cried, holding up one hand. "Wasn't that one long an' two shorts, Dolan?"

"That was one long, wit' positively no shorts," Johnny Dolan said firmly.

"Yeah?" Mr. O'Toole frowned doubtfully, with several rapid sniffs. "I'd certain'y'a said that was—psst! Was *that* one long an' two shorts?"

"Absolutely not!" said Johnny Dolan. "That was two shorts, wit' no long whatsoever."

"Hey, lissen!" Mr. Binney cried brokenly, for even he had nerves. "Whatever this is, would you kindly roll it outside, on account of you are gettin' me down wit' all this—"

"Psst! Psst! Psst!" Mr. O'Toole shot at him angrily and waved both hands—and this time, to be sure, the single long blast of an automobile horn did sound from the street, and after it two shorter blasts. "Hah!" Mr. O'Toole said, with a great, relieved sniff. "That is probably sayin' he wishes me to come steer him in here for a conference. Stay where you are, Dolan. I will hold up one finger if it is okay for you to foller us into the back room. Binney! Kindly chuck out whosoever is in there, on account of we have to talk very private."

He glided across the sawdust floor and up the steps to the street. Mr. Binney passed one horny hand over his forehead.

"Lissen, John," he said hoarsely, "an' t' hell wit' whatever this stromology book is tellin' you, you still got time to beat it out through the back window, an' if this goof shows again I will paste him one wit' the bung-starter an'—"

He subsided, lips parted. Mr. O'Toole had already returned and beside him hurried a curious figure—a stocky man in a long dark overcoat, with wide collar turned up until it met his black slouch hat, which was pulled far down in front. So that, Johnny Dolan reflected with a slight shiver, for all you could really see this guy might have a head or it might just as easy be that his lid was simply resting on his collar, with nothing whatsoever inside. It made a person feel quite peculiar along the backbone.

"Dolan!" Mr. O'Toole croaked.

"Yeah?" Johnny Dolan said thinly.

"Psst!" said Mr. O'Toole, and held up one finger. "An' lock the door after you."

AT least, Johnny Dolan noted when he had locked the door, the party had a head, once his collar was turned down, and the more you looked at this head the more puzzled you got, on account of you knew positively you had seen it somewheres before, maybe only in a newspaper picture.

There was a very fine pan on the front of this head, with a little white moustache and a jaw with large bumps at the back corners and a couple of sharp gray eyes which seemed like they were probably going straight through your clothes and your skin and looking over what you had for dinner.

"Psst, Dolan!" Mr. O'Toole said. "Pull your chair over close to the table here, on account of we have to whis-

per. Dolan, as you can doubtlessly see, this is Mr. Cyrus P. Van Inkle in person an'—an' this is Johnny Dolan, Mr. Van Inkle."

Mr. Van Inkle nodded, how it looked to Johnny Dolan, with about three hairs of one eyebrow.

"I guess it seems quite peculiar, Dolan, how a slug like me would be knowin' a rich gent like Mr. Van Inkle," Mr. O'Toole pursued genially, "but it is somewhat like this. Monday I am to a certain polo game, see, lookin' to see what this guy has in his pockets an' then makin' a very quick getaway an' lookin' to see what some other guy has in his pockets; an' it seems that Mr. Van Inkle, which has very fine eyes; is watchin' me an' gets greatly interested, on account of he says I move exactly like a ghost."

"Can *you* move like a ghost, too?" Mr. Van Inkle snapped. "It is essential. I must have two men on this job, and O'Toole says you can."

"Why, absolutely!" Johnny Dolan replied. "I could also make noises like a ghost an' if necessary I could—"

"Well, anyhow," Mr. O'Toole pursued smugly, "it seems Mr. Van Inkle gets more an' more interested in this way which I move, on account of he is needin' somebody which moves exactly like a ghost, an' so he follers me an' gives me the sign an' we go sit in the clubhouse, which is empty—"

"I'll do the talking, O'Toole," Mr. Van Inkle clipped off, and now you saw them eyes could get very mean, like when the assistant D. A. is telling the jury how you should get a five-to-ten stretch. "In the first place, understand one thing. I'm a very wealthy man. Slip up on me, play just *one* trick, and I have lawyers who will send you up for life—and *that's* a *guarantee!* If you even claim to have

talked with me, at any time in your lives, I'll bring fifty witnesses to prove you were robbing a bank at the time. On the other hand, play straight with me, do your job well, and I'll make you both rich. Is that clear?"

"Absolutely, Mr. Van Inkle!" Mr. O'Toole said briskly. "An' I will state we are very honest crooks, which would greatly prefer gettin' rich to gettin' the book, so—"

Mr. Van Inkle was now gritting his large teeth so you could hear them and he was also getting very mad indeed, on account of his face was now the same color as the top of a turkey before they chop off his head.

"Damned strange procedure, all this is, I must say; but I've made stranger things work *and I'll make this work, too!*" he grated, with an evil smile. "I live most of the time at Inklewold. You know the estate, of course. Drive it in an hour from here; O'Toole says he has a car. I never put a gate at the service entrance, thank fortune, so you'll be able to coast in almost to the house."

And now he started drumming on the table.

"My daughter, Aileen. Her—her personal jewels are worth half a million dollars!" he jerked out emotionally. "And they're not in her safe-deposit box and haven't been for a week. They're hidden somewhere in the house. Not in her own suite, for I've had every corner of that combed over, and I've grilled her damned French maid, Annette, till she begged for mercy, too. Not in *his* room, either. That's been searched. But, somewhere, *he* has them secreted!"

"**I** GETCHA," Johnny Dolan said brightly. "An' so, whoever this slug is, you wish us to hang him by

the thumbs an' stick lighted matches under his toenails, an everything like that, till he comes t'rough wit' the stuff. Okay, chief! You could'a hunted a long time before findin' any better two lads than us at—"

"Psst!" Mr. O'Toole interrupted. "It ain't like that; it's like this. It seems that Miss Aileen has fell greatly in love wit' the head chuffer, a large, handsome lad named Miles Duncan, an' Mr. Van Inkle has at last found out positive it is tonight they're gonna elope, if possible, an' so consequently you and me got—"

"Shut up!" Mr. Van Inkle barked, and now his little moustache was sticking out like the hairs on a cat, when you tie it to a hydrant and keep shoving a dog at it. "That is the situation. Here is how I mean to deal with it. I have kept Duncan, literally, in the house and made certain that he has sent out nothing. My daughter chooses to defy me. She has flatly refused to tell me anything about the matter since I—ah—um—questioned her last Sunday. I have stopped her allowance and tied up her personal funds; she has nothing whatever but the little fortune these jewels will bring, if they're able to get them out of the house and sell them; and if they're not able there'll be no elopement!" Mr. Van Inkle hissed.

"I get it now, chief," Johnny Dolan said, with a slight frown. "Only lissen. We stick a knife through this lob's neck. Okay. Only are you sure you got the right spot picked to bury him, where the bulls—"

"Half past one! About half past one!" Mr. Van Inkle muttered, almost to himself. "From all I have pieced together, I'm positive they mean to start about half past one. Duncan's room is at the top floor, rear. He'll

come down the main stairway to join her and when he does he'll have those jewels on him and—here! Give me that filthy bill of fare."

He snatched out a pencil and sketched rapidly.

"Look! Service drive here and here's the smaller outside door to the cellar. I'll unlock that myself. Cross to the stairs here and come out in the side corridor, *here*. Now! Along here to the back stairs and up to the main corridor on the second floor and here—right *here*—is a large closet. Odds and ends in there—some trunks full of books—I don't know just what—plenty of room for you, anyway. Go in there and wait. Duncan will come down the stairs *here* and along *here*, to my daughter's suite at the front. And when he does," rattled out Mr. Van Inkle, "you'll whisk out without a sound and garrote him! Choke him into insensibility; don't let so much as one audible gasp get out of him. Go through him, get the jewels and disappear yourselves, like a pair of real ghosts. There will be no excitement; Duncan, I think, will never know quite what happened to him *and there will be no elopement!* I choose to deal with this matter, you see, in the slightly unusual way *I find best!*" Mr. Van Inkle concluded, comfortably, and it struck Johnny Dolan that this old guy must have quite a florist's bill, the way he liked to chuck bouquets at himself.

He glanced at his watch and then turned up his collar, pulled down his hat and arose.

"The household is abed by eleven. I wish to get home before that. Be there by twelve. You'll hide in the cellar when you've done your work and I'll be down some time before dawn for the jewels. I will then give

you the name of a man you may call upon tomorrow, who will hand you fifty thousand dollars in cash—because that is how I pay for a perfect job! . . . And if you *should* feel tempted to steal the jewels," he smiled as he moved toward the door, "bear in mind that I'll spend a million if necessary to catch you and send you up for life!"

IT was quite wonderful, Johnny Dolan reflected as they rolled at last into the midnight blackness of the service drive, how a car like this one of Sniffy's, which was built around 1700, could get this far. It was also quite wonderful thinking how this time tomorrow you would have twenty-five grand in your pants and—

"Psst!" Mr. O'Toole said, slowing down, with two quick sniffs. "This is a very swell job I am lettin' you in on—no risks, I mean, an' I done all the preliminary work. So, how it looks to me, instead o' splittin' even we could say twenty grand for you an' thirty for me, huh?"

"Hey, lissen!" Johnny Dolan began hotly—but just then the car bounced over a rock at the side and his head flew up and hit the hickory bow of the top, causing many stars to flash in front of his eyes. And it was very peculiar indeed, but it seemed that in some way this sock had started something spinning inside his dome! What he meant, here they would be hiding down this cellar for quite some time and—

"That is, supposin' you would do all the real work in there, which of course you would not," Mr. O'Toole pressed on ruthlessly. "So, since we will be workin' together, the way I said, I will take thirty-five grand an' you will take fifteen. Right?"

"Well—okay, Sniffy," Johnny Dolan said mildly.

Mr. O'Toole shot a sidelong glance at him, sniffed three times and cleared his throat.

"Or better yet, seein' that wit'out me you would not be gettin' a thin dime, we will say I have thirty-seven-five an' you take twelve-five, Dolan. Okay?"

It so happened that whatever had started spinning inside Johnny Dolan's dome, it was now spinning faster and faster. On account of—well, look!

Sniffy O'Toole never packed no rod, on account of he was very nervous about such things since they put his brother in the hot seat, but Johnny Dolan packed a very fine rod which Moey the Mutt had given him because there were a couple of chambers which for some reason refused to shoot.

So, getting back to the cellar, here would be him and Sniffy and all them jewels, with probably several hours to wait, so it would be very simple to get behind Sniffy and knock him cold with the butt of the rod and then, supposing he could find bags or something to muffle the shots, to put a couple of slugs through Sniffy's coco and hide him under the coal. Then, when Mr. Van Inkle came down, he could say Sniffy had gone on home and tomorrow morning he could collect the fifty grand from this party, and it would be at least several days before you could notice anything in the cellar and—

"Psst, Dolan!" Mr. O'Toole said sharply. "Okay, I ast you?"

"Huh? Oh, sure. Anything you say, pal," Johnny Dolan replied.

"Okay, then!" Mr. O'Toole cried softly. "We will leave it like that—forty grand for me an' ten for you, an' you are certain'y gettin' a wonder-

ful break, sucker. An' now we got that settled, from this point onwards, Dolan," he chuckled softly, "we are, no kiddin', the same as a couple o' ghosts."

Inkle-what's-this, or whatever the old guy called it, was a very large house, Johnny Dolan observed, which looked somewhat like Birmingham Palace when you see it in the news-reel; but at that it had a little cellar door the same as any other house, and this was unlocked. Even with his five-and-ten flashlight, they could see the stairs far across the tremendous cellar—and there was really nothing whatsoever to getting to the second-floor corridor, which was maybe as wide as Fifth Avenue and had very large stairs leading downwards and also upwards, and was lighted only by a very small lamp at the one end.

"An' this," Mr. O'Toole whispered jubilantly, as he opened a door, "is the closet an' it is now practically all over except gettin' the fifty grand."

JOHNNY DOLAN flashed his light around again and, really, you would think people with servants would be ashamed to have a closet like this. What he meant, it was very untidy, with loose piles of books here and there and several trunks stuck in every which way, the extra large one, in fact, being tilted up with several books under one corner so a good push would have knocked it over.

"We have now got maybe an hour to wait," Mr. O'Toole breathed on, "so leave the door slightly open an' we will find a place to set, maybe over in this corner, huh?"

"Okay," Johnny Dolan said, and turned quickly and—well, it was so very strange you could hardly describe it. What he meant, in turning it

seemed he must somehow have struck this extra large trunk which was tilted on the books and started it tilting further, and it also seemed that Sniffy O'Toole must have been behind the trunk at this time, maybe leaning over or something.

So, anyhow, there was suddenly a very peculiar sound, like everything in the closet was sliding at once, and Sniffy O'Toole was making many strange noises, like: "Wah—wah—what the—wah—" And next there was a sort of soft, heavy "blong!" and Sniffy O'Toole said:

"Rrr—woof!"

That was all for the time being, except that Johnny Dolan finally found the button of his flashlight and turned it on—and, positively, you could not have helped laughing if it killed you, on account of there was Sniffy O'Toole on his back, with only his feet showing at the one end and his head showing at the other and this extra large trunk was laying flat on the rest of him!

And if you were not already in stitches at that, you would practically have died at the sight of Sniffy's pan, once the light got on it. What Johnny Dolan meant, it was all blown out, like a couple of purple balloons and his eyes were also sticking that far out of his head you could have knocked them off with your finger!

"Dolan—y' double-crossin' little—" Mr. O'Toole gasped.

"Look, Sniffy," Johnny Dolan wheezed merrily, "you certain'y do not think I done that a-purpose, but you can be very thankful it fell on you like that, on account of if it had hit the floor it would have woke the whole house."

"That is—one way lookin' at it," Mr. O'Toole squeezed out. "Lissen,

Dolan. I—did not give you credit for that much—brains, but I get it. Okay. You win. I was only kiddin', anyhow, when I spoke—that way about how we would split. What I mean, it is straight fifty-fifty, John, so now would you kindly lift off this damned trunk, on account of in maybe two minutes more I—will be dead."

Johnny Dolan laid hands on it and tried to lift, and really you could never have believed anybody could get so much heavy stuff in one trunk, even supposing this was where the old palooka kept his spare anvils! What he meant, you could lift and lift and still it came up maybe only an inch and then—

"Dolan, y' dirty little louse!" Mr. O'Toole strangled. "Ah—ah—lissen, Johnny, I didn't mean to call you outen your name, but you ground the both feet offen me that time an'—lissen, Johnny. We can now quit kiddin' each other an' say you take thirty grand an' I take twenty, huh? *So would you kindly lift this trunk?* How it is, my two arms are pinned under me an' I cannot move a muscle."

"Well, look, Sniffy," Johnny Dolan puffed, "I am doin' the best I can, only it seems this box is full o' coal an'—"

"T' hell wit' arguin'!" Mr. O'Toole whined. "Call it forty-ten, me takin' the ten, an' now, for the luvva—"

"If you would kindly lay still till I see can I get my fingers under that edge up there by your neck," Johnny Dolan suggested superfluously.

It seemed he was getting a good grip now. He pulled as hard as he could and the trunk came up one inch, two inches, five, six inches. You could hear Sniffy suck in his breath with a long gasp and—*HEY!* You

could also hear something else; you could hear footsteps coming down them stairs!

JOHNNY DOLAN stiffened and listened. There was no doubt whatsoever; the guy was coming down. Johnny Dolan hurriedly dropped the trunk and stepped to the crack of the door. Yeah! He was halfway down!

"Waaah! D-D-D-Dolan!" Mr. O'Toole choked out, and as he turned the light on him for a second Johnny Dolan saw that his eyes were now crossed and his tongue was hanging from one corner of his mouth. "I—I—I cannot take no more! Lissen! Gimme just five grand—an'—you—"

It seemed that at this point he must have fainted, or something. Johnny Dolan shook his head. He was slightly confused, to be sure, but this was really enough to exasperate a person. What he meant, Sniffy was known far and wide as not so reliable; but you never would have said he was one to leave a pal all alone, to choke a guy that might easy be seven feet tall.

At that, from what you could see through the crack in this very punk light, he was not such a big guy. He had no hat and he wore some kind of long coat. Also, he was now practically down the flight, so Johnny Dolan pushed open the door and dived at him, first giving him quite a sock in the back, where his head joined on to his body, and then getting him by the neck; and in two seconds he could have cheered, on account of it seemed this was one of them lugs which have no guts whatsoever!

What he meant, no sooner this party found he was getting choked than he gave a little squawk and went limp all over, pulling Johnny Dolan down

with him. It also seemed they were much nearer the stairs than he had thought, on account of they had now both tripped and were suddenly rolling down the flight together, one over the other. And now, it seemed, they had reached the bottom and had somehow hit one of them large iron suits of armor, which immediately fell over with a very loud bang and came apart, with the pieces rolling away in every direction, until you would have thought a wagonful of tinware had just been hit by a train.

And lissen! It seemed, even in this bum light, as Johnny Dolan bounced to his feet, that maybe this was not the right party after all, on account of he did not look about to elope.

"Help!" he screamed as he lay there. "Help! Help!"—only before the first yip was really out of him Johnny Dolan was moving down the main corridor of Inklewold so fast that small rugs were flying out behind him the same as dust.

Not only was this a dead-end corridor, but right in front of him the door of a lighted room was open maybe a couple of inches and some dame was looking out at him and—

"Inside an' close the door!" Johnny Dolan snarled, and thrust his gun into a tricky little white apron on a maid's black uniform as he followed. "Lissen, baby! Y'aint heard nothin' an' y'aint heard nobody, know what I mean? One peep outen you an'—"

It seemed he positively could not go no further! What he meant, his heart had now jumped up into his throat and was beating so fast it made spots in front of his eyes and the top of his head felt like it was flapping up and down, the same as a lid on a pot when it boils—on account of there is beautiful dolls and there is beautiful dolls,

but once you had looked at this judy you knew that all the other coupla billion dolls were just something to scare the children with!

She had hair the same as yellow silk; she had very large violet eyes with lashes maybe an inch long; she had . . . steps sounded outside and there was a sharp tapping on the door.

"Annette! Are you awyke?" a voice demanded. "This is Potter. 'Ave you 'eard anyone running down this wye? There's a burglar in the 'ouse and he just attacked Mr. Gannon, the master's secretary. Open up!"

THIS wonderful doll was now moistening her wonderful lips with her wonderful tongue.

"No, I do not hear somezing whatever," she said. "And I do not open ze door. I am ondress."

"'E must 'ave gone the h'other wye," the voice said and the steps hurried on. The doll was now looking very scared at Johnny Dolan.

"You are—b-b-burglar?" she chattered.

"See, baby," Johnny Dolan babbled tenderly, on account of the longer you looked at this doll the goofier you got in the dome, "don't be scared. I ain't no burglar. What I mean, you are the Van Inkle doll's maid, huh? Well, I am simply hired here to see she does not fly the coop wit' the chuffer an' her jewels, see?"

The doll was now very rapidly getting not scared. Her eyes got smaller and smaller and she smiled.

"Vvhat ees zis you say?" she asked. "M'sieu Van Inkle pay you zat Mamzelle do not elope? I cannot believe!"

"Oh, no? Well, look, first off, on account of it could be I am talkin' out o' turn. Is it somethin' to you, does she or don't she elope?"

"To me? To *me?*" the wonderful doll cried, and threw up her hands. "To me is nossing whatever, so I—*me!*—get out of zis crazee house I say today, I have enough, I go. She say, no, you stay! I say, no, I go, for *you* are crazee, I say, and your papa ees crazee, and I stay longer I am crazee myself. She say no, no, no, and ees very crazee again herself—so I go like zis, in middle of night," she shrugged and pointed at a big suitcase.

"I get it, kid," Johnny Dolan gurgled. "You are also flyin' the coop. Gonna walk?"

"No, I do not walk. Ze—ze second chauffeur, M'sieu Paul, he take me to rain. He ees—what you say?—good guy, zis Paul. He get catch, he weel be fired. I—I go now through window," she finished, with an odd glance at Johnny Dolan.

"Lissen, baby," he drooled huskily, "I do not understand it myself, but it seems that somehow I have fell greatly in love wit' you even in this coupla minutes, so I gotta see more o' you, so where is it you go from here, kid?"

The little frog was now looking at him very surprised and somewhat peculiar. What he meant, her eyes were now sparkling very bright and intelligent, so you could see he was already making a great hit.

"Oh—I zink I go live wiz my sees-taire till I find othair job," she murmured. "But I—I zink I should not tell you where zis ees for—"

"I get it, baby. Leave it lay like that," Johnny Dolan panted on. "So how's it for meetin' me outside the Public Libery tomorrow night at eight, huh?"

It really seemed like she could no longer take her eyes from him which

certainly showed you he was making more and more of a hit.

"Attends, m'sieu!" she said swiftly. "I weel meet you, yes, eef you will help me now to leave zis crazee place. It ees like zis: Paul say he theenk we mus' push ze car a leetle way up ze service drive, so they do not hear ze engine start. I am not so beeg enough to push, but you—*you*, m'sieu, have ze great strength—"

"Say no more, baby!" Johnny Dolan cried gladly, as he snatched up the grip and opened the window. "Where is the slug an' the bus?"

The wonderful doll was now hurrying into a light coat.

"Oh, darlink, you are ze—how do you say?—saver of life," she breathed unsteadily and all but knocked him senseless with her eyes. "And now, once more, attends, if you please. We step from window to ground, but zen I mus' go ahead a leetle. Paul, he ees nairvous and eef he see you and do not know who you are, he may do—, who knows what? So you follow and when I find heem I give little whistle—yes?"

"Yeah, only wait, baby!" Johnny Dolan said masterfully, as she threw one slim leg over the sill. "Before startin', one kiss, huh?"

Well, you could tell how careful this doll was brought up by how scared she suddenly looked and the way she shut her teeth. Then, simply showing you what a hit the right guy can make with the right doll in five minutes:

"At—at zat, I zink you have eet coming!" she sort of gasped, closing her eyes tight so, naturally, he could not see all that was in them.

HHE had now been laying maybe twenty minutes on the grass beside the service drive and it seemed he

could at last breathe again and even sit up. What he meant, you would never think a roadster that size would weigh six or seven tons and you would never think this service drive was steeper than Mike's Peak. This Paul number, who said practically nothing, was quite washed up when they finally got to the level and started the engine and Johnny Dolan was the same as if he had been dipped in a tub of water—but *so what?* So any party which wished could give the razz to storology, but when this book stated you would be successful in your love affairs between ten and three—zowie!

The lights in the big house were now getting turned off again one by one and it seemed the excitement was dying down. Johnny Dolan giggled happily as he got to his feet. It could be the old palooka was quite sore about the slight mistake that had got made on his secretary, but at that everything was okay. What he meant, the Van Inkle doll and her boy friend would now probably wait at least another hour, till everybody was asleep again. He stole back to Annette's room and listened; he climbed in and opened the door and listened again. Everything was nice and quiet. He glided up the back stairs. Everything was still nice and quiet. He glided into the closet.

"D-Dolan!" came faintly from under the trunk. "Is that—you?"

"Absolutely, Sniffy," said Johnny Dolan, "so I will now lift—"

"Lissen, Dolan," Mr. O'Toole croaked weakly, "I think it is too late, on account of I have been hearin' noises like angels singin' for several minutes now. So you will take the fifty grand, Dolan, only many's the night you will be tryin' to forget how you double-crossed a pal, an' that will

be impossible, on account of I will come back an' haunt you an'—"

"Aw, save it, Sniffy!" Johnny Dolan whispered gaily. "How I feel at present, I am lucky if I do not chuck this trunk right across the hall. Hold it, kid, till I toss the box offen you."

It was very strange, how you could lift this trunk, once you were greatly in love. The first pull, and it came a good foot offen Sniffy's chest and you could hear the punk starting to gargle like he was taking in air again and—*luh?*

"I am very sorry, Sniffy," Johnny Dolan hissed hurriedly, and dropped the trunk as gently as possible, "but it seems the lad is comin' downstairs at last."

You really had to hand it to this Duncan guy, having the brains to start off at this time, just when they would not be expecting no more excitement for a while. Johnny Dolan squinted through the crack. This was him, all right. He had on an overcoat and a cloth hat, pulled down on this side and—really, he was that full of vim and vitality, he hardly knew he was doing it, but Johnny Dolan shot out of the closet and through the air, almost like a bird, his hands reaching for this Duncan's neck.

Furthermore, he had his fingers around it and—well, it was very surprising indeed, but it seemed he must have put a little too much on the ball! The two of them were rolling down together, first one on top and then the other on top and this Duncan trying to sock him all the time and also using language you would never expect to hear from a decent person.

And still furthermore, there was another of them damned iron armor suits on the other side of the stairs

and it seemed they were going to take this one head-on and—maybe two seconds, as he lay on his back, Johnny Dolan could see this large helmet leaning over nearer and nearer to him, exactly like the guy inside was saying: "What's the big idea, punk?" and then it fell off and patted him right between the eyes and—

It seemed there were many millions of stars, which presently faded out. It seemed there was a large bump, like a horn, on his forehead and he was scrambling to his feet and still looking at this guy in the cloth hat. And, no kidding whatsoever, he was that ashamed he could have gone down through the floor, but this party with the cloth hat which he had just choked was Mr. Van Inkle himself. He stood there now with his jaw stuck out, smiling very peculiar indeed.

"SO you're the burglar, are you?" he said, and even if his voice was quiet you could tell he was slightly mad. "I was just going to look around for you outside."

"Well, lissen, Mr. Van Inkle," Johnny Dolan said, "I am certain'y very sorry I give you the neck by mistake, but if you will kindly sneak back to bed, it can easy be everything is still under control an'—"

He cut it short; they were no longer talking private. Some party with little side-whiskers was hurrying downstairs in his bathrobe.

"You—you've got one of 'em, sir? God save us and keep us, you're not injured, sir?" this one panted. "Mr. Van Inkle, there's two of 'em, sir. I just found the h'other 'iding in the 'all closet above, sir—under a trunk full of books, of h'all places, and pretending 'e's h'asleep, sir, and—"

"Go telephone for the troopers, Pot-

ter," Mr. Van Ingle said, and continued to smile this same peculiar way at Johnny Dolan. "So *you're* the—well, what the devil's all the row above?"

How it sounded, there was a slight wrestling match in the upstairs hall and then some dame with a voice like a crow screamed:

"Cochon! Take ze hands from me, I tell you! Yes, I go to ze old man wiz you. He throw me from the house, I laugh—ha! ha! You hear me? I laugh—ha! ha! ha! Because for loaf one shall lose not ze job, not even ze life. For loaf, one shall lose ze whole world—and laugh—ha! ha! ha! ha!"

You could now see her coming down the stairs with this pretty young Mr. Gannon which Johnny Dolan had first choked by mistake. He was wearing his spectacles again and it seemed he was all hot and bothered. This dame with him was positively something you would have to go to the drugstore and get something for your eyes, after looking at her! What Johnny Dolan meant, she had a squint and a large nose and feet the size of rowboats. She was quite small, and the silk robe she had wrapped around her was much too big for her.

"I—I've got to the bottom of it, sir! To the bottom of it!" this Gannon puffed. "Here's Annette."

"Hey, lissen," Johnny Dolan said, and he really had to laugh, "that out o' the funnies looks as much like Annette as a cow looks like—"

"You see, sir," the secretary was rushing on, "I finally got into Duncan's room, when there was no answer to my repeated knocking. His bed has not been slept in, his two suitcases are missing and—*so is he, sir!* He slid from his window on a rope and the rope is still hanging there."

"*What?*" Mr. Van Inkle cried, and

started to turn white. He was furious!

"Precisely, sir! And then I took the liberty of—er—going to Miss Van Inkle's room. The door was not locked and I made so bold as to tiptoe in and look, because she seemed to be in bed and asleep. She was not, sir!" Mr. Gannon cried dramatically. "Annette, here, was in her bed! The scheme, no doubt was to give the impression that Miss Van Ingle herself was there."

"Oui, m'sieu, and it was vairee good scheme indeed, I zink," this funny-looking dame laughed very defiant. And suddenly, Johnny Dolan began to feel very queer in the dome, on account of you would think these guys certainly must know this headache was not Annette, and at the same time they kept acting like she was. "For loaf, m'sieu, one does strange zings, ees it not? So tonight I steal to Mamzelle's room and we change ze clothes, do you see? And she steal down to my room, m'sieu, and she ees not discover I zink, for now it would seem zey are a long time gone. Loaf, m'sieu—loaf, I say!—ees make again ze triomphe, even over you who have ze great power, ze great money, ze—"

THE corridor, Johnny Dolan noted dizzily, had now started jumping up and down in front of him, on account of it seemed this Paul was not any Paul, but the Duncan number, and this pippertino which said she was Annette was not Annette and would consequently not be seeing him at eight tomorrow night. Only you would say the old palooka would open his chest and pin back the ears of this moll who, the way it began to look, had helped his daughter fly the coop. Instead, he just kept looking through two little slits at Johnny Dolan and getting whiter and whiter, and the

way his teeth started to grind, you would say somebody was fling off a padlock.

"Potter—turn that other one over to the troopers," he gritted out. "I want to—want to talk to this young man in private. Come!" he said to Johnny Dolan.

He took Johnny Dolan's arm and led him off to the rear, and you would really be surprised how a guy that old could have such fingers, which passed through the muscles and simply grabbed the bone. He led Johnny Dolan down another corridor and into a large room, all books and big chairs. He locked the door and dropped the key in his pocket. Next he opened a window and, standing before it, took several deep breaths. Then he slipped out of his overcoat and you saw all he had on underneath was pants and a low cut undershirt. He had the same kind of arms you see on a piano mover and a very large chest, like a beer keg.

"I could send you up, but this will do me more good!" he said, in a funny whisper.

"Now, lissen, Mr. Van Inkle," Johnny Dolan began soothingly, because things here did not look so hot, "if you are slightly sore on account of—"

He had to leave it lay at that. What he meant, this flat iron, or whatever it was Mr. Van Inkle had hidden in his hand, had just hit Johnny Dolan's nose, and there were a billion stars and he could feel his nose going out through the back of his head. And he had somehow hit the wall and then bounced forward again, and in bouncing forward his right eye had met up with this same flat iron and there was another billion stars, and in maybe a split second his left eye also hit the same flat iron and there were still

another billion! And it seemed the old palooka also had a sledgehammer which now came up and hit Johnny Dolan's chin, knocking his head completely off his shoulders and sending him spinning across the room and—it seemed he was whirling at this open window and could not stop. It seemed that he had now fallen out and in some way he was running along the grass on all fours like a dog, on account of Sniffy O'Toole's car was somewheres over this way. It seemed that behind him Mr. Van Inkle was screaming:

"Why the hell didn't I close that window, the—" and after that he used words which you would never have thought a person like him would know.

MR. JAMES (RED) BINNEY was just preparing to close his little establishment for a few hours, when it entered. Mr. Binney stood petrified. Its nose seemed to be spread all over its face. It had a great lump in the middle of its forehead. Where it should have had two eyes, it had two huge purple mounds, although there was a small slit in the right one through which it could probably see. Only after a full minute did Mr. Binney recognize it as Johnny Dolan.

"Well, for the luvva tripe!" Mr. Binney breathed. "An' so that is what happens when a guy stops one o' them

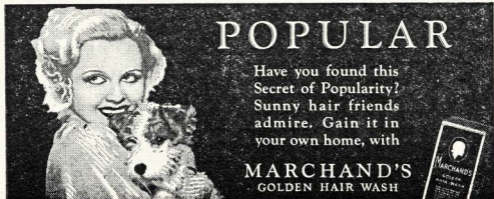
streamlined trains wit' his pan, is it?"

"Lissen, Red, an' kindly lay off'n the wisecracks," Johnny Dolan said with some difficulty, on account of it is quite hard to talk when your neck has been broken and you have to breathe through what is left of your mouth. "Gimme this, now, Seven-X bottle an' a large glass an'—"

He stopped suddenly, peering through the slit above his right eye. A chinless, smiling youth had just shuffled in and was waving a hand, but the hand was hardly in the air before Johnny Dolan hurtled across the place and landed on top of him. He squealed and collapsed with a crash and Johnny Dolan, astride his chest, went to work on his teeth, removing several—on his eyes, closing both of them—on his nose, flattening it like his own. He was about to pound the flesh off the cheekbones when Mr. Binney hauled him away. The chinless youth lay peacefully still.

"Lissen, Dolan, have you gone completely nuts?" Mr. Binney puffed. "That is Pinhead McGovern, which never hurt a fly in his life!"

"Okay! I am no fly!" Johnny Dolan panted. "So what? So who is it nicks me for thirty cents for this storology book which says what is gonna happen between ten an' three? So I am tellin' you who it is! *Pinhead McGovern!*"

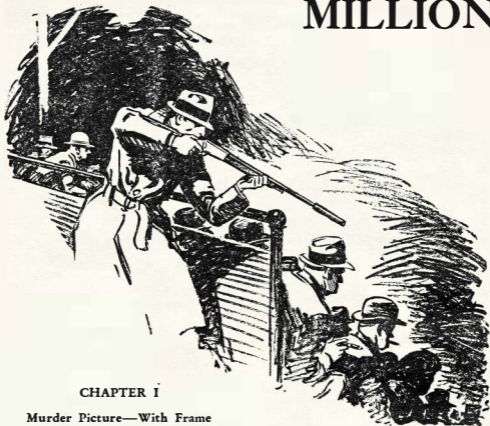


POPULAR

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MILLION



CHAPTER I

Murder Picture—With Frame

THE little ivory ball went 'round and 'round. Like the music. Only it came out nowhere. Instead it went in. It took a sudden dive and plopped into a pocket of the spinning wheel.

A sad-eyed croupier with a dead pan droned: "Eight on the black," and raked the board clean. With a deft flick of two fingers he sent the pill rolling again, adding: "Make your bets, please," and the ball bounced and skittered in its fathomless course.

One of the half dozen players grouped before the roulette table was a man in his early thirties. Tall, broad-shouldered, he wore formal clothes that seemed poured on him. His features were too angular to be called handsome. But he had the kind of a face that drew

attention and held it. His jet black hair, combed straight back, had a slight wave that caught the light and cast off a bluish sheen. Under finely-arched brows dark gray eyes danced as if he found life vastly amusing. A carefully tended black mustache topped thin lips that never quite lost their smile.

He was jiggling a few chips in his hand. These he placed on red "21," and touched a snap lighter to a cigarette. The ivory ball stopped its dervish dance. A doll-faced blonde dressed in an anatomy-revealing gown let out a thrilled, "Ee-e-k!" and clapped her hands. Her fingers had too many rings; her wrists, too many bracelets. A



DOLLAR KNOCKOUT

By K. Krausse

Author of "Red Bait for Murder," "Unorthodox," etc.

po m pous - looking oldster beside her beamed. Some half hundred patrons of the *Hi-De-Hi Club* glanced up from their various games of chance and smiled.

The coupier said tonelessly: "Double O on the green." He paid off the blonde's winnings, and started the ball on its dizzy journey once more. The black-haired man was standing before the board with his hands in his pockets. He said to him: "Another stack, Mr. Faughan?"

A Million Dollars Was Invested in That Fight, and the Champ Was All Set—Except for a Little Matter of Murder!

Jetson Faughan made a grimace of mock disgust. "No. That'll be all for to-night."

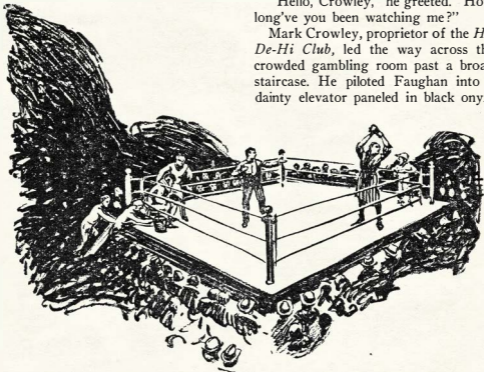
As he turned to leave, a soft voice at his elbow said: "If you're finished trying to outguess that little white ball, I'd like a word with you. In my office."

Jetson Faughan's gaze met a pair of deep-socketed, expressionless eyes. Their owner was a lean, slightly gray man attired in faultless tails. The long dimples creased his face.

Faughan dropped his cigarette into a sand-filled urn.

"Hello, Crowley," he greeted. "How long've you been watching me?"

Mark Crowley, proprietor of the *Hi-De-Hi Club*, led the way across the crowded gambling room past a broad staircase. He piloted Faughan into a dainty elevator paneled in black onyx.



"Fifteen minutes. Why?"

Faughan grinned sardonically. "If you wanted to talk to me why didn't you give me a rumble sooner? I'd've saved five grand."

"And be out that much? Be your age. As it is, I think I'll break about even." Crowley closed the elevator door, shutting out the low buzz in the gambling room. He pressed a switch.

Delicately-arched brows went up. "Which spells you're thinking of hiring my services. Or am I wrong?"

"Are you ever wrong?" Crowley's words were slightly sarcastic.

"Only in yielding occasionally to a weakness for roulette," Faughan chuckled. "Who're you thinking of hiring? Jetson Faughan, attorney-at-law—or The Black Faun Detective Agency?"

"You're going to need both your vocation and your avocation to crack this case. It's murder."

"Murder?" Faughan rolled the word on his tongue. "How nice! Which makes *you* wrong, Crowley. You hoped to break even? I doubt it very much."

The elevator rose to the floor above. Sliding doors opened, and the two men stepped into a lavishly outfitted office. Painted murals decked the walls. Heavy, red leather chairs; a massive, hand-carved desk perched on a rich oriental rug. Crowley did everything on an elaborate scale.

THE room was not empty. Two men occupied two of the chairs. One was a small, chubby man with the yellow complexion of an anemic. He was plucking nervously at his nether lip and staring vacuously at the second man. The latter sat with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands. Faughan gave Hal Fencher, Crowley's manager, a brief nod of greeting.

The second man raised his head, disclosing a youthful face. While coarse-featured it gave the impression of being clean-cut, honest. Now it was harried, strained. The eyes, childlike under low-hanging brows, seemed hunted.

Faughan's forehead staffed. "Hello, Champ," he said. "What're you doing in town tonight? Thought you weren't leaving your training camp in Singac until morning. Or did you want to be sure you'd be on time for your scrap tomorrow night?"

Eugene Pendell lumbered to his feet, face working. Erect, he showed the powerful physique that had made him the deadliest fighting machine of all time. Inches taller than Faughan, he was built in proportion. His muscles rippled under his clothes with each move like live things. He shot a look of mute appeal at Mark Crowley.

The gambler seated himself behind his desk, pushed a humidor of cigars toward Faughan.

He growled: "Pendell would've saved himself a lot of grief if he'd stayed the hell in Singac tonight. He's in a jam. The rap is murder. The cops aren't on his trail—yet. Your job is to keep him out of the can. Or clean his skirts. *Before* tomorrow night."

Ignoring Crowley's cigars, Faughan fired a cigarette. He flicked somber gray eyes at Pendell's worried face, stared obliquely at the gambler's wooden one.

"Uh-uh," he murmured. "Count me out. I feel sorry for the Champ. But I don't make a practice of whitewashing crime. Least of all murder. You know that, Crowley. If Pendell killed anyone, he'll have to take his medicine. Or hire another lawyer."

Pendell's doglike eyes sizzled with panic. "Hey, Mr. Faughan," he blurted. "You don't think I really killed her!"

She—she was dead when I went to her apartment! Honest!”

“So you're involved in the murder of a 'she.' Who?”

“Didn't Mark tell you?” Pendell gulped. “It's Zena. Zena Zorn.”

Two startled jets of smoke pumped from Faughan's nostrils. Zena Zorn—the Glamorous Zee-Zee—was a head-lined singer and dancer at the Cairo Casino. She was beautiful, exotic as her name. She was more. Walter Winchell and the tabs had let the world know she was the Champ's girl.

Crowley said unemotionally: “Gene didn't kill her. He put his neck into a lousy frame.”

Faughan lowered himself into a chair, crossed long legs. “Suppose you tell me about it, Champ.”

Pendell shuffled his big feet. “Late this evening I got a phone call at the camp. Someone buzzed in my ear that if I dropped in Zena's apartment around midnight I'd—”

He paused, then choked out words as if they scorched his throat: “— I'd catch her cold two-timing me. You know how crazy I was about her—”

Faughan nodded, smiling wryly. “I know. *And* crazy jealous. Didn't I go to court for you the time you nearly crowned a guy who— But skip it. Go on.”

“I saw red. I piled into a car, and made tracks for New York. I got to Zena's penthouse about twelve, let myself in—”

“You had a key to Zee-Zee's apartment?”

Pendell's jaw jutted. “What's wrong with that?”

Faughan shrugged distantly. “Oh, nothing. Nothing. Just asked. What happened when you waltzed in?”

“I—I found her stretched in her living room—shot through the heart! It

was awful! Poor Zena—she was blood all over.”

He fished a crumpled handkerchief out of his pocket. As he started to raise it toward his steaming forehead, his glance fell on it. So did Faughan's. The handkerchief bore crimson stains that were unmistakably blood.

Pendell licked his lips, put the handkerchief away hastily, and wiped his face with the back of his hand.

“Did you touch her?” Faughan asked.

“No. I didn't touch her. I could tell she was dead. I—well, got scared and beat it here to Mark's. When I told him what was what, he told me to sit tight until he saw you.”

“Assuming you didn't kill her, Champ . . . Why were you scared? Were you shocked to find her dead because you'd gone there prepared to do some blasting of your own?”

Pendell swallowed noisily, shifted his weight. “I guess I would've killed. I was kind of nuts. But I didn't. I didn't have a gun.”

Faughan pursed his lips, looked at Crowley. “He didn't have a gun. Yet—only last week I got him a license to carry one.”

Pendell's huge hands that could easily have encircled a ham pawed the air. “Honest, Mr. Faughan. I looked for my gun before I left my training camp. I kept it in my bureau. But it was gone. So I came along without it.”

Crowley said: “Unless Gene is lying about his gun—which I doubt—someone swiped it and killed Zena with it.” He turned to his manager. “Tell Faughan what you told me, Hal.”

FENCHER coughed, drew in his breath, and let it out slowly.

“About an hour ago a call came for the boss. Mark wasn't around. Who-

ever it was phoning gave me a message for him. He said: 'Tell Crowley I was hidden in Zena Zorn's apartment twenty minutes ago. Gene Pendell came in, beat her up, and then shot her. I followed him, saw him ditch a gun in a sewer.'"

The anemic club manager paused, blinked once, and went on:

"Then the guy said: 'Now get this straight, guy, and see that Crowley gets it. He's to contact Pendell—right away. He's to tell the Champ to lose tomorrow's fight—or the cops will be tipped off where they can find that gun. We'll call back at three sharp for his answer.' With that he hung up."

"Do you get it?" Crowley asked Faughan. "Gene is the odds-on favorite to win tomorrow's scrap. He could shellack the hide off his opponent, K. O. Browberg, with one hand. Some 'wise-money' heels want to fix it to clean up a fortune on bets. They thought as the Champ's manager I'd talk him into laying down rather than lose my cut in his purse."

"Sure, that's it, Mr. Faughan," the Champ croaked. "Only last week a couple of punks contacted me, tried to buy me to throw the fight. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars they offered me. And a promise of a return match with Browberg in six months—which would be on the up-and-up."

Crowley's expressionless eyes slewed around. "You never told me that, Gene," he said.

Pendell laughed shortly. "No. And I never told you I took 'em up."

"What?" Crowley barked. Faughan sucked a last drag on his cigarette, ash-trayed it.

"I didn't want to worry you," Pendell explained. "I took 'em up. Then I got Zena to bet every dollar I owned on me—to win. Look."

He reached into his breast-pocket, pulled out a slip of paper. He gave it to Crowley.

Faughan got up, circled the desk and read it over the gambler's shoulder.

It was an acknowledgment signed by a betting commissioner noted for his square-shooting of a wager placed on Gene Pendell to win the scheduled fight. The amount was eight hundred thousand dollars. The odds were eight to three.

"Nice," Faughan drawled. "Very nice. So you sucked them in, Champ—intending to take them to the cleaners!"

"You young fool!" Crowley snapped. "Why didn't you ask my advice? Don't you see what happened? The gang found out you planned a double-cross. So they framed you for murder to force you to play ball their way. By acting wise, you signed Zena's death warrant."

Pendell's face congested. "I didn't mean to do that. I thought—"

"Never mind what you thought," Crowley growled. "The fat's in the fire now." He swung on Faughan.

"Before I fetched you I put it up to Gene whether or not he wanted to throw the fight to save his hide. He said no. Emphatically. Now I understand why. He'd be wiped clean. Lose his championship. His dough. And he'd never get another crack at Browberg.

"At three o'clock, I'm going to tell whoever calls me to go to hell. That puts it up to you. Gene'll be arrested. You've got to fix it so he can fight. Either by getting him out on bail, or by clearing him before ten tomorrow night. Can you swing it?"

Faughan toyed with his mustache. "I couldn't get bail for the King of England on a murder charge," he confessed slowly.

He glanced at his watch. "Two-

thirty. That leaves me less than twenty hours to crack a murder case. Champ—who were the men that tried to bribe you to throw your fight?"

Pendell spread his palms. "I'd know them if I saw them again. But I never saw them before. One was short and dark. The other, tall and tough-looking. The birds called themselves 'Murray' and 'Weiber.'"

"You're a great help. Crowley, those names mean anything to you?"

"Nothing. Must be out-of-towners. I know all the sharp-shooters that follow the fight racket in this burg."

FAUGHAN swung to the *Hi-De-Hi's* manager. "Fencher, did the bloke's voice that spoke to you sound familiar?"

"He had kind of a nasal voice. It did remind me a little of Slat's Kaulper's."

"Slat's Kaulper!" Crowley cried. "There's a tie-in! I've heard rumors that Slat's was laying heavy sugar on the fight. But I thought he was backing Gene."

Faughan rubbed his lean jaw thoughtfully. "And Slat's Kaulper runs the Cairo Casino—where Zena Zorn danced. That's another tie-in worth looking into."

"If you think you can hang a kill on Slat's Kaulper in twenty hours," Crowley lipped, "guess again. He's as slick as they come."

"You're telling me? But I won't bank on that." Faughan's eyes swept to Pendell. "Zee-Zee was killed about three hours ago. I surmise her body hasn't been discovered, or we'd've heard about it by now—"

"The chances are it won't be found till morning—when her maid arrives. Unless the cops are tipped."

"They will be. Your friends will see to that. Now we mustn't be seen leav-

ing here together. You go back to Zena's apartment—Where is it, by the way?"

"The Rheingold Arms," Pendell gulped, staring. "On Central Park West. You want me to go back—there?"

"Yes. As if nothing has happened. Wait for me; I'll join you shortly. Now scram. Take a back way out of here if there is one."

"Do as he says," Crowley said, pointing. "Use my private elevator. Go down to the basement. There's an exit there to a back alley."

Pendell opened his mouth, closed it. He spun on his heel, brows warped, and entered the small cage. Its door slid silently shut behind him.

Faughan scooped up Crowley's phone, whirled the dial. When his number responded, he snapped:

"Stone . . . ? Faughan. Is Petraske around . . . ? Good. Tell him to grab One-Eyed Eddie and meet me in front of the Rheingold Arms—Central Park West—in fifteen minutes. You get the wires hot and exercise your dogs. Find out all you can about two birds named Murray and Weiber. They're presumably tools of some big betting and yegg man who's been laying his shirt on K. O. Browberg in tomorrow's fight. See if they trail to Slat's Kaulper."

He rang off, saying to Crowley, "My agency; I keep ace ops on call there day and night," and spun the dial again. It was a long three minutes before he got an answer this time. While he waited, he fired a cigarette, face inscrutable. Crowley watched him intently, frowning.

Finally his connection was completed. He said: "Hello, Martin Nord . . . ? Jetson Faughan . . . Sure, I know it's almost three in the morning. Did I get you out of bed . . . ?

Tsk! Tsk! I hope you haven't been there long. . . . Since ten . . . ? My, my, but you're an early-to-bed-goer . . . ! However—I had a hunch you'd be awakened soon anyway so park your grouch and listen.

"A murder is going to crack shortly. . . . Never mind who—I can tell you this: Gene Pendell, the Champ, will be accused of the crime. I've been retained for him. I'll be ready to turn him over to you tomorrow morning at nine. On one condition. You've got to arrange to arraign him and shove through a hearing on the charge by ten. Is it a deal . . . ?

Faughan grinned while he listened to Nord explode. "Sure, I know it's not according to Hoyle," he said smoothly. "But you can manage it. Use your drag as District Attorney. . . . If you don't agree, I'll let Donald Swan, one of the Assistant D. A.'s make the pinch. Think of all the juicy publicity you'll lose. . . . You'll do it . . . ? Fine! Fine! I'll be seeing you."

Faughan chuckled as he hung up. "The fat slob—dangle a little publicity in front of him—bait him with his jealousy of Swan—and he'll break every rule in the book."

Crowley was regarding the lawyer through smoky eyes. "What was the idea of tipping off the D. A. about the case at this stage?"

Faughan's lean face was faintly mocking. "You want the Champ free to fight tomorrow night, don't you?"

"I stand to lose a wad of dough if he isn't. And you know what it means to Pendell."

"Well, I'm not taking any chances of muffing it. I'm going to spike the guns of the clucks trying to snowball him."

"How?"

"Be in court tomorrow at ten and

you'll see. Meanwhile, you can develop a bad case of lost memory. If anyone should ask—you haven't seen me or the Champ tonight. Be seeing you."

CHAPTER II

Counter-Offensive

FAUGHAN retrieved his hat and coat from the cloakroom bandit downstairs, and hurried to the street. East Fifty-eighth Street was dark, deserted in the early morning starlight. An occasional automobile purred past, but not a cruising cab was in sight. Usually they were as thick as flies regardless of the hour.

The lawyer frowned, and started west toward a nearby hotel before which a hack stand was stationed. Just then a taxi drew up at the curb. He walked toward it, thanking his luck, when the door opened and a man lurched out.

Faughan's brows knit. The man was Slats Kaulper. A bleary-eyed, loosc-lipped Kaulper, who swayed on unsteady feet and stared at the lawyer blankly.

"Fancy meeting you here!" Faughan greeted cheerfully. "And pie-eyed! My, my, what could be sweeter! I intended to look you up later, but there's no time like the present."

His voice lost its bantering tone. "Get back in the cab, Kaulper. I've got a date. So we'll talk while we ride."

Kaulper rocked on his heels like a cornstalk blown in the wind.

"See me s'm'other time, Faughan," he mumbled, thick-tongued. "Lookin' for someone—now." He tried to brush past the lawyer.

Faughan grabbed his arm. "I said back—in," he snapped.

Kaulper wrenched himself loose,

reeled drunkenly. "Damn you—" he muttered. His words were slurred, sounded slightly plaintive. "Get out of my way or—"

A hand, curiously lethargic, Faughan noticed, snaked inside the turned-up collar of a heavy camel's hair coat. The lawyer sighed regretfully. His fist lanced up. It clipped the night club owner on the point of the chin, snapping his head back.

Kaulper let out air in a sudden gust. He began to melt like an icicle thrust into a hot furnace. The lawyer caught him on the way down, lifted his sagging body into the cab.

"The Rheingold Arms," he told the goggle-eyed driver. "Central Park West."

Gears clashed. The cab shot away from the curb. Faughan let three blocks slide past. When Kaulper did not regain consciousness, he leaned over and shook him.

"Come on—snap out of it," he said. "You're not hurt that bad. I pulled my punch—"

He broke off suddenly on a muffled gasp. The hackles of his neck stiffened. He had realized instinctively that he was shaking a dead man.

It did not seem possible. He could have sworn he had not hit Kaulper hard enough to kill him. Yet—

He dug under Kaulper's coat to feel his heart. He smothered a gasp again, and jerked his hand away as though it had touched a red-hot stove.

The little light that seeped into the cab from the street showed his hand smeared with red. The gooey stuff from which his touch had shrunk was blood!

He suppressed his qualms, let his fingers probe beneath Kaulper's blood-soaked shirt. A wet handkerchief was stuffed in a slit in the chest directly

above the heart. A heart that was still.

His racing thoughts formed a hundred questions. Only one or two answers presented themselves.

Obviously a knife had done for the night-club owner. Undoubtedly he had been dying on his feet—not drunk—when he lurched from the cab.

Who had inflicted the fatal wound? When? Where had he been attacked? Why had he been headed for the *Hi-De-Hi Club*?

Absently Faughan fished out a handkerchief and wiped his fingers. The act recalled another handkerchief to his mind. Gene Pendell's handkerchief had been blood-stained!

The lawyer's thoughts took a sudden dive, and his thin lips fused in a taut line. Had he been played for a sucker, duped into believing Pendell innocent of Zena Zorn's murder?

It was possible the fighter, driven into a jealous frenzy, had manhandled Zena. And she had confessed to being over-friendly with Slat's Kaulper. That jibed. The night-club owner had taken her out of a chorus, made her. He wasn't the type to dispense favors without strings. Thereupon Pendell had shot her. After ditching his gun he had sought out Kaulper, knifed him.

Panic-stricken he had to run to Mark Crowley with his troubles. The gambler was noted for two things: his shrewdness; and his love of money. He knew he would lose a fortune if Pendell were arrested and the scheduled fight stopped. He knew also Faughan's penchant for clearing any innocent person accused of crime regardless of ways and means. So he had concocted a credible story to convince the lawyer of Pendell's innocence. The fight had to go on. What happened after that wouldn't bother him.

In the darkness of the cab,

Faughan's eyes blazed angrily. That he'd been duped wasn't his only concern. If the cab driver told what he'd seen in front of the *Hi-De-Hi Club*, the result was evident. Faughan would be charged with Kaulper's murder!

THE lawyer swore softly. He couldn't report Kaulper's death. He couldn't be found with the body. And to save himself he was in the unenviable position of needing to prove a man guilty of murder whom he had set out to clear of another murder!

He rapped his knuckles on the driver's partition. The cab stopped.

"Where did you pick up your fare?" Faughan asked, indicating the form of Kaulper slouched in the cushions.

"It was a call-in," the driver said. "I picked Mr. Kaulper up in front of his apartment house on West Seventy-second." The hackman chuckled. "He sure had a load on. An' that clout you handed him, Mr. Faughan, was a beaut. Is he still out?"

"Yes," Faughan said, grimly. "So you know him and me, eh?"

The cabbie grinned. "I hacked him lotsa times. An' I seen your picture in the paper plenty."

Faughan grunted. That tied it. He took a bill out of his wallet. "Listen. I'm going to need your cab the rest of the night. But I want to drive it. Will fifty bucks cover it?"

The taxi driver licked his lips, grabbed the money.

"Throw in another ten, Mr. Faughan," he grinned, "an' the heap's yours." He slid from behind the wheel with alacrity.

Faughan took his place. "You'll find your cab in front of my office in the morning," he said, and drove off.

The Rheingold Arms was an imposing pile of brick and glass. Not a light

shone in its towering facade. Some illumination gleamed from its entrance under a canvas marquee that ran to the curb. Across the street, Central Park was a dark blob of shrubs and trees.

Faughan parked ten feet from the marquee, hopped to the sidewalk. He took time to tumble Kaulper out of sight on the floor of the cab. He was locking the second door, when a figure sauntered toward him out of the shadows of the building. He was a small man with a cigarette dangling in his mouth. A black box was strung from his shoulder by a strap.

"Hello, chief," he greeted.

Faughan said: "Hello, Petraske." His glance fell on the black box. "I see you didn't forget One-eyed Eddie."

Petraske fell in step beside the lawyer. "Nope. What's up, chief? Whose picture d'you want me to take at this hour of the night?"

Faughan laughed dryly. "Plenty's up. The Glorious Zee-Zee's been murdered. I wanted you to use your camera on her corpse before the police found her. But something's happened to make me change my mind."

Petraske whistled softly. "What?"

Faughan jerked a thumb backwards. "Slats Kaulper. He's in that cab. Knifed."

Petraske chuckled callously. "His destiny caught up with him finally. He's been chiseling his way 'round this man's town too long. Same party kill him and Zena Zorn?"

"Must've. You'll meet him soon."

Faughan swung his lithe figure across the ornate lobby of the Rheingold Arms toward a bank of elevators. A colored operator squinted sleepy eyes at the two men as they entered his cage.

The lawyer said: "Miss Zorn's penthouse apartment. Make it snappy."

The Negro pointed to a switchboard

in the rear of the lobby at which an operator dozed. "You gotta be announced, suh," he offered, diffidently.

"We'll skip that, Sam. You took Gene Pendell up a short time ago, didn't you?"

"Yassuh. I done took Mistah Pendell up 'round twelve. But he come down 'most right away. Den I took him up fifteen—twenty minutes ago agin."

"Well, he's expecting us. Let's go."

The darkie took one helpless look into Faughan's level, respect-commanding eyes, and set the elevator in motion.

Zena Zorn's living room was expensively, but tastefully, furnished. It showed the expert touch of an interior decorator.

The dancer lay on the floor near a tapestried divan. She was dressed in a black sheer peignoir over black pajamas. Her flimsy garments had seeped blood in profusion. It had congealed in a wide pool under her body.

Not over twenty-five, neither death, nor the manner of her dying had detracted from her beauty. If anything, death had erased the tell-tale hard line of sophistication from her face.

Bruises stood out on the ivory of her neck where ruthless hands had evidently choked her. There was a cut on her chin, purple rimmed, where a fist had left its imprint.

Gene Pendell was seated before a fireplace, smoking in jerky puffs, his back to the body. When Faughan and Petraske entered—they had found the door unlocked—he bounded to his feet like a frightened rabbit.

Faughan let his glance linger only a moment on the corpse of Zena Zorn, then he fixed icy eyes on the fighter.

Pendell wet his lips nervously. "Gosh, Mr. Faughan," he stammered. "I thought you'd never come—Waiting

here—alone—with her—was awful—"

"I should think it would be," Faughan frowned. "With her murder on your conscience."

Pendell fell back as if slapped. His eyes pinwheeled.

"What—what do you mean?" he blurted.

"I mean I'm wise to Crowley's game. The two of you tried to trick me into going to bat for you. You did kill Zena Zorn. And that isn't all—you killed Slat Kaulper. Knifed him to death."

Pendell gagged. "I killed . . . ? Is—is Slat Kaulper dead?"

FAUGHAN scowled. "Stop stalling, Pendell. I've got the how of it now. You came here at midnight as you said. You found Zee-Zee alone. But you weren't satisfied. You had a bug in your ear and you wanted the truth. You choked her, and beat her, until she admitted she'd been seeing Kaulper. Then you shot her.

"That yarn about not finding your gun at your camp was an invention. Of Crowley's. After you ditched your gun in some sewer, you decided to polish off Kaulper, too. You went to his apartment, waited for him. Stuck a shiv into him. Left him for dead.

"He came to, doctored himself, and went looking for you. I met him in front of the *Hi-De-Hi*. He died in a taxi I forced him to take with me.

"If you want to know what gave you away—your handkerchief. You admitted you didn't touch Zena. Yet it was covered with blood. Blood that spurted onto your fingers when you stabbed Kaulper."

The lawyer took out his own handkerchief, held it up. "Look. I got some of Kaulper's blood on my own fingers. Did the natural thing. Wiped them off on it."

Sweat was oozing from every pore in Pendell's face. He pulled out a handkerchief—the same blood-stained handkerchief he had exhibited in Crowley's office. This time horror-distended eyes strained at it. He dropped it, cried:

"That blood—I got a poke in the nose sparring this afternoon. And a nose bleed. On my way down from Singac my nose started to bleed again. I used that handkerchief. So help me, Mr. Faughan—that's the truth. I didn't kill Zena—or Kaulper!"

He sank weakly into a chair.

Faughan rubbed a perplexed jaw, said in an undertone to Petraske: "Either the bruiser's a damn' sight better actor than I think he is—or he didn't kill Zee-Zee or Kaulper."

Petraske spoke past a dangling cigarette—either the same one he'd been smoking in the street, or its brother.

"A lot of this is over my head. But if you want proof whether the blood on Pendell's handkerchief belongs to Kaulper—let me have it, and yours, and half an hour in our lab. I'll tell you. Better yet—let me put a sphygmomanometer on Pendell."

Faughan ground a fist into his palm. "By gad! A blood test and a lie test! Why didn't I think of that?" He addressed Pendell. "Maybe I've got you wrong, Champ. Maybe you have been framed. Maybe there's more to this than I can see right now.

"You've heard of the lie-detecting machine? Are you willing to submit to a test? If you're really telling the truth—I'll go the limit for you."

Pendell sprang up, his face flushed with eagerness. "I'll do anything—anything! If it'll only get me out of this mess!"

Faughan spread his hands, exchanged glances with Petraske.

"Look at him," he murmured. "As

ingenuous as a babe in arms. Hell, I'm almost ready to believe him innocent without those tests."

Petraske shrugged. "It's up to you, chief."

Faughan considered. "No—you take Pendell with you, make the tests. But first I'll proceed with my original plan—on the theory he is innocent. If he is, I've got a job ahead of me tomorrow. I want to be ready."

He pointed to a door at the far side of the living room. "Station yourself in that doorway with your camera. You're going to 'steal' a candid shot."

Petraske nodded, headed for the door, swinging his camera from his shoulder.

The lawyer pulled a gun from his pocket, turned to Pendell.

"Here, Champ, take this gun."

The fighter took it uncertainly.

"Now," Faughan went on, "stand over Zena Zorn's body as if you've just shot her. Face that door. Besides being an ace scientist, my assistant, Mel Petraske, can do marvels with a camera. He's going to snap your picture."

Pendell hesitated a moment. Then, with an expression contorting his face that was palpably anguish, he placed himself over Zena Zorn's body, gun poised.

"That's right," Faughan approved, and withdrew out of camera range. "Shoot it, Petraske."

The blinding glare of an exploding flashlight bulb filled the room, and Petraske said: "Okay, chief. Got it."

"Fine." Faughan retrieved his gun from Pendell's limp hand, hastily joined his assistant at the other side of the room.

"You've got a whale of a lot of work ahead of you, Petraske," he told him in an undertone. "You're to take Pendell with you, give him the lie-test.

Test the blood in the handkerchiefs, too, just to be sure. Here's mine.

"If he stands up, develop your picture. Print on the back of it in pencil, 'This goes with the gun.' Then wrap it up, and see that it gets to Martin Nord, the D. A., without a backtrail to us. But before you send it out, I want you to do this—"

Faughan's voice dropped lower and he spoke swiftly and earnestly for several minutes. He finished with: "Can do?"

Petrasko chuckled. There was an expression of frank admiration on his bland face. "Can do. When you cook up a job I can't perform with my little camera I'll retire to the old ladies' home."

"Good. I banked on you. Now—and this applies, too, only if you decide Pendell is innocent—when you've finished with him, hustle him out of the agency office.

"So far the cops don't know about this kill. But they will shortly. It's after three. They'll know I'm representing him, and might search there for him. The Champ can't go to a hotel; he's too well known. Have Doyle hire a 'U-Drive' with a trailer—they've got 'em now, fully equipped. Pendell can grab some sleep—he'll need it if he's to win tomorrow's set-to—while Doyle drives out into the country.

"At nine-thirty tomorrow morning, Doyle is to park his trailer in front of the Criminal Courts building. Now—you got everything straight?"

Petrasko spat out a cigarette that was burning his lip. "I'm way ahead of you, chief," he grinned. "Let's go. What're you gonna do meanwhile? Get some shut-eye?"

Faughan smiled sardonically. "Me? I'm going to put Slat's Kaulper's body on ice. I can't afford to have it found

just yet. Then I'll hit the hay. But whatever the hour, call me and let me know the result of your test on Pendell."

"Okay." Petraske took Pendell's arm. "Let's go, Champ. I've got a feeling the cops'll be swarming into this dump any second now."

The three men left the room. Only one of them looked back. Gene Pendell stabbed a last glance at Zena Zorn's still form. There was a suggestion of moisture in his dog-like eyes when he turned them away.

CHAPTER III

Snatch

FAUGHAN hadn't spoken figuratively when he told Petraske he was going to put Kaulper "on ice." He drove his borrowed taxi containing the body of the night club owner down Third Avenue to the City Morgue. A lugubrious-visaged old man opened the basement receiving door to his persistent ring.

The morgue watchman peered at the lawyer through watery eyes.

"Goodness me, Mr. Faughan," he cackled. "What're you doin' here at this hour?"

Faughan smiled cheerfully. "I've been doing the rounds, Pat," he said. "Happened to remember I left my brief case upstairs on the third floor in Doc Savage's laboratory. I consulted with him yesterday afternoon. I'm going to need some papers in it the first thing in the morning. Like a good fella—will you fetch it for me?"

"Sure. Sure. You wait here. I'll be right back." The morgue attendant ambled off down a dimly lighted corridor.

Faughan waited until he heard an elevator door clang shut. Then he went

into speedy action. He pulled Kaulper's body out of the cab, carried it fireman-fashion to the refrigerator vault. The atmosphere was dank, reeked of ammonia, and dead human flesh. It didn't bother him.

The vast icebox seemed lined with huge filing-cabinets. Which they were actually. Filing-cabinets for the city's unclaimed dead.

Hastily, he read some cards on the panels until he found one with a three-months' old date. He rolled out the slab, deposited Kaulper's body on top of the corpse it held, and pushed it back.

He was smoking calmly at the morgue entrance when Pat O'Brien returned.

"Are you sure you left your brief case in the lab?" Pat asked. "I hunted high an' low. It ain't there."

Faughan wagged his head puzzledly. "That's funny," he murmured. "I could've sworn I left it there. But never mind. It'll turn up. And thanks just the same, Pat."

He slipped the old man a bill, hopped into his cab.

Before heading for the apartment-hotel where he maintained bachelor quarters, Faughan drove past the Rheingold Arms. Now a score of lighted windows dotted its façade. Two police cars were parked in front of it.

Face inscrutable, he drove on. So the authorities had been tipped off to Zena Zorn's murder. Whether by Crowley in pursuance of a pre-conceived plan to fool him—or by a man with a nasal voice—Faughan did not know. He would know when he heard from Petraske.

Too tired to garage the taxi, he left it before his building. It was four-fifteen when he let himself into his suite, closed the door.

He switched on the light in his living-room. And froze in an attitude of shocked surprise.

Two men were seated in two of his best chairs. One was short and dark. The other, tall and hard-looking. Both held black-snouted automatics in their fists. Both heaved themselves erect, hefting their guns.

The short one said: "You were long enough gettin' here, Faughan. Now—behave. An' you won't get hurt." His voice, Faughan noted, wasn't nasal. It was guttural, harsh.

The lawyer's lids flickered. The amazement went out of his face, leaving it blandly expressionless. He recalled Pendell's description of the men who had propositioned him, drawled:

"Murray and Weiber, the 'wise-money' twins, I believe. I'm glad you're here. This'll save me the trouble of looking you up. This business that started with your attempt to buy Pendell's fight and wound up with the murders of Zena Zorn and Slat Kaulper has me ga-ga. There're angles I don't understand.

"I see now you found out Pendell planned a fast one after you—or your boss—placed a mint of money on Browberg. To salvage your investment, you framed him for Zee-Zee's murder. Result—no dice. Pendell turned out to be an honest scrapper with a one-track mind. You couldn't buy him. You couldn't intimidate him.

"You learned, somehow, I was going to bat for him. Now you want to crack down on him by gunning me out so I can't clear him. Why go to all that trouble? Why not simply blast him down? And why did you kill Kaulper? Where does he fit in?"

The tall man snapped in a gruff bass: "We ain't killers. You can't dump the Kaulper or Zorn kills on our doorstep.

We've got air-tight alibis. But if you act up that ain't saying we won't smoke you."

He turned to his companion. "Fan him, Weiber."

FAUGHAN'S mouth curled ironically. He submitted meekly to a thorough search, watched his gun disappear into the short man's pocket.

"That makes you Murray," he said to the tall man. "And you've got alibis . . . Think of that! If you didn't kill them you shouldn't even know they are dead! Or are you clairvoyant?"

Murray sidled forward, swung his fist. Faughan crashed against the wall, eyes flaring.

"What the hell was that for?" he grated, a dangerous flush on his lean cheeks.

"To button your lip. You talk too much. Now we're going bye-bye. One peep and you get ventilated. Be nice, and you'll live to grow whiskers."

Faughan sighed. "You wouldn't fool—"

Just then his phone began ringing with startling suddenness.

Weiber and Murray exchanged quick, uneasy glances.

Murray poked Faughan with his gun. "Move, shyster. We're fading."

Weiber said: "Wait. Maybe we better let him answer it. This dump has a switchboard downstairs. The op must've seen him come up. If there's no answer, he's liable to investigate."

Murray nodded. "You're using your bean." He prodded Faughan again with his gun. "All right. Answer it. And remember. No shenanigans. We mean business."

Faughan crossed the room, picked up his phone, murmured, "Hello," into the mouthpiece.

Petraske's voice crackled over the

wire to him. "Pendell was telling the truth, chief. I've shipped him out with Doyle. Stone wants me to tell you he's run down the names you gave him. Murray and Weiber are a couple of big-money sharpshooters from Chi. No tie-up with Kaulper that he could find. Anything else?"

"No, Rube," Faughan said. "Except you might check all 'out' calls from Algonquin 4-3528."

"Okay, chief," Petraske said quietly, and rang off.

Faughan cradled the receiver, joined Murray and Weiber. They sandwiched him between them, trotted him out into the corridor. Then into an elevator. The car dropped them to the lobby. A deserted lobby. Not even the switchboard operator was in sight. Nevertheless, Murray and Weiber kept their guns discreetly in their pockets.

They walked the lawyer to the street, to a car waiting half a block away. The tall man got into the rear seat with him. The short man took the wheel. The starter coughed once, metallically. The motor roared to life. The machine drove off.

Four blocks west it turned south on Eighth Avenue.

No one spoke. Faughan remembered the sock on the jaw he'd received. So he essayed no speech except to ask if he could dig out a cigarette. Murray, who sat with his gun on his knee, gave him one, and a book of matches. The lawyer lit up. He puffed away, watching Eighth Avenue unwind its drabness alongside the speeding car. And thought.

The more he thought, the crazier the case he'd undertaken became. His captors could have killed him in his apartment—easily. They hadn't. That meant his guess had been only half right. They didn't wish to kill him—only to

hold him prisoner until Gene Pendell had been indicted for Zena Zorn's murder. Once that happened there would be no getting him out. Innocent, or not innocent. And the Champ *was* innocent. That much had been established.

If Murray and Weiber had killed the dancer and Kaulper, why hadn't they killed him—Faughan? Instead of snatching him? That in itself didn't make sense. Their attempt to frame Pendell into throwing his fight had failed. They were afraid he—Faughan—would vindicate the Champ in time for the bout. Apparently they were anxious to save their investment. Why hadn't they simply killed the scrapper? Instead of complicating matters by kidnapping his lawyer?

Another thing. Why had Slats Kaulper been killed? The possibility occurred to Faughan that he had been in cahoots with Murray and Weiber. That there had been an argument resulting in the fatal attack.

And finally—Zena Zorn's murder had been cold-blooded. In their present rôles neither Murray nor Weiber were acting like killers. That presented another problem. Had Murray stated the truth when he said they hadn't murdered the dancer and Kaulper? Then—who the hell had committed the crimes?

Faughan gave up. He flipped his cigarette from the fast-traveling car, dropped his chin to his chest, closed his eyes. Before he knew it, he was asleep.

He might have dozed five minutes, or fifty. He didn't know. A rough hand shaking his shoulder roused him. A voice—Murray's—said:

"Can you beat that? He's asleep! Hey, wake up! This is the end of the line."

Faughan dragged himself out of the car on Murray's heels.

"My hours're killing me," he yawned, and looked around. "I'm dead on my feet."

He recognized the neighborhood for what it was. The water-front. Frowzy, dismal buildings, gloomy warehouses, covered in the darkness of a poorly-lighted, odoriferous street. An occasional hoot, the groan of rivercraft straining at their moorings at nearby wharves, and the low moan of a melancholy wind were the only sounds to break the eerie stillness of the night.

Murray said dryly: "From what I hear one of these days one of the cases you stick your nose into is going to kill you. You're lucky we're not hoods. Or by now you'd be dead on your back."

He shoved the lawyer toward a house that seemed to be leaning dejectedly on its neighbor.

"This'll be your address for a time Like I told you—if you behave. In."

WEIBER had unlocked a door flush with the sidewalk, and switched on a sickly light inside the building. Faughan walked into a dirty hall that held the ghosts of so many smells none was definable.

"Behaving with a gun in my back," he said caustically, wrinkling his nose, "is the best thing I do."

They led him up a rickety flight of stairs, pushed him into a dark room. The door slammed behind him, and the lock clicked.

Faughan snapped on his lighter, held it over his head, and surveyed his surroundings. In one corner was a mildewed cot that sent a shudder over him. The only window in the room was boarded up. The planks were thick. The nails, big as spikes. It would have required a hefty axe to batter it open.

He examined the door. He had

noticed it opened inward. It was old, but of solid oak. Its panels were sturdy enough to withstand the onslaught of any two men.

He sighed, removed his overcoat, and spread it on the cot. It had no pillow. So he doffed his jacket, rolled it. He stretched himself out on the cot, and was dead to the world before his head hit the improvised pillow.

At first he thought the crash of thunder had awakened him. He jackknifed erect, blinking sleep-laden eyes. Again a series of detonations, sharply defined, echoed through the lower part of the house. It was accompanied by harsh shouts, hoarse curses. Then pounding footsteps shook the ramshackle building.

Faughan grinned in the darkness, took his jacket and overcoat from the cot, and donned them. He was lighting a cigarette when the door swung wide, and the beam of an electric torch spotlighted him.

A voice—Petraske's—said: "Hell, chief. You all right?"

Faughan pocketed his automatic lighter, walked from the room into the upper hall. A single, dust-caked bulb illuminated it rather badly.

"Yes," he said, rubbing his jaw where Murray had hit him. "Only my feelings are hurt." He glanced at his watch. "Six-thirty. What kept you? I was asleep when you crashed in, but I was dreaming you didn't get the agency 'S. O. S.'"

Petraske followed him downstairs, chuckling:

"You would be asleep. I got the 'Rube,' all right. And when you told me to check 'out' calls from your *own* phone, I figured as you wanted me to. That someone had the drop on you and was crating you bye-bye.

"I called back Freddy Grunn, your

switchboard operator, gave him the lowdown. He was for calling the cops. But I voted that out. Thought you'd prefer to keep this strictly 'agency.' I told him to tail you. Luckily he found a cab parked in front of your apartment house with the keys in it."

Faughan laughed. "That was my cab. A bad habit mine—leaving keys in cars."

"Yeah. Very. Well, Grunn spotted this dump, called me. It took him half an hour to locate a phone. That accounts for the delay. I hightailed it down here with Stone and Peters. And here we are."

They reached the lower hall. Stone and Peters, another Black Faun Agency dick, were standing spread-footed in the center of it, smoking. Sprawled on the floor between them were two still bodies.

"Hello, boys," Faughan greeted, and nudged a lean jaw at the inert forms. "Dead?"

Stone, a broadshouldered individual with keen eyes, and a battle-scarred face, nodded.

"Dead as pickled herrings. They put up a fight. Who are they?"

"Muggs named Murray and Weiber." Faughan clucked his tongue. "Too bad you had to plug them. Alive, they might've talked. In fact, I was depending on them to help me crack this case. Now—"

He fell silent, considered a moment. Then he murmured, half to himself: "Sometimes even a smart guy can't see the forest for the trees . . . I wonder—"

He turned to Petraske. "You never travel anywhere without a camera. Got one in the car you came down in?"

"Yes."

"Good. Grab some shots of the faces of Murray and Weiber. Then lug their

bodies down to the cellar. Hide 'em. I don't want them discovered for a while. Your shooting foray must've gone unnoticed or we'd be hearing police sirens by this time.

"Then lam. I suppose you haven't finished the other jobs I assigned you?"

Petraske shook his head. "Nope. Things've been happening too fast."

"Well, attend to them first. Then develop the pictures of Murray and Weiber. Better make 'em life-size. Stone, you and Peters, tuck copies under your arms and trace the movements of the two blokes.

"Account for every minute of their time. Say from eight o'clock last night to four this morning. Your trail should wind up at my apartment-hotel. Report to me as soon as you can. I'll be at the Criminal Courts Building from nine on. Check?"

The lawyer's instructions were received with silent nods.

He saluted his men cheerfully, said, "Be seein' you, boys," and went out, yawning.

CHAPTER IV

Arraignment

A SHOWER, shave, change of clothes, and breakfast refreshed Faughan some. But he was still yawning when, at nine, a cab deposited him before the Criminal Courts Building. There was a Chrysler sedan, with a trailer hitched behind, parked at the curb. Doyle, his op, sat at the wheel, staring straight ahead.

As he passed him, Faughan whispered out of the corner of his mouth:

"When I give you the high-sign let Pendell out."

Without looking around, Doyle inclined his head slightly.

On the stone steps of the Courts

Building a group of reporters loitered. Glimpsing the lawyer, they swarmed over him, plying him with questions. Over their heads, he spotted Martin Nord and Inspector Carter, of Homicide, at the building entrance.

The morning papers, which he'd read during breakfast, had carried scareheads about Zena Zorn's murder. Chronicled facts had been meager. No mention had been made of his connection with the case, although it was stated the Champion, Gene Pendell, was being sought for questioning.

Apparently some rumor had leaked out, however. That would account for the presence of the scribes. Jetson Faughan's name linked to any case meant more than news. It meant sensation.

"Hey, Blackie! Is it true you're representing the Champ?"

Another legman shouted: "We hear you're surrendering him to the D. A. this morning. Is that straight?"

And: "Got any rabbits up your sleeve this A.M., Blackie?"

Faughan grinned affably. He liked the newshounds. Their interest in him had made him famous, had helped to put his income in the seven figure bracket. There wasn't one of them he did not know by name.

He said: "It's a fine morning this morning, boys. Or am I wrong?"

Good-natured laughter greeted his evasive sally. The scribes fell back, let him make his way to Nord's side.

The D. A. was a large, meaty man with the squashed-in face and hanging jowls of an English Bull. His close-set eyes, his whole bearing, stamped him a smug egotist. A mediocre lawyer at best, he had secured his position through political phenagling, and he had used his office for self-glorification ever since.

He stabbed a glance of belligerent appraisal at Faughan, said: "Well, where's Pendell?"

Faughan looked at Inspector Carter, and back at Nord. He screwed up one corner of his mouth, countered with: "Got everything set? What judge will preside at the hearing?"

Nord became a lobster red. "Trustful as usual. Judge Porter." He puffed out his cheeks angrily. "I'm sorry now I made a deal with you. If I'd known last night what an air-tight case I had against Pendell, I'd've gone after you; forced you to turn him in. Or you'd have gone to jail for compounding a felony."

His little eyes narrowed slyly. "What's to stop me from ordering your arrest now?"

"Don't get ideas, Nord," Faughan said quietly. He jerked a thumb over his shoulder. "Those pencil-pushers are friends of mine. If you tried any back-knifing, I'd give them the facts. They'd make your name mud—politically."

The slyness went out of Nord's eyes; apprehension crept in.

"Besides," Faughan continued, "Pendell didn't commit a felony. So I couldn't've compounded one, even if I knew where he was last night."

Inspector Carter took a black stogy out of his mouth. He was a big man, wide across the chest, with a ruddy complexion. He wore a tailored, blue-serge suit, and a tailored overcoat of blue broadcloth. He had a hard, craggy face with a network of crow's-feet around shrewd eyes. When he smiled you knew frowning hadn't caused the crow's-feet.

Officially, he was on Faughan's tail. The lawyer-detective's corner-cutting tactics tended to rouse the ire of the Bar Association and police officialdom

alike. If he were brought to book for his unorthodox methods it would have pleased not only Martin Nord, but many judges and higher-ups.

OFF the record, however, the Inspector and Faughan were good friends. Carter respected the lawyer's cleverness, and secretly admired his code. Put tersely, it was, "Be sure you're right. Then the hell with how you prove it. Prove it!" Many times the cop wished he had the courage to make it his own.

He dropped Faughan a covert wink.

"Must you two wrangle? As long's the hearing's all set—let's get on with it. Where's Pendell now, Blackie? I was all night looking for him with the rest of my department. I want to go home and get some sleep."

"You and me both," Faughan grinned. He turned, caught Doyle's eye, and nodded.

Doyle left the sedan, walked to the rear of the trailer, opened the door.

Gene Pendell came out. Worry-lines etched his forehead. Otherwise he looked as if his troubles hadn't interfered with his sleep.

Carter flicked an oblique glance at Faughan. The crow's-feet were in evidence around his eyes.

"Clever monkey," he muttered. "If Pendell rode around in that thing all night—sure you wouldn't know where he was. And—no wonder we couldn't find him."

Nord scowled: "Clever hell! One of these days his chicanery will catch up with him."

Upon the Champ's appearance, he was immediately surrounded by whooping reporters. Cameras clicked. He fought his way to the Courts Building entrance. His eyes questioned Faughan's in silent inquiry.

The lawyer took his arm, pressed it, said to the District Attorney: "Here's your prisoner, Nord."

The D. A. cleared his throat importantly, put a fat hand on the Champ's shoulder. With a glance at the reporters to make sure they had their cameras focused, he said: "Eugene Pendell, it is my painful duty to arrest you for the murder of Zena Zorn!"

Pendell wet his lips, said nothing. Carter murmured under his breath, "Pompous ass!" A reporter yelled, "Hold that pose, Mr. District Attorney!" Nord beamed, and held it.

Faughan masked a grin. Just then Mel Petraske skirted the edge of the crowd. He handed the lawyer a flat, paper-wrapped package, and slipped quietly away.

Carter growled impatiently: "Do we have to twiddle our thumbs here while you look at the birdies, Nord? For Pete's sake, let's go!"

Nord retorted: "Keep your shirt on. I'm coming."

He led Pendell into the Criminal Courts Building. As they crossed a wide rotunda toward Judge Porter's court, Mark Crowley fell in step beside Faughan. The Champ's manager was immaculate in a gray suit, and a black, velvet-collared overcoat.

He studied the lawyer, his eyes expressionless, said, "Well?"

Faughan winked. "Everything's set. After Pendell's arraignment, it'll be over in an hour."

"Did you learn anything?"

"Nothing much. Except that Murray and Weiber're in this up to their necks. They snatched me last night to keep me from appearing this morning. But I managed to get away."

Crowley raised an eyebrow, but said nothing.

Judge Porter must have been waiting in his anteroom, for he took his place on the bench as soon as Nord appeared with Pendell. He was a plump little man, with a shock of white hair, and a cherubic, red-cheeked face. He wore half-moon glasses and had a habit of digging his chin in his chest to squint pale eyes over them.

He gaveled his court to order, quickly disposed of Pendell's arraignment. Then he addressed himself to Faughan.

"I understand, counsellor," he said, "that you've arranged with the District Attorney for an immediate hearing on this charge."

"That's true, Your Honor." Faughan said.

The judge tried to look stern, succeeded in looking a little annoyed.

"Mr. Faughan, you seem to make a practice of—er—playing hob with legal procedure. Couldn't you have permitted the law to take its usual course?"

Faughan said, gently: "If Your Honor please, my client, Eugene Pendell, stands charged with a serious crime—the murder of Zena Zorn. He is innocent. Would it serve the ends of justice better if he were incarcerated in jail until indicted by the Grand Jury—and then until his trial?"

"If—er—your client were unjustly accused, you might have applied for a writ of Habeas Corpus instead of—"

"That, too, takes time, Your Honor," Faughan interrupted. "It is imperative—as you will learn—that he be at liberty today."

JUDGE PORTER shrugged, glanced at Martin Nord. "While this form of procedure is unusual, it is not disbarred by the legal statutes of this state. On the contrary. It lies with-

in the District Attorney's discretion to require a court of competent jurisdiction to weigh evidence in matters involving felony before it is presented to the Grand Jury. It then becomes the Court's duty to determine whether or not the state has a prima facie case against the person charged with said felony. Inasmuch as you have consented to this hearing, Mr. Nord, we shall proceed. Call your first witness."

The bang of the judge's gavel was superfluous. The court room was tensely silent. All eyes were focused expectantly on Jetson Faughan as he calmly seated himself beside Gene Pendell.

Nord let a fleeting glance rest on the defending attorney. A fugitive expression of anticipation flitted across his features. He faced the courtroom, singled out a Negro seated amongst the spectators. It was the elevator operator of the Rheingold Arms.

The D. A. said: "George White, take the stand."

Through White, Nord established the *corpus delicti*. The Negro also testified that he had taken Gene Pendell to and from Zena Zorn's apartment the night before around twelve o'clock.

Faughan permitted him to leave the stand without cross-examination.

The next witness was the Inspector. Carter testified that shortly after three that morning he had received an anonymous phone call at headquarters. The unknown person, he said, informed him of the murder of Zena Zorn. His informant, who claimed he was in the dancer's apartment at the time of her murder and had witnessed it, also stated he had followed the killer to the street, and had seen him throw a gun into a sewer. Who was the killer? Eugene Pendell.

Inspector Carter went on to say that

after visiting the scene of the crime he had notified the District Attorney. Then he had supervised the recovery of the gun. Subsequently, from license records, he had determined the weapon actually belonged to Pendell.

Here Nord introduced the gun in evidence. Then, fumbling a moment in his brief case, he produced a sheet of glazed paper, which he handed to Carter.

"I show you a photograph, Inspector," he said. "Can you identify the scene it depicts? And the people in it?"

Carter stared at the photograph hard, as if he saw it for the first time. His eyes flicked toward Faughan, and back to Nord.

"Where did you get this?" he demanded.

"Mr. Faughan will undoubtedly ask that question," Nord smiled. "So I'll tell you. That photograph was left at my home early this morning. Now identify it for the court, please."

"It shows Zena Zorn's living-room. Her body lies in the foreground. Standing over her, with a gun in his hand, is Eugene Pendell."

A wave of excitement swept over the courtroom. The gavel fell; His Honor gazed out upon the audience with unspoken censure. The ensuing silence heightened rather than relieved the tension.

Pendell was searching Faughan's face with bewildered eyes. Crowley, too, was studying him. The lawyer met their stares with a vague smile.

Nord took the photograph from Carter, tendered it to Faughan.

"If you have no objection," he said, with exaggerated politeness, "I want to offer this photograph in evidence."

Faughan barely glanced at the picture, waved a hand. "No objection."

The Court received the photo from

Nord, scrutinized it thoughtfully, and handed it to the clerk. "Mark it 'S-2.'"

Nord turned to Faughan. "That's all. You may cross-examine."

Faughan slouched down deeper in his chair, shook his head.

"No questions," he murmured.

The D. A.'s brows screwed together in a little frown. For a moment he seemed perplexed. Then his face cleared and he called the county Medical Examiner. The latter testified that Zena Zorn had been killed the night before between eleven-thirty and twelve-thirty.

Walter Berger, a Centre Street ballistics expert, followed the Medical Examiner to the stand. He proved the bullet that had killed Zena Zorn had been fired from the pistol identified as Pendell's.

CHAPTER V

Out of the Hat

AS Berger was leaving the witness stand, Stone entered the courtroom. He approached the counsel table, gave Faughan a folded sheet of paper, and waited beside him in expectant silence.

The lawyer opened it, read its contents swiftly. He refolded it, and put it in his pocket. Ten seconds passed while he stared off into space, tapping his fingers on the arm of his chair in a thoughtful manner.

Suddenly he leaned forward, hastily scribbled a note which he handed to Stone. His operative took it wordlessly and vanished from the courtroom.

Faughan sighed softly, and turned his attention to Nord, who was addressing the Court.

"Your Honor, I shall not take time to analyze the testimony you have just heard. I believe it speaks for itself.

And I believe you will agree with me that it establishes a *prima facie* case of murder in the first degree against Eugene Pendell, sufficient—within the requirements of our statutes—to warrant his being held for the Grand Jury without bail.

"I have not touched upon Pendell's motive for the murder of Zena Zorn. But, since a hearing of this kind by its very nature is informal, I will say now that jealousy prompted his act. That I shall prove at the proper time. At his trial.

"In view of the foregoing, Your Honor, I see no reason why Eugene Pendell should not be tried for murder. And I respectfully request that you so rule."

The D. A. sat down pompously, casting Faughan a triumphant glance of well-ground satisfaction.

His Honor the Court peered over his half-moon glasses at Faughan, said tonelessly: "Mr. Defense-Attorney, if you have any testimony to present this court, you may proceed."

Faughan rose, leisurely. "I have just one witness to call, if Your Honor please."

Judge Porter leaned back in his chair, stifled a yawn absently. He seemed suddenly to have lost interest in the hearing.

"Call your witness."

Faughan faced Martin Nord. There was a veiled twinkle in his eye.

"Mr. Nord—if you please," he said quietly, and waved a languid hand toward the witness chair.

The D. A. jerked stiff, stared. "What?" he barked. "You're calling *me* as *your* witness?"

"Yes," gently, "I'm calling *you* as *my* witness."

The District-Attorney looked so ludicrously bewildered and stunned

that an amused titter welled in the courtroom. It was instantly stilled by the drop of the gavel.

His Honor the Court no longer gave the impression of bored disinterest. Watching Faughan inquiringly, he said to Nord:

"Take the stand, Mr. District-Attorney."

Scowling, unable to conceal the fact that he suspected a trick, Nord lumbered to the witness chair. He was sworn in. After asking the usual preliminary questions, Faughan snapped suddenly:

"Where were you last night, Nord, between the hours of ten-thirty P.M. and two A.M.?"

Nord's eyes popped. "Where was—" he croaked and swung to the judge. "I object!" he roared. "I object! Where I was last night is irrelevant, immaterial and—and—" He sputtered to a stop, his anger gagging him.

His Honor eyed Faughan indignantly. "What bearing can Mr. Nord's whereabouts last night have on the case before this court?"

Faughan shrugged indifferently. "Since the witness objects to answering it, I'll withdraw the question."

He strode to his counsel table, unwrapped the package Petraske had given him on the Courts Building steps. He brought to view a rectangle of glazed paper. This he tendered to Nord.

"I show you a photograph, Mr. Nord," he said, his tone slightly sardonic. "Can you identify the scene it depicts? And the people in it?"

The District-Attorney took one look at the photograph, and his face ran a gamut of color from greenish-white to red to purple. He whirled toward the judge.

"It's a lie!" he screamed. "It's a lie!

I was home last night! Home in bed! Faughan's trying to hoodwink the Court with a scurvy trick!"

The courtroom was in an uproar. Spectators were on their feet, craning their necks in a futile attempt to see the photo that had turned the District-Attorney into a wild man.

The gavel rose and fell. "Silence!" The Court yelled. "Silence! Or I'll clear the courtroom!"

The clamor subsided, although hushed whispers persisted. His Honor took the photograph from Nord's trembling fingers. He looked at it. His jaw sagged.

"Why," he breathed, "this photograph is a replica of the one the District-Attorney introduced in evidence! Only the man standing over the murdered woman isn't Pendell! It's Mr. Nord!"

THE audience received the sensational disclosure in breathless quiet.

"Zowie! There's the rabbit!" was a stage whisper from one of the reporters present. It won a baleful glare from His Honor, which he immediately transferred to Faughan.

"Explain this," he snapped fretfully. "If it's another of your notorious tricks, I'll have you know the Court won't tolerate it!"

Faughan said calmly: "Your Honor, I admit that photograph was made at my order. But it is not a trick. I merely desired to convince the Court that even the most damning evidence can lie.

"You heard the District-Attorney say he was in bed last night—a fact most difficult of proof. I could go on and show that he knew Zena Zorn, that—"

Red of face, Nord pawed the air. "Your Honor, I object!"

Judge Porter said sarcastically:

"Considering the start you made, I can well imagine you could build up a case against Mr. Nord. But surely you are not serious! You are not accusing the District-Attorney of the murder of Zena Zorn!"

Faughan smiled. "No; Your Honor. If I gave him a bad moment, I am sincerely sorry. I wanted to illustrate a fact. Eugene Pendell is as innocent of the murder of Zena Zorn as he is!

"That picture"—he pointed a dramatic finger—"State's Exhibit number two—and all the other evidence adduced in this court this morning, is part of a deliberate plot to frame the accused.

"Pendell was never snapped almost in the very act of shooting Miss Zorn. That picture is a fraud. It stands to reason that if I could acquire a fake photograph compromising the District-Attorney, someone could resort to the same deception with Eugene Pendell the victim.

"It is true Pendell went to Miss Zorn's apartment last night. But he was lured there from his training camp where he was preparing for a championship bout. He arrived there *after* she had been murdered.

"It is true his gun shot the woman down. But it had been stolen from him for that purpose. Then it was planted in the sewer to which the police were later directed.

"Where is this 'unknown person' that witnessed the shooting, snapped that photograph, and claims he saw Pendell dispose of the death weapon? Why didn't he come forward instead of hiding under the cloak of anonymity?

"The Medical Examiner placed the shooting between eleven-thirty and twelve-thirty. This 'unknown person' saw it, yet he waited three hours before reporting the killing to the police?

Why? And why was he 'Johnny-on-the-spot' with a camera to photograph the scene?

"All these questions have one answer: *he* is the real murderer of Zena Zorn! *He* framed Eugene Pendell! Which gives rise to another question: Why did he choose Pendell, the Champion, as his victim?

"I'll tell you—because this 'unknown person' is a member of a crooked gambling ring which sought to enrich itself by fixing Pendell's coming bout. It tried to bribe him to throw it. Failing, it tried to intimidate him with a cold-blooded murder frame!

"The location of the murder weapon—that incriminating photograph—were the threats held over his head. I was apprized of the facts by Mark Crowley, the Champion's manager. My services were retained.

"I subjected Pendell to a lie test. It showed him innocent of Miss Zorn's murder. But unfortunately, the findings of a lie-detecting machine are inadmissible as evidence in any court. It was necessary to exonerate him before ten tonight. The time was too short to find the real killer of Zena Zorn. So, lacking other evidence, I did the one thing that would satisfy the Court Eugene Pendell was being framed. I duplicated part of the evidence I knew the District-Attorney would offer as proof of his guilt."

Here Faughan paused momentarily. He continued, staring squarely into Judge Porter's eyes:

"If Your Honor please, cold logic applied to the facts as I have submitted them should convince you that Eugene Pendell is innocent. If he were held for the Grand Jury it would serve no purpose. It would be a grave injustice. The police, working along the theory I've outlined, should have no difficulty in

apprehending the real killer of Zena Zorn.

"I respectfully request, therefore, that the charge against him be dismissed."

MMARTIN NORD was on his feet. "I object, Your Honor!" he belated. "I object! This is highly irregular! Mr. Faughan's statements are incompetent—based on pure conjecture. And his conduct in fabricating evidence was an affront to this Honorable Court! I demand that he be adjudged in contempt!"

Judge Porter frowned at the District-Attorney. "This Court is quite capable of maintaining its own dignity without recommendations."

He turned to Faughan. "I don't approve of your sensational way of presenting an argument. I should fine you for contempt of court. But I'll overlook your zeal in your client's behalf this time because, considering the curious elements in this case, I am inclined to believe Eugene Pendell was framed. Charge dismissed!"

A stampede broke out in the courtroom. Yelling reporters surged toward Faughan and Pendell in a mad rush.

Above the hubbub of excited voices and stamping feet rose the District-Attorney's frantic: "Your Honor—Your Honor—I object! I—"

The Court's gavel fell. "Silence! I will not countenance a demonstration!" The reporters stopped in their tracks. The Judge looked at Nord, a quizzical expression in his eyes.

"Mr. District-Attorney," he said, "this Court has ruled. If you do not agree with me, you are at liberty to present your case to the Grand Jury yourself and request an indictment. I am sure Eugene Pendell will not leave the city pending their decision."

With that the Judge gathered his robe about him, and disappeared into his chambers. The reporters started forward again.

Faughan seized Pendell's arm, whispered: "Quick, Champ! The D. A. will do just that—try the Grand Jury next. I don't want you to talk now—to anyone. Beat it into the judge's chambers—and out his private door to a side street exit. Go to my office and wait there for me."

Looking somewhat dazed, Pendell sprinted after the judge. He slammed the door in the reporters' faces.

Mark Crowley, standing by Faughan's side, said: "That was a neat stunt. Faughan. Very neat." His eyes were glowing. Otherwise his face was expressionless.

Scowling, Nord strode to the counsel table, picked up his papers. "Well, you managed to win this skirmish," he growled to Faughan. "But I'll have Pendell indicted if it's the last thing I do. When the Grand Jury convenes you won't be around to hypnotize them."

He pushed his way past the reporters who were now converging around Faughan.

As Inspector Carter followed the D. A., he leaned close to Faughan's ear. "If and when you catch Zena Zorn's killer," he chuckled, "I'll be home in the hay. Give me a ring."

Faughan's brows went up. "Meaning what?"

Carter grinned. "Meaning the police don't mind having you do our work for us. The Grand Jury'll indict Pendell sure as shootin'. The trick you bamboozled Porter with is shot. Your only hope of clearing Pendell when he's brought to trial is to produce Zee-Zee's real killer. So produce, Blackie, produce." He moved away, still grinning.

Faughan matched the grin wryly, then waved back the clamoring reporters with: "Nothing to add, boys—"

The figure of a man hurtling into the courtroom cut him short. The lawyer recognized a reporter. The scribe, wild-eyed with excitement, cried:

"Blackie, Pendell's been snatched!"

Faughan's brows corrugated. "What! Higgins, are you sure?"

Higgins bobbed his head up and down. "When the Champ pulled his fade-out, I ducked into the hall. I wanted a statement from him. So he scooted out a side exit—me on his tail. I saw two muggs—masked—jab rods in his back and load him in a car. If that doesn't spell 'snatch,' I'm an Eskimo! Now 'scuse, please. Gotta phone my rag."

The courtroom became suddenly empty as the other reporters lit out for phones. Faughan took Crowley's arm.

"Let's me and you toddle to your office," he suggested. "I've got a bill to collect from you for services rendered. And I think you'll be wanting to hire the Black Faun Agency some more. Or am I wrong?"

CHAPTER VI

Pay-off

IN Crowley's ornate office, Faughan lowered his frame into one of the red-leather chairs. He found a cigarette, snapped his lighter to it, before he answered the gambler's question.

"What do I make of it? It's simple. I told you Murray and Weiber snatched me last night to keep me from appearing in court for Pendell. Remember?"

Crowley was pacing up and down, puffing jerkily at a cigar. He nodded gloomily.

Keeping the deaths of Murray and Weiber to himself for a purpose, Faughan went on:

"Well, I escaped. They figured I'd clear Pendell somehow, and were all set. It's obvious they—or others of their gang—snatched the Champ. They framed him for murder to intimidate him. That failed. They tried to have him jugged to stop his bout. *That* failed. Now they're taking a last crack at him. They have a pile of jack bet on him, and are desperate. Either they'll dope him to insure his losing, then turn him loose, or they'll put him through the meat grinder—torture him until he agrees to throw the fight."

"Or they might just kill him," Crowley rapped out. He swung around. "Why don't you do something instead of sitting here gabbing? Get after Slat Kaulper! I swear that punk's implicated in this!"

Faughan laughed lightly. "He *was* you mean. Kaulper is dead."

Crowley started. "Dead? When was he killed? I haven't heard anything about it!"

"I met him last night in front of the *Hi-De-Hi* getting out of a taxi. He'd been stabbed somewhere by either Murray or Weiber. I don't know why—yet. They left him for dead. I suppose they came here to cover Pendell. He must've trailed them. I shoved him back in the cab, where he died on me. So I had to get rid of his body."

Crowley's phone rang. He picked it up, scowling, said, "Yes," a couple of times, then, "I can make it in an hour." Then he listened to his caller for a moment and growled: "All right."

He hung up, faced Faughan. "Well, what're we going to do?" he demanded.

The lawyer uncoiled from his chair. "You—nothing. Me—I'm going to find Pendell." He glanced at his watch.

"It's twelve-thirty. I'll have him at Madison Square Garden in time for his scrap. It'll cost you twenty grand. That includes white-washing him this morning."

"Cheap enough if you can do it," Crowley said with a wry face.

"Gad, I'm tired," Faughan said in the middle of a sudden yawn. He clicked his teeth shut, added: "What d'you mean—if? I guarantee it. So bring the money to the Garden with you. Tomorrow's pay-day for my staff, and I can use it. I've got an overhead like the foreign war debt."

He left the *Hi-De-Hi Club*, walked west to the nearest corner. Here, in a drug store, he folded himself in a phone booth. Ten minutes later he emerged on the street again, hailed a cab. Twenty minutes later he was in his apartment—in bed. And sound asleep.

At eight o'clock he woke up as if an alarm had roused him. He dressed in tails fresh from the tailor's, and supped in leisurely fashion. Quarter of ten found him entering the dressing room under the Garden reserved for the Champ.

It was filled with men and smoke. Trainers, handlers, masseurs stood around indecisively. They were making ash out of cigarettes and cigars as if their lives depended on it. Mark Crowley, brows knit, sat slouched in a chair, mangling a Corona.

Upon Faughan's entrance he jumped up. "Where the hell've you been? I've been calling your office, your agency, your hotel for hours—Nobody's seen you, or knew where you were—"

"They hadn't and didn't," Faughan grinned. He blew out breath. "Phew! The air in here's foul!"

"Never mind the air," Crowley snorted. "Did you give out the press

release saying Pendell'd been released by his snatchers? That his fight would go on, and that he'd stay under cover until time for the fight?"

Faughan pushed his silk hat to the back of his head. "Yep. You didn't want the Garden to be without customers, did you?"

"They're hanging to the rafters. But what good is it? Where's *Pendell*?"

AT that moment a cheer came from the stadium proper. It rose wave on wave, a tremendous roar of sound that threatened to raise the roof.

"There's *Pendell*," Faughan smiled. "Just in time for his bout." Crowley stifled an exclamation, and leaped for the door. The lawyer stopped him. "Just one minute, Crowley. My fee—if you please!"

The Champ's manager muttered something under his breath, dug a hand in his breast pocket, took out a packet of bills. These he tossed to Faughan and darted on his way. He almost collided with a ruddy-faced man coming down the passageway. Without bothering to apologize he disappeared.

The man let out a muffled curse. Faughan, approaching him, said: "As I live and breathe! Inspector Carter! What're you doing here?"

Carter flicked unsmiling eyes at the money the lawyer still held in his hand, then they bored into the lawyer's.

"I came here expecting to find you, Blackie," he said. "And hoping I wouldn't."

Faughan thrust the money away, patted the pocket. "That has an ominous sound," he grinned. "What have I done now?"

Carter bit his lip. "I hate this job, Blackie," he said, and looked as if he meant it. "I've got to take you downtown and book you—for murder!"

Faughan's face clouded momentarily, then he grinned slowly.

"So you found Slat Kaulper," he murmured.

Carter nodded. "Kaulper was found—not an hour ago. Where you hid him. The morgue keeper told us how you drove up in a taxi, sent him on a fool's errand. We located the driver from whom you hired the cab. He filled in the gaps." The cop paused. "Why did you do it, Blackie?"

Faughan sighed. "Creature of impulse—that's me. I act first and think later. For instance—"

His fist shot up, and exploded on the point of Carter's chin like a stick of dynamite. Carter didn't even grunt. He buckled at the knees, fell.

Faughan caught him, muttered: "Sorry, Inspector. This hurts me more than it hurts you."

He dragged the police officer's inert form to a room across the narrow corridor. It proved to be an office. He deposited Carter in a small closet.

Three minutes later he was hurrying down an aisle in the Garden stadium toward the raised ring. The Champion, dressed in a striped robe, was being introduced to the shouting crowd. His opponent stood in a corner.

Crowley was standing beside the ring, his fists jammed in his pockets; his face impassive.

Just as Faughan reached the ring, Pendell gasped hollowly, snaked a taped hand toward his chest in a convulsive movement—and fell over backwards.

The excited, puzzled cry of the audience thundered in his ears as Faughan vaulted into the ring. His features were tautly set. When Pendell fell, Crowley, too, had leaped into the ring. The two men knelt beside the Champ.

Above them, jaws sagging, stood the challenger, Browberg; the officiating referee; a half a dozen other men that had surged into the ring.

Pendell had his eyes open. White-faced, he was breathing hard.

Crowley husked: "Gene—what happened? Are you all right?"

Pendell gulped; faltered: "I—I guess so—" He looked at Faughan.

The lawyer tore the fighter's robe aside. Instead of disclosing a bare chest, he brought to light a jacket of fine steel mesh. The links over the heart were mashed a little; but they were still intact.

A chorus of stunned, incredulous gasps greeted the sight, and its significance.

Faughan ground out: "As I expected would happen—someone took a shot at him. The jolt of the bullet hitting him knocked him down. Think you can go on with the fight, Champ?"

Pendell essayed a sickly grin, staggered to his feet. "Sure," he said. "Be all right soon's I catch my breath. Only—" here he darted appraising eyes at Browberg—"I guess I'll have to use both hands—now."

Crowley seemed to have lost his composure. He was mopping his brow, trembling. The gaze he gave Faughan had awe in it.

"Whew!" he said.

The lawyer took his arm, said: "Come on downstairs, Crowley. The final act of this affair will take place there. You should be in on it." He paused, added, chuckling: "It won't cost you a cent."

The office opposite Pendell's dressing rooms wasn't empty. Stone, Faughan's operative, stood in the center of it. He held a gun in his hand casually. It was trained on a rat-faced man who cowered in a chair before him.

WITHOUT looking around, Stone said: "The punk's name is 'Crunch' Malley, chief. He's a free-lance hood. Caught him with his pants down. There's the gun he used."

He jerked a thumb toward a desk. On it reposed a rifle, with a silencer attachment.

Crowley walked to the desk, stared down at the weapon, then at the lawyer.

"My hat's off to you, Faughan," he said. "You never miss an angle."

Faughan showed eventeeth in a grin. "Not often. I knew an attempt would be made on Pendell's life. I had half a hundred men guarding the upper tier of the stadium—the logical place for an attack."

He turned to Stone. "Give Crowley your gun, and go outside. See that we're not disturbed. Malley and I're going to pow-wow."

Stone handed Crowley his gun, walked out, and closed the door behind him.

Malley's thin, brutal face was the color of putty. He shrank back in his seat, licked dry lips. "What—what are ya gonna do?" he whined. Fright pitched his voice in a trembling squeak.

"I'm going to beat the living daylight out of you," Faughan said. His granite-hard eyes belied the gentleness of his tone. "Until you tell me who hired you to kill Pendell. Here's a sample—"

"Don't! Fer Pete's sa—" Malley choked to a terror-stricken stop as Faughan's fist swung upward.

The lawyer-detective never landed his blow. Behind him a harsh voice grated: "Hold it, Faughan!"

Faughan dropped his fist, turned slowly. And looked into the bore of the gun in Crowley's hand. His lips twitched.

He said: "So you were the one. I wondered—"

Malley lurched to his feet unsteadily, wiping drooling saliva from his mouth. "Cripes, Crowley—t'anks! This mugg would 'a' hammered hell out of me. . . . I could see it in his eyes!"

Crowley sneered: "And you would've shot off your trap. . . . I could see that in *your* eyes." He turned to Faughan. "So you wondered. This was one angle you missed! Call in your watch dog."

Faughan ignored the order. He said: "You're wrong there. I tagged you with the Zorn kill—and Kaulper's carving—the minute I received a report from Stone. Remember his coming into the courtroom this morning and handing me a sheet of paper? It contained a check on Murray's and Weiber's movements of last night. *They had not been near the Hi-De-Hi Club.*"

Eyes pinpoints of hate, Crowley said nothing.

Faughan continued: "That could mean but one thing: Kaulper was looking for *you* because *you* had shived him. Or was I wrong?"

Crowley jeered. "Are you ever wrong? He was in that betting coup with Murray and Weiber and me. We'd pooled three hundred grand apiece. Stood to clean up millions if Pendell threw his fight.

"When Pendell reneged, Murray and Weiber accused me of a double-cross. I had to do something or eat lead. And I had to go it alone."

"Because you suggested a murder-frame to coerce Pendell. Murray and Weiber wouldn't tune in. They were tough, but drew the line on that. And you couldn't let Kaulper in on your plan because you knew he was still soft on Zena and would blast you if you harmed her. After you killed her, you

decided to sidestep his rage—you figured he'd find out—by killing him."

Faughan paused. "Sure. I figured all that out. You called yourself at your club, imitating Kaulper's voice when you spoke to Fencher. When Pendell refused to throw the fight in spite of the frame, you called me . . . For two reasons: You surmised it would direct suspicion from you; and at the same time you wanted me to prevent his actually taking the murder rap."

The lawyer laughed shortly. "Greedy guy. You wanted to keep him from fighting Browberg to save yours and Murray's and Weiber's money, but you hated to lose a goose laying golden eggs for you. Then to make sure I didn't clear Pendell in time for the fight you got Murray and his pal to take me bye-bye.

"Well, I cleared Pendell. I knew his life would be in danger from then on. So I had my men snatch him, with orders to hole him up and deliver him at the Garden a few minutes before ten. The call you received today at twelve-thirty—supposedly from Murray—came from one of my men.

"You were advised they had taken precautions. You were asked to come to their hideout at eight. You went there and found Murray and Weiber dead. I know. You were followed there. You thought my men killed them getting Pendell. You were wrong. They were killed last night.

"I still had no proof tying you to the murder plot. You could have explained away your visit to the waterfront dump. And I knew that—with Pendell free to fight—you'd shoot your last bolt. You'd plant a sniper in the stadium to kill him—because you disliked the idea of losing three hundred grand. A bullet-proof vest took care of that—"

Faughan stopped and chuckled softly. "The joke is—I wondered if you'd fall into my trap!"

CROWLEY was breathing deeply, slowly. His eyes were red-flecked with hate and sudden panic. "Trap?" he spat. "What trap? Call your watchdog in here, damn you! Or so help me, I'll drill you now!"

"Blaze away," Faughan answered quietly. "But if I were you, I'd drop that gun and take my chances with the law."

As he spoke, the lawyer took a paced step forward.

"You asked for it!" Crowley snarled. His finger tightened on the trigger of his gun. The room reverberated to the echo of the explosion.

Faughan was still standing there. A grim, gruesome smile twisted the corners of his mouth. The door burst open and Stone dashed in. He stabbed one look at Crowley, said: "Well, that's that!"

Malley was staring in the same direction. He pumped out a hollow: "Jeez!"

Crowley was lying sprawled on the floor, fragments of the still-smoking gun in his hand. And that hand which had held the gun was a pulped, bleeding mass.

At that moment, angry fists pounded on the closet door.

Faughan poised a cigarette in mid-air, said: "I had to clout Inspector Carter a while back. Apparently, he's just come to. Let him out of that closet, Stone."

Stone opened the door, turned quickly to bend over Crowley's shattered hand. Carter staggered into the room, wild-eyed. His ruddy face was black with rage. A cut on his chin was trickling blood over his stiff collar.

"Blackie, damn you—" he roared, and his glance fell upon Crowley's lax form. "What—what the devil happened to him? He's dead—shot! Blackie, have you gone nuts altogether? Did you kill him?"

"Be your age, Inspector," Faughan said. "I didn't kill anyone. No, not even Kaulper. Crowley will tell you all about it, if Stone keeps him from bleeding to death. And our friend here—" he indicated Malley—"will tell you all about it. Won't you, Malley?"

The Inspector swung around.

Malley gulped. "I'll talk!" he blurted.

Carter riveted slitted eyes on Faughan. "All right," he said grudgingly, "You didn't kill Crowley. But what in Hades did happen?"

Faughan's eyes twinkled. He touched the broken gun beside Crowley's limp body with the point of his shoe. "Crowley borrowed a gun from one of my operatives. He forgot to see whether the barrel was clean or not. It wasn't. Someone had sort of plugged it with leadfoil."

While Carter blinked stupefied eyes, Faughan extracted a thousand-dollar banknote from his pocket. He tucked it into the dazed cop's hand. "That's to buy you some court plaster for that cut, Inspector. . . ."

At that moment, a wild, sustained cheer seeped down to them. Faughan jerked his head erect, listening. "That must mean Pendell has just flattened Browberg. Come on, Stone. Let's go see. Maybe I'm wrong."

Cipher Solvers' Club for March

(Continued from page 40)

Iowa; Narom, Niagara Falls, N. Y.; Orkayo, Chicago, Ill.; †Cecil T. Partner, Kokomo, Ind.; A. M. Pere, Chicago, Ill.; †Tau Pi, Cincinnati, Ohio; *Hugh B. Russell, Washington, D. C.; Segro, Brooklyn, N. Y.; *G. A. Slight, Newburgh, N. Y.; †Mrs. Josephine Spalding, Arizona; †Ty N. Twist, London, Ontario, Canada; G. W. Wing, Chicago, Ill.

Twenty-two—†Ernest G. Alstadt, Erie, Pa.; Arbnj, Bronx, N. Y.; †Alpha Bet, Merchantville, N. J.; Charles F. Bridewell, Houston, Tex.; John P. Brogan, New Castle, Pa.; J. A. Callan, Rainy River, Ontario, Canada; Cryptox, State College, Pa.; Vasseur and Danette, Denver, Colo.; †Jay Essee, Fort Benning, Ga.; Howard N. Hehr, Buffalo, N. Y.; †luocus, New York, N. Y.; †Captain Jo, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; James G. Karns, New Castle, Pa.; *Plantagenet, Paterson, N. J.; †Posius, Brookline, Mass.; Abe C. Pressman, New York, N. Y.; Charles R. Robb, Toledo, Ohio; †Thomas E. Roberts, New Castle, Pa.; Ruel, Ocala, Fla.; *W. R. W., Chicago, Ill.

Twenty-one—L. H. Aber, Outremont, Quebec, Canada; Albert H. Alpert, Cleveland, Ohio; F. W. B., Avoca, Pa.; †Arthur J. Brooks, Jr., Sault Sainte Marie, Ontario, Canada; Dictionary, Dillon, S. C.; Henry F. Dolliver, Belmont, Mass.; Ellephe, Dorchester, Mass.; Jay-en-Ess, Denver, Colo.; Bert Hilton, Wilmington, Calif.; Helen Hotz, Rumford, R. I.; †Mrs. Altie Mather, Milwaukee, Wis.;

Nom d'Plume, Burlington, Vt.; †Quay, Springfield, Ill.; †Vegee, Globe, Ariz.

Twenty—†L. S. H., Washington, D. C.; †Neil Johnson, Manchester, Iowa; Lucille Little, Chicago, Ill.; †J. G. Meerdink, Jersey City, N. J.; †Nertz, Waukegan, Ill.; †Pangram, Lakewood, Ohio; †Flo Rogoway, San Diego, Calif.; Mrs. J. C. Saunders, Vallejo, Calif.; †Sam Spiegel, Butte, Mont.; Steve, Richmond Hill, N. Y.; *Ike N. Wynne, Great Falls, Mont.

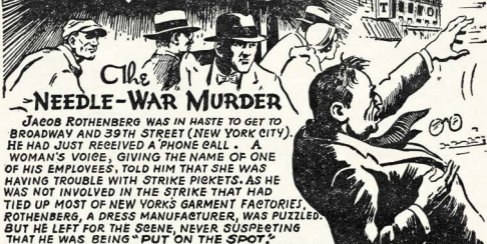
Nineteen—Robert De Mougeot, New York, N. Y.; Gregory, Taos, N. Mex.; †Kadash, Tacoma, Wash.; †Mabs, Baltimore, Md.; Y. M. Reyna, Syracuse, N. Y.; †D. G. S., Colusa, Calif.; †Mrs. B. C. Squires, Thomaston, Conn.; Loula Williams, Stockton, Calif.

Eighteen—*Amanovlettus, Franklin, N. H.; *A. Has-Been, Union Grove, Wis.; G. Carder, Seattle, Wash.; Daffy Dill, Bangor, Me.; †Gunga Din, Dallas, Tex.; Etcog, Rockville Center, N. Y.; †Ezymarc, Franklin, N. H.; †G. N. G., Key West, Fla.; †Izzy Greene, East Millinocket, Me.; Hitide, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Frederick Neal, Kokomo, Ind.; A. Novice II, Wallins Creek, Ky.; †My Pal, Brooklyn, N. Y.; †Rena Patton, Los Angeles, Calif.; O'Phan, White Bear, Saskatchewan, Canada; †Jerry Phelan, Bronx, N. Y.; †Edward F. Ralford, Holland, Va.; Cold Winters, Minneapolis, Minn.

Seventeen—Ernest H. Carling, New York,

(Continued on page 125)

ILLUSTRATED CRIMES



The NEEDLE-WAR MURDER

JACOB ROTHENBERG WAS IN HASTE TO GET TO BROADWAY AND 39TH STREET (NEW YORK CITY). HE HAD JUST RECEIVED A PHONE CALL. A WOMAN'S VOICE, GIVING THE NAME OF ONE OF HIS EMPLOYEES, TOLD HIM THAT SHE WAS HAVING TROUBLE WITH STRIKE PICKETS. AS HE WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THE STRIKE THAT HAD TIED UP MOST OF NEW YORK'S GARMENT FACTORIES, ROTHENBERG, A DRESS MANUFACTURER, WAS PUZZLED. BUT HE LEFT FOR THE SCENE, NEVER SUSPECTING THAT HE WAS BEING "PUT ON THE SPOT."



THE TELEPHONE CALL TO ROTHENBERG WAS FOUND TO HAVE COME FROM A STATIONERY STORE. ONE OF THE SLEUTHS LOITERED ABOUT THAT SHOP AND NOTICED A SINISTER LOOKING MAN MAKING FREQUENT CALLS TO A NEWARK, N. J. NUMBER. THOUGH IT SEEMED FAR-FETCHED, HE HAD THE CALLS TRACED AND FOUND THEY WERE TO ONE, ROSE HALPERIN, AN EX-DRESSMAKER, ALREADY UNDER SUSPICION IN THE CASE.

THREE MEN AWAITED HIM AT THE CORNER. ONE STEPPED UP AND SLUGGED HIM ON THE CHIN. ROTHENBERG STAGGERED BACK AND FELL. HIS HEAD HIT THE CURB. HE WAS TAKEN UNCONSCIOUS TO A HOSPITAL WHERE HE DIED OF BRAIN CONCUSSION. HIS ASSAILANT ESCAPED IN THE CROWD. DETECTIVES LEARNED THAT RACKETEERS HAD BEEN DEMANDING MONEY FROM ROTHENBERG'S FIRM FOR "PROTECTION." SINCE THE DEMAND HAD BEEN IGNORED, IT APPEARED THAT THE SLUGGING WAS PERPETRATED BY EXTORTIONERS USING THE "PICKETING TROUBLE" AS A CONVENIENT RUSE TO LURE THEIR VICTIM OUT OF HIS OFFICE.



Coming Next Week—



WORKING IN ANOTHER DIRECTION, POLICE HAD ARRESTED IRVING ASHKENAS, REPUTED "STRONG ARM" MAN FOR A MOB OF GANGSTERS WORKING A PROTECTION RACKET THROUGH CONTROL OF A UNION. EVIDENCE AGAINST HIM AND ROSE WAS LACKING HOWEVER.

LATER A DETECTIVE WHO RESEMBLED "SCARFACE AL" CAPONE, WORKED HIMSELF INTO THE CONFIDENCE OF A GIRL FRIEND OF ROSE. POSING AS BROTHER, "JIMMY," HEAD OF A BRANCH OF THE "BIG SHOTS" BOOTLEGGING SYNDICATE HE GOT HER TO TALK. IN MONTREAL, WHERE HE HAD TAKEN HER ON A SUPPOSED LIQUOR RUNNING JOB, SHE BRAGGED OF HAVING BEEN A GUN MOLL WITH ROSE IN A GANG OF LABOR RACKETEERS.



LATER WHEN THE GIRL LEARNED THAT THE MAN SHE TOOK FOR CAPONE WAS A COP, SHE DENIED ALL THAT SHE HAD TOLD. BUT THE INFORMATION HELPED BUILD UP THE CASE AGAINST ASHKENAS AND THE HALPERIN GIRL. BOTH RECEIVED 5 TO 15 YEARS. THE GIRL WAS LATER FREED ON A REVERSED VERDICT IN HER CASE.



Invisible "F" Ink

Two Against London

By John Kobler

Author of "The Secret Hand," etc.



For five hours they fought, two men against a thousand

Merchants of Death Were They, with Only Their Lives to Sell!

And England's sporting gentry, the huntin' - shootin' - fishin' contingent, exclaimed in righteous horror: "Three hundred policemen to catch an eighteen-year-old boy and his sweetheart! Preposterous!"

WHEN the late "Two Gun" Francis Crowley kept an attacking force of three hundred policemen at bay for three hours, spraying them from the top story of a New York apartment house with fast-spitting, hot lead, overseas commentators sneered, threw up their hands in disgust. English observers of the American scene particularly pointed to the boy desperado's last stand as the sort of exhibition that could happen only in the United States. "Typical!" they cried.

**TRUE
STORY**

In this, the English were inexcusably short of memory, for not so very long before the Crowley capture—twenty-seven years to be precise—there occurred in London a protracted gun-battle between two Russian thugs and Scotland Yard, the climax of a remarkable series of crimes, which made the Crowley shooting and, indeed, every other similar combat before or since, look like children playing cops and robbers.

On that historic occasion, six hundred constables, reinforced

by the Scots Guard and the Royal Horse Artillery, pitted themselves against two killers trapped in an East End building. At one point, Mr. Winston Churchill, then Home Secretary, personally directed the siege.

The affair has entered the annals of English crime as the Siege of Sidney Street.

At 11:30 on the night of Friday, December 16, 1910—in a damp, fog-ridden night—a Houndsditch merchant sat up abruptly in bed. From Exchange Buildings, backing on his house, he heard rasping sounds.

The merchant hastily slipped into some clothes, dashed out into the murky street and hailed the constable patrolling the beat. "There's burglars in Mr. Harris's shop!" he exclaimed. He pointed at the gold and silversmith establishment across the way.

Together they approached it. The door was bolted, the shades drawn. They listened, holding their breaths. From deep within the darkened shop came the rasping of a file on steel.

The constable hurried to a telephone-box, put in an alarm call. Presently a riot squad composed of Sergeants Bentley, Bryant and Tucker, Constables Choate and Woodhams, drew up across the street from No. 11 Exchange Buildings, which was directly behind the goldsmith's shop.

It was Sergeant Bentley who strode up to the bolted door, while his colleagues kept anxious eyes on the three converging streets.

Bentley knocked. Steps padded behind the door. The bolt was drawn back. The door swung open. In the jet blackness Bentley was aware of a woman's presence, but it was impossible to distinguish her features. He called out gruffly: "Seems to be burglars about. Let us in!"

The woman jabbered something in a foreign tongue. She retreated into the black depths of the shop. Bentley saw her white-clad form grow dimmer, fuse with the darkness. He stepped over the threshold. He could hear nothing, see nothing. Across the street the others were watching him sharply.

Bentley hesitated a moment, then decided to go in. He fumbled in his breast-pocket for a match. At that instant, two spurts of flame slashed through the darkness. Bentley staggered back, crumpled on the threshold, two reddening holes gaping in his tunic.

For a split second his colleagues were paralyzed with shock and surprise. Then, as one man, they pressed forward, despite the fact that not one of them was armed. Before they were halfway across the street a hand gripping an automatic glowed whitely in the doorway. The finger of the hand tightened. Bullets raked the street from right to left. Almost simultaneously, the four officers were struck. The death-dealing hand came into full view now. A man dashed out of the shop. Two more men and a woman, the men pumping lead as they went, followed hard on his heels. Straight for the wounded, but still advancing officers, they went, scarlet flame and lead spitting from their guns with every step.

Sergeant Bentley lay dying in the doorway. Sergeant Bryant, hands outstretched, pitched forward into the gutter as a bullet smashed through his jaw. The three men and the woman pressed forward. Futilely, Sergeant Tucker tried to block their path. Three barking guns brought him to the street, dead before he struck the ground. A bullet from the same vol-

ley caught Constable Woodhams in the thigh.

Only Constable Choate remained standing. He dove fiercely for one of the men's legs. Three bullets tore through his stomach. Five more splintered the bones of his legs.

Now no one remained to bar the killers' murderous progress. The merchant had fled. Into the honeycomb of narrow streets and alleys the four plunged. But an accidental shot hit one of their own number. The man fell; the others carried him. The darkness, the fog swallowed them. And in the fog-moistened gutter lay five bleeding bodies, five unarmed officers, three dead or dying, two desperately wounded. . . .

NEVER before in the history of Scotland Yard had so savage, so merciless a massacre taken a toll of police officers. An outraged populace howled for the heads of the gun-toting fugitives. What particularly embittered Londoners was the fact that the English police had always maintained a code of fair play. Constables were not then, nor are they now, allowed to carry arms and it is for this reason that armed burglary is so rare in Great Britain.

But for once, that spirit of extreme fair play—of gentleness even—had cost three gallant men their lives. Here was a personal challenge and there was not a member of the force who would rest before the slaughter of his colleagues had been avenged.

The small, tawdry section of London known as the East End comes within the jurisdiction of the City Police, not the Yard, but Chief Constable Frederick Wensley was called in to assist the City detectives. Head of the investigation was Detective John

Stark; under him, Detective Superintendent Ottaway and Chief Inspector Willis. These four men plunged into the task of tracking the Houndsditch killers.

Their early efforts immediately uncovered a brilliantly conceived scheme to loot Mr. Harris's shop, a scheme frustrated only by the deaths of the three officers. It was Inspector Wensley who discovered, by questioning real estate agents and shopkeepers near Exchange Buildings, that in December a foreigner calling himself Levi rented the shop known as No. 11 Exchange Buildings. This was the shop whence the killers had emerged.

A few days later, another foreigner, a man giving the name of Gardstein, rented the nearby shop, No. 9. Between was No. 10, a shop directly behind 118 A Houndsditch, which was the goldsmith's establishment. But No. 10 was not immediately available. Only two days before the crime was it empty. This row of shops was separated by the Houndsditch buildings by a narrow alley bounded by a high wall.

Detectives searched No. 9 and made a number of curious finds. There was, for example, a huge cylinder of oxygen. This, neighbors reported, had been lugged up to the shop in a peddler's cart on the afternoon preceding the crime. In addition, a large number of hastily abandoned safe-breaking tools were found in No. 9. Between No. 9 and No. 10 a hole had been cut through the separating wall, giving the cracksmen easy access to the rear of Mr. Harris's place.

Two bottles bearing the stubs of tallow candles indicated that the cracksmen had operated by candlelight. The bottles were smeared with fingerprints, but the Yard's finger-

print bureau was unable to make any identification.

While these clues were being sifted, a strange development broke in an entirely unexpected quarter.

The time was 3:30 Saturday morning. Dr. Scanlon, a young general practitioner of Commercial Road, was awakened by the sounds of frantic rapping on his front door. He trotted downstairs and opened to two young women, obviously foreign, obviously in a state of extreme agitation.

The older of the women gasped in broken English: "You must come. There is a man dying at Grove Street."

Young Dr. Scanlon wasn't sure whether he was dreaming or whether he had not simply stepped into the pages of an old-fashioned melodrama. However, he dressed quickly, snatched up his bag and followed the two women through the dim streets.

As they approached Grove Street, Dr. Scanlon was further baffled by the behavior of the younger woman. Abruptly she turned back and disappeared. The other woman expressed no surprise and Dr. Scanlon kept his bafflement to himself.

The address was No. 59 Grove Street. The ground floor was in complete blackness. A light glimmered in the topmost room. The woman, now panting heavily, led the way up a narrow, broken-down staircase. The doctor could barely see a foot ahead of him and twice stumbled. But at last they reached the top floor. The woman pointed to a room facing the landing and Dr. Scanlon went in.

A man lay on the bed. Between his tight-clinched teeth, gasps of agony escaped. Sweat beaded his stubbled, sallow face. Dr. Scanlon approached the bedside, deposited his bag and asked gently: "What's the matter?"

The man groaned again, answered: "I was shot in the back by a friend. It was an accident. You must do something, doctor, the pain is unbearable."

DR. SCANLON was beyond mere surprise. There was no longer any doubt of it. He had walked straight into blood-and-thunder melodrama! The man was fully dressed even to his shoes.

The young doctor probed for the bullet. It had entered the man's left side and inflicted dangerous injury. Both the stomach and lungs had been pierced and the man was vomiting blood. He dressed the wound as best he could, but saw that hospital equipment was required to extract the bullet.

"What is your name?" he asked the agonizing man.

"My name? Gardstein—George Gardstein."

The woman made a sudden gesture with her extended hand as though she would stop Gardstein's mouth, but in his pain he was beyond reasoning and caution.

"This man," Dr. Scanlon told the woman, "is dangerously ill. He must be taken to the hospital."

The woman's eyes blazed. "No, never. Never will he go to the hospital."

And the man, raising himself painfully on one elbow, echoed the woman's words. "No, she is right. I will not—I cannot go to a hospital."

Dr. Scanlon saw it was useless to argue with them. He remained with the wounded man an hour. Then he left, promising to return in the morning. The woman accompanied him so that he might give her some drugs to see Gardstein through the night.

It was unfortunate that Inspector

Wensley's discovery as to the identity of the lessee of No. 10 Exchange Buildings had not yet been made. Dr. Scanlon had never heard the name Gardstein before and it did not occur to him to report the matter to the police.

He returned to Grove Street the following morning, Sunday, at eleven. An even more startling set of events confronted him. For a long time, no one answered the door. When finally it did open, two scowling, unshaven men glowered at him.

"How is the man upstairs?" Dr. Scanlon asked.

The two men exchanged puzzled glances. "Man? What man? We know of no one."

"Why, George Gardstein."

Dr. Scanlon thought he detected a fleeting shadow of alarm in their faces, but they only shrugged. Impatiently he brushed them aside and dashed up the stairs. He tore open the door of Gardstein's room, half expecting to find the man gone. But he was gone only in the spiritual sense. His body was still on the bed, cold, stiff. He had died sometime during the night.

When Dr. Scanlon descended to the lower floor, his mind racing with the mysterious events of the past twelve hours, the house was deserted. It was as empty and silent as a tomb. Alone was Dr. Scanlon with the stiffening corpse of George Gardstein.

This time, he wasted no instant reporting the strange death to the coroner. The coroner in turn reported to the police and it was then, and then only, that Detective John Stark and his assistants received the vital news of Gardstein's hide-out. Had that news reached them six hours earlier, the ghastly blood-letting yet to come would have been avoided.

As it was, Inspector Wensley, accompanied by a squad of plain-clothes men, rushed to 59 Grove Street. They were admitted by an obese Russian woman, who either could not or would not understand a word they said. Wensley found that she had been destroying some papers in a back room and she was promptly arrested. She gave her name as Mrs. Rosa Trassjohnski.

Upstairs, in the squalid, stained bedroom, where Gardstein's body still lay, there was evidence of a wild search having been made. Hidden in various parts of the room were daggers, rounds of ammunition. Under the dead man's pillow was a black automatic. Wensley reasoned that it had been left by Gardstein's colleagues to give him a chance to make a fight for it when the police came.

Wensley stepped into an adjoining bedroom and there saw a second woman, the young woman described by Dr. Scanlon, standing near the blazing fireplace, a sheaf of photographs in her hand. Wensley sprang forward, gripped her wrist, but too late to prevent her dropping the photographs into the flames. They were consumed in an instant. Like fat Rosa Trassjohnski, the girl feigned to be unable to understand Wensley's questions. Nevertheless, the famous sleuth felt that he was measurably nearer the identity of the men who had butchered his colleagues. That Gardstein was one of them he had no doubt.

The Inspector was not far wrong. Arrested and taken back to the Yard, the two women were persuaded by gentle, but effective methods of third degree to talk in their native Russian to an interpreter.

From their statements the first important leads on what was ultimately found to be a giant ring of anarchist-

gangsters developed. After days of questioning, searching, employing police "informers," publishing Gardstein's photograph and offering rewards, the police were able to piece together a story surpassing in fantasy the wildest concoctions of Mr. E. Phillips Oppenheim.

The dead man had been known variously as Gardstein, Morin, Morountzeff and a great number of other aliases. Russian police informed the Yard that a year previously this man had fled from Moscow, a fugitive from the law. He made straight for London.

THERE was at this time in the British capital a secret society calling itself the Anarchist Club. It was composed of a desperate, sinister brood of foreigners, misfits in their own country, homeless wanderers, ready for any deed of violence. Gardstein joined this society and by force of his dominating personality became the ringleader of ten particularly bloody-minded ruffians.

The Yard's toughest task was determining the identities of these ten men. Ordinary detective work was unavailing here. Mere questioning among the Russian element in the East End met only with a wall of silence, of thinly veiled hostility. Subtler methods were required. Stool pigeons became invaluable allies.

Eventually another name came to the Yard's attention, Fritz Svaars, another Russian criminal who, like Gardstein, had left Russia a step ahead of the police. From a description given by Dr. Scanlon of the two men he saw at 59 Grove Street the morning following Gardstein's death, it was clear that one of these was Svaars, the other an odd character, an artist,

Peter Piatkoff, known as "Peter the Painter." Then there was Fritz's girl, Luba Milstein. She was the one whom Wensley had caught destroying photographs. Were these the three who with Gardstein had escaped from the goldsmith's shop, scattering lead death as they went?

Other names entered the investigation. It appeared that a meeting had been held in Fritz's rooms at 59 Grove Street on the very afternoon of the crime. Those who were seen to enter the house were Gardstein, Svaars, Peter the Painter, and Russians named Joseph, Zourka Duboff. John Rosen, Jacob Peters, Ossip Federoff, the brothers Max and Karl Hoffman, the two women, Rosa Trassjohnski and Luba Milstein. The meeting of these men so close to the hour of the crime was too strong a juxtaposition to pass as mere coincidence. Wensley was hot on the trail.

It was at this point that he discovered the probable cause of Gardstein's death. The Russian terrorist had been something of a chemist, experimenting with oxygen and blow-pipes. But he had little experience with the mechanical side of safebreaking. And so he persuaded the gang to hire a thug called Max. Max may have known everything about safe-breaking, but he was a beginner when it came to handling firearms. He was working at the safe, as Wensley learned, when the alarm sounded. A gun was lying on the table. He picked it up and ran out after the others, firing wildly. By mistake he struck Gardstein in the back.

Miraculously the three men and the woman managed literally to carry their colleague to Svaars's place on Grove Street one mile away without arousing attention. For that feat, Wensley

grudgingly extended his admiration. It would have been safer and simpler to let Gardstein die in the street.

The police now had a fairly accurate picture of the ten men who composed the shock-troops of the Anarchist Club, their descriptions, their characters. But laying them by the heels was another matter.

The first break, a minor one, came on December 22nd, exactly eight days after the Houndsditch massacre. A constable patrolling Galloway Road in the suburb of Shepherd's Bush spied a man answering to the description of Zourka Duboff. He nabbed him, dragged him to the nearest police station and detained him for further questioning.

That same evening, Inspector Wensley received word that another of the terrible ten, Jacob Peters, had been seen to leave a lodging on Turner Street. Presumably the man lived there. Accompanied by Detective Inspector Collinson, Wensley went to the house, waited. At 8:30, Peters walked unsuspectingly into the arms of the law. Wensley smiled, counted off two men on his proscription list.

Grilling Peters resulted in the revelation of a second address, a tenement in Romford Street. This was supposed to be the home of the man known as Federoff.

Wensley burst in upon him towards midnight. The Russian turned pale, admitted under examination that he had visited Svaars and Peter the Painter from time to time in Grove Street. "You realize," Wensley warned him, "that these men are suspected of the murder of three police officers."

"I can't help that," the Russian replied in halting English. "I had nothing whatever to do with it."

Duboff, Peters, Federoff and the two were then charged with complicity in the triple murder. The hunt for the others went on. Here the detectives were not so fortunate. At least three of the ten had succeeded in escaping to France. Many years later, one of them was to hold a prominent place in the Russian Government. Rosen and Hoffman were still laying low. No trace of them could be found.

The interlocking statements of the apprehended anarchists now led the detectives to Gold Street, near Stepney, where a Russian using the name of Morin had maintained lodgings. Morin was one of the many aliases employed by the dead Gardstein. A raid upon his room disclosed some amazing findings.

There was a vast armory of weapons and ammunition, enough to arm a small army. It was ammunition of a type found in Gardstein's death chamber at Grove Street. The very bullets were of the same caliber and manufacture as those extracted from the slaughtered policeman. Inspector Wensley's hands were twitching to clap handcuffs on the last of the ten. Among them were the three who had pumped blazing death into London's "finest." But which ones? Gardstein undoubtedly. He was beyond jurisdiction? Who were the other two? There was not yet a definite answer to that question.

THE hunt dragged on into February. Rosen, alias Zelin, tumbled into the police dragnet. His hide-out in Hackney had been spotted. He surrendered meekly. Fast upon this triumph came news of another house in Canon Street. It was thought to be the house of Karl Hoffman, the man with whom at least two of the assas-

sins had taken refuge after the massacre. At two o'clock in the morning, a cordon was thrown around the house. Hoffman was upstairs in bed. A policeman went up, roused him, arrested him.

One of the most intriguing suspects arrested at this time was a tall, beautiful, sloe-eyed Russian Jewess whose name had been linked romantically in the Whitechapel underworld with that of Gardstein. Cool, self-possessed Nina Vassileva had been Gardstein's sweetheart. She disappeared from her old haunts after the murders, dyed her hair black. Once she decided to escape to Paris. She got no further than the corner. She felt she was being watched, which she was, and returned to the house of the Jewish folk on Burros Street where she had been hiding.

Inspector Wensley found her, hiding, half-dressed, her black hair in striking disarray, in a back room. She was reading her own fortune by cards. "I'm a Russian and I make cigarettes for a living," she stated haughtily in answer to Wensley's questions.

"Do you deny that you are a member of a certain club on Jubilee Street?" Wensley asked.

"I was. Yes."

"Good. Then perhaps you know that some of the men who committed the Houndsditch murders were members of that club. Do you know who they were?"

"Perhaps I do and perhaps I don't!"

That was all that could be got from Nina Vassileva, but a clue, almost forgot since the early days of the investigation, cropped up to destroy her innocence. The fingerprints on the candleholders found at No. 9 Exchange Buildings matched the girl's! At last one of the fatal foursome who had escaped from that building!

The beautiful Jewess was eventually tried and sentenced to two years' hard labor. But the verdict was quashed on appeal. After all, there was no proof that she had fired a single shot. Her only sin had been consorting with the killers who had. She was freed.

As for the others, Rosa Trassjohnski, Luba Milstein, and the five men, nothing could be proved against them beyond the fact that they had known and associated with the killers. And only Rosa would identify them. For the first time the names of Gardstein's two murderous mates were definitely linked with the murders. They were Fritz Svaars and the man known only as Joseph! Shortly after making this important revelation, the Trassjohnski woman went mad, had to be put under restraint.

The six others were released. Max, Joe Levi, the man who had rented No. 9, and Peter the Painter dropped out of the picture altogether. There remained only the two human savages, Svaars and Joseph. By a process of elimination these appeared to be the two wanted men.

Had they, too, fled? Were they still alive? Who was protecting them and how long could they escape the avenging arms of the police?

The answer came abruptly, startlingly. It was the first act in the incredible Siege of Sidney Street.

THE chiefs of the City Police and New Scotland Yard were summoned suddenly to a conference at the Old Jewry Police Station. When they were all assembled, Detective Stark rose, uttered the news they had all been waiting for.

"The two murderers, Svaars and Joseph, were seen to enter No. 100 Sidney Street last night!" A hum of

excited voices interrupted him. He lifted his hands for silence. "Wait! It is also known that they are armed with Mauser pistols and an unlimited supply of ammunition. You all know the fate of three of our colleagues. I don't want another man to lose his life at the hands of those assassins. They're desperate, savage men. They have nothing to lose by killing again. They must be caught without loss of life!"

A map was spread on the table and methods were discussed as to how best to attain that goal. No. 100 Sidney Street was a chunky, perfectly square block of tenement dwellings. It stood in the center of a square, isolated, easily surrounded. From this point of view it was highly vulnerable to attack. But there were innocent men and women in that tenement. In the event of a gun battle, their lives would be in danger.

The first problem, then, was to get those men and women out without alarming the killers. It was Superintendent Ottaway who suggested that the entire block be surrounded by policemen, the dwellers to be quietly warned of the danger after dark.

Accordingly a large body of men, more than one hundred, fully armed this time, prepared themselves. At two in the morning, when Svaars and Joseph might be expected to be sleeping, they marched quietly to Sidney Street, dispersed themselves about the block. It was part of the original plan to get the dwellers out, then capture the two desperadoes in their bedroom before they could reach for their Mausers.

The occupants of the ground floor at No. 100 were an elderly married couple. A plainclothesman awakened them quietly, explained the danger and persuaded them to dress immediately.

Unfortunately there was a more difficult problem ahead. The woman explained that on the first floor there was a two-room apartment, shared between the two killers and a young woman. That made it awkward. If fighting broke out she might be killed, certainly she would be wounded.

Faced with this predicament, Inspector Wensley propounded a ruse. He suggested that the woman on the ground floor go upstairs, call to the girl and ask her to come down to help her with her husband, who was to feign illness. The woman swallowed hard, marshalled her nerve and went upstairs. The little ruse worked. It began to look as though everything would work out.

All the occupants of that section of the tenement were at last routed, all except one couple, a very old gentleman of ninety and his wife. When they were suddenly awakened, they made an outcry. At that very moment, by another incredible mischance, a policeman tooted his whistle. All hope of trapping the killers in their sleep was gone. Wensley cursed bitterly. Now, there'd be the devil to pay! But how steep that payment would be even the Inspector never dreamed.

One hardy policeman offered to take the stairs by storm and break in on the killers. It was pointed out to him that such a course was plain suicide. The stairs were steep and narrow. At the least sound, the landing would be manned by a pair of conscienceless killers with rapid-firing Mausers.

The leading police officers put their heads together in a brief parley. It was decided to bring the two men to the window by flinging pebbles against it, warn them that the house was surrounded and ask them to surrender without spilling any fresh blood.

The tenement had been evacuated now. The old couple were got down the stairs by a neighbor. The killers were in there alone, pacing their room like tigers, their claws unsheathed, ready to strike.

Inspectors Wensley and Hallam and Sergeant Leeson advanced into the roadway and tossed a number of stones at the first floor window. A reply, decisive, violent, followed immediately. The window was flung wide. Out of the darkness of the room a Mauser belched flame. Another joined it in devilish duet. A cannonade of shots volleyed from that window. Leeson, furthest in front, reeled backwards, collapsed into Wensley's arms.

"Mr. Wensley," he gasped, "I'm dying! They've shot me through the heart."

He fainted. But there was still life in him and for the moment all else was abandoned in the effort to get Leeson to a hospital. The entire street was now under the range of the Mausers. They were silent, but no one knew when they would bark again.

As it was they dared not carry the wounded man down the street. A crude stretcher was fashioned from officers' coats and Leeson was carried up a ladder and over a roof to safety. Although badly wounded, he was deposited at the hospital in time to save his life.

Just as the stretcher-bearers reached the center of the roof, a second fusillade of shots broke out. It was so fierce, so heavy that Wensley, who had helped Leeson up to the roof, was forced to remain there for the next half hour, sheltering himself from the rain of lead as best he could. Only when answering shots from the other side of the tenement drew the killers' attention away was Wensley able to

descend. He took his last close-range look at the pair, Svaars and Joseph, snarling, teeth bared in the savage grimace of trapped hounds, they stood shoulder to shoulder at the window, firing away as fast as they could reload.

A fresh detachment of police had been sent for. The thousands now drawn to the scene of battle required attention as well as the killers. Panic seemed to have descended on all London. The wildest rumors filled the air. Word had got about that London had been attacked by an enemy country, that the militia had been called out, that thousands were engaged in pitched battle.

The crowd became so violent that more and more policemen had to be summoned. They stood four and six deep.

The vicious firing from the tenement now doubled in swiftness and volume. As soon as one of the attackers came within hailing distance of the house, one of the Mausers were leveled at him, spat its deadly message. A young constable took the chance. He stepped boldly out, gun in hand. The gaping crowd saw the curtain of one of the windows stir, a blinding explosion. The constable's fingers clapped his forehead. Blood poured through them, over his eyes. He fell face forwards on the pavement.

Another was shot down in the same way. Then another. In all four policemen felt the cold bite of lead in their flesh before that infernal night was done.

The officers in charge realized at last that it was hopeless to try to rush the house without incurring serious loss of life. The killers were not only crack marksmen, but equipped with

the most up-to-date guns as well, while the attackers were armed with out-moded makes of pistols such as had not been used since an emergency twenty years before.

IT was decided to apply to the Tower of London for a detachment of Scots Guards armed with service rifles. This was an unprecedented, a wholly amazing thing for members of the City Police to do. But it was done and towards ten in the morning, three hours after the siege had begun, the Guards marched through a madly cheering crowd. It was at this point that the Home Secretary himself, Mr. Winston Churchill, appeared, clad in a black derby and carrying an umbrella. He stood on the side lines, directing the ensuing operations.

The guns of the killers had been silent for some time now. The newly arrived Guards took advantage of the breathing spell to place themselves at strategic points about the square. Some climbed to the roofs of surrounding buildings; others crouched in alleys. Scores of rifles were trained on the shattered windows behind which Svaaers and Joseph were reloading once more.

Again the firing broke out and this time never let up until the bitter end. The Scots Guards were reinforced by still another detachment, this time the Royal Horse Artillery. Close to a thousand men were devoting all their powers to destroying the two possessed demons within the tenement. The deafening noise was like a weird symphony of war by a mad, modernist composer. The sharp, hard crack of the Mausers furnished the leitmotif, almost drowned by the contra-puntal theme of the chattering automatics, the loud, echoing bang of the old-

fashioned pistols. And with this, the ceaseless smashing of glass, the brittle crack-crack as bullets struck against the stone ledges of the tenement.

Farther and farther the crowds were shoved back, but not soon enough to save four of them. The ever widening arc of the bullets' struck three men, an old woman. . . .

The killers fought a deadly battle. Only the mouths of their guns showed in the windows, their hands jerking on the triggers.

For five hours that grim, merciless duel raged. At 12:30 a woman in the crowd suddenly screamed: "The house is on fire!"

The men held their fire an instant. The woman was right. At first it was no more than a plume of smoke curling along the bullet-scarred sill. Then a tongue of flame showed itself, dancing wickedly along the sides of the window. Presently a thick column of flame and smoke billowed upwards. The entire first floor appeared to have burst into flame. But the killers continued to blaze away at the police.

The clang of fire bells sounded above the din. Firemen leaped from their engines, dragging at thick hoses. But the hail of lead kept them from approaching the burning house. They were forced to stand by while the flames leaped ever higher and higher.

A particularly fierce blast of flame swept through the first story window. It was followed by six shots fired in quick succession. They were the last shots to be fired from that doomed house. For a moment, no one could believe it. The firing had lasted so long, had kept up so steadily that the attackers' ears were unaccustomed to the sudden pall of silence. Only the crackling of burning wood could be heard.

So they had decided to make a break for it, after all! There was only one way and that was through the front door and on that door a score of service revolvers, a score of rifles were trained. They waited with tense expectancy. The killers made no move. Had a bullet found its mark at last?

The house was now a raging inferno. From cellar to attic, thick, twisting pillars of smoke and flame soared skyward. And then for the first time in seven hours a policeman ventured straight across the street to the door of No. 100. He kicked it open, staggering back as a bank of flame leaped at him. The crowds waited, holding their breaths. But there was no shot, no sound.

Before the police could determine what had happened to the two killers, the fire had to be quenched. The firemen attacked it with hose and ax. In the ensuing confusion, a wall, cracked by the fierce heat, toppled over, burying two firemen under its scalding stones. One died, the other was seriously burned. Thus the two killers had taken a toll of four lives, caused severe injury to dozens.

But at last, the besieged house could be entered. Inspector Wensley was the first to dash up the charred stairs. Turning into the bedroom on the landing, his eyes fell on what was

left of Fritz Svaars and the man called Joseph. Both had been burned beyond recognition. Their blackened bodies lay under a mass of gutted debris. Svaars, untouched by bullets, had been suffocated. Joseph's skull had been torn open by lead. Beneath the bodies lay the twisted, melted remains of the two Mausers.

The Siege of Sidney Street was over.

THERE was a curious sequel. Three years later, the Yard received information that in 1908 three desperados entered a saloon near Boston, Massachusetts, held up every man present at the point of guns, and looted the cash register. One man tried to escape and was shot dead before he could reach the door in his effort to escape.

The three bandits then fled to a nearby cemetery. One of them, considerably older than his companions, became winded, could run no further. So the younger two brutally shot him down to make their getaway easier.

A posse composed of 400 state troopers pursued the bandits, but they got away. A long investigation finally revealed that these two were the same who later held almost 1000 London policemen and guards at bay in the Sidney Street affray.



Practical Finger Printing

*What the Finger
Print Expert Does
in Courts of Law
—and What It's
Worth to Him!*



Finger Prints and the Law

By Lieut. Charles E. Chapel

*U. S. Marine Corps; Member, International
Association for Identification*

AFINGERPRINT expert usually receives a minimum fee of twenty-five dollars per day while testifying in court; some of the most experienced identification specialists are paid more than one hundred dollars for each day of the trial, whether they are on the witness stand or not. It is obvious that a man or woman cannot expect this recognition as soon as he is able to classify records, but it is encouraging to know that the courts give fingerprint specialists the same professional standing as doctors and engineers when they present the proper qualifications.

Before the trial, the fingerprints found at the scene of the crime, and the corresponding impressions taken from the accused, are photographed, enlarged, and then neatly labeled to show clearly the characteristics which are identical in both sets of prints. Lines drawn from these characteristics to the margins of the enlarged photographs are numbered, and these num-

bers are repeated in the "key" at the bottom of the photograph, where the characteristics are named and described in detail for the benefit of the jury.

The poorly trained or uninformed identification expert stops at this point and considers that he is ready to be called into court, but the cautious, experienced man thinks over the possible questions and his answers, together with anything he has learned about the case.

Is the jury composed of people unfamiliar with fingerprint science? Then he should enlarge the photograph so that it is sixteen times the actual area of the print. This will enable him to show more than fifty characteristics which are identical in both the known print, taken from the prisoner, and the print found at the crime scene.

To show the degree of enlargement, a ruler is laid beside the fingerprint when it is first photographed. Any subsequent enlargement carries the picture of the ruler and thus graphically shows the ratio of amplification beyond argument.

Is the opposing law-



yer tricky? Then the lenses used in photography can be sent to the Bureau of Standards, Department of Commerce, in Washington, D. C., for testing, and certification as to accuracy and the absence of astigmatism or distortion.

Unless there is a limited amount of money available, sixteen copies should be made of the photographs of the contested prints. One copy goes to each of the twelve jurymen, one to the judge, one to each of the opposing counsel, and one for the fingerprint expert. If there are not enough funds available, it is unlikely that the fingerprint expert would be called unless he is employed by city, county, state, or Federal governments, and even the poorest of these is able to provide the necessary material.

In the "key" at the foot of the enlarged picture, there will be notations such as: 1—core, 2—bifurcation, 3—rod, 4—'island, 5—delta, 6—end of ridge forming core, etc. In explaining these terms, the expert must be able to translate his technical language into the language of the market place. A bifurcation can be called a fork, a rod can be referred to as a ridge, a staple is translated into "two ridges that meet at their tops." This rendering of scientific terminology into words of one-syllable can be obviated in a long trial by explaining the elements of fingerprint science in the early part of the testimony.

To simplify his testimony, the expert may bring a blackboard into court, or even large sheets of paper which he can tack to the wall. Schematic representations of the fingerprints are drawn large enough for everyone to see, and any confusion is overcome by using colored pencils or chalk. In extreme



"Would you please explain, in detail, the points in common between the two prints?"

cases, an old-fashioned stereopticon can be employed, throwing images of the prints, side by side on a screen.

THESSE preparations have been the material ones. Equally important is the mental preparation. It is not enough that the expert witness understands taking fingerprints, filing, and classifying. He must be familiar with the history of the science, its literature, and the leading cases that determine what evidence can be admitted and what must be kept from the jury. If he lacks knowledge of any of these collateral subjects, he may be made to appear ridiculous by the opposing attorney.

Let us follow a fingerprint expert into court and see what happens. First, he is given the oath, just as any other witness, and then he is asked his name, occupation, and residence. With these routine questions out of the way, the lawyer for the side which called him usually asks a series of questions that qualify him as an expert. In the absence of this procedure, most of his testimony would be inadmissible on the grounds that it expressed an opinion, but as soon as he has shown his right to the title of expert, he can freely offer his opinions, subject to such reservations as the one forbidding that he say outright that he considers the accused guilty. Logically, these opinions must fall within his specialty.

At this stage of the trial, a clever lawyer for the opposition may arise and tell the court that he waives any questions about the qualifications of the witness as an expert. The purpose of this apparently generous concession is two-fold. First, it keeps from the ears of the jury facts that would impress them with the skill and experience of the witness; second, if the record of the case goes to a higher court on appeal,

there may be doubt regarding the qualifications that were thus kept from the record.

Equally unfortunate is the question: "State your qualifications," often asked by lazy or stupid lawyers on the same side as the witness. If the fingerprint expert proceeds to outline his experience and training, it will appear that he is a boastful, conceited individual.

These preliminary skirmishes out of the way, the lawyer who called the fingerprint expert asks the following:

1. Does the identification of fingerprints occupy all your time?

2. If you do not devote all of your time to fingerprint identification, what portion of your time is spent on fingerprints?

3. What training have you had in fingerprint identification?

4. What practical experience have you had in fingerprint identification?

5. Have you appeared as an expert fingerprint witness in other trials?

6. How many times, in what cases?

7. What scientific equipment do you have for this work?

8. What textbooks on fingerprints are you familiar with?

9. Do you photograph your own fingerprints?

10. How long have you been able to photograph fingerprints?

These questions will normally "qualify" the witness as an expert. Next come the specific questions.

1. Can you examine two fingerprints and tell whether or not they were made by the same person?

2. Explain how this is done.

3. Are any two fingerprints ever alike?

4. Assuming that two fingerprints are of the same pattern, and general appearance, what characteristics show whether or not they are identical?

5. I show you a fingerprint; where and when have you seen this before?

6. Did you examine this print at that time?

7. I show you another fingerprint; where and when have you seen this before? Did you examine it?

8. Did you compare the first print with the second?

9. What was the result of your comparison?

10. If you say that the prints are identical, that they were made by the same man, explain the characteristics they have in common.

11. I show you an enlarged photograph? What is it?

12. If this enlarged photograph is that of the two prints, side by side, point out on this enlargement, in detail, the points in common between the two prints.

13. Is there any doubt in your mind that the same man who made print number one, also made print number two?

DURING this questioning, the lawyer may wish to place the fingerprints and photographs in the record as "Exhibits." This is merely a formality which offers no problem to the expert witness if he is able to testify how and where they were taken, and that they are in the same condition as when he first saw them.

To explain how and why he came to the conclusion that two prints, or two sets of prints, were made by the same individual, the fingerprint expert may have to go into a certain amount of technical explanation. The opposing lawyer will then object to the judge that the witness is delivering a lecture to the jury. This objection is avoided by asking the witness:

"Will you please take the finger-

prints you took when the accused was arrested, and the glass bearing the fingerprints, found at the scene of the crime, and tell us in detail what examinations you have made, and all the facts and circumstances which have caused you to form the opinions you offer this court?"

What is the result when expert witnesses contradict each other on salient points? At one time this was enough to deadlock a jury, but Professor John H. Wigmore, author of the great legal text, *Wigmore On Evidence*, has said that expert witnesses should interpret the facts in terms understandable by the average man, since failure to give reasons for opinions "would usually involve little more than a counting of numbers on either side."

One of the leaders of the fingerprint profession has said that for many years he thought that no fingerprint expert would knowingly give false testimony, but that he was present at one trial where a so-called fingerprint expert tried to convince a jury that important characteristics found in a fingerprint were nothing but "flyspecks" made after the print had been left at the scene of the crime. Enlarged photographs easily revealed that ridges in the fingerprint pattern could not be mistaken for flyspecks.

Will an expert witness sell his soul for the fee? Fortunately, most fingerprint experts are not guilty of that crime, but a large fee is a temptation hard for a weak man to resist. There are two remedies for this problem. One is to unmask the false expert during the trial. The other is to either license, or organize into associations all those who appear as expert witnesses and expel or withdraw the licenses of liars and incompetents.

Unmasking the incompetent is a

matter for cross-examination by a brilliant lawyer. One of the legal tricks is to ask the false witness if he has read a number of textbooks on his specialty. Among the names of real books are introduced fictitious names of books by authors who do not exist. When the ignorant or dishonest witness says that he has read these imaginary publications, the joke is exposed and he is glad to escape the laughter of the court.

Another resource for exposing frauds is to give the witness fingerprints which are superficially identical. This is hard to do, because there are few prints which resemble one another enough to deceive even a beginner unless they are actually from the same man. However, out of a large collection of prints it may be possible to find a print that requires close inspection to establish its identity or lack of identity with another impression.

TO further the interests of the identification profession, several organizations have been started at one time or another. The largest and most important of these is the International Association for Identification, with hundreds of members in the United States and foreign countries. Among its members are doctors, lawyers, fingerprint experts, examiners of questioned documents, forensic ballisticians, chemists, psychologists, and penologists. All are working together for the protection of life and property in their respective countries, all are anxious to help one another, but is it to be supposed that election to membership guarantees that a member will be accurate and reliable for all time.

This is the objection to the proposal that dishonesty and inaccuracy can be prevented by associations. Equally fallacious would be the scheme to

license the experts. Who would constitute the board of examiners?

In the field of forensic ballistics, commonly called "fingerprinting bullets," there were comparatively few qualified men in the early days of this new identification science. In fact, it is still an uncrowded profession. If the license system had been applied to forensic ballistics, the results would have been discouraging. Followers of the old French method of rolling bullets in lead foil would have scoffed at the Goddard technique of the comparison microscope, while the disciples of Goddard, in turn, would have regarded the French as outmoded by the Germans, who at least made an attempt to use microscopes early in the present century. We are forced to conclude that the regulation of experts by associations or license laws lies far in the future.

How can the beginner in fingerprint identification hope to qualify for the high fees of the expert? The matter is not as hopeless as it seems at first blush. In testifying before Congress a man who claimed to be a "naval expert" was asked to define the phrase "naval expert." His reply was that a "naval expert" was a man who knew more about the navy than the average Congressman. So it is with fingerprint experts. A fingerprint expert, then, is one who knows more about fingerprints than the average layman.

Seriously, we hope that you will go further than gaining that little bit of learning that is so dangerous, that you will agree with a court decision on expert testimony which said in part:

"It thus appears that this is a technical subject, and in order to give an expert opinion thereon a witness should have made a special study of the subject and have suitable instruments and equipment to make proper tests."

MURDER CARAVAN

By T. T. Flynn



"Watch out that mug doesn't make a run for it," Van Duesen said

Tony Savage, on the trail of a coast-to-coast murder syndicate, walks into a trap and finds that Rita Carstairs is headed for danger hundreds of miles away.



WHAT HAS HAPPENED—

ANTHONY SAVAGE, ace private investigator for the Pan-America Insurance Company of New York, and his assistant Briggs, are driving northward along a Florida highway in their coupe with a new trailer, equipped with a short wave radio set for sending and receiving. Suddenly a hatless, bearded man stumbles onto the macadam road and falls, wounded by a rifle bullet fired from the thicket along the highway.

Savage stops the car, rushes to the man's side in time to

hear him whisper, "Bellamy"—before he dies. To Savage this is a significant coincidence, for he and Briggs were on their way to visit "Flamingo Grove," the Florida estate of Roger Bellamy, a heavy policy holder with the Pan-America Company and president of the Arcade Steel Company. Leaving the corpse at the side of the road, Savage drives on only a short distance, where he is stopped by an indignant girl in a coupe who accuses him of the hit-and-run death of the stranger



This story began in *Detective Fiction Weekly* for May 15

At the point of a gun she orders Savage and Briggs to drive on to "Flamingo Groves" to surrender to the sheriff who is investigating the death of Roger Bellamy. The girl is Rita Carstairs, reporter for the New York *Star*.

At "Flamingo Groves" Savage identifies himself and takes up the investigation of Bellamy's death for his company. Bellamy's body had been found under a capsized boat. He had been insured by Pan-America for \$525,000 in case of an accidental death. Savage concludes from his investigation and the coroner's report that Bellamy had been murdered.

At "Flamingo Groves" he meets Joan Bellamy, daughter of the slain man, and Jerry Goddard, her fiance. From Anne Teasdale he learns that Goddard had been overheard calling Clark, the gardener on the estate, "Father." Savage asks Clark to row out to the scene of Bellamy's death with him. There Clark assaults Savage, but is mysteriously killed by a gunman hidden in the dense forest on the shore.

Savage makes his way back to the dock where Briggs, his assistant, informs him that Bellamy had been in financial straits and had lost control of his Arcade Steel Company to James Larnigan.

Goddard and Joan leave the estate to take Bellamy's body for burial in Cleveland. Larnigan, a crack marksman, also leaves the estate hurriedly for New Orleans. Savage asks his office there to investigate the man, but a short while later is informed that Larnigan's charred body had been found in the wreckage of his car near Torrington, close to the Alabama line.

Savage drives to the scene and becomes suspicious when he fails to find Larnigan's rifle in the wreckage. Informed that Larnigan had phoned a Miss Moira Sullivan, his secretary, Savage continues on to New Orleans, knowing that Rita Carstairs, the reporter, has been one jump ahead of him so far.

In New Orleans in Larnigan's residence he runs into Rita, who is accompanied by Larnigan's butler, Jasper. The butler informs Savage that Larnigan had appeared that evening to pick up his clothes!

Savage's investigation reveals that Jerry Goddard is bound for New Orleans, that Pan-America had a \$90,000 double indemnity policy on Larnigan, and that Goddard had phoned Lorette Armond in Hollywood, who

wants to collect quickly as Larnigan's beneficiary. He learns, too, that Bellamy had been interested in the girl.

Savage locates Moira Sullivan. While he is interviewing her in her apartment, she receives a telephone call and unwittingly exclaims "Jim!" when she answers it.

The investigator tells Rita Carstairs that he is sure Larnigan is alive and that another's body had been found in the wreckage in Torrington.

In Larnigan's house Savage also had an encounter with a mysterious gunman who escaped but is traced to a home in the New Orleans French quarter. Raiding the place with the aid of police, Savage finds Goddard and Anne Teasdale together. They are arrested.

When Moira Sullivan takes a plane to Houston, Texas, Savage decides to follow with his trailer. Hoping that she will lead him to Larnigan who apparently is the key to the entire mystery.

PART V

CHAPTER XXI

On to El Paso

TRAFFIC was heavy on the Houston highway. Long lines of automobiles were moving toward the Mardi Gras in New Orleans. But there was little traffic going west from the Mississippi ferry, where the highway for miles skirted the high grassy levee bank and then struck off to the left through the low bayou country.

Gradually Savage was able to drive faster. Briggs was back in the trailer with his short-wave set. Over the telephone Briggs had managed to wring a promise from one of the local short-wave "ham" operators to remain at home and keep a wireless channel open between Clancy's office and the speeding trailer.

An hour passed . . . and then two hours. Clancy had not returned to his office.

Sixteen cylinders under the broad

gray hood of the car poured out their power with deceptive smoothness. Tony Savage fixed his eyes on the unreeling ribbon of highway, let his thoughts race over the problem of young Jack Goddard and Anne Teasdale.

Savage had confessed to Clancy and Hanson, the detective, that finding those two together had stumped him. He was still groping for an explanation of that amazing rendezvous in the New Orleans French Quarter.

True enough, New York had relayed information that Goddard had boarded a train for New Orleans. Goddard had caught the Jacksonville plane in the middle of the night, changed at Atlanta for New Orleans, saved a day—and gone straight to Anne Teasdale!

The two had known each other well. They had been living for weeks at the same Palm Beach hotel. Anne Teasdale had introduced Goddard to his fiancée, Joan Bellamy. But nullifying all that, Anne Teasdale had tried to place the blame for Bellamy's murder on Goddard!

Her story this morning about hastening to New Orleans to view the Mardi Gras was a lie. Plainly a lie, after the gunman had been traced from Larnigan's house to her house.

Jack Goddard's surprising visit to that same house was important. But how? Was Goddard behind Bellamy's murder after all, for the heavy insurance Joan Bellamy would inherit?

The idea had possibilities.

Grant that—and what about James Larnigan, who had just stripped Bellamy of his wealth before the murder? Would Larnigan, wealthy, successful, triumphant in his personal feud with Bellamy over the Hollywood actress, Lorette Armond, let himself be in-

involved in a cold-blooded murder plot backed by young Goddard?

"He wouldn't. He'd be a fool!" decided Savage. All the facts were at odds. Cool reasoning couldn't bring them together.

"One hell of a mess if I ever saw one!"

He put a cigarette between his lips, held the glowing lighter to it, and lifted the telephone off the bracket at the corner of the windshield.

"Any luck, Briggs?" Savage spoke back to the trailer.

"Half a minute, chief," Briggs replied. "Mr. Clancy's in his office. Jordan's catching something off the telephone to pass along."

Savage continued to drive, holding the receiver to his ear. In a moment Briggs said:

"Mr. Clancy has been at Headquarters. His brother-in-law, the Lieutenant, was called to question the two prisoners. Neither prisoner would amplify their first statements. They'll be held—but there's apparently nothing against them. Two headquarters men are in the house. Fingerprints are being taken in the house for a checkup. Houston hasn't reported yet. Mr. Clancy wants to know what you're going to do?"

"Drive and try to keep awake," said Savage. "Keep open to New Orleans, Briggs. That Houston plane is in by now. I want the report as quickly as possible. Tell Clancy that report will determine what I'll do."

SAVAGE yawned as he hung up the receiver. The long wakeful night was pulling leadenly at his eyelids. The distance to Houston was better than three hundred miles—and hard to tell what he'd have to do on arrival.

Savage passed a trailer . . . Shortly

another trailer. He scanned both closely. Neither trailer was red. Neither was drawn by a small dark car. Neither had New York tags or a visible man with a broken nose.

The telephone buzzer sounded.

Clancy had another report.

"Houston's reported, Chief. The subject left the plane alone. Checked bags at the airport, taxied into town and is shopping. Bought an air ticket to Ft. Worth and made inquiries about the Ft. Worth air connections for El Paso. Is apparently going to El Paso. The Houston plane leaves at 2:25 for Ft. Worth. Makes a connection there with another airline—and gets to El Paso at 4:30 in the morning."

Savage whistled sharply with surprise.

"She's going that far west, eh? Larnigan's making a long jump before he stops. Tell Clancy we'll go on through to El Paso. Sometime tomorrow will be the best we can do. We'll go by Del Rio, Texas. Ask Clancy if his agency has an El Paso office."

"No," said Briggs, a moment later. "But Clancy says he can get you service at El Paso."

"Good," said Savage. "Someone had better ride that plane from Houston to Fort Worth, in case the lady changes her itinerary. Ask Clancy what Miss Carstairs is doing."

Clancy's reply was succinct.

"Telephoned Miss Carstairs at her hotel. She came to Headquarters, talked unofficially with the prisoners. Told them she was in New Orleans writing up Larnigan's death. Prisoners professed surprise at Larnigan's death. Denied previous knowledge. Miss Carstairs left Headquarters, saying she'd telephone the agency office later. But no call has come through from Miss Carstairs."

"Tell Clancy you'll contact him again in two hours."

Briggs took the wheel. Back in the trailer Savage was asleep in his narrow springy bed within five minutes after they rolled on.

TWO hours later Briggs shook him awake. The short-wave generator was whining. The trailer quivered as another automobile flashed past a few feet away. Briggs was excited.

He said breathlessly:

"I'm working New Orleans again, Chief. Here's news for you. A second-hand automobile dealer telephoned that Bourbon Street house to see if the trailer purchased yesterday was satisfactory."

"What's that? Trailer? Yesterday?" Savage came to his feet, rubbing sleep from his eyes. "Who bought a trailer yesterday?"

"A man. A second-hand trailer. He took delivery at once. Said he had a license tag. Gave that house as his address."

"What else?"

Briggs returned to his set. Clancy's relayed message came out of the loudspeaker.

"The buyer was tall, clean-shaven, wearing a single-breasted blue suit. He paid cash. The trailer was on a second-hand auto lot. The fellow came back in about an hour with a Ford equipped with a trailer hook-up, and hauled the trailer away. He was alone. Said he was going to Georgia. The trailer was covered with aluminum paint."

"That's something," said Savage. "I don't want those two prisoners at Headquarters to know we're aware of this second trailer. Has Miss Carstairs telephoned in?"

Miss Carstairs had not.

Briggs ended the contact with New Orleans, and in ten minutes had soup and sandwiches set out. In fifteen minutes more Briggs was driving again and Savage once more was drifting off to sleep.

Sometime after 3 P. M. Savage waked, vastly refreshed. The trailer was in city traffic. Savage used the telephone.

"Where are we, Briggs?"

"Beaumont, Texas," said Briggs.

"I'll take the wheel as soon as we're out of town. I want you to pick up the report on that Fort Worth plane. How about an aluminum-painted trailer pulled by a Ford—or that red trailer, Briggs?"

"I've seen a dozen trailers," said Briggs. "All the red ones were heading east. Nothing we wanted."

Tony heard Briggs sigh.

Houston was not far ahead when Briggs got the report. Moira Sullivan had boarded the El Paso plane at Fort Worth, some 250 miles to the north. In Houston Savage filled the oversized gasoline tank, had the oil checked and followed the setting sun through the last of the low damp country along the Gulf Coast.

El Paso was some eight hundred miles away—long miles, lonesome miles. San Antonio, about two hundred miles farther on, would be the last city of any size. And somewhere ahead, Savage was convinced, was one trailer—perhaps two—and two men at least he must find. Larnigan and the short man with the broken nose!

Beyond San Antonio Savage took the south road through Del Rio, on the Mexican border. Savage held the wheel until ten, dozed in the front seat beside Briggs until an hour after midnight. Briggs went back in the trailer to sleep. Daybreak found Savage

holding the speedometer at sixty-five on the straight stretches.

CHAPTER XXII

The Friendly Stranger

A WILDERNESS of thorny mesquite stretched in all directions. Green beds of prickly pear cactus sprawled over the ground. The lush green grass of the coastal country had vanished. The tall trees were gone. This was a dry country, a harsh country, rising mile by mile toward the semi-deserts farther west. At no time during the night had a suspicious trailer been sighted.

At seven-thirty Briggs telephoned that breakfast was ready. They ate with the horizon at least forty miles away through the clear crisp morning air. A dozen varieties of cactus, Spanish bayonet, and other desert plants were visible from the trailer doorway. But no life. A little later while Savage walked up and down outside in the bright sunshine Briggs tried to get New Orleans. His voice was audible through the open doorway.

"W2ZXYZ calling New Orleans—W2ZXYZ calling W5RPLS. Are you on the air, W5RPLS?" A pause while Briggs listened, and again Briggs' call: "W2ZXYZ calling W5RPLS. W2ZXYZ calling New Orleans. Calling any New Orleans station. Give me an answer, any New Orleans station. I want W5RPLS, but I'll take any station. Any New Orleans station give W2ZXYZ a call."

Savage paused near the door as he heard a voice in Briggs' loudspeaker.

"W5OXCCT calling W2ZXYZ. What's on your mind, W2ZXYZ, up there around New York this early in the morning?"

"Hello, W5OXCCT," said Briggs.

"Thanks for coming in. I'm working a portable, in BT5 right now. I'm over here in West Texas near the Mexican border, in the middle of enough cactus to stop your Mardi Gras parade today. I want W5RPLS. How about giving him a buzz on your telephone? His name is Barton—Bill Barton, out on Fontainebleau Drive. Go ahead W5OXCT."

The answer:

"I've worked Barton a lot. Always in the evening, though. I'll give him a ring and see if he's around. Hold it open."

Savage spoke through the doorway.

"If you get Clancy's office find out if the El Paso report has come in. Ask about fingerprint reports. And what about Miss Carstairs?"

The loudspeaker said:

"All right, W2ZXYZ—are you there, W2ZXYZ?"

"O. K.," said Briggs. "W2ZXYZ waiting."

"I got Barton on the telephone. He was at breakfast. He'll be on the air in a couple of minutes."

A few minutes later a thin fast-speaking voice came in from the air.

"W5RPLS speaking, W2ZXYZ. Sorry I wasn't looking for you this early in the morning. What's on the cuff today? I hear you made plenty of miles last night. My wife's telephoning your office right now . . . Wait a minute—she's got 'em . . . There's something for you. Just a minute—"

After a pause, the rapid voice resumed:

"All right, W2ZXYZ?"

"Shoot it," said Briggs.

"Here you are—there's quite a bit of it. Fingerprints went off yesterday evening to FBI in Washington and to the State Identification Bureau. Answers expected today. The two pris-

oners were released yesterday evening. They had retained a crack criminal lawyer. Nothing was said to them about trailers. The man took the train for Memphis. The woman closed the house and boarded a California train. No one else had called at her house. Neighbors state no sign of a trailer was seen around the house. Got all that? There's more coming as soon as I get to the telephone again."

"Waiting for it," said Briggs. He lighted a cigarette while he waited and looked at the doorway. "Memphis," said Briggs. "And California. Goddard and the Teasdale dame split fast, didn't they?"

"The Fort Worth-El Paso-California planes go through Memphis first," said Savage. "Goddard is up to something."

"He might," Briggs suggested, "be heading back to Cleveland to join his fiancée."

"Why did he leave her? The decent thing would have been to escort Miss Bellamy to Cleveland with her father's body."

"You had a chance in New Orleans to ask him why," reminded Briggs.

"It would have only aroused his suspicions. I wish I'd told Clancy to send a man after Goddard, to Alaska if necessary. The fellow needs—"

NEW ORLEANS cut in: "Are you still getting W5RPLS?"

"Let's have it, W5RPLS," said Briggs in the peculiar and often monotonous jargon of the short-wave brotherhood.

"Here you are—Cohatchie, Florida, long-distanced the New Orleans insurance office last night, as follows: 'Torrington, Florida, sent two bullets to FBI in Washington. Cohatchie sent one bullet out of Clark's corpse to

FBI. They don't match. The Torrington bullets were from a .32 Colt automatic. The Cohatchie bullet was from a rifle. Torrington wanted Cohatchie to know the bullets found in accident victim's body were not from the exploded rifle cartridges in the back seat. The automatic bullets indicate murder, instead of accidental death.

"The police here got two bullets out of the house wall and on recommendation of agency office have sent them to FBI in Washington for check against the two automatic bullets from Torrington. Miss Carstairs not yet heard from. The El Paso report says the lady got off the plane and went to Del Monte Hotel. Asked at the desk for mail, telegrams or messages, and received nothing. Apparently is asleep now. Tri-State Agency in El Paso will have further details, and are expecting your arrival. That's all. Have you got anything? And will you be sending later today? I want to take in some of this Mardi Gras."

"Nothing more. We'll be in El Paso some time this evening. I'll telephone back long-distance," said Savage.

Briggs signed off, ducked out of the low trailer door, stretching, grinning.

"It's old stuff by now," said Briggs. "But I still get a kick out of putting something through from a forsaken spot like this. It's like using the whole country for a backyard, with the cities for rooms, and one yell reaches everything."

Tony Savage chuckled.

"You're acquiring the soul of a poet, Briggs. Let's get going. This next stretch of our backyard covers a lot of ground. Take the wheel while I get some sleep. I don't want to be a wreck when we arrive."

Briggs was a skillful and a fast driver. Time after time during the day Savage was jolted into partial wakefulness as the racing trailer slammed over some rough spot in the road. Those times Savage was aware that Briggs was driving as fast as the road would allow.

Briggs relinquished the wheel at Van Horn, Texas. The sun was hanging over the horizon. Briggs' hands were shaking from the strain of the grueling day's drive at furious speeds.

"About a hundred and twenty miles more," said Briggs as they watched the gas tank being filled and the oil checked. "Good road. We ought to make it in time for some *enchiladas* and *tequila* over in Juarez. Texas looks big on the map—but it's four times as big when you drive across it."

"*Enchiladas* and *tequila* it is," Savage smilingly agreed. "We've earned that much at least."

Savage's wrist watch marked off two hours and a half before he took his foot off the accelerator and let the throbbing motor fall into a leisurely purr through Isleta, a few miles from El Paso.

Briggs telephoned: "I'm bathed and dressed, Chief. Want me to take it in while you change?"

"You might as well," Savage agreed, and pulled over to a stop under tall cottonwoods that lined the road.

They were rolling smoothly on the El Paso city pavement, passing the first neon tourist camp signs, when Savage finished dressing.

HE was adjusting his cravat when an automobile horn sounded alongside. A man shouted something. Briggs pulled over to the curb and stopped. Savage slipped on his coat and stepped out.

The red tail lights of an automobile were at the curb just ahead of their outfit. A tall man wearing a broad-brimmed Western hat had stepped back and was speaking to Briggs. He turned as Savage came to him.

"Mr. Savage?"

"Yes. Who is it?"

Savage could see the stranger's tanned angular face smiling. He thrust out a hand. The stranger's grip was strong.

"I'm Van Duesen, from the Tri-State Agency," the man said. "I've been waiting along here for two hours for you to show up. Clancy, in New Orleans, gave me a description of your car and trailer."

"Glad to know you, Van Duesen. I was going to call your office as soon as we had something to eat across the river."

"I was afraid you'd do something like that," said Van Duesen. "I thought you'd rather have me head you off. The lady checked out of the hotel about dark, taking her suitcase. A car was waiting for her at the side entrance of the hotel."

"Damn!" exclaimed Savage in disappointment. "So she got away again! Where did she go?"

Van Duesen chuckled.

"We followed her. She didn't go far. Only to a small cottage just beyond the city limits on the Alamo-gordo road. The last report I had, about twenty minutes ago, had her still out there. I thought you'd want to rush out there and check up, since she seems to have left the hotel for good."

"Quite right. Decent of you to catch me on the road this way. Briggs, I'm afraid the *enchiladas* and *tequila* will have to wait."

"I can take you in my car," offered Van Duesen. "I take it you don't want

to run this heavy outfit out there, or wait to get unhooked."

"Your car by all means," assented Savage. "My man can get this outfit parked while we're gone. Do you know of a good place?"

"The vacant lot behind our office building should do. Matter of fact I meant to suggest it to you. Mrs. Van Duesen is with me. She can show your man where the lot is, while we cut across town from here."

"By all means."

Van Duesen stepped to his car, returned in a moment with a small demure looking young woman who smiled rather shyly at her husband's introduction.

"We shouldn't be gone more than half an hour, darling," said Van Duesen. "But if we should be gone longer, you can drop in to that movie you wanted to see."

"Be careful, don't get hurt, dear!" Mrs. Van Duesen cautioned as her husband opened the car door to seat her beside Briggs.

"I'll get a gun and a pair of handcuffs, just in case," decided Savage, turning back to the trailer.

"Never mind. I have both," Van Duesen assured him.

"I'll feel better with the gun anyway, in this instance."

In the trailer Savage slipped off his coat, buckled on a shoulder holster, and did feel better when he joined the detective in the front car. It was hard to tell what might happen if Larnigan was in that house.

"Did Miss Sullivan have any visitors?" he asked as Van Duesen drove briskly across town.

"We didn't see any. She was in her room all day."

"Waiting for a telephone call, I suppose."

"I wouldn't know. What sort of a case is this anyway, Savage?"

"Murder."

Van Duesen whistled softly. "Murder, eh? Making an arrest tonight?"

"I'll know better after I see whom the lady is with."

CHAPTER XXIII

Trapped

THEY sped through the El Paso outskirts, on the north. An air beacon on a low mountain off to the left swept a finger of light rhythmically around the sky. The street lights ended. The black-surfaced highway lay straight and smooth ahead through a tangle of desert plants, with only an occasional house light visible beside the road.

"How far is it?" Savage asked.

"A couple of miles. It's off the road a little. We have a couple of men out there," said Van Duesen heartily. He was a hearty man, a big man; he began to whistle cheerfully between his teeth.

And Savage was conscious of rising excitement. The break was coming. The Sullivan woman *must* be with Larnigan. Once that knot was unraveled, other things would fall in line. This was more luck than he'd hoped for.

Van Duesen slowed the car, turned off the highway into two sandy ruts that wound out of sight through the tall desert plants. The highway was almost a quarter of a mile back when a man appeared in the road ahead of them.

"One of our men," said Van Duesen cheerfully. He switched off the headlights.

But the lights went dark a second too late. The indistinct figure in the

road had registered on Savage's mind with an explosive shock. The shadowy indistinctness itself had released that explosion of memory, clearing thoughts back to the lower hall in Larnigan's house in New Orleans, where a shadowy figure had dodged out of the dim flashlight beam and vanished.

Savage grabbed under his coat for the automatic. And realized at the same instant that Van Duesen was watching him in the faint dashlight glow.

"No you don't!" Van Duesen rasped violently, lunging against him and snatching at the gun hand.

Van Duesen was as powerful as he was big. But Savage fought with a fury he had never before experienced. Like a tyro he had fallen eagerly into a trap—and he would get no more mercy than a trapped animal.

But Van Duesen had a steel grip. His weight jammed Savage back in the seat corner. Van Duesen was using both hands to hold the gun harmless in the armpit holster.

The struggle was silent, save for their quick gasping breaths.

Van Duesen could not get to his gun. Savage tried to hurl him back. He might as well have shoved at a stone wall.

Abruptly Savage relaxed, thumbing off the safety catch of his gun as he did so, trying to twist both holster and gun far enough around to bear on his assailant.

Van Duesen sensed the danger. He jammed an arm in against the holster. And Savage pulled the trigger again and again for what good it might do.

The crashing shots smashed at the eardrums in that closed space. They seemed to hammer and tear at Savage's side as the blasting muzzle gasses

burned through to his skin. The bullets passed harmlessly between their two bodies and into the seat.

A MOMENT later the door behind Savage was jerked open. A torch poured light over the seat. Savage expected a shot—he couldn't see what was coming—couldn't have dodged it anyway.

He received a blow—a blow that seemed to smash in the crown of his head, to rob him of reason, will and strength. It was like a black powder explosion before his eyes; his vision saw the flashing light as vividly as if it had occurred before his eyes. Then blackness closed in. He felt inert, leaden, helpless, and the voices in his ears were muted and far away.

He was aware, however, that there were voices. He knew when he was roughly shoved over in the seat, his gun taken away, his person searched, his own handcuffs snapped on his wrists. And all the time he was fighting threatening unconsciousness.

Head pains ripped through the pall. He could see again, and think. The automobile was lurching ahead. Savage twisted his head dizzily, made out the angular silhouette of Van Duesen's head at the wheel. And above the top of the seat, where Savage was uncomfortably crumpled, a voice said: "Keep that head down an' stay quiet or I'll slug you again!"

Van Duesen cursed.

"Go ahead and slug him anyway, Sam! I owe him a few for trying to drill me the way he did!"

"You should'a watched him closer," said Sam. "You ought'a know by now he's dynamite. Why didn't you sap him as soon as you turned off the road?"

Van Duesen grunted:

"How did I know he was going to get wise? Ten seconds more and I'd have been ready for him. He must have recognized you, Sam!"

Sam! The "Sam" of the telephone call to Larnigan's house. The gunman beyond the hall door—the man who had fled to that Bourbon Street house of Anne Teasdale's where Jack Goddard had come.

From a dry, painful throat, Savage asked:

"What the devil were you doing in Larnigan's house?"

"Shut up!" said Sam, and there was a calm viciousness in the order that needed no additional threat.

Van Duesen swung the car off the road and killed the motor. "Get him out, Sam," said Van Duesen, opening the door on his side.

Savage staggered as he stood up beside the car. Hammers were pounding inside his head. The car lights gleamed against the aluminum-painted side of another trailer that was hidden from the road here among the tall Spanish bayonet.

This must be the trailer that had been purchased in New Orleans! Like a bullet it, also, must have raced across the state of Texas.

Van Duesen cut off the car lights and spoke from the other side of the car.

"Here it comes. Get your rod ready, just in case. And watch out that mug doesn't try to make a run for it."

"I hope he does," said Sam with the same calm viciousness. Small as he was, he was the more dangerous man, Savage guessed.

THE headlights of another car were approaching from the highway. Savage was not surprised, when the car arrived, to see the long gray hood

of his own automobile, the bulk of the big silver-sided trailer looming behind.

Van Duesen's meek lady spoke irritably from the open window.

"Get this clunk outa here, Buck, before I shoot him! He burns me up!"

Briggs' reply was sarcastic.

"Now lady, is that any way to talk? I drove you out here, didn't I? Never mind showing me you're a tough little torpedo. I knew that as soon as you shoved that gun in my side."

Van Duesen had gone to Briggs' side of the car.

"So he's a wise guy?" said Van Duesen. "Well, I've got what it takes right here. Come outa there, fellow!"

A moment later Briggs cried out a dazed oath of protest. He stumbled around through the lights of the gray sedan, blood pouring from an ear mangled by a blow from Van Duesen's gun.

"Sam," ordered Van Duesen, "bring that guy in here as soon as Jessie pulls this outfit off the road."

Savage stepped into his own lighted trailer with Sam's gun poking at his back. Briggs was already in. Jessie—her lips were bolder with rouge, her face harder here in the light—went from window to window pulling the curtains close.

"Don't we travel swell?" she asked, looking about the interior. "I wouldn't mind a wagon like this for myself. How about it, Buck?"

"Want this one?"

"Why not?"

"I thought you'd be fool enough to want it!"

"Don't start riding me!" flared Jessie angrily. "I came through tonight, didn't I?"

"So what? Get outside there and keep watch."

She went out pouting angrily.

Briggs was wiping blood off his cheek with a red-splotched handkerchief.

"I wasn't looking for it, Chief. I thought she was the McCoy until she jammed a gun in my side. I tried to laugh it off, but she seemed to mean business. She sounded mighty jumpy with her trigger finger."

Sam grinned. He did have a broken nose. His forehead was high and wide, his face came down past the broken nose to a point at the chin, and his lips were thin and more on the bluish side than red. The sharp, bloodless effect was unpleasant.

"You should'a tried to find out," said Sam.

"You're a bloodthirsty devil," growled Van Duesen. "Some day you'll burn for it. Now then, which one of you two runs this short-wave radio? *You*, I guess. Your voice sounds familiar."

"What's so familiar about it?" said Briggs, glaring at the bloody handkerchief, and then at the speaker.

"I've been listening to it enough," said Van Duesen. "Get on that radio and get through to New Orleans. They'll be expecting that long-distance telephone call from Savage this evening. Tell 'em he decided to come in over the radio."

"You seem to have a short-wave receiver," Savage guessed.

"And a good one," said Sam. "The best we could buy—just to catch what you were batting back and forth through the air."

"I see you've been well-informed about us."

"Plenty," Van Duesen answered curtly. "You've been talking yourself into this over the air. Now tell that mug of yours to get New Orleans fast."

Sam will stand over him, and the first yip he makes for help, Sam will blow the top of his head all over the set."

Briggs shrugged, sat down at his set and turned on the generator. A gesture from Van Duesen directed Savage to sit down on the couch. Van Duesen stood by the door, gun in hand, and Sam stood behind Briggs. There was silence in the trailer while Briggs reached out across the country once more.

"W2ZXYZ calling W5RPLS, at New Orleans. W2ZXYZ calling W5RPLS. . ."

CHAPTER XXIV

Death Threatens

SEVERAL minutes of that, broken by pauses to listen, and Barton's familiar rapid voice came with startling clarity out of the loudspeaker.

"W5RPLS answering W2ZXYZ. I was wondering if you'd be on the air tonight. How's everything going now? Did you make it through today?"

"Wait a minute!" Van Duesen snapped before Briggs could cut himself in. "Remember, Sam gives it to you if you make one crack! Tell him you're at El Paso, and you're heading back to Chicago tonight!"

The loudspeaker said:

"Did you get me, W2ZXYZ? I'm waiting for you."

Sam had his gun muzzle against the back of Briggs' head as Briggs cut in and spoke huskily.

"I got you, W2RPLS. Yeah, we made it in to El Paso. And we're heading back to Chicago in the morning. Can you get the office?"

"Hold it open," said Barton cheerfully. "Back to Chi tomorrow? Are

you trying to run a cross-country marathon? Hold it open. . ."

A faint sheen of perspiration was on Briggs' face as he sat stiffly with the gun muzzle against the back of his head.

"Don't get careless with that."

Briggs suggested through stiff lips.

"Just don't make me nervous," Sam grinned.

"Ask that office if they got the fingerprint reports from the G-men," Van Duesen ordered. "Tell them the situation is under control here and you're heading for Chicago. Ask them about the Carstairs woman."

Briggs licked his lips and nodded.

"Are you there, W2ZXYZ?"

"Waiting on you, W5RPLS," said Briggs.

"Here it comes. . . Reports from Washington. The bullets found in the Torrington body match the bullets out of the house wall. Same gun. Same man, evidently. A whiskey bottle sent in by Cohatchie sheriff from trailer camp had fingerprints of Daniel Van Drake, alias Buck Clark, alias Big Tom Carson, with record of four years, Atlanta, on narcotic conviction, and numerous previous arrests without convictions. Just a minute—I'll get some more."

Van Duesen cursed softly and scowled as he met Savage's narrow look. The pointed, bloodless grin spread over Sam's face.

"That's what whiskey does for you, Buck. Why didn't you heave that bottle into the water?"

"Dry up, you grinning ape! D'you know what it means?" Van Duesen asked.

"This Sunday School dick is wise to you."

"T'hell with him! It means the G heat'll be on me!"

"Better head over the border and work for Limey down south."

"Yeah," muttered Van Duesen, and snapped up his head as New Orleans came in again.

"Here it is, W2ZXYZ. . . Fingerprints taken out of the Bourbon Street house includes the prints of John Black, alias Bob Mutton, who did three years at Leavenworth for possession of counterfeit currency, and the prints of Rudolph Coston, alias Soapy Jones, alias Sam Jenkins, wanted by San Francisco police for murder of a detective four years ago. The office wants to know why you're going to Chicago."

"Tell him," ordered Van Duesen, "that all the business leads to Chicago, and to hold everything until further orders. And ask about the Carstairs woman."

The report came back: "No word from the lady. The office wants to know if attempt shall be made to rearrest the two prisoners that were freed."

Van Duesen said: "Tell them there's nothing against those two, and to hold everything."

The generator died. The silence of the desert night outside closed down. Van Duesen sneered at Sam.

"SO you rubbed out a cop four years ago? I didn't know you were that hot. I wouldn't have touched you with a pole with that bent nose. Limey wouldn't either."

Sam's face was a livid death's head. He pushed Briggs' head roughly with the gun muzzle and then stepped back, pocketing the gun. The gun looked to Savage like a thirty-two calibre Colt automatic. The same gun, probably, which had killed that man in Larnigan's car.

Grinning, Sam said:

"Never mind how hot I am. I've gotten away for four years. I'll do it for plenty years more. And don't make cracks about my bent schnozzle. It suits me. Let's get going. Bob ought to have his end cleaned up by now."

"He'd better!" growled Van Duesen. "This starched shirt dick here has stirred up enough dust. We've got to work fast and fade. Savage, is there another pair of handcuffs in here?"

"I'm wearing the only pair we had," said Savage, lifting his shackled wrists. "By the way, what is Larnigan doing?"

"You won't have to worry about Larnigan," said Van Duesen colorlessly. "Sam, stop cuddling that rod in your pocket and get something out of the other trailer to tie this fellow."

"Why not leave him here?" suggested Sam.

"Damn you, no! He might be found. Get some cord. Tell Jessie to start driving."

Sam came back with a coil of strong cord. Van Duesen tied Briggs' wrists, jerking the knots so tight Briggs winced. The other trailer pulled out toward the highway. And with Van Duesen guarding Briggs and Savage, the bigger trailer followed some minutes later.

Savage noted that they turned north. The trailer began to lurch and sway as the speed rapidly increased. Van Duesen balanced with wide-spread legs and glanced in some of the cabinets. He found a bottle of the *Chateauneuf-au-pape*, knocked the neck off the wine bottle into the sink, slopped a glass full of wine, and drank half of it.

"No kick," he decided.

From the couch, Savage inquired: "Where are we going?"

Van Duesen shrugged. "That won't worry you two."

Briggs licked his lips. "Chief," said Briggs huskily, "these rats are going to kill us."

"Of course," said Savage thoughtfully. "I'm merely wondering where and when. And being glad Miss Carstairs isn't here."

"She's looking for trouble," said Van Duesen surlily as he lifted the glass again.

The trailer was swaying more violently as it raced into the north. Savage recalled this road from the maps as a long empty stretch of some ninety miles to Alamogordo, New Mexico. The semi-desert behind was probably a fair sample. A vast, dry, empty country. No water, probably, except at an occasional windmill or ranch house out on the range. Mountains many miles to the east and west, and the mountains themselves barren, dry, devoid of life.

In such country murder could be casual, leisurely, undiscovered. There was law, of course. Law in El Paso. Law in Alamogordo ahead and the little towns scattered over the huge state of New Mexico. But they were all tiny spots on the map. Between them were vast stretches which rarely saw a sheriff. For a thousand miles to the north and a thousand miles to the west there was country in which crimes might never be discovered.

ANTHONY SAVAGE reviewed the tangle of murder and mystery that had spun out two thousand miles from the low seacoast of Florida to this high, arid, wild country. Careful planning, rather than chance, seemed behind it.

But who had done the planning?

James Larnigan? Young Goddard? Hardly! Van Duesen or the sharp-faced little killer in the car were more likely candidates. Van Duesen had been casual about fleeing down into Mexico. He spoke like a man at home in this barren border country.

The one outstanding fact was that death waited at the end of this trip. Another killing or so would not make much difference to these two. Sam would probably relish the incident.

Such thoughts brought their own fatalistic conclusions. Since death was certain, why wait passively for it? Nothing that could happen here along the road could be any worse than what was due to happen.

Life was behind you. Odds against you meant nothing. You were not brave. But you were dangerous; you were quietly, coolly dangerous and deadly.

Van Duesen tossed the empty wine bottle into the sink. Glass in hand, he explored further. He opened the gun cabinet, was immediately so interested he tossed the partly empty glass over into the sink.

He pulled a skeet gun halfway out, thrust it back and lifted out Savage's particular pride and joy, the fine .280 Halger high velocity rifle.

Van Duesen moved closer to the light with the gun, handling it with respect.

"What'll it do at three hundred yards?" questioned Van Duesen over the noises made by the rushing trailer and the car exhaust just ahead.

"Better than 2600 foot pounds, with the 180 grain bullet," said Savage.

"Ha!" said Van Duesen. "This'll be something to keep."

Savage shrugged, watched Van Duesen carefully replace the gun in the rack. He marked that Van Due-

sen's hand went immediately to the gun in his pocket. The man was watching them. He was taking no chances. He'd kill at the first move toward them. Handcuffed as he was, and with Briggs' wrists tied, they didn't have a chance of overpowering Van Duesen. His first shot would probably be heard in the car ahead. Sam would stop, dash back with another gun. No, they didn't have a chance.

The one light bulb burning was in a wall bracket over the couch where Savage and Briggs were sitting. Opposite the couch was the door. Van Duesen was standing farther back, by the sink, where he could brace himself as the trailer rocked and swayed.

Savage found his mind centering on the light and door with increasing intensity. If the trailer slowed a little . . . if the light were suddenly out, plunging the interior of the trailer into blackness—there might be a chance to reach the door and jump!

What happened after that would be in the laps of the gods. Van Duesen's automatic might cut one or both of them down. Legs might be broken in the flying leap to the roadside, with nothing to do then but lie there and be slaughtered.

That would probably happen at the rate they were traveling. Sixty at least. Perhaps more. But they would have to slow sometime, if only for a few seconds.

Twenty minutes—twenty-five minutes passed. . . .

Van Duesen was biting on a piece of salami he had found in the ice box. Crackers were in his other hand. He was watching them when the trailer slowed abruptly, rolled down through a road dip, and bounced slightly as it took the other side of the dip. Van Duesen staggered back half a step and

reached out to the sink edge for support.

And Savage lunged up at the light!

CHAPTER XXV

Adrift in the Desert

VAN DUESEN'S angry shout was incoherent. Savage's shackled wrists smashed the light globe as he rapped to Briggs:

"The door, Briggs! Jump!"

In the same instant Savage shoved hard against the wall, hurling himself back across the darkened trailer. The automatic crashed out. Savage struck the door, slapped manacled hands at the door handle as the trailer picked up speed with a lurch. The automatic was roaring again as the door flew open. Briggs stumbled against Savage's back. The detective leaped far out, twisting himself to face forward.

His feet struck the edge of the road—the roadside ditch dropped away under him—and he fell heavily, sliding, rolling through sandy soil into a mound covered with low thorny growth.

Savage's last impression as he fell was the faint silhouette against the headlight glare of Briggs' leaping also.

Breath knocked out, thorns imbedded in his flesh, dust and dirt in his mouth, ears, eyes and nose, Savage reeled up. He could stand. He could move. He gasped—

"Briggs! Briggs!"

"Here!" Briggs replied feebly. He staggered closer to Savage.

Tires were shrieking on the road 150 yards ahead, as the driver brought the heavy car and trailer to a quick stop.

"Back across the road here!" Savage whispered hoarsely. "They may

think we ran in the direction we jumped!"

A thin drift of clouds hid part of the starry sky. The night was deep black. They stumbled across the road, plunged over sandy soil dotted thickly with low earthen mounds covered by the cruel thorny growth.

Briggs gasped: "I'm shot in the leg! Don't know how far I can go!"

"How badly is it bleeding?"

"I can feel blood running down my leg! The bone seems all right!" panted Briggs.

Over his shoulder Savage could see the lights ahead of the stationary car and trailer, and could faintly hear angry voices.

Briggs stumbled, fell, swore as the long sharp thorns pierced his flesh. Their feet made little sound in the soft soil. They could see better now, could vaguely make out the brush-covered mounds and the clear spaces.

Far behind them on the road other lights in the trailer had been turned on. Into the south, over the horizon, light from the air beacon atop the mountain swept around and around in the sky. But to the north and the south, as far as the eye could see, there were no more lights, no other cars on the road. Ahead of them the night seemed an infinity of emptiness.

"Gosh, this leg hurts!" Briggs gulped, but kept on running.

Far back, at the trailer, Savage saw the smaller beam of a flashlight sweeping around. A little later the flashlight glinted in their direction.

"They have a flashlight out of the trailer! They're following our tracks!" Savage panted. And then he remembered. "Get your breath, Briggs, and reach into my right coat pocket. I dropped the keys to these handcuffs in there. Van Duesen didn't get them!"

Briggs fumbled clumsily in the pocket, got the key, groped to fit it into the handcuffs, and almost dropped the tiny key. He cursed, waited a moment, tried again. The key slipped in. Savage dropped the handcuffs into his pocket, took a penknife from Briggs' pocket and freed Briggs' wrists.

The flashlight was still bobbing back on their trail.

"Maybe there's a chance to slip back and get the car going," suggested Briggs.

"Not much chance they left the keys in the lock. One of them may be waiting there at the car hoping we'll try," said Savage. "Can you get on?"

"Coming," said Briggs.

THE light followed doggedly after them. But, Savage judged, the light was not gaining much. The car lights now were out of sight in the distance behind.

Briggs stopped again, reeling. "You go one way an' I'll go the other!" Briggs gasped as Savage supported him.

"Not a chance of it, old man. Don't waste your breath. Leg still bleeding?"

"Yes!"

"Get your trousers off. I'll use my shirt for a bandage. It should help a little."

The wound seemed to be a nasty tear in the muscles, deep, dangerous, painful. But Briggs could move, although it kept the wound open. They went on, into an infinity of night-shrouded space. And like a creeping nemesis, the winking light came after them.

Savage thought of doubling back and waiting beside the trail. Reason dissuaded him. With only the handcuffs for a weapon, he wouldn't have

much chance against one armed man. None at all against two. If he fell, Briggs would be caught soon after. He saved the idea for a last hope.

The road, miles back, was out of sight. Even the car lights were invisible across that flat, thorn-covered plain. And only now and then did they glimpse the following light.

How much time passed, Savage did not know. But there came a time when they could not see the light. They waited. Still the light did not appear. They walked on slowly, watching behind, listening. Finally Savage said: "Those flashlight batteries weren't too fresh. Rest a while, Briggs. We'll see what happens."

Nothing happened. A long time later they made out the wink of moving car lights on the far horizon behind, to the north. Impossible to tell whether it was the lights of their car.

Half an hour later Savage decided: "Safe enough now to work back toward the highway, I think. If they've gone on, good. If they're waiting back there, we'll come out on the road several miles to the south."

Briggs groaned when he tried to walk.

"Don't know whether I can make it," said Briggs weakly. "Go on, chief. I'll be around here somewhere."

"We'll do it together, fellow. And you're going to make it. Listen—isn't that a train whistle?"

It was. They saw the engine headlight miles away, evidently not far beyond the highway. They watched it pass and vanish toward El Paso. A man's throat tightened at thought of the quick trip one could make to the city, to doctors and help, on that speeding train. And the painful dragging slowness with which they inched on foot across this endless landscape.

Briggs was growing weaker. More often he had to stop and rest. But at least they did not see the pursuing flashlight again.

A chill wind sprang up. Hours had passed since they left the trailer. Briggs was stumbling, Savage was half supporting him.

Another train went north. They came in sight of the highway, saw an automobile pass going north. And a little later another going south. And then another going north—and no more automobiles.

It was two-thirty in the morning when they reached the road, miles south of where they had left it. Briggs collapsed in the sand, under the lee of a mound where the wind did not reach him.

Automobile headlights appeared from the north, traveling fast. Savage stepped out in the road and waved his hands. And at the last minute had to jump back as the machine rushed past.

"Afraid of a hold-up," he said, returning to Briggs.

BRIGGS was too weak to walk farther. Gray dawn was pushing over the eastern mountains before another machine appeared on the road. And this time it was an old truck traveling noisily and slowly toward El Paso.

The truck stopped. It was carrying a load of steers. Two tanned men wearing broad-brimmed sombreros were in the cab. They stared in amazement at Savage's dirty, thorn-ripped face, his soiled suit, his undershirt exposed under the coat.

"We were held up," Savage explained. "My partner's shot in the leg. Have you passed any trailers to the north of here?"

"We only come from this side of Alamagordo," replied one of the men. "Boy, yuh two are in a bad shape! Shore we'll take yuh in town!"

They had to help Briggs into the cab. One of the men rode on the running board while Savage crowded on the seat beside Briggs. Before they rolled into El Paso Savage put on Briggs' shirt.

"You won't need it in the hospital, Briggs. I'll have to be moving around fast before the stores are open."

"I hate to run out on you at a time like this, chief," said Briggs painfully.

"Can't be helped. I think we may get a break out of this night yet."

They took Briggs to a hospital. The truck left. A police car arrived a few minutes later, in answer to the telephoned report that a wounded man had been brought in.

Savage described the two trailers, the cars that pulled them, gave the license numbers of his car and trailer. He washed hastily and talked to the police while an interne patched up his face. The police telephoned headquarters, promised quick action on a broadcast report to halt the two cars. But one of them gave his opinion:

"They've had too much of a start. Those trailers will be ditched somewhere. Maybe the cars. There's a thousand places north of here they can drop out of sight if they keep off the highways."

Savage telephoned the Hotel del Monte. He was prepared for what he heard.

"Miss Sullivan checked out at five minutes to seven last night. . . . No, she didn't leave a forwarding address."

The Tri-State Agency had a night telephone listed. A sleepy voice answered.

"This is Anthony Savage, on that

case referred to you by the Apperson Agency in New Orleans. Where did Miss Sullivan go?"

"How should we know where she went, Mr. Savage?" the astonished voice replied. "This is Starbuck speaking. In the office, about five-thirty yesterday afternoon, you personally told me you'd handle this matter yourself. We were discharged from the case. And as you directed, we took our man off Miss Sullivan at once."

"At that time I was over near Van Horn, Texas," said Savage bruskiy. "Someone impersonated me! Will you get down to your office at once?"

CHAPTER XXVI

Rita Walks into Danger

STARBUCK was a chunky man with a short black mustache; he displayed signs of his hasty trip to the office. And Starbuck was almost incoherent at what had happened.

"How could I know, Mr. Savage? The man was well dressed, seemed to know exactly what he was doing, spoke of the trip he'd just made, and knew every detail about which we had been informed. We were expecting your arrival. It all fitted in."

"I'd probably have been taken in the same way," Savage granted. "I didn't do any better myself. What did this man look like?"

Starbuck knit his brows.

"Different—not at all like you, Savage. He was somewhat younger, for one thing. More heavily tanned than you are. And he'd been working hard somewhere. When he shook hands, I noticed the callouses."

Savage stared. "Callouses—heavy tan? Was he about twenty-six? Blond? Let's see—some gold in one of his front teeth?"

"Er—yes—I think so. I remember the gold showing when he smiled. D'you know him?"

"I think I do," Savage snapped. "And if it's the same man, he *has* been working hard—as a gardener, an assistant gardener, to be correct. And I've had the feeling about him that I overlooked something that should have been followed up. He called himself Parker."

"He was Savage when he was in here," stated Starbuck glumly.

"Well, that's water over the dam. What about Miss Sullivan?"

"She stayed around her room most of the time. Lunched with one of the hotel guests. A man. He registered as R. L. Chatham, Chicago."

"Chatham? Chicago? What'll break next in this case?" Savage exclaimed, recalling Chatham, that unobtrusive business associate of Larnigan's in Florida. "Let's have your telephone!"

Savage called the Del Monte again.

Mr. Chatham had registered from Chicago night before last. He had checked out at six the previous evening, without a forwarding address.

Savage was red-eyed, haggard behind the patches of tape on his ripped face. He scowled at the telephone for a moment.

"Ever hear of a Daniel Van Drake, alias Buck Clark, alias Big Tom Carson?" he asked Starbuck.

Starbuck shook his head.

"Or John Black, alias Bob Hutton—or Rudolph Coston, alias Soapy Jones, alias Sam Jenkins?"

"I'm sorry, Mr. Savage."

"They're both acquainted with a man down in Mexico called Limey."

"Not Limey Drake?"

"Limey is the only name I know."

"It must be Limey Drake," said Starbuck positively. "He's the **only**

'Limey' along the border here who would fit into a case like this."

"A bad one, eh?"

"Worse," said Starbuck. "Limey Drake is notorious along the border. His specialty is smuggling."

"Dope?"

"Naturally. But other things—Chinamen, onions, butter, Swiss watch movements. There's quite a profit in watch movements because of the high duty. They don't carry identification marks and can't be traced after they're in the country. No one's ever proved dope smuggling on Drake. But then he always has others do the work."

"Daniel Van Drake," said Savage, "did four years in Atlanta on a dope charge. But I can't by any stretch of the imagination connect dope with this case."

"I think," Starbuck decided, "you want to talk to Jim Considine. Jim's an Inspector of the Customs Border Patrol. An undercover man. Does a lot of his work down in Mexico. One of Jim's pet hates is Limey Drake. He knows more about Drake and the men Drake uses than any living man. Jim's in town. I'll telephone him, and we'll go over to his hotel."

YOU had a sense of confidence from the first sight of Jim Considine. Slightly built, square-jawed, almost as dark as a Mexican, Considine was blond and blue-eyed. His eyes were dark blue, stabbing, rather cold, as such men's eyes are apt to be. And his manner was quiet and intent.

Considine was in his undershirt when he admitted them to his hotel room. He stood by the window, sinewy fingers toying with a brown paper cigarette while Savage explained the case.

"Yes, I've seen this Sam Jenkins,"

said Considine thoughtfully. "I saw him talking to Limey in a Torreon *cantina* a couple of years ago. He left as soon as Drake warned him I was in the place. Got out of town. But I've carried that broken nose in my mind. So he was wanted in San Francisco for murder? I wish I'd known it. Van Drake I don't place. Limey's dealt with a lot of men. It may even be a relative. Drake—Van Drake. Close, eh?"

Savage spoke rapidly.

"How about John Blake, alias Bob Hutton? I think he's the man who impersonated me. He's the key to this. I've got to get on his track at once."

"I don't place him," said Considine. "But if he's been close to Limey, I may be able to get a line on him. Suppose you two get some breakfast and go over into Juarez. Stand across from the jail on Cinco de Mayo Street. No, go to the plaza. You can sit down there. If anyone comes along and says: 'Viva Mexico,' go with him."

Considine smiled thinly. "Sometimes I don't want to be too public in Juarez. One gringo is bad enough. Three together stand out like the horns on an old mossyback *brasada* steer."

Over ham and eggs and strong black coffee in a white-tiled lunchroom near the El Paso plaza, Starbuck confided:

"Jim Considine has had enough close scrapes from death to turn most men's hair white. Anywhere across the border he's fair game. I don't know what he's up to now—but if Jim thinks he can do anything, you can be damned well sure he'll probably come through. And he knows every in-and-out of the Juarez underworld."

"Sounds good to me," said Savage. "There'll be time to buy a shirt, I guess. And I'll stop by your office and get off a wire to New Orleans."

Over the telephone in the Tri-State

Agency office, Savage was dictating the telegram to Clancy, in New Orleans, when a messenger entered with a telegram.

"For you," Starbuck said, bringing the envelope to the telephone.

A minute or so later Savage whistled softly as he read the wire. It had been sent from Hollywood the night before, to Clancy's office in New Orleans, and forwarded from there.

HAVE TALKED TO LORETTA
ARMOND STOP AM CONVINCED
SHE IS MERELY CASUAL GOLD
DIGGER STOP SHE KNEW GOD-
DARD AS FILM WRITER HERE
IN HOLLYWOOD STOP GODDARD
CALLED HER FROM COHATCHIE
TO TRY TO GET HER TO CALL
OFF LARNIGAN FROM BELLAMY
MATTER STOP GODDARD AFTER
DRINKING TOO MUCH ONE NIGHT
CONFIDED TO HER HE HAD BLACK
SHEEP HALF BROTHER FROM
NEW MEXICO NAMED APPROPRI-
ATELY BLACK STOP SAME
MOTHER DIFFERENT FATHERS
STOP AM FLYING TO ALBU-
QUERQUE TONIGHT TO INVESTI-
GATE HALF BROTHER AND
GODDARD'S BACKGROUND STOP
GODDARD APPARENTLY NOT BAD
SORT OUT HERE TO THOSE WHO
KNEW HIM SIGNED RITA CAR-
STAIRS

"Good girl!" said Savage delightedly, and the next instant swift apprehension struck him hard.

RITA must have flown from New Orleans to Los Angeles to tackle the case from that end. And she'd done well. Too well!

A black sheep half-brother named Black! It must be John Black, alias Bob Hutton. Everything fitted in!

And if this Bob Hutton was Parker, the assistant gardener on Bellamy's estate, then Hutton had been working close to Clark, the man who Anne Teasdale had said was young Goddard's father.

You could get excited about that—

the old man, Clark, working humbly there around the boat-house while his son was engaged to his wealthy employer's daughter. And the black sheep half-brother of young Goddard working on the place also, under an assumed name.

That would make old man Clark merely the foster-father of the assistant gardener, Hutton. No kin, no blood ties, probably no affection.

The two men had been quarrelling in the boathouse just before Savage first saw them. The assistant gardener had displayed no emotion over Clark's death. The facts suddenly suggested that the assistant gardener had had a hand in his foster-father's death. Young Jack Goddard would know, wherever he was.

A swift stab of apprehension for Rita Carstairs struck Savage. Rita had flown in the night from Los Angeles to Albuquerque, New Mexico, some three hundred miles to the north.

And the two trailers had headed north! Bob Hutton must have gone that way!

Rita Carstairs innocently is rushing into danger and only Tony Savage, ace investigator, can save her. But he is in El Paso and she is hundreds of miles to the north, bound for an unknown destination. Can he save her? Can he clear up this vicious murder syndicate that has eluded him from Florida to Texas? The swift, smashing conclusion of this exciting serial appears in next week's issue of DETECTIVE WEEKLY.

Cipher Solvers' Club for March

(Continued from page 85)

N. Y.; Alwina Gentsch, Richmond Hill, N. Y.; Iris Goldthorpe, New York, N. Y.; *Jayel, Canton, Ohio; †Nonagenarian II, Fancy Prairie, Ill.; Chi Valor, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; Wew, Chicago, Ill.; George F. Wiley, Chicago, Ill.; †Zarkov, Aberdeen, S. Dak.

Sixteen—Isabella Grady, Fall River, Mass.; *Pearl Knowler, Wendling, Oreg.; Mae Lisbeth Phelps, Tampa, Fla.; Ralavega, Miles City, Mont.

Fifteen—†Edna D. Brooks, Attleboro, Mass.; Ephaw, Long Island City, N. Y.; †H. L. Evans, New York, N. Y.; Odd Fellow, Bronx,

Rita didn't know all that. She wouldn't be prepared. If she had luck in her quest, she was going to blunder into their hands. There wasn't a chance to warn her now, to stop her. And they'd kill her, kill her sure!

Savage caught up the telephone again, snapped: "Long distance!" And when the long distance operator was connected, he said: "Calling Miss Rita Carstairs, at Albuquerque. She arrived in Albuquerque on the plane last night. She should be registered at one of the leading hotels."

He had a wait of some minutes. They seemed endless; and then the answer was:

"Miss Carstairs registered at El Fidel Hotel last night. She left about thirty minutes ago, leaving word at the desk she would be gone all day."

Savage hung up. Knifing apprehension coursed through him again. Something had to be done—and done immediately to save that girl.

"Let's get over to Juarez quickly!" he snapped at Starbuck. "We've got to find Considine at once!"

N. Y.; Hevan, Le Mars, Iowa; †Illy, Akron, Ohio; †Al. Liston, Newark, N. J.; L. E. S., Firebaugh, Calif.; †Will Will, White Plains, N. Y.; Russell R. Willard, Coopersville, Mich.

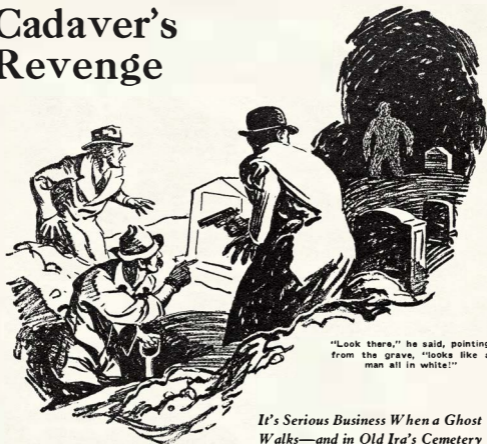
Fourteen—†Myrtle Lee Bunn, Washington, D. C.; †Mrs. Robert De Noyelles, Douglaston, N. Y.; King Frank, Maspeth, N. Y.; †John T. Straiger, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Thirteen—Joseph F. Csank, Cleveland, Ohio; Elsie, Natchez, Miss.

Twelve—†Attempt (36th-37th), Akron, Ohio; †Harry R. Bell, Columbus, Ohio; Ciphersmith, Tallahassee, Fla.; *Joseph E. Conklin, River-

(Continued on page 133)

Cadaver's Revenge



"Look there," he said, pointing from the grave, "looks like a man all in white!"

By Thomas W. Duncan

Author of "The Men They Murdered," "Still Waters," etc.

"MR. KOSS," said Jay Rutherford Longworth, ex-con extraordinary, "there's one branch of our profession that I've rather neglected."

Otis Koss glanced sharply at his companion in the back seat of the sedan.

"Safe cracking?" he inquired.

"No," said Jay Rutherford Longworth, gazing out at the flying countryside, "it was a safe cracking rap that put me in Joilet."

"Fencing?"

*It's Serious Business When a Ghost
Walks—and in Old Ira's Cemetery
It Proved a Grave Matter*

"No," reminisced Jay Rutherford "when I decided to go straight, I set up as a fence. That was in 'Frisco. They gave me a stretch for it in San Quentin. Which just goes to show that honesty don't pay."

Otis Koss fingered his long horse face.

"What is it," he asked finally, "that you ain't done much with?"

Before replying, Jay Rutherford Longworth took out a cigar from his pocket, scrupulously lit it, and blew fragrant smoke at the ceiling of the sumptuous sedan. He was about fifty, and looked as if he should have been sitting on the Stock Exchange. The

last time he was weighed (before he began gaining), the scales groaned to 205.

On this October afternoon his noble bulk was clad in a black broadcloth coat and vest, and pin-striped trousers. A high polish gleamed on his expensive shoes, and a black derby sat on his silvery head. A diamond ring flashed on his little finger, matched by a larger diamond in his fine necktie.

"Mr. Koss," he said weightily, "the branch of our profession to which I refer is—uh—cemetery work."

"Cemetery work! But, Jay. There's a homicide indictment against you right now in Massachusetts."

Mr. Longworth inhaled the luxurious smoke and blew a couple of rings.

"I'm not," he said, "speaking of putting people into cemeteries. I'm referring to taking them out."

"You mean—you mean grave-robbing?"

"Mr. Koss," said Mr. Longworth reproachfully, "your bluntness of speech is, at times, painful. I prefer to call it—uh—the exhuming of cadavers."

"Whatever you call it," growled Mr. Koss, "it ain't up our alley. It ain't got no dignity. Con-work is good enough for me."

MR. LONGWORTH puffed blissfully for a moment. His pale blue eyes, dreamy with thought, rested on the broad shoulders of Huckins, the chauffeur.

"We," he murmured, "would do no actual digging, Mr. Koss. Huckins would do that."

Otis Koss shook his narrow head. He was about thirty-five, brown-skinned, hard-eyed.

"Naw, Jay—let's not get mixed up with any stiffs. I knew a guy oncet

that was in that business. Know what happened to him?"

"Since I wasn't acquainted with the gentleman, Mr. Koss, how could I know?"

"He got haunted," said Otis Koss darkly.

Jay Rutherford Longworth's gold teeth glistened. "You don't mean to tell me you believe in ghosts?"

"Well—"

"I didn't think it of you. Besides, the business I have in mind would be no ordinary job of exhuming and selling a cadaver. That, I agree, is for persons with low mental voltage. For muscle-men like Huckins. My thought in this matter is to dig not for a body—but for what is buried with the body."

"I don't get it, Jay. I wish you'd talk American for a change instead of that high-toned gab."

Jay Rutherford Longworth picked up the folded newspaper that he had been reading, before he launched into conversation. Indicating a news story with a pudgy forefinger, he handed the paper to his companion. The item had evidently been written by the small-town correspondent of the metropolitan paper:

BANKER BURIES GEMS

IN WIFE'S COFFIN

Sioux Creek, Oct. 19.—Love of a banker for his dead wife is responsible for a modern version of a buried treasure story in this rural community.

Jasper Davis, president of the First National Bank of Sioux Creek, ordered that a string of pearls be buried yesterday in his wife's coffin.

The pearls, which cost \$10,000, were given to Mrs. Davis by her husband twenty years ago.

When interviewed by a *Beacon* correspondent, Mr. Davis verified the rumor that the gems were to be buried with her.

"Nancy was so fond of those pearls," he

said, "that I feel it is only proper that they should be buried with her."

When asked if this were not an unusual proceeding, Mr. Davis said:

"Well, after all, the Indians used to bury with a warrior his favorite weapon and his trinkets. And I loved Nancy more than any squaw ever loved her brave."

Otis Koss tossed aside the newspaper. "I don't," he declared, "like the idea of messing around graveyards."

"Ten grand," said Jay Rutherford Longworth, "is a lot of money for an hour's work. There'll be a full moon tonight."

"Well, where is this Sioux Creek?"

Otis Koss said after a moment.

Jay Rutherford took a map from the pocket of the car.

"I thought so," he murmured. "It's directly on our route to Omaha. We should reach Sioux Creek in another hour."

"Yeah, Jay, but we get there, and what do we do?"

"We dig. I mean, Huckins digs."

"I know, but how we going to know which is the right grave?"

"Graveyards have sextons. You know—a caretaker. A fellow who cuts grass and digs graves. He should be able to tell us."

"Maybe he won't."

Jay Rutherford patted the bulge that an automatic made in his coat pocket.

"And maybe he will."

"But look, Jay. We're likely to get caught. Somebody's sure to catch us—"

"Mr. Koss," purred Jay Rutherford, "you forget one thing."

"Yeah?"

"You forget human nature."

"What's human nature got to do with it?"

"Most people—and you're a good example of this—more or less believe

in ghosts. They laugh at the idea in the daylight—but when night comes they stay away from cemeteries. It'll be dusk in an hour . . . I think we can work without interruption."

"It's bad luck to dig open a grave."

"Ten grand," Jay Rutherford smiled, "is a lot of money."

SOME people said that old Ira Slater was crazy.

"He's a little cracked," they would say. And then they always added, "But who wouldn't be—with a job like that."

On that October day, red sunset was surrendering to red moonrise when old Ira heard a car humming up the lonely hill. From the door of the toolshed he squinted at the yew-lined road. A sedan turned into the cemetery, and he hobbled out to meet it.

The chauffeur, a morose chap with an underslung jaw, switched off the motor, and the car listed as a bulky man stepped to the running board from the back seat.

He grabbed Ira Slater's dangling right paw and shook it vigorously.

"Mighty glad to know you!" he boomed. "My name's Jay Rutherford Longworth."

"Howdy do," Ira intoned in his cracked old voice. He rubbed his fingers. "My name's Ira Slater."

"And this," Jay Rutherford said, "is Mr. Koss. Mr. Otis Koss."

"Howdy do," Ira repeated. "What kin I do for you?"

The fat man smiled and roared heartily, "It's not a question, Mr. Slater, of what you can do for us. It's what we're going to do for you. Isn't that so, Mr. Koss?"

"Truer words than them was never spoke," Mr. Koss asserted.

Ira cocked his bonny head, clamped

together his nutcracker mouth and squinted at the strangers.

"I dunno," he cackled at last. "Folks that say they're goin' to do something for you usually turn around an' do something *to* you."

"Come, come, Mr. Slater," Jay Rutherford boomed. "Life in a peaceful place like this shouldn't make you so cynical."

And he gave Ira Slater's skinny back a friendly slap between the protruding shoulder blades.

"Don't *do* that!" Ira exclaimed. "You keep poundin' my back an' you'll be startin' my neuralgia!"

Jay Rutherford heavily cleared his throat. "Uh—I take it you're the sexton here, Mr. Slater."

"Well," Ira snapped, "I dunno what I'd be hangin' round here at this hour for if I wasn't. I been sexton here for thirty years."

"You dig the graves, then?"

"There ain't a remains been put in this ground for more'n a quarter century, that I ain't dug the grave."

"Uh—you had a funeral here yesterday, didn't you?"

Ira stroked his white mustache. "One yesterday *and* one today. Beats all how folks do die. Yes sir, we buried old Wild Jack Perkins today. He was nigh onto a hundred, an' as a young feller he came out on these prairies an' fit the Indians. . . . An' yesterday—yesterday we buried Nancy Davis. Mrs. Jasper Davis, she was. Banker's wife. . . . Me an' her was the same age—sixty-seven. . . ."

Jay Rutherford licked his chops and purred in a rich, confidential voice:

"Mr Slater. We've—uh—got a proposition to make to you."

"That so?"

"Mr. Slater, how would you like to make fifty dollars?"

"Cash money?"

"Cash money."

"Never knew a feller to pass up a chance to make a big amount like that. What would I have to do?"

"All you'll have to do is say three words."

"Three—?"

Jay Rutherford nodded. "Yes sir, Mr. Slater—all you'll have to do is to say, 'There it is!'"

"**D**ERN it!" old Ira exclaimed. "Why don't you come to the point! There *what* is?"

The fat man turned and beckoned the chauffeur.

"This," he said, "is Huckins. Huckins will do the diggin'."

"An' me only three weeks off the rockpile," Huckins sighed.

"Diggin'. What diggin'?"

Jay Rutherford's voice dropped almost to a whisper. "We want you to take us to this Davis woman's grave. We want to open it."

"You want—?"

"You get the idea," the fat man grinned.

"Why dog your hides!" old Ira shrilled. "You can't do that!"

"We can't?"

"'Course you can't! It's agin the law!"

A low laugh shook Jay Rutherford's great stomach. "I'd certainly hate to break the law, Mr. Slater, but, on the other hand. . . ."

"Why you want to open Nancy Davis's grave, anyhow?"

"That's our affair. All you have to do is point out the grave to us and take your fifty bucks and keep your trap shut."

Ira pursed his lips. The shadows were deepening; on a far ridge a hound-dog was yelping mournfully.

Suddenly the old sexton yapped:

"By glory, I know what you are! You're body-stealers for some doctor school—!"

"Shut up."

Ira kept muttering.

"Shut up, I say! We're not body-snatchers. We're—gem-dealers."

"What in tarnation is that?"

Jay Rutherford told him. "As gem-dealers, Mr. Slater, as connoisseurs you might say, it saddens us to think of a beautiful string of pearls being buried from the sight of day. It doesn't seem right. Those pearls won't do anyone any good—buried six feet in the ground. So we want to dig them up."

"You fellers are plumb fools," Ira shrilled. "I know Jasper Davis well—mebby too well. He's a mean old blow-hard. Nancy was worth a hundred of the likes of him. That warn't a ten thousand dollar necklace. Myself, I doubt ye if it cost a hundred—I think it was a fake. If it hadn't been a fake, old Jasper would've never put it into the ground with Nancy."

"You're crazy," Jay Rutherford gruffed. "They'd never printed it in the paper if those pearls were phoney."

"Mebby I'm crazy and mebby I'm not," old Ira whined. "But I know one thing—Jasper Davis is a windy old tightwad. Never catch him puttin' ten thousand in the ground. He said he did, but that was just to fool folks into thinkin' he loved Nancy more'n he did."

"I think," Jay Rutherford said, "we'll have a look, anyway. That offer still goes. All you have to do is take us to the grave. Easiest fifty bucks you ever made."

Ira exclaimed, "I wouldn't open Nancy's grave fer the president of this

land! You can take your fifty dollars and—"

"And what?" inquired Jay Rutherford, slipping an automatic from his pocket.

"Nothin'," Ira said, with a nervous shrug.

"Now," the fat man said smoothly, "you're being sensible. Where's your spade?"

"It's there by the toolhouse door."

"Let's go. The sooner we're done, the better."

"I'll say so," Otis Koss put in, glancing round uneasily. "I don't like this place."

IRA shuffled toward the toolhouse. The sun had long since fled, and the bright moon poured frosty light into the valleys that fell away from this hilltop burying-ground.

"Give Huckins the spade," Jay Rutherford commanded.

"I ain't in no hurry for it," Huckins growled.

Ira handed it over. Then he said, "I'd better warn ye. . . ."

"Warn us? What about?"

"There's a haunt in these parts."

"A what?"

"Some calls it a ghost. I calls it a haunt. I never seen it, but it's *been* seen."

"Nonsense."

Very low, Ira replied, "Well, jest thought I'd warn ye. Ain't no harm in that, I guess. . . . Fact is, that's why I didn't take you fellers up on your offer. I ain't never stayed here after dark. Ain't money enough to make me. . . ."

"What's all this crazy talk!" Jay Rutherford demanded.

Otis Koss said uneasily, "Jay, I think we'd be smart to scam. To get on to Omaha."

"Me too!" exclaimed Huckins.

"Boys," Jay Rutherford boomed heartily, "don't let this crazy old fool rattle you."

Ira sucked his lips. "I know what I know," he said darkly. "Thirty year ago, old Sam Evans was sexton here. *He* stayed once after nightfall, an' he was found the next day. Dead. Not a mark on him. It was the White Man that done it. I took Sam's job. Been at it thirty year. An' this is my first time here after nightfall."

Ira's voice melted into the hush of the October evening. Far in the distance, down the misty valley, the evening passenger train whistled. A mile away, the hound-dog was still wailing at the moon.

Jay Rutherford tried to laugh. "You don't expect us to *believe* that yarn, do you?"

"Don't expect nothin' of nobody." Ira spat into the frost-crisped grass. "Jest warnin' ye. It's been seen, as I said. By several people. By Tim Bennett's boy, fer one. Tim lives a piece down the road." Ira jerked his head in the direction away from the village. "Jest a few weeks ago Tim's boy, Charley, was cuttin' through here after nightfall. He seen it. Said it was a man dressed in white, comin' through that gate and along the driveway where your car stands. Charley ran. Don't blame him. You couldn't get him in here now after nightfall fer *nothin'.*"

The fat man's gaze swept the driveway which ran bright in the quicksilver moonlight to the road.

"We—ought to—scram. . . ." Otis Koss mumbled.

Jay Rutherford waved the automatic. "Get going. Where's the grave?"

Ira Slater shrugged and led the way

to a mound of fresh clay in an unmarked lot by the driveway.

"There it is."

"Start digging," Jay Rutherford told Huckins.

The chauffeur groaned, spat on his palms, and plunged the spade into the loosely heaped clay.

"I might as well be on the rockpile," he muttered. "I don't like this place, anyway. . . . All these dead guys in the ground—well, it puts a man to thinkin' . . ."

"Never," Jay Rutherford told him emphatically, "think. You weren't made for it, Huckins, and you're apt to strain something."

THE moon rose higher; the silhouettes of the yew trees were sharply cut against the silver-blue sky. In the distant valley, the tiny lights of the village twinkled yellow through the mist that bewitched the autumn night. The grave deepened. Jay Rutherford produced a flask and passed it around.

"No thank ye," old Ira snapped.

"That hits the spot," Otis Koss declared, shivering a little. "This place gives me the willies."

Huckins took a great swig. "Whee—zowie!" he exclaimed, rubbing his stomach. "That's got a kick like a shot-gun." He drank again. "Makes me feel like singin'," he said. "Ever heard me sing, Jay?"

"My name," said Jay Rutherford Longworth with great dignity, "is Mr. Longworth. And if you ever start singing, you're fired. If I want a canary, I'll get one in a cage."

"That was me!" declared Huckins. "A canary in a cage! The boys at Michigan City said they never heard such a voice."

"Dig!" ordered Jay Rutherford. "Quit leaning on that spade. Dig!"

"Aw right, aw right! But it just goes to show how a guy with talent can get bum breaks."

Ira stood silent at the edge of the grave, shrewdly observing his captors. Jay Rutherford did not drink; his automatic never wavered from the old sexton. Otis Koss kept twisting his head and nervously snapping his fingers. Then, from a patch of timberland off to the east, a long wail ascended to the frosty moon. Tremulous and ghostly, it floated over the graveyard like the lament of a soul forever lost.

Koss gave an involuntary shudder; even Jay Rutherford started. Huckins stopped digging.

"What was that?"

Ira's laugh was a short cackle. "Don't you fellers worry about that. That's just a coyote over in Johnson's timber. *That* can't hurt you."

"A sound like that," Huckins said hoarsely, "takes all the music out of a man."

Ira cackled again. "The White Man don't howl. Them that has seen him says he walks quiet, mostly."

"You crazy old coot!" Jay Rutherford boomed. "Shut up about that White Man. And Huckins, you dig faster. We can't stay here all night."

"Ain't late yet," Ira observed. "Ain't more'n a few minutes after supper time, right now."

The group lapsed into a silence broken only by the thud of Huckin's spade. Ira's jaws worked in a chewing motion. He knew he was very likely to die. After these men had finished, they would probably put a bullet into his carcass. Dead men didn't talk. Perhaps they would roll his lifeless body into the grave and cover it. He would never be found; no one would think to look into the

grave. The cold smell of raw earth entered his nostrils and he shivered.

The spade clanged against something solid. Huckins straightened, kneading the small of his back.

"There's a steel bell coverin' the coffin," he said.

"It's goin' to be a job," Ira yapped, "hoisting that coffin out. We'll have to get ropes from the shed—" His gaze flicked to the yew trees that lined the edge of the cemetery. Along the road, still a good distance away, something white glimmered in the moonlight. "Let me get into that grave," Ira added. "I think there's a handle on that bell that we can hook ropes through."

He eased himself into the grave, then said dryly, pointing toward the road:

"Look there, would you. . . . Looks like a man all in white."

IRA stooped and in the damp darkness ran his hand round the inner base of the grave. At last his fingers contacted what they had been seeking — a small canvas bundle. He unwrapped it and cautiously peered over the pile of earth.

Ira said, "He's comin'. . . ."

The figure was turning in at the gate. From the top of his cap to the bottom of his trousers, he was a striding study in white. The moonlight glistened on him.

"That's him, all right," Ira cackled.

Jay Rutherford Longworth was beginning to tremble. His automatic still pointed at Ira. Huckins mumbled incoherently and scrambled out of the grave. Otis Koss was shaking like a whipped dog.

"Koss!" the fat man ordered. "Take hold of yourself."

Suddenly, Ira pointed his left fore-

finger at the approaching figure and uttered a long screech.

"My God!—I can't stand it!" Otis Koss gasped. The fat man gripped his wrist. With a jerk Koss tore himself loose, spinning his companion half round, and plunged off through the moonlight. Instantly, Jay Rutherford aimed his automatic at the white figure.

A spurt of red, accompanied by the report of a gun, came from the grave. Another followed, then a third.

The man with the automatic crumpled heavily to earth. Koss's arms shot upward, and he stumbled forward on his face; while Huckins, running for freedom, whirled, let out a yell, and dropped.

Ira climbed from the grave. He did not seem afraid of the white figure trotting toward him. Indeed, he spoke to it:

"Evenin', Tim Bennett. Glad to see you. Fact is, I was never so glad to see anyone—"

"What—?"

Ira explained. And he added, "Your wife came by here this afternoon and told me she was baking fresh bread. She said she'd send you down with a loaf this evenin' if I'd wait here, and when these fellers came, I remembered

that." Ira reached out and took the loaf of bread from Bennett's hand. "And I got to thinkin'. You being a painter—workin' today painting Jed Sullivan's house—I figured you'd still have on your white overalls. . . ."

"But," Tim Bennett exclaimed, "you say you didn't have a gun. And—" He pointed at the revolver in Ira's hand.

"Uh-huh. You see, I had 'em open Wild Jack Perkins's grave instead of Nancy's. Wild Jack used to be an Indian fighter, and he got the idee from them—of havin' his weapon buried with him. Last week, on his death-bed, he told me he was afraid his relatives would think it a fool idee, an' he give me his old six-shooter. He made me promise to wrap it in canvas, an' put it on top of his coffin before I filled his grave. Mighty glad I kept that promise. . . ."

Tim Bennett exclaimed, "Ira, you may be crazy, but if you are, you're crazy like a fox. It was pretty smart for you to open Wild Jack's grave instead of Nancy's."

"I wouldn't have opened hers, no-how," Ira declared. "Not if they'd shot me for refusin'. Not even the president of this here country could make me disturb the rest of my twin sister, Nancy."

Cipher Solvers' Club for March

(Continued from page 125)

head, N. Y.; A. B. I., Springfield, Ohio; †Joubert, New York, N. Y.; †Marie Kristjansson, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Maniac, East Millinocket, Me.; Molinero, Detroit, Mich.; Mrs. Ange F. Myers, Greenfield, Calif.; †Ruth, Laramie, Wyo.; Mrs. L. L. Smith, Sycamore, Ill.; †Dr. Dirk E. Stegeman, Los Angeles, Calif.; Tex. Joplin, Mo.; †Texocron, New York, N. Y.; Mono Verde, Minneapolis, Minn.; †Wash, Portland, Me.

Eleven—Elinor, Oakland, Calif.; A. D. Hodgson, Portland, Me.; Rab, Penticton, Brit-

ish Columbia, Canada; F. K. C. Sauberzweig, Astoria, N. Y.; †Stas, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Ten—L. A. B., Philadelphia, Pa.; †Eatosin, Marietta, Ohio; Duke d'Ekud, Bronx, N. Y.; Irving Freedman, Bronx, N. Y.; Virginia Freeman, Akron, Ohio; Mrs. William E. Gilroy, Newton Center, Mass.; Ian, Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, Canada; M. A. McGob, New York, N. Y.

Seven—Elmer E. Rusk, Gallipolis, Ohio; Alvin Thomas, Erie, Pa.; Ida M. Volk, New York, N. Y.

(Continued on page 135)

Pollen Puzzle

By James W. Booth

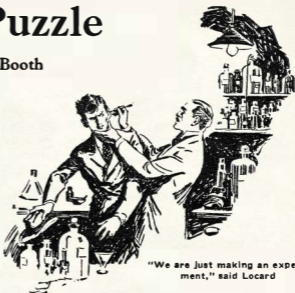


IN a wooded dell on the outskirts of Lyons, France, aptly referred to as a lovers' nook, one day, in 1926, a seeker after wild flowers came instead upon a horribly mutilated body of fragile, China-doll-like Yvonne Chalet, a maiden just turned twenty.

Her blond head had been smashed in. Her clothes were blood-stained and all but completely torn from her graceful, little body. There were signs all about to indicate that a fierce struggle had preceded her slaying. The flowers and shrubs were broken and matted down; the ground was trampled with many footprints.

In their methodical search for the perpetrator of the fiendish crime, the police learned in short order that the girl had only recently quarreled with and broken her engagement to a young resident of Lyons, named Pierre Lamont. And furthermore, they learned that the jilted fiancé had taken the broken engagement none too kindly. In fact, they were informed, he had threatened to see to it that Yvonne never married another.

Things looked very black indeed for young Lamont. At the same time, the police realized that disappointed lovers sometimes make rash threats, which they have no intention of carrying out.



And it seemed possible that such might be the case with Lamont, for, when he was taken into custody and informed of Yvonne's horrible death, he swooned and showed genuine evidences of grief. He had not heard of his former fiancée's murder, he said, as he had only just returned from a visit to a village outside of Paris.

The police questioned him at length, but his alibi that he had been out of the city when the crime occurred could not be shaken. Still, the police were not completely satisfied. Who but he, they asked themselves, could possibly have had a motive for killing the beautiful Yvonne?

And so, before releasing him, they turned him over to Edmond Locard, shrewd and famed director of the Laboratory of Police Technique of the city of Lyons.

Locard had visited the murder scene and made a careful survey of the spot. Particularly, he had paid attention to the flora. He had found to his surprise that only one species of flower grew

there, and upon consulting botanical references, learned it was a species native to that section of France alone. As a result, he had a theory he wished to test out.

"Tell me," he asked Lamont, "have you visited the dell where mademoiselle's body was found since your return to Lyons?" He was the essence of politeness. His voice was low; his manner gentle. There was nothing of the gruff and bellowing fiction detective about him.

Lamont replied that he had not been near there.

"It is well," Locard told him, escorting him into his laboratory, "for now we can make an experiment."

And he did. One of the most remarkable in the annals of scientific crime detection. From Lamont's ear he extracted a tiny bit of wax. This he examined long and thoroughly under the powerful lenses of a microscope. Finally he looked up. He did not speak, but gazed intently at the suspect. It was a penetrating gaze, and Lamont shifted uneasily. He knew well the miracles of

crime detection which Locard had wrought.

"M'sieur is certain he has not visited the spot where Mademoiselle Chalet's body was found?" he asked again. His voice was still low, and his manner still gentle.

Lamont shifted his weight from one foot to another and denied again that he had.

With his denial, Locard's tone changed. His words took on a bitter snap.

"How, then," he demanded. "is it that in this bit of wax I find specks of pollen from a flower which does not grow near Paris, where you say you have been, and does grow in abundance where you say you have not been—where your former sweetheart was slain—fiendishly slain? How, M'sieur?"

A tiny speck of pollen might not have been important to the old-fashioned detective, but it was to the modern Locard, and his discovery of it so shattered the nerve of Pierre Lamont that he confessed his horrible crime, and was sentenced to the guillotine.

Cipher Solvers' Club for March

(Continued from page 133)

Six—†Arulas, Los Angeles, Calif.; Charles Boulton, New York, N. Y.; *L. P. Carr, Soda Springs, Idaho; August Fromm, Elizabeth, N. J.; †W. R. G., Maywood, Ill.; †Wm. P. Grey, Meriden, Conn.; Hatchet, Birmingham, Ala.; Lloyd E. Henderson, St. Joseph, Mo.; Ichor, Washington, D. C.; †D. V. J., Minneapolis, Minn.; Frank McAlister, Caroleen, N. C.; C. W. Miller, Quincy, Pa.; Remdin, San Antonio, Tex.; T. G. S., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; †Ben Shimkus, New York, N. Y.; Richard K. Trepane, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Geo. Williams, Reliance, S. Dak.; †Albert B. Woodriddle, San Antonio, Tex.; Effe You, Anderson, S. C.

Five—†Alice, Riverside, Calif.; †Larry Bee, Portland, Me.; †How Carso, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; C. Lennon, Cambridge, Mass.; I. F. McClure, Waco, Tex.; E. Sthar Odilun, Atchison, Kans.; Peter Penguin, Washington, D. C.; Betty Perkins, Montreal, Quebec, Canada; †B. P. Miami, Fla.; M. E. Smith,

Galt, Calif.; †Sunny, Chicago, Ill.; I. Cipher U., Newport, R. I.

Four—Case Ace, Chicago, Ill.; †Denarius, Detroit, Mich.

Three—MisLed, Van Tassell, Wyo.; Martin L. Rothschild, New York, N. Y.

Two—Arthur M. Barron, New London, Conn.

One—Thomas P. Bassett, New York, N. Y.; L. K., Bronx, N. Y.; Marj. Bedford, Ohio; Mrs. W. H. Perry, Albrook Field, Canal Zone; Wednesday, Joliet, Ill.; Grover Weeks, Chicago, Ill.

Corrections—†Elvin Crane Paynter, Millville, N. J., 15 answers for February, not previously credited; †Posius, Brookline, Mass., 23 answers for February instead of 17; †Ty N. Twist, London, Ontario, Canada, 18 answers for February instead of 6; †B. P., Miami, Fla., 25 answers for January instead of 20; †Jerry Phelan, 6 answers for January not previously credited.

Civil Service Q & A

By "G-2"

Could You Qualify as—

| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Police Patrolman | Special Agent (G-Man) |
| Police Detective | Secret Service Operative |
| Policewoman | Post Office Inspector |
| Fingerprint Expert | Customs Patrol |
| State Trooper | Immigration Patrol |
| Crime Prevention Investigator | Anti-Narcotic Agent |
| Probation Officer | Parole Investigator |
| Criminologist | Prison Keeper |
| Police Radio Expert | Internal Revenue Agent |
| | Alcohol Tax Agent |

This department will give you every week typical questions asked in civil service examinations.



Written G-man Test



FOR the benefit of readers who are eager to know what may be expected of Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, (G-men) in the way of knowledge about the workings of their organization, the following test has been devised. No claim is made that this is an official test or that it was ever given to candidates for F.B.I. positions. Its sole purpose is to inform the reader of details which might be included in a written test. An official written test is not available, nor do F.B.I. jobs come within the jurisdiction of the U. S. Civil Service Commission.

Indicate by writing the letter T or F which of the following statements are true or false.

Q 1—The Federal Bureau of Investigation is a department of the United States Treasury. —

Q 2—The F.B.I. is charged by law with the investigation of counterfeiting. —

Q 3—Government rate, collect telegrams or telephone messages will be accepted by the F.B.I. from law enforcement

officials if information involved indicates that immediate action is necessary. —

Q 4—The F.B.I. will not cooperate with city police departments. —

Q 5—All field offices of the F.B.I. are connected by means of a teletype system. —

Indicate by letter which of the following answers is the correct one.

Q 6—To qualify for appointment to the F.B.I. candidates must be (a) not under 21 years, not over 40; (b) between 25 and 35 years; (c) between 30 and 40.

Q 7—The Police Training School of the F.B.I., established July 29, 1935, is open to a (a) college graduates only; (b) duly qualified law enforcement officials; (c) only chiefs of local police departments.

Q 8—To qualify for appointment to the F.B.I. a person must have had (a) five years' experience as a private detective; (b) at least two years practical commercial experience and a graduate of a law school of recognized standing, expert accountants or possessed of a constructive type of law enforcement experience; (c) previous federal government service.

Q 9—After newly appointed Special Agents of the F.B.I. have been in service for sometime they are required to attend (a) a recognized law school; (b) the re-training school of the F.B.I. (c) open sessions of the U. S. Supreme Court.

Q 10—The U. S. Department of Justice is under the direction of (a) the Secretary

of the Interior; (b) director of the F.B.I. (c) Attorney General of the U. S.

Q 11—Application for appointment to the F.B.I. as a special agent must be made to (a) the U. S. Senate; (b) Director of the F.B.I. (c) Appointment officer, U. S. Treasury Department.

Q 12—Special agents of the F.B.I. must be available for service (a) from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M. every weekday; (b) at all times; (c) daily except Sunday.

Q 13—Political influence is (a) not necessary to obtain appointment to the F.B.I. (b) the only basis upon which appointments are made; (c) barred in making appointments.

Q 14—The F.B.I. has jurisdiction over (a) all types of felonies; (b) all crimes against the United States Government; (c) violations of certain crimes only.

Q 15—Most notable achievement of the F.B.I. during recent years was (a) preventing a jail delivery in Atlanta, Ga.; (b) apprehending and convicting kidnapers; (c) detecting counterfeiters.

Scientific Methods of Crime Detection.

Q 16—The spectograph is a device which (a) makes criminals confess; (b) breaks up light into component wave lengths, parts or colors, then photographs that light, thus providing a means of qualitative or quantitative study of the spectrum thus formed, (c) detects persons in the act of lying.

Q 17—The spectograph is of special value in (a) locating stolen property; (b) tapping telephone wires; (c) identifying minute bits of evidence too small to allow of chemical analysis.

Q 18—Spectograph analyses can be completed in (a) two days; (b) half an hour; (c) 24 hours.

Q 19—Assume that you are a special agent engaged in the investigation of a series of thefts of government checks from desks in a government office. In each case the desk was opened by some mysterious means, apparently without the use of tools. One morning, local police notify you of the arrest of a man occupying a room in a local hotel. In his bag was found some blank cashier's checks and three strips of celluloid, six inches in length, one inch wide. When questioned the suspect stated that he used the celluloid strips as calipers with which to test dice. The local police

insist upon charging him with possession of burglar's tools. State (a) whether you would approve of this procedure; (b) what were the burglar's tools found in his possession; (c) why they are classified as burglar's tools?

Q 20—A defendant, accused of murder, was a member of a fishing party of four men. One of the party was found dead, his body turned over to the police by the defendant. Death, the autopsy revealed, had been caused by a knife wound behind the deceased's ear. At the time of the defendant's arrest police found a pocket knife on his person. Defendant testified that he had the knife on the fishing trip (the knife was introduced in evidence and identified) or a knife just like it. During the murder trial the physician who performed the autopsy testified on direct examination that "the depth and the width of the wound correspond to the depth and width of the knife" in question. He further testified "there was something on the knife that looked a little red. I couldn't say that it was blood. I don't know whether it was blood or rust. I did the best I could to see what it was but I couldn't tell." The defendant was convicted, appealed and the appellate court reversed the conviction on the ground that the doctor's testimony as to the spots on the knife was of doubtful propriety since no chemical test had been applied to the spots by the state and since, moreover, the knife in question had been in possession of the state's prosecutors from the day it was delivered to them by the defendant. State (a) what serious error was made by the state in relation to the knife; (b) what steps might have been taken to avoid that error; (c) why that step should have been taken.

Duties—Q 21—Name 22 types of crimes over which the F.B.I. has investigative jurisdiction.

Q 22—Name five classes of federal law violation over which the F.B.I. does not have investigative jurisdiction.

Q 23—What department of the Federal government maintains a central bureau of criminal identification?

Q 24—What department of the Federal government has supervision over Federal prisons?

Q 25—In what courts are tried offenses against the U. S. Government?

Key answers: Q 1—F; Q 2—F; Q 3—T; Q 4—F; Q 5—T; Q 6—(b); Q 7—(b); Q 8—(b); Q 9—(b); Q 10—(c); Q 11—(b); Q 12—(b); Q 13—(c); Q 14—(c); Q 15—(b); Q 16—(b); Q 17—(c); Q 18—(b); Q 19—(a) I would approve; (b) the celluloid strips; (c) a well known practice of certain types of office burglars is to gain admittance to an office when it is open for business, and while not being observed, to insert alongside the lock of a desk a small strip of celluloid, which forces out of position the lock when the desk is closed, thus preventing the locking of the desk. The same trick is used on office doors; hence such celluloid strips are regarded as burglar's tools and courts of law have held them to be such. Q 20—(a) the spots on the knife should have been subjected to chemical analysis; (b) knife should have been turned over to chemist at once; (c) so that the evidence would have value beyond its use in the detection of the crime and apprehension of the defendant. Q 21—violations of national motor vehicle theft act, interstate transportation of stolen property valued at \$5,000 or more; national bankruptcy act, interstate flight to avoid prosecution or testifying in certain cases; white slave traffic act; impersonation of government officials; larceny of goods in interstate commerce; killing or assaulting federal officer, cases involving transportation in interstate or foreign commerce of persons who have been kidnaped; extortion cases in which interstate commerce or interstate communication is an element; theft, embezzlement and illegal possession of government property; anti-

trust laws; robbery of national and federal reserve banks; crimes on any kind of government reservation, including Indian reservations, or in any government building or other government property; embezzlement, abstraction or misapplication of national and reserve bank funds; neutrality violations; frauds against the government; crimes in connection with federal penal and correctional institutions; perjury, embezzlement or bribery in connection with federal statutes or officials; crimes on the high seas; Federal racketeering; location of persons who are fugitives from justice by reason of violation of federal laws over which the F.B.I. has jurisdiction, of escaped federal prisoners, and parole and probation violators.

Q 22—Counterfeiting. Narcotic traffic. Customs Law. Immigration Laws. Postal Laws. Q 23—Federal Bureau of Investigation; Q 24—U. S. Department of Justice; Q 25—United States District Courts.

The Q & A Box

Questions pertaining to civil service tests will be answered without charge. If a personal reply is desired enclose stamped (3c) addressed envelope.

Ernest Hoppe, San Diego, Calif. Electrician, U. S. Quartermaster Service pays \$1860 annually. Age, 20th but not 50th birthday. Must show they have completed at least 4 years apprenticeship as all-around electrician, or equivalent practical experience. Test is not written and candidates are rated on experience and fitness based on sworn statements in application. Candidates must be in sound health and citizens of the U. S.

CIVIL SERVICE Q and A IN BOOKLET FORM

SAMPLE questions given in previous civil service tests are now available to readers in booklet form. THIS COUPON MUST ACCOMPANY EACH REQUEST. Coupons mailed later than TWO WEEKS after the date below will not be honored.

JUNE 12, 1937

G-2, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY,
280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Enclosed find \$_____ for which send me, postpaid
_____ copies of the Civil Service Q and A Booklet
as indicated below:

- ___ copies Postal Clerk Test (25¢ per copy)
___ copies Patrolman Test (25¢ per copy)
___ copies Clerk Test, (25¢ per copy)

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____



They're Swindling You!

For Dentists and Their Patients

By

Frank Wrentmore

This is the eighty-eighth of a series of articles exposing business rackets that cost you billions of dollars every year! Mr. Wrentmore is an authority on swindles and frauds, well known to legal, financial, and commercial associations.—The Editor

DEAR Mr. Wrentmore: You are doing a great amount of good, exposing different rackets that afflict the people, and many have been devised to fit certain lines of business. Take my own profession, for instance—that of dentistry. We have many smooth artists who pop into our offices each week.

"There is the man with the little handbag of dental instruments which he will sell at a ridiculously low price, with the excuse that his uncle died and left these and his widow could not get any decent price for them. If your office is unlocked, and no one in it, he would quickly go to your cabinet and in a few seconds load his bag with your instruments and gold.

"There is the man who comes to buy old gold with rigged scales, or he may have made-over watches to trade for gold. The catch lies in that the value of gold is difficult to estimate in bulk, as it depends upon weight and the carat fineness.

"There is the man who brings along a bunch of catalogs and other literature from a reputable dental house and represents that he is a traveling

salesman for it. He wishes to take your order for dental goods that have gone out of fashion, but are very serviceable. If you give him a nice order and pay him in advance—in order to secure a cash discount—you may whistle for the goods to come.

"There is the man who has some fine furniture polish to sell. As he holds the bottle in his hand he says, 'Let me show you how it works.' In a trice he has taken a cloth and made a swipe across the surface of your cabinet with the result that he has made a shiny streak that makes the balance look dingy and you have to purchase a bottle in order to make the cabinet look right all around.

"There is the unscrupulous traveling dental engine expert who likes to take your handpieces apart and tells you that the cost will not be much for repair, but in the end it foots up quite a bill, and you have to pay it, for you must use the handpiece.

"There is the traveling bill collector who looks over your old accounts and goes after them with vigor, but alas, he keeps all he collects. And you have no recourse.

"There is the pretty girl who is always a college student trying to earn a few pennies so that she can get an education. She has everything to sell, from magazine subscriptions to neck-

ties. Often the magazines fail to come or the neckties have gone astray.

"Finally, we have the confidence men who believe that doctors are always the best suckers, are the easiest to find, and usually with money in their pockets. They come to us to buy farms, apartment houses, mining stock, doubtful bonds, orchard propositions, cooperative schemes and a hundred other investments. Following them are tramps, panhandlers and lesser ilk. Altogether the life of a dentist is full of toil and full of trouble."

AREN'T we all? But let me add a little to the doctor's letter. Many of the petty racketeers he describes do not confine their attention to dentists as they thumb their way from town to town. The gold buying gyp may visit your house tomorrow with his rigged scales, but after he has agreed to buy your gold for so much a "pennyweight," he will balance his scales with Lincoln pennies instead of Troy weights. Now a Lincoln penny weighs 48 grains and a Troy pennyweight is only 24 grains, so he gets double the amount of gold he pays for.

The traveling repair man, as I mentioned in a recent article, is sometimes more intent on getting permanent possession of your household machines under the pretense of taking them to his shop for repairs, than he is in actually repairing them. If that ruse fails, he will, as the doctor says, make a repair on the spot and charge exorbitantly for it.

There is also another side to the

picture. The doctor doesn't mention a few gyps who call themselves "dentists" and who offer in their advertising to make false teeth for you by mail. If you answer their ad, they send you instructions for taking the plaster cast of your gums and a few days after the cast is returned to them they send you your new "store teeth" —*but they never fit!* No layman can make a perfect plaster impression. Even when the dentist, with his years of skill and experience, finishes a plate he has to fit it to the patient's mouth and either grind it down or build it up where it comes in contact with the gums until it is perfectly comfortable and usable. Don't waste your money by trying to buy satisfactory dentistry by mail. It cannot be done.

The doctor has written an interesting letter which carries lessons for all of us, and I'd like to hear from others who are in a position to expose the "tricks of trade" in their business or profession so that we can all benefit from their experience. "A wise man learns from the experience of others; a fool from his own."

Here's one lesson. A young married couple received a pair of theater tickets in the mail with an unsigned note reading, "Guess who sent these." They attended the show and enjoyed it, but their joy turned to sorrow when they arrived home and found that during their absence sneak thieves had entered their apartment and had removed almost everything portable. On the dining room table, however, the thieves had left another short note which read, "Now you know." That explained everything.

Next Week—Crazy People



Solving Cipher Secrets

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



M. L. OHAVER
"Sunyam"

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. Read the helpful hints at the beginning of this department each week. The first cryptogram each week is the easiest.

FROM far-off Hilo, Hawaii, comes this week's special puzzle, No. X-37, by W. H. J. This differs from our regular ciphers in that it is of the transposition class—not substitution. That is, in enciphering the plain text, the letters are not replaced by other letters which become their symbols, but are merely changed in their order, according to a systematic method of "shuffling," and grouped by fives in the completed cipher. You'll have to supply the punctuation yourself, after you "unshuffle" the message. Full explanation to No. X-37 will be published in two weeks.

No. X-37 Transposition Cipher. By W. H. J.
CMDWA DEUSM TMFN Y ULEUP
TEATE EUYFU ILNSH HLHWI
OEOXX SESOE IEASO LBSRR
SDTHR ATOOR SADWJ IOAAI

Some interesting results cropped up with †Lethargic's No. X-35, the cryptic magic square of March 13, reprinted herewith. Due to a typographical error, XL, the third number, was misprinted as XR. But undaunted, our solvers found the answer anyway, and the correct keyphrase, CHARLES XIV. Several fans, confused by the misprint, submitted the key, CHARLES XVI. But this would give the desired total of 315 in all rows, columns, and diagonals only when the 4th and 5th letters are interchanged. And historically, of course, there is no CHARLES XVI.

Regarding No. X-35, †Piscator observes: "It may be interesting to note that there are seven other ways in which a magic square, having the same consecutive numbers, may be constructed with 55 in the central position. Also that there are 200 ways in which any series of 25 numbers may be arranged to form a magic square, and in eight of them the inner squares of nine numbers will also be magic."

EI EH XL SX SF
SV SA SC ER XH
EE XR SS SL EX
SH EV EA XE SI
XA XC SR ES EL

This week's hints: The key to No. 139 is numbered 012345 6789. Consider $N \times J = N$ for symbol J. In No. 140, compare PVB and the phrase PV PB. Continue with V:AO, VZ, and EZV. Then try for ZG, GHZN, and GHOPA, thus unlocking DHZNDV and DOZDKO. No. 141 presents RVK, UV, and NU NDH for identification. These words will give all but one letter of KAVH, leading to ABUV; etc.

The affixes KP- and -KPY provide an approach to groups 1, 3, and 7 in No. 142. While in No. 143 the recurrent DX deserves consideration; also -NV and -NVRs, with DXNVYSB next in line. Spot your own clues in No. 144, this week's most difficult, or "inner circle," cipher! And look for the answers to puzzles Nos. 139-44, inclusive, in next week's issue!

No. 139—Cryptic Division. By Ian.

HBN)RTBBBE(GJU
RIIH

IUJB
IHHN

GRIE
INTJ

IUG

No. 140—Minus Middleman. By †Captain Jo.

XLCXEVXROB ZG KSEYA KXT: PV PB DHZNDV,
OEOHROVPY, GHOBA GHZN VA O DOZDKO, YAOXD, GPEXK.
AXB EZ BXKXHS VZ KZBO, XEL YZEBOUFOEVKS PB EZV
XGXHPL VZ LZ PVB LFVS.

No. 141—Soft Hard-boiled Eggs. By Blackbird.

HTHV XAFDNZ ORB-YUBKE, PBREE-ENIKKHK, PRBBHY-
LDHENHK, ODU ESUIN GABH RVK KAVH UV ELBRS ABUV,
LRSHB VAXPYZ NU NDH ESBAFDNYZ ENBRAVE UG
XAYRKZ'E YINH!

No. 142—Logical Conclusion. By M. E. Smith.

KPZLKETZR̄ ELBXZA KPZLKYGR XABEODFDYB
XLDNRAADL, ETGAKPY PRYFREZ DN HGZKRA. HRTP
KPMRAZKYTZRA TFFRYRH FTUKZB DN AGSDLHKPTZR;
SREDVRA NTP, TFAD.

No 143—Fine for Figures. By †Nutmeg.

SPORANGFUT LMGARVG TDXRAL APPGT DXNVYSB.
VRSVXSRL VVKLT, RKKALQNRGL URGFLURGNVRS
PZLARGNPET, TNUZSNHB RANGFULGNV, TRQL GNUL!

No. 144—Masked Witnesses. By *Magi.

HDZLU YZPLOX DHZOX, RLPG HLQKX, FZOBHPN BOXH
OXHUZYP OXKUP. HLOZK DENGTXY, EYUXH FBOXH.
RZPFG, NSV ESBY FHZAV GETBHBN ZYPLFN.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

133—Key: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
UMBRA L CON F

134—On June eighth of this year, a partial eclipse of the sun will be visible in parts of California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Louisiana

135—"The last century has been one of human achievement; the present century promises to be one of human improvement."—Aronovici

136—Converted convict conducts concertina contest. Congenial constable, condemning conception, contacts conductor, confiscates concertinas, concludes concert

137—Advised by physician, hamburger addict exists on zwieback, asparagus, kohlrabi, onions, spinach, kumquats, eggplant Grows anemic. Years for juicy bovine delicacy.

138—Carnival cayuse runs amuck. Owner posts reward. Local yokel ropes miscreant, splurges new-found wealth upon pop-corn

Answers to any of the current puzzles Nos 139-44, inclusive, will be credited to the solver in our *Cipher Solvers' Club* for June. Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y



AS the editorial staff finishes the preparation of this issue—"putting the book to bed" is the vernacular expression—a glow of pleasant satisfaction comes over us. An up-to-the-minute novelette of today's doings, by Edward S. Williams, starts the ball rolling. Then there's a choice bit of detective-mystery fantasy by Mr. Sale; and an astounding revelation about crime in England by Mr. Kobler. We were more than a little proud, too, of the novelette by K. Krause about prizefighters and crooks.

Next week's issue, also, promises great things. Donald Barr Chidsey has a new novel entitled *Midsummer Murders*, and it is probably the finest thing he has ever done. That's the keynote of the issue, and the rest of it is in the same vein. Great things are in the wind!

More stories by Max Brand are scheduled for coming weeks. In them, Mr. Brand reaches a new high in glamorous and exciting fiction. And Richard Sale tells us that he is thinking of putting *Sheila Martin* in a story of her very own.

DEAR SIR:

I was very glad to learn that we are to have another story by Max Brand, who I consider

tops among your distinguished group of authors. His *Spy* stories are what sold me on D.F.W. in the first place. They had everything—action, drama, mystery, suspense—and all put together so smoothly and plausibly that they appealed to me as really outstanding fiction.

Far be it from me to find fault with any author for minor lapses. I appreciate the difficulties they have to contend with. Take Richard Sale for instance—I greatly enjoy his *Daffy Dill* and *Candid Jones* stories. But won't you please ask him to write a postscript to his *One Herring—Very Red*, and let us know what happened to *Sheila Martin*? She was sufficiently involved in the plot to arouse our curiosity, but *Candid Jones* seemed to lose all interest in her, once he started breaking his case.

I heartily endorse both contents and form of D.F.W., with one very small exception. I would have Mr. Ohaver reverse his two pages of Cryptography so that writing out the answers would be easier.

Yours very truly,

MARK ROTHMANN.

Oh, dear! Just when we thought Johnny Dolan was reaching a peak in his career! Does anyone agree with Mr. Smith or is this a case of isolated perversity?

DEAR EDITOR:

As one who likes his detective stories with hair on their chest, may I object to the frivolous yarns which you frequently publish about nincompoops like *Johnny Dolan* and *Murray Magimple*?

I go and get to feeling all grim and courage-

ous and tight-lipped with the heroes of the novelettes, which usually have a serious slant, and then you come along and dash froth in my face with the humorous antics of these dumb galoots.

For Pete's sake, will you please make up your mind whether you're going to let my vicarious pleasure be of the honest-to-goodness, two-gun, crime-fighter variety, and let me go along that way in peace, or *must* I have to do with vulgar clowns who, in reflection, make the real yarns seem a wee bit silly?

I have been reading your magazine faithfully for four years, and I think I am entitled to some consideration on this point. Angrily,

JUDSON F. SMITH,
Jefferson, Mo.

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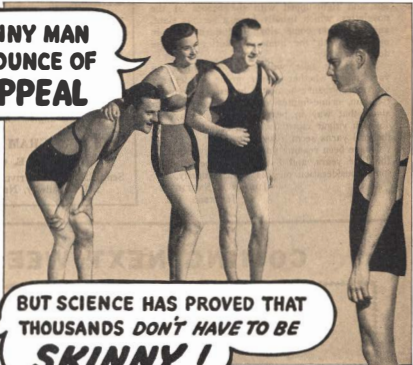
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