

NOV. 14, 1936

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

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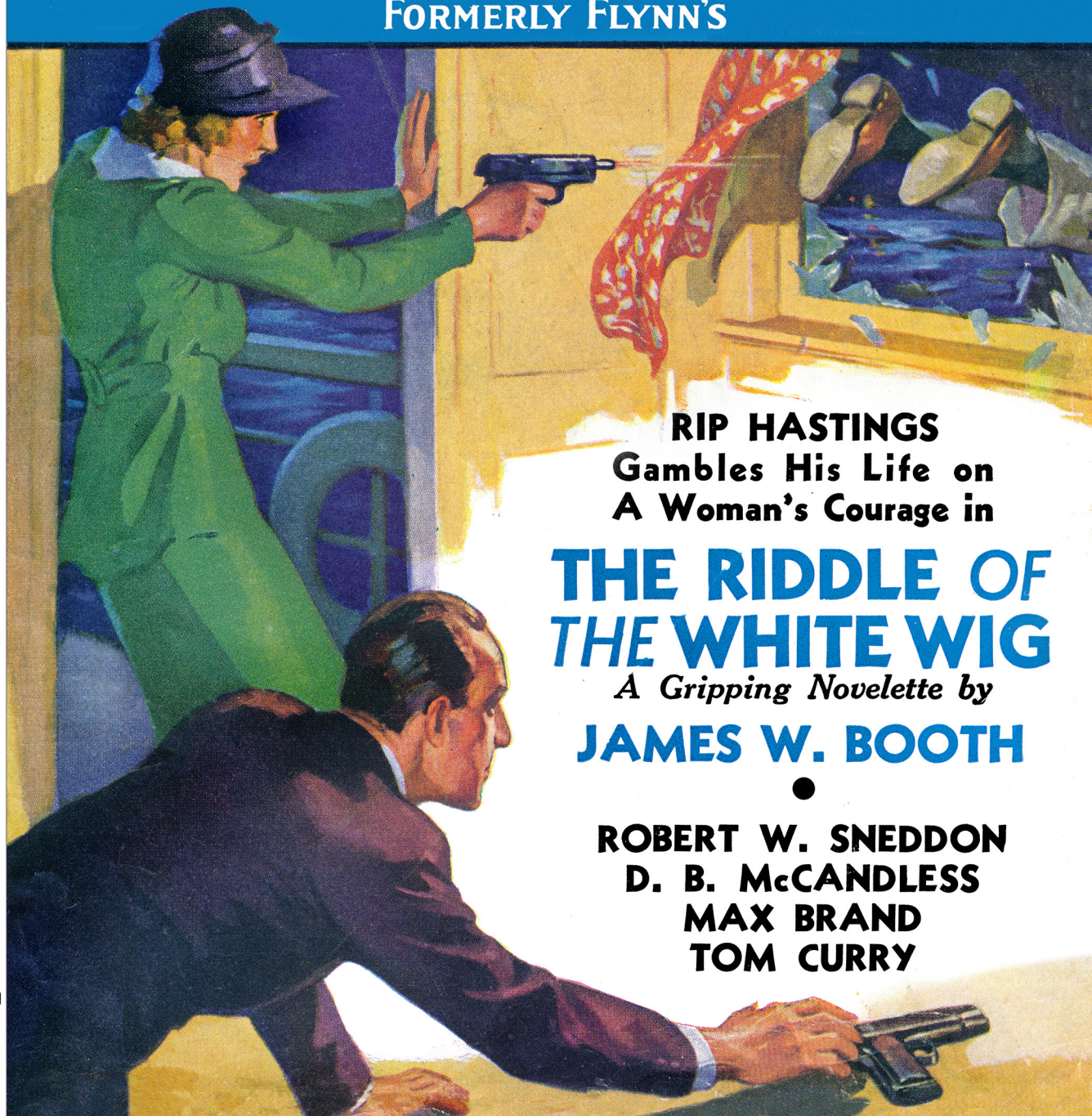
NOV. 14
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Exciting Mysteries

DETECTIVE

FICTION WEEKLY

FORMERLY FLYNN'S



RIP HASTINGS

Gambles His Life on
A Woman's Courage in

THE RIDDLE OF THE WHITE WIG

A Gripping Novelette by

JAMES W. BOOTH



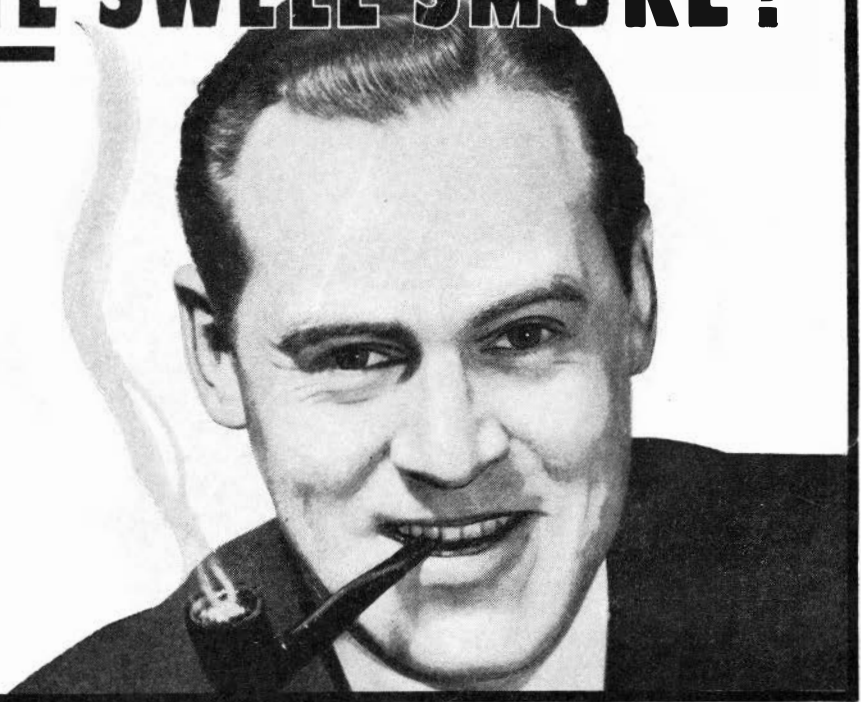
ROBERT W. SNEDDON

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No Bite!

Still no Bite!

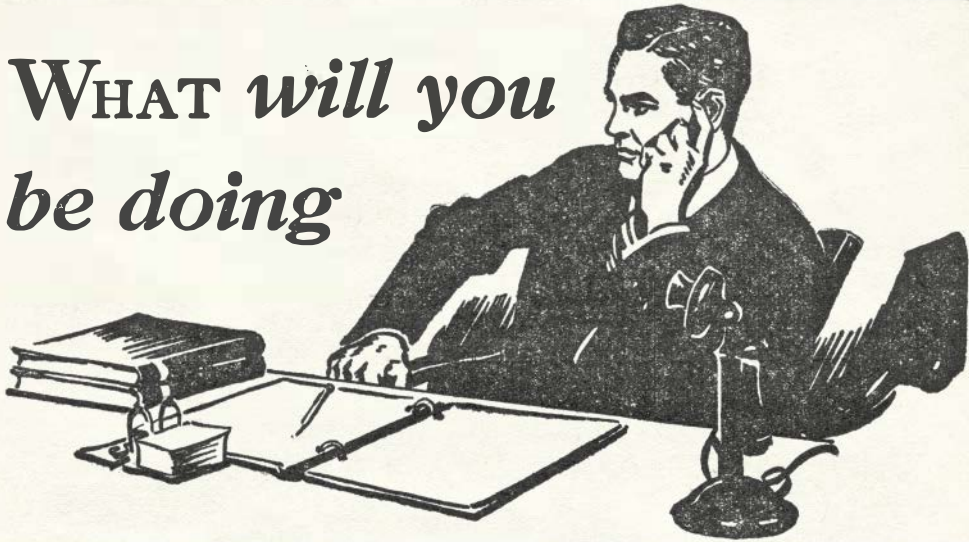


Not a bit of bite in the tobacco or the Telescope Tin, which gets smaller and smaller as you use-up the tobacco. No bitten fingers as you reach for a load, even the last one.

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HALF ^{AND} HALF
The Safe Pipe-Tobacco
FOR PIPE OR CIGARETTE

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ONE YEAR *from* today?

THREE hundred and sixty-five days from now—what?

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One year from today will you still be putting off your start toward success—thrilled with ambition one moment and then cold the next—delaying, waiting, fiddling away the precious hours that will never come again?

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There is no greater tragedy in the world than that of a man who stays in the rut all his life, when with just a little effort he could advance.

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DETECTIVE

FICTION WEEKLY



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Formerly FLYNN'S

VOLUME CVI

November 14, 1936

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111 Rue Réaumur

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HE THOUGHT HE WAS LICKED—THEN A TIP GOT BILL A GOOD JOB!

MY RAISE DIDN'T COME THROUGH MARY—I MIGHT AS WELL GIVE UP. IT ALL LOOKS SO HOPELESS.

IT ISN'T HOPELESS EITHER BILL. WHY DON'T YOU TRY A NEW FIELD LIKE RADIO?

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THANKS!

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**J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 6MK
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.**

**J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 6MK
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.**

Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send "Rich Rewards in Radio," which points out the spare time and full time opportunities in Radio and explains your 50-50 method of training men at home in spare time to become Radio Experts. (Please Write Plainly.)

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READ ABOUT THE

PLAGUE OF RATS (Page 24)

TRAIN WRECK CAUSED BY A CAPTAIN ABOARD SHIP (Page 120)

HORSE-CAR CARVED ON A TOMBSTONE (Page 112)

MULES THAT VANISHED FROM A LOCKED CAR (Page 60)

These are only a few of the odd angles of rail-roading discussed in the December

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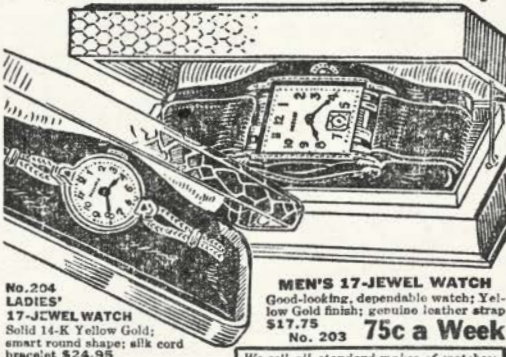
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Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and County aforesaid, personally appeared WILLIAM T. DEWART, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the President of the Red Star News Company, publisher of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in Section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations. To wit:

That the names and addresses of the Publisher, Editor, Managing Editor, and Business Manager are:

Publisher—The Red Star News Company, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Editor—None.

Managing Editor—Albert J. Glibney, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Business Manager—H. B. Ward, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

That the Owners are: (If a corporation give its name and the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of the total amount of stock.)

The Red Star News Company, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

The Frank A. Munsey Company, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

C. W. H. Corporation, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

William T. Dewart, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Mary W. Dewart, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.
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That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders, owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are:

None.

That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him
WILLIAM T. DEWART, President.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1936.

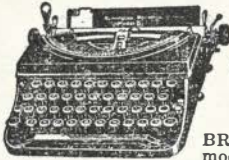


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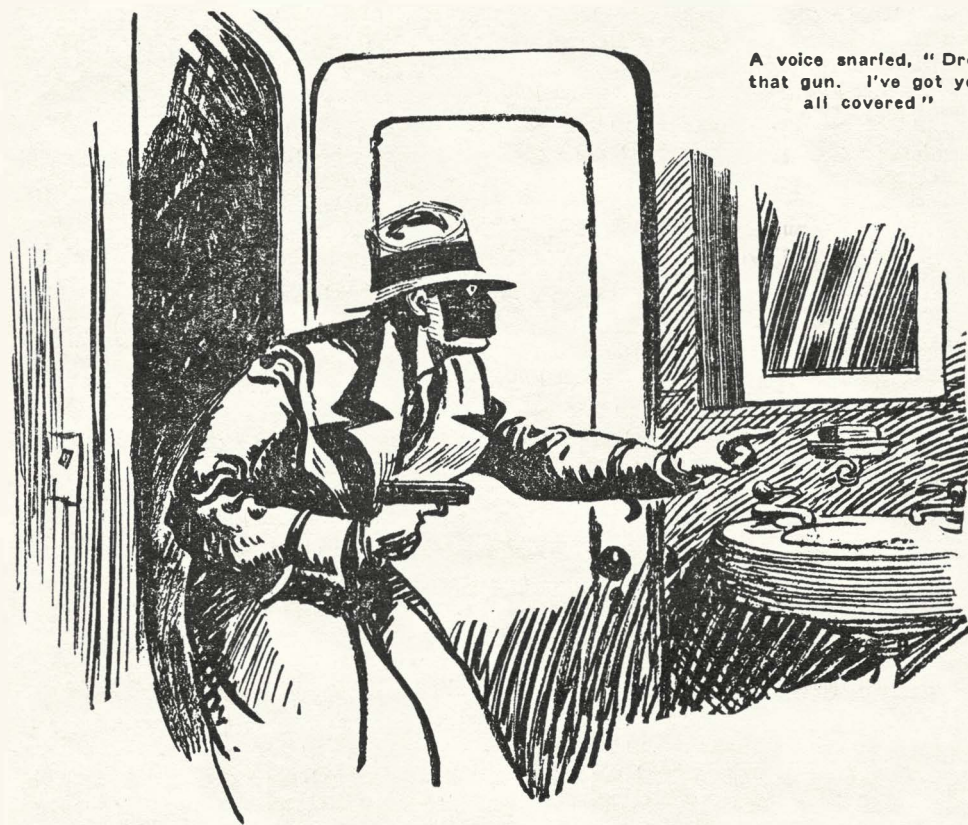
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A voice snarled, "Drop that gun. I've got you all covered"

The Riddle of the White Wig

CHAPTER I

Innocent?

THE jury filed slowly back and a nervous, expectant hush fell over the crowded courtroom. I didn't bother to notice them. My eyes were on the chief, young, brilliant, athletic Rip Hastings, Assistant United States Attorney, who had been my captain in the Marine Corps, and who I now served as

confidential secretary, bodyguard—as though he needed one!—and drinking partner.

His were centered on the eleven men and the solitary woman, who, in a moment, would be decreeing whether Toby Flannigan was innocent or guilty of the murder of United States Senator Homer Blakc.

Rip's finely proportioned body was tense, his steel-gray eyes narrowed, his





All three of us reached for the ceiling. That guy meant exactly what he said

By James W. Booth

chin protruding. He watched those twelve as a cat might watch a mouse.

Then suddenly he relaxed, looked away and settled comfortably back in his chair. A strange, twinkling light appeared in his eyes—an expression which is difficult for an ex-Leatherneck Sergeant to describe—and then and there I knew the verdict would be “Guilty.”

I knew, because I'd seen that expression in those steel-gray eyes of his before. It always appeared when he was certain of success.

The first time I'd seen it was down

in the jungles of Nicaragua. Our detachment had been surrounded by a band of bloodthirsty brigands and there didn't appear to be a chance of escape. We were outnumbered a good ten to one and cut off, as well. But Rip got us out, and without losing a man, either. And once he'd determined

how to do it, that funny light popped up in his eyes.

It had been there, too, not many weeks before, when he had gone out to Georgetown to ask Connie Merrick to marry him. And sure enough she'd accepted him.

A Woman's Intuition Made Rip Hastings Laugh — Until Murders, Like Beads on a String, Proved Connie's Hunch Correct, and Hastings, Facing a Desperate Killer's Gun, Planned to Gamble His Life on a Woman's Courage.

In Nicaragua, there had been something for him to worry about. And Connie hadn't been a safe bet, either, for she'd turned him down a half dozen times or so before she gave in.

But this Flannigan case! It had appeared an odds-on bet to me from the start that he would burn. From the evidence I couldn't for the life of me see how it could be different. Rip's luck, which was something of a legend in the Corps, seemed to be holding good in his new sphere. Not only had he drawn a sensational case to prosecute as his first assignment since his appointment as Assistant United States Attorney for the District, but one which appeared a cinch to win.

Shortly after midnight on May 24, Senator Blake had been found sprawled on the ornate Chinese rug of the study of his spacious Massachusetts Avenue home. Crimson saturated the white of his stiff-bosomed shirt, and protruding grotesquely from above his heart was the hilt of a common, every-day jack-knife. His body was still warm. The medical examiner said he had been dead less than an hour. The study looked as though a young West Indian hurricane had struck it.

JUST prior to the grim discovery, Flannigan—a crook who had seen the inside of a score of jails from the Mississippi east, including a trio of incarcerations in Lorton, the District of Columbia bastille across the Potomac in Virginia—had been nabbed fleeing from the grounds.

His fingerprints were on the sill of the open study window. His footprints were in the soft earth outside. His rumpled felt hat was in a rose bed a short distance away. And there was mud corresponding to that on his shoes on the rug of the death study and in

the hallway leading to the front door.

The motive? Robbery obviously, for Tobey's lengthy police record stamped him as a proficient exponent of the unsavory art of breaking and entering.

Senator Blake had been alone in the house at the time of the murder. Earlier in the evening there had been a conference in his study. It had had something to do with the Railway Pension Bill, then pending before Congress. Attending it were Larry McKay, rotund, white-haired lobbyist for the railroads, John Abbey, a statistician of the Interstate Commerce Commission, gangling, flashily-dressed C. P. Bagley, Blake's attorney and Connie Merrick's employer, and the Senator's secretary, Frank Kingcade. They had all left before ten-thirty.

The police theory was that Blake had come upon Flannigan in the act of rifling the study and had fought with him. During the struggle, they contended, Tobey had drawn the knife and plunged it into the legislator.

On the witness stand, the defendant had vigorously denied killing the Senator—or, for that matter, even having been in his home. His claim was that he had planned to rob the house, but seeing the light in the study, had crept up to the open window and peered in.

"I seen him on the floor there, all blood, and with the knife sticking in him," he testified, "and I got scared. I knew if I was caught around there they'd pin the rap on me, so I ran. The next thing I knew a cop had collared me. But I swear I didn't kill him."

It just didn't stand up to my way of thinking. Not with all the circumstantial evidence—the fingerprints, the footprints and the mud in the study and the hallway.

And now the foreman of the jury, a skinny woebegone little man, who held

down some minor job in the Geological Survey, was confirming my convictions.

"We find the defendant guilty of murder in the first degree," he droned.

They polled the other eleven. Every one of them felt the same way.

"Congrats," I told Rip.

"Forget it," he answered, gathering up his papers, but I could see he was as tickled with his success as a kid would be with an electric train at Christmas. "Get the car," he told me; "I'll meet you outside in a minute."

I had it ready, its motor purring sweetly, when he came down the court house steps and across the lawn. He slipped in beside me, tossed his brief case on the back seat, and said, "Back to the office, Tiny. I'm thirsty."

They call me Tiny, which is a laugh, because I'm not. Just six feet one of muscle and bone, one hundred ninety pounds of it. And the real name is Saunders—Montgomery T., in case anyone is interested in the full moniker.

I knew that by office Rip meant his own private layout in the Press Club Building, not his cubbyhole alongside the U. S. Attorney, so I swung the car down D Street, then across to Pennsylvania Avenue and up. On the Avenue, we got the full benefit of the sizzling heat which makes Washington insufferable in the summer. The asphalt all but rose up and slapped us in the face. So it was a relief to get in the Press Club Building and be whisked up to Rip's air-conditioned offices.

"ANY calls?" he asked his stenographer, Teddy Wilson. If you wanted to be formal with her, you addressed her as Theodora, but

we never were. She was a trim little mite. Fresh, but keen as a whip lash, and I had a strong yen for her. However, it didn't seem to be doing me any good.

She thrust back a strand of her golden hair, and nodded. "A bill collector asking for the striker," she said, meaning me.

"A public enemy, you mean," I corrected, but she saw no merit in the remark.

"A man named Lawson, John Lawson, was in to see you, but he couldn't wait," she told Rip, ignoring me completely.

"Lawson! Never heard of him."

"I think he's a taxi driver, but I wouldn't care to ride with him, thank you."

"Why?" Rip wanted to know.

"Too fidgety. He was as nervous as an old hen."

"Anyone else?"

"Yes, a mugg who seemed all hot and bothered phoned."

"What does a nice girl know about muggs?" I demanded.

She flashed blue eyes at me and snapped, "Pest! Why don't you go sit on your derriere?"

Then to Rip, "He called about five minutes ago. When I told him you weren't here, he told me, none-too-politely, 'Listen, sister, you tell your boss I'll get in touch with him later and when I do he'd better listen to me and do as I tell him if he wants to stay healthy.'"

Rip frowned, then said, "A perfect gentleman, eh?" and walked into his private office. I knew he didn't understand what it was all about, and I didn't either.

I followed him in and, remembering his remark about being thirsty, made for the little bar we'd installed

in one corner and started rustling up a couple of Tom Collinses.

"Here's to the first conviction," I told him, handing him one, and then asked, "I wonder who the bozo was who phoned you?"

Before he could reply, his interoffice phone buzzed. He answered it, said, "Yes," and then, "Tell her to come in." I knew it was Connie even before he turned to me and told me to mix up a third drink.

She breezed in, as lovely as ever, and looking so cool and refreshing in her tight-fitting sea-green linen sports dress that I forgot all about the fact that the thermometer outside was cracking 100 degrees.

"Lo, darling," she greeted Rip, and waved to me. "I understand the public prosecutor won his first case. The newsies are screaming it from the Capitol to the White House."

Rip grinned and kissed her. "Glad?" he asked.

She shook her head. "No," she told him, "I'm frightfully disappointed."

Rip looked at her skeptically. "You wouldn't be kidding a fellow, would you?" he wanted to know.

I was certain she was, but why she should I didn't know.

SHE took the Collins I held out to her, took a deep sip, and dropped into the big leather chair in front of Rip's desk. She yanked off the blue beret, which had been pulled jauntily over her raven-black hair, and smiled up at him. I thought how lucky he was and hoped that Teddy would smile at me that way some day.

"No, Rip, I'm serious," she replied. "I was never more so. I believe Flannigan should have been acquitted."

I nearly choked on my drink.

Rip sat down and put his elbows on

his desk. He looked straight at her. Their eyes met and their gaze held.

"In short," he said, "you consider this Flannigan a public benefactor? You believe that by plunging a knife into Senator Blake he performed a national service?"

She smiled again and answered. "Not exactly, darling."

Then, speedily, her expression changed. Her face became grave and her brown eyes flashed.

"Homer Blake was the biggest crook ever to sit in Congress," she exclaimed, heatedly. "He ruined more than one man, and my father was one of them. He lost everything when Blake sold out to the R. M. and W. and they built the cut-off between Ransom and Blackston. You know all about it."

I did, too, for Rip had told me. It had happened more than a score of years before, but at the time it had received much space in those Western newspapers not controlled by the railroad or its financial backers. The cut-off had left two agricultural counties of the State without adequate transportation facilities. It had been necessary for farmers to haul their produce into Ransom, a distance of anywhere from thirty to seventy miles, before they could get it aboard freight trains for shipment to market. Automobile trucks were not as common then as they are now, and the time element and the expense had been too much for the farmers.

Homer Blake had been in the House then, representing a district which included the two affected counties. At first, he had fought the cut-off proposal vigorously. Then, suddenly and without ever giving a satisfactory explanation of his action, he had withdrawn his opposition. Construction of

the cut-off had commenced, and a short while later, Blake had announced his candidacy for the Senate. The railroad had thrown him its support, and its bankers, too, and he had been elected. And until his murder he had remained in the Senate. The railroad, the bankers and the other powerful interests of the State had seen to that. They knew he was safe and could be depended upon to vote the way they wanted him to.

"Yes," Connie continued, "Homer Blake ruined my father. He died shortly afterward. The worry of the thing was too much for him. I was a mere child then, but from that day on I hated and despised Homer Blake. But even so I couldn't condone his murder."

Rip studied her speculatively.

"Well?" he asked, softly.

Connie's smile returned, and with it she heaved a verbal bombshell.

She announced earnestly, "I don't consider Tobey Flannigan a public benefactor. I know he is a criminal, with a long record. I know also—oh, I'm positive of it—that he is innocent of the murder of Homer Blake."

CHAPTER II

The Threatening Voice

RIP slowly drained his Collins, eyeing her all the while.

"Tiny," he said, not shifting his gaze, "I believe three more are in order. No—wait!"

He addressed Connie. "You can stand another, can't you, dear? Or has the first one gone to your head? Given you illusions or something. Tiny makes them potent, I know, but I never realized one was so strong that it would make a guilty man appear innocent."

Connie puckered up her nose and made a face at him.

"I'd be charmed with another one, Mr. Hastings," she replied, sweetly. "They're delightfully refreshing. And it isn't the drink that makes me feel the way I do."

I commenced mixing up another trio, and Rip asked. "What is it then?"

"Suppose we call it woman's intuition," she laughed.

"Admirable evidence to place before a jury," he scoffed. "The defense could appreciate it, I'm sure." He paused a moment, and fished out a cigarette from the pocket of his coat. He always kept some loose there. He said they were easier to get at. "No, Connie," he went on, "it's no go."

"Maybe not," she said. "Nevertheless, I feel he told the truth on the stand. Someone else could have murdered Homer Blake, couldn't they?"

"Undoubtedly, only they didn't. The fingerprints, the footprints, the mud—scientifically proven to have come from his shoes—all that evidence and a good deal more proves that Flannigan and Flannigan alone committed the crime. Satisfied?"

"No," she stated, emphatically, "I'm not. Somehow the fingerprints seem to strengthen my theory about his innocence."

"What do you know about fingerprints?" Rip inquired.

"You'd be surprised, darling," Connie responded, crossing her legs and settling back in her chair. "After all, if my husband-to-be is going to be concerned with crime, murders, kidnappings, embezzlements, and all that sort of thing, they should be my concern, shouldn't they? I've just read a book about how to be a dutiful wife, and it was emphatic about it. Really! It's the crux of all marital harmony. Collective interests, not separate ones."

Rip grinned. "Okay," he said, "I'm

glad you are studying up on how to be a little helpmate, but that doesn't answer my question. What do you know about fingerprints?"

"I know those found on the window sill of Homer Blake's study pointed in—toward the study."

"Sure they did. What of it?"

Connie frowned. "Well," she said, "if I was Sherlock Holmes or Philo Vance, which I'm not, I'd say they substantiated Flannigan's testimony. He stated he merely peered into the window, didn't he? Isn't it logical to suppose he placed his hands on the sill while he was doing so?"

Rip nodded. "Yes," he stated, easily, "and then climbed through the window, murdered the Senator, with a neat knife jab, and ran out of the front door, leaving particles of mud from his shoes in the study and the hallway and the door wide open."

SHE didn't say anything for a moment, and Rip just watched her. He was enjoying it immensely, I could see.

At length she said, "I still think someone else could have done it. Did he do it, in fact?"

"Suppose you tell us who," Rip rejoined. "I'm not anxious to see a miscarriage of justice, you know."

"What about the four men who were out at Blake's earlier that evening?" she wanted to know. "And, by the way, wasn't there something in the papers right after the murder about a quarrel between the Senator and Kingcade? It took place in the Senate Office Building, as I recall."

"That's right, but it had no bearing on the case. We checked it thoroughly, and Kingcade was very frank about it when we questioned him. It was over patronage. Something to do with the

appointment of a postmaster. Kingcade wanted one constituent, a cousin of his, I believe, and Blake favored someone else. They had a lot of heated words, but, like all such things, they patched it up. No, there's no motive there if that's what you're looking for."

"How about Abbey?"

"He'd never met Blake until that night. He was merely called in to furnish some figures and statistical data."

"McKay?"

I put my oar in then. "Not jolly old Larry!" I said. "Blake was his mouthpiece on the floor and in committee. His meal ticket! It's certain he didn't kill him."

Rip crunched out his cigarette. "Which leaves only Bagley, your own employer, among your list of suspects," he informed Connie. "Now you know he was the Senator's attorney, and at a handsome retainer's fee, too, so—well, from what little I know of my profession he preferred a live client to a dead one."

"Anyway, the forces of the law, my dear, carefully investigated the respective activities of the four gentlemen between the hours of ten-thirty and one o'clock on the fatal night."

"They found that Kingcade, after leaving the Senator's home, went to the Millard, had a Scotch and soda in the Round Robin Room, and then took a taxi out to his apartment on Connecticut Avenue. He arrived there shortly after eleven-thirty, according to the doorman."

"Abbey went directly to his rooming house out on Seventeenth Street, near Park Road. He chatted with his landlady for about ten minutes and then retired."

"McKay and Bagley rode down town together in McKay's car. They had a bite to eat at the Occidental and

then parted. McKay went to the High-Ho Club and stayed there until closing time. Bagley walked down the Avenue to the Regent, where he lives, talked with the night clerk, and then went up to his rooms."

He paused and smiled at Connie.

"There you are, darling," he announced. "All four present and accounted for." He shook his head dismally. "That much-publicized woman's intuition may be okay for picking an occasional winner at Bowie or Laurel," he told her, "but it's a total loss here."

Connie seemed about to reply, but just then Teddy Wilson knocked on the door and, without waiting for a response, which wasn't unusual for her, pushed it open and stepped into the office.

"That's man's on the phone again," she informed Rip. "The one who called before and told me you'd better listen to him if you wanted to stay healthy."

SCARCELY were the words out of her mouth than Rip had snatched up the French phone.

"Hastings speaking," he said softly. He always spoke in a low, well-modulated voice, no matter what the situation.

We all watched him intently. A faint frown furrowed Connie's forehead. There was a perplexed expression in her dark brown eyes. Unlike Teddy and myself, she knew nothing of the previous call.

"Wait a minute. Not so fast," Rip said. "There, that's better."

He listened attentively, occasionally interrupting with a "Yes" or a "How do you know?"

We could all hear the voice at the other end of the wire. It was sharp and high-pitched. But we couldn't distinguish the words being spoken.

Suddenly, the voice ceased abruptly. "Hello Hello!" Rip called, his voice rising ever so slightly.

A dull click at the other end of the line was the only response. Whoever had called, he or she had hung up.

"Damn," Rip muttered, flashing the operator. Quickly, he identified himself and gave brisk instructions to trace the call. Then he looked at Connie, then at me, and finally at Teddy Wilson, standing in the open doorway. For a time, he didn't speak. Then he said, "It's incredible."

"What?" I asked, wondering what it was all about.

"That there could possibly be anything in that woman's intuition business."

Connie wiggled to the edge of her chair, her eyes wide with interest. I put down my glass and walked over to the desk. I perched my carcass on it.

"What's the dope?" I asked.

"It's all screwy," Rip said. "Whoever that was who called said very bluntly and positively that Flannigan didn't have a thing to do with Blake's murder. He said, too, that I'd better prove he was innocent or I'd be killed the day he goes to the chair. 'I'm not kidding you, Hastings,' he said. 'I'm not the sort who kids or who gives second warnings. But I'll give you a tip.'"

"What was it?" I demanded.

He looked at me and grinned. "Of course, it's all screwy, Tiny," he answered. "The fellow is nuts. A crank. He said if I'd go out to the apartment at the corner of Fourteenth and Clifton Streets, Northwest, at 10 o'clock tonight I might find something in Number Eight to help me."

"Well, let's play detective," I said.

"We're going to," he said, seriously.

The telephone rang. Rip was quick

to answer it. He was frowning as he replaced the receiver.

"That was central," he announced. "She traced the call. Now it's screwier than ever."

"Where did it come from?" Connie asked, excitedly.

"From a pay station in the Department of Justice," Rip said.

CHAPTER III

"Nervous as a Hen"

WE were out at the apartment at eight-thirty, but we didn't go in. The building was a grimy, brownstone one and stood on a terrace. We parked the car around the corner on Clifton Street, and waited in it. From where we sat we could watch the front door and see whoever went in or out.

A thunder storm had been threatening since late afternoon. Black clouds had hung low over Arlington across the river, and the sky had been inky in the direction of Georgetown.

But the storm didn't break until we came up Fourteenth Street hill, swung into Clifton and turned around. Then it lashed out in wild fury. Carried on a high wind that snapped off branches of trees and sent leaves hurtling down as though before a winter blast, the rain pelted down in sheets. Soon the streets were filled and water was overflowing the curbs. Lightning struck not far away from where we sat.

"A nice night for a murder," I told Rip.

He said, "I'm glad we have the sedan, not a roadster."

The height of the storm passed quickly. The thunder and lightning moved off in the direction of Brookland, but it continued to rain. A trolley car slogged up the hill. It stopped

at Clifton Street and two girls alighted, then a man. The girls had an umbrella. They put it up, huddled under it and went hurrying up the street. The man didn't have one. He put up his coat collar, looked cautiously about and then started for the apartment house on the terrace.

Rip gripped my arm. "See who it is?" he whispered.

"Yeah," I said, "Kingcade. What will we do?"

"Stay put," Rip told me.

I looked at him quizzically.

"We can't shadow him without being detected, and we know he's going into the apartment," he said. "See, there he goes in the door."

"What time is it?" I asked.

Rip glanced at his wrist watch. "Nine-fifteen," he answered.

"Gee, three-quarters of an hour to wait. The guy on the phone said ten o'clock, didn't he?"

Rip nodded. "I'm commencing to think he knows something. I didn't before. I thought he was just a crank. Still, I couldn't ignore what he said. I had to investigate it. But how the devil could Flannigan possibly be innocent?"

"Don't ask me," I told him.

WE waited a half hour, then we got out of the car and made for the building. Kingcade had not emerged. The name over the mail box in the vestibule showed us that one Mathew Denton occupied apartment eight. The vestibule was dark and gloomy. The small hall inside was even darker. An old fashioned cage elevator was over at one side.

"Number eight must be on the second floor," Rip stated. "We'll use the stairs. Did you ever hear of Denton?"

I said, "No."

We went up quietly. A small light burned in the hallway above. Someone had had cabbage for dinner. You could still smell it. It wasn't a nice smell. Number eight was in the rear. The number was painted on the door. Whoever did the job must have been drunk. The figure was all wobbly.

Not a sound came from inside the apartment, nor from the one across the hall. We stood outside the door, listening and wondering. Finally, Rip looked at his watch. It lacked two minutes of being ten o'clock.

"We'll ring," Rip said, and pressed the buzzer. We heard it ring somewhere back in the apartment.

"What are you going to say when they answer it?" I asked.

"It all depends."

It didn't matter. No one answered. We rang three times, then knocked. Rip looked at me, questioningly. "It's all very screwy," he said again, and tried the knob. It turned and he opened the door.

"We haven't a search warrant," I cautioned him, as he started in.

"The hell with one!" His tone was brisk. I saw him again a marine captain, alert, keen and ready for action. "I'm getting premonitions, too," he said. "I feel something's happened, but I don't know what."

The foyer was pitch black. Rip groped for the light switch, found it and snapped it on. There was a cheap rug on the floor and a rickety settee up against the wall. Its seat was covered with some coarse material. It was a hideous shade of crimson. It made me think of blood.

"Hello, anyone home?" Rip cried. The only answer was the rain beating against the windows of the bedroom, which was off the foyer.

We went in there. There was an old

bed, with only a blanket on it, and a dilapidated bureau. There was a comb and brush on it, and a cheap safety razor. The room was stuffy and foul-smelling.

"It smells as though the windows hadn't been opened for days," Rip said. It did.

"Nothing here," Rip said. "This Denton must be a sloppy guy."

"He isn't neat, that's certain," I told him, looking quickly around the room.

There was a narrow hallway leading to the living room. Rip started down it and I followed him. The light from the foyer illuminated the room dimly. Rip reached the threshold, uttered a startled exclamation, and bounded across the room. I snapped on the light and stopped dead in my tracks.

A studio couch stood in one corner. A man lay on it. He was a medium-sized man with jet black hair. He was fully dressed, except for a coat. His shirt was full of blood and there was a knife sticking in his heart. It was an ordinary jack-knife.

Rip felt his pulse. "He's dead," he said, grimly, "but he hasn't been dead long."

He stood up and looked around the room. His eyes were narrowed and his face was grave. There was a window on one side of the room. It was open and led on to the fire escape. The rain was coming in it. Rip hurried over and looked down the fire escape.

Then he turned quickly and addressed me. "Notify the police," he ordered, briskly, "and get the janitor. Find out all about this Denton. And no one's to leave this building until I say so, especially Kingcade, if he's still here, which I doubt, seeing that window opens on the fire escape. It's the only one in the place that's open."

I WAS on my way before he finished speaking. I got hold of the janitor by pressing the bell in the vestibule. I had to lean on it for a good five minutes before he put in an appearance. But I couldn't afford to go down in the basement looking for him and leave the front door unguarded.

He came grumbling up the steps. He was a German, plump and short, and had a racing tipster sheet in his hand.

"Forget the scratch sheet," I snapped at him. "You've got a sure thing upstairs in Number Eight."

"What?" he asked, stupidly. Then, "Who the heck are you?"

"A stiff," I said, answering the first question. "And the name's Saunders, United States Attorney's office," which actually wasn't the whole truth, because while I worked for Rip, I didn't draw the twice-monthly from Uncle Sam.

It got him though. "A stiff! You mean—?" he stammered.

"A dead man—with a knife in him. His name's Denton. What do you know about him?"

He drew a nervous hand across his forehead.

"Say, what's your name?" I asked him before he could reply.

"Becker," he said, "Karl Becker."

"Okay. Now about this Denton?"

"I don't know much about him. He's only been a tenant about three weeks and I've only seen him a couple of times since he moved in. He's away a lot. Travels, he told me."

"When did you see him last?" I questioned.

"Tonight. I saw him come in about six o'clock."

"Six o'clock, eh?"

He nodded.

"Describe him."

"He's not very tall," he said. "About

five feet five. I'd say he was pretty close to sixty years old. Maybe older." He paused, and when he spoke again he gave me a start. I concealed it, however. "Anyway, he has white hair."

I told him to go down and lock the basement door and pocket the key. When he came back I had him guard the front door. "Don't let anyone out," I told him, "and no one in, except the police."

All the time I was thinking about what he told me.

There was a pay station in the hallway and I called Inspector Bowers at Headquarters and told him about the murder. Then I hastened back to Rip again.

"Say," I exclaimed, "that guy isn't Denton. Denton has white hair."

Rip said, "I know he isn't." He was holding a card in his hand. "I found this in his trousers pocket. It's a taxi driver's identification card. The name on it is John Lawson."

"The—?" I started, but Rip kept on.

"That's the name of the man who came into the office to see me this afternoon."

"The fellow Teddy Wilson said was as nervous as an old hen," I finished.

CHAPTER IV

Identification

RIP was very solemn. "The same," he acknowledged, "unless someone planted the identification card on him. Teddy will know. You better get her over here."

He walked slowly over to the corpse and knelt down beside it. He squinted his eyes and studied the knife sticking into the poor guy, but didn't touch it.

"It's very screwy," he stated, using his pet expression, "Homer Blake was killed with the same sort of knife and

in the same manner. There are factors here, Tiny, that don't jibe at all."

"The white-haired cluck, Denton, and Frank Kingcade, for example," I volunteered.

He nodded, but didn't say anything.

"Fingerprints may help," I went on.

He stood up and glowered at me. "You're an optimist," he said. "I'll give you odds right now that there isn't a damn print on the knife, or anywhere around here, that's worth anything."

He ran his hand through his hair and continued to glower.

"We got a phone call telling us that Flannigan is innocent, and that we might find something to prove it if we come up here at ten o'clock," he went on. "We get up here early and see Kingcade scooting into the building. Then, we find that Number Eight is occupied by someone named Denton, who we've never heard of before. There's no answer to our ring or our knocks, and we break in. He's not here, or Kingcade. But we find this poor devil and—"

"An open window leading on to the fire-escape," I offered. "The only window in the place that is open, or has been for some time, judging from the stuffiness around here."

"Yes, but I still don't get it. No, wait—"

He broke off abruptly, and whistled softly. I thought I glimpsed that funny, twinkling light in his steel-gray eyes.

"I get it now," he exclaimed, eagerly, and crossed over to where I was standing. "This fellow Lawson knew something about Senator Blake's murder. Something vital. That's why he was killed."

He put his hand on my shoulder.

"Listen," he told me, "get down to that phone and call Teddy Wilson, then the Triangle Cab Company—that's the

outfit Lawson drove for—and find out where he was between ten and one o'clock on the night of May 24. Find out what fares he had and where he took them. They'll have the records. Have them check them right away."

"Okay," I said, "but who did the killing, Denton or Kingcade?"

Before he had occasion to reply, footsteps sounded down the hallway and Inspector Bowers, followed by a couple of dicks from Headquarters, strode into the room. Bowers was a lean, lanky individual, with a weather-beaten face, bushy eyebrows and a perpetual frown.

He greeted Rip, and then asked, "What's been going on here?"

Rip pointed toward the couch, and Bowers hastened over to it. His frown deepened considerably as he surveyed the corpse.

"Who is he?" he asked.

"A cabbie named Lawson, judging from this." And Rip handed him the identification card. Then, he quickly sketched what he knew of the affair. But he left out quite a bit. He didn't mention the phone call he had received, or say anything about having seen Kingcade enter the building. He had his reasons, I knew, and, anyway, it wasn't up to me to butt in.

I left the apartment and went down to the phone booth on the first floor. Two uniformed cops were guarding the front door, and a lot of excited tenants were clustered on the stairs. One woman was on the verge of hysterics. Becker, the janitor, the racing sheet still clutched in his hand, was trying to quiet her, and not succeeding very well.

I fished out a nickel, stepped into the booth and drew the door shut. I called the cab company and told them who I was and what I wanted. They told me

it would take some time to get the information I sought.

"How long?" I asked.

"An hour, anyway," they informed me. "That's two months ago and all those records are filed away. We'll have to dig them out."

"Okay," I said. "Make it snappy. I'll call you back in forty-five minutes."

I hung up and started hunting for another nickel. I didn't have one. A half-dollar was the only change I had in my pocket. I opened the door and yelled at Becker.

"Hey, let me have a nickel," I told him.

He looked at me dumb-like, but produced it.

"Thanks," I said. "It's one the bangtails won't take from you," and closed the door again.

I dialed Teddy Wilson's number. She answered, sleepily.

"The boss wants you," I advised her. "It's important."

She woke right up at that.

"Don't be funny," she flung at me.

"A working girl still has some rights. I'm not being pulled out of bed in the middle of the night to take dictation. Mr. Hastings should know that."

I wiped the perspiration off my forehead and scowled. It was hot in the booth, and she would be like that.

"Who said anything about dictation?" I demanded. "He wants you to identify a stiff."

"A what?"

"A stiff," I repeated. "A corpse. A dead man, dumbbell."

"You're drunk," she stormed, and hung up on me.

I SWORE and tried to get the operator, but I couldn't. Not without another nickel. I stepped out of the booth and saw Doc MacFarland, the

Medical Examiner, and a couple of the fingerprint boys from Headquarters entering the building. Doc changed my half-dollar for me, and I went back to wrangle with Teddy.

"Listen," I said, when I got her on the phone again, "don't jump at conclusions. Wise up to yourself. I'm stone sober and there is a corpse over here."

Then, I hurriedly reviewed what had happened, recalled that someone giving the name of John Lawson had visited the office that afternoon while Rip was still in court, and carefully explained that the only way we could know whether he was the murdered man was for her to identify him.

"Why didn't you say so in the first place?" she wanted to know.

I glared at the phone. Wasn't that just like a woman?

"Sweetheart,—" I commenced, but she interrupted me.

"I'll be right over," she informed me, briskly.

She was. She arrived within twenty minutes.

In the meantime, Doc MacFarland had done his stuff and departed; the fingerprint boys had powdered everything there was to powder, and a trio of dicks were quizzing all the tenants and their guests. They had them all rounded up in the hall on the third floor, but Kingcade was not among them.

It wasn't the usual cocky Teddy that a big policeman showed into the apartment. She was very much subdued. Perhaps it was the realization of death that made her so. I don't know. Anyway, she hurried over to me, shuddered slightly, and said, "I'm sorry, Tiny, I didn't mean to be so rude over the phone. Really."

"Forget it, honey," I said. "You weren't," and took her arm.

I led her down the narrow hallway. "Don't let this get you," I said. "It's nothing—just a dead man." That was a boner—a bad one. I realized it the instant I'd said it. Just because I was used to death, and I'd seen a good bit of it, in Nicaragua, Haiti and over in China, that didn't mean she knew anything about it. I was sorry, but then, I always did have a habit of putting my foot in it. I just squeezed her arm tighter and said no more.

Rip met us at the door of the death chamber. Inspector Bowers, glowering as always, stood just behind him. They'd drawn a sheet over the body. I was glad for that.

"Take it easy, Teddy," Rip said. "Sorry we had to disturb you."

He took her arm and guided her across the room. Bowers drew back the sheet. I'll give him credit. He showed a certain amount of finesse. It's surprising for a cop. He only pulled it down far enough for her to see his face. You couldn't see the blood-soaked shirt, where the knife had been driven into him.

"Is this the fellow who called to see me this afternoon?" Rip asked, gently.

Teddy nodded. "Yes," she faltered, and snuggled up to me.

Bowers quickly covered up the corpse. Rip said, "That's all, Teddy, and thanks a lot." He addressed me. "Take her home, Tiny," he instructed.

I would have liked nothing better. She was such a sweet kid, and I had such a yen for her. But she wouldn't hear of it. She grabbed hold of her nerves once we were outside the drab apartment building and down on Fourteenth Street. She dabbed at her eyes, wiped away the tears, and told me:

"I'm all right, Tiny—really. I have my car and can get home in no time. And, anyway, Rip needs you."

I'd never heard her mention the chief in such informal tones before, but it didn't register just then.

"You're sure you can make it?" I questioned.

She smiled, wistfully. "Of course, foolish," she told me.

Her car was parked around the corner and I guided her to it. Regretfully, I watched her drive away alone. As she swung into Fourteenth, she leaned out and waved to me. It made me feel a lot better.

I went back into the drab apartment building. But before going upstairs, I stepped into the phone booth and called the Triangle Cab Company. I figured they should have the information I wanted by this time. They did, and I felt elated when I heard what it was, for it tied in neatly with Rip's theory.

The fingerprint man was talking when I stepped back into Denton's apartment.

"There are no prints on the knife, Inspector," he told Bowers.

Bowers growled something, which I couldn't make out, and Rip said, "It's not surprising. I offered to give Saunders odds there wouldn't be."

The fingerprint man went on. "There are some clear ones on the bed and the bureau, but there's not a one on that window sill."

He motioned toward the open window leading out on the fire escape.

Two men from the morgue came in just then to cart Lawson's body away. They were a couple of glum-looking hombres. I doubted if they ever smiled.

"Well, I'll be moving along, Inspector," Rip announced. "I'll keep in touch with you, though."

I still couldn't figure out why he hadn't mentioned Kingcade's presence in the building.

"I'll have this thing cleared up in

no time, Mr. Hastings," Bowers boasted.

"I'm sure you will," Rip told him, but he didn't sound as though he was.

CHAPTER V

The White Wig

WE went down the steps and out into the night. It was still drizzling, but the moon was making an attempt to poke through the clouds. We cut across the lawn to the car. I didn't say anything until I had pressed down on the starter and the motor had sprung to life. Then I asked, "Where to?" and anticipated Rip's reply.

I wasn't mistaken.

He told me, "Get over to Kingcade's as fast as this old bus will travel and forget the red lights."

I had swung into Fourteenth Street before he had the words out of his mouth. I cut left on Park Road, down into Klingle, and then raced through Rock Creek Park. Kingcade, I knew, lived in an apartment house out on Connecticut Avenue, above Tilden Street.

Rip remained silent until we were well into the Park. Then he asked, "What did you find out from the cab company?"

I gave it to him fast. "Lawson hung on the stand at Q and Connecticut from ten-thirty until twenty of twelve without getting a fare. Then he got a call to pick up a party on New Hampshire Avenue. He took them out to the British Embassy."

Rip whistled softly. I knew he would.

"Go on," he told me.

"There's not much more," I answered. "He got back to the stand at twelve-thirty and reported in. He didn't get another call until one-ten."

In the light from the dashboard, I saw that Rip was grinning.

"It ties in perfectly, Tiny," he cried. "It definitely places Lawson out there on Massachusetts Avenue about the time the Senator was murdered. Blake lived pretty close to the Embassy, you know. It seems apparent now that he saw the killer."

"Flannigan?" I asked.

He shook his head. "No. I'm convinced now that he got a bum rap. Connie's premonition appears to be correct, after all, in spite of all the circumstantial evidence against him. Now she'll ride me."

He remained silent for a time, and I kept still, too. I realized he was trying to fashion the loose ends together somehow.

Finally, he said, "Whoever murdered the Senator also killed Blake. It seems impossible to escape that fact. The same sort of a knife was used in both crimes, and both victims were stabbed in the same place—just above the heart."

"Kingcade did it, of course," I offered.

He answered, "It certainly points that way."

"Why were you so close-mouthed about it with Bowers then?" I demanded. "You never even mentioned the guy to my knowledge."

"I didn't, because I'm not certain."

I frowned. I couldn't get it at all. His reply made the whole affair screwier than ever.

Kingcade's apartment loomed up ahead on the right. I swung the car into the curb and the tires shrieked as I jammed on the brakes. Rip was out and half-way into the building before the car stopped rolling.

"Come on," he shouted at me. "We've got to get him."

THE apartment was a swanky one. There was a big, black Negro doorman in livery out front. Two clerks, immaculately attired and looking very pompous, behind the desk, and a blonde, who wasn't chewing gum, at the switchboard.

Rip didn't waste any words.

"I want to see Mr. Kingcade."

One of the clerks smiled, politely. He recognized Rip. "He's not in, Mr. Hastings," he said. "He went out about ten minutes ago."

"Know where he went, whether he took a cab?" Rip snapped.

The clerk looked puzzled. "No, I don't," he answered, "but the doorman—"

Rip turned quickly to me. "Find out what he knows, Tiny," he ordered. And then to the clerk, "Get me the manager. I want Kingcade's apartment opened."

I hurried out to the big Negro, and from him I obtained the information Rip desired.

"Mr. Kingcade? Why, he took a cab, boss. One of those from the stand there."

He nodded up the street. There was a line of taxicabs drawn up at the end of the building.

"You don't happen to know what directions he gave the driver, do you?" I asked him. "Did you hear where he said he wanted to go?"

"Yes, suh," the Negro grinned. "He said, 'Union Station, and make it fast.'"

"You're an observant cuss," I told him. "Thanks."

So Kingcade was trying to lam. It was a sure sign of guilt.

I started into the building, and then suddenly remembered something I'd forgotten to ask the doorman, and went back.

"Say, you know the driver of that cab, don't you?" I questioned.

"Yes, suh, his name's Little, Bill Little."

"Okay. When he comes back tell him Hastings, the Assistant U. S. Attorney, wants to see him pronto. We'll be inside."

The Negro's eyes widened. He said, "Yes, suh!" again, and then, "He ought to be back directly, 'cause he uses this stand 'most all the time."

I went back into the apartment. Rip was talking to the manager, a little guy, with a bald head and pince-nez. He appeared fidgety. I drew Rip aside and told him what I had learned. He frowned, and then went into the phone booth over on one side of the lobby. He called Bowers and told him he wanted Kingcade picked up. Then he communicated with the railroad police at Union Station and gave similar instructions.

When he came out, he made for the elevator. The manager dogged along beside him. They stepped in and I crowded in after them. We rode up to the sixth floor and got out. The manager pulled out a bunch of keys and started down the corridor. We trailed along.

"This is very irregular, Mr. Hastings," he said nervously, stopping before a door. "Mr. Kingcade is one of our most valued tenants, and—"

"Don't worry about it," Rip informed him. "There'll be no come-back."

He appeared dubious about it, but he unlocked the door.

I didn't know what Rip expected to find inside, but we both saw the cartridges at the same instant.

They were strewn across the top of the desk, eight of them, and there was a box, with more in it, turned on its

side over by the edge. On the floor, beside the desk, was an empty holster.

I picked it up, and Rip reached for one of the cartridges and examined it.

"It's a thirty-eight," he declared.

He frowned at the others on the desk, and then glanced quickly around the room. It was a comfortable bachelor layout, and everything appeared to be in its place. Kingcade had a reputation up on the Hill of being a fastidious chap.

Rip turned back to the desk, righted the box and started picking up the cartridges and putting them into it.

"The way these are spread all over, and that empty holster there, makes it look as though Kingcade had grabbed the gun and the bullets in an awful hurry," he said, grimly. "It ties in with what the clerk told me. He said Kingcade came in about eleven, but only stayed a few minutes."

"And with what the Negro doorman says, too," I offered.

RIP put the last of the eight cartridges back in the box.

"Yep," he announced, "it's just as I thought. He came in to get the revolver. There are six cartridges missing from the box. Just enough to load it."

"Who's he planning to kill now?" I blundered.

Rip simply scowled at me. The bald-headed manager gulped, started to say something, and then thought better of it.

It dawned on me then that Rip hadn't told him anything about his suspicions.

We went through the apartment in fine-tooth-comb fashion. We scrutinized the contents of every drawer in the place, fingered through the file, pulled books out of the bookcase, and

looked under the mattress and the rugs. But we didn't discover another single clue.

And then Rip opened the closet in the bathroom. There were shelves in it, neatly stacked with towels, sheets and a couple of blankets, and there was a metal hamper for soiled linen on the floor. It was half-filled.

Rip picked it up and dumped the contents on the bathroom floor.

I started to say, "You sure are thorough," but quickly changed it to, "What the hell!"

For out on top of a bunch of soiled shirts, underwear and socks tumbled a white wig.

Rip reached for it, an incredulous expression on his face. He appraised it for a moment, and then handed it to me. "It's wet," he said. "Does that mean anything to you?"

I looked at him, vaguely. It didn't.

"It was raining when Lawson was killed, if that'll help you," he told me.

Then it clicked. "You mean," I cried, "that Kingcade masqueraded as Denton?"

I knew the idea was screwy the minute I'd suggested it.

But Rip didn't seem to think so. "It's very possible," he informed me.

"That's a lousy trick to play on that old guy Denton," I said. "The cops'll pick him up, sweat the devil out of him, and the next thing he knows he'll be confessing a crime he doesn't know anything about."

"No, they won't."

"Oh, not now, of course—now that we've found the wig," I admitted.

"I didn't mean just that," Rip replied. "I don't think there is any such person as Mathew Denton. Something tells me Kingcade created him and impersonated him all the way through. It's all theory, of course, right now,

but here's the way it shapes up to me.

"Lawson knew that Kingcade killed Blake. Perhaps he threatened to expose him. Perhaps he tried to blackmail him. It's anyone's guess. Anyway, Kingcade knew he wasn't safe until he could get rid of Lawson, and he had to do it in some way so that suspicion wouldn't be directed at him. So he posed as the old white-haired guy, gave the name of Denton, and rented the apartment over on Fourteenth. Then he enticed Lawson up there and killed him."

"But first Lawson got panicky about it all and tried to see you."

"Very possibly. We may never know."

"It's a nice theory," I said, "but it doesn't explain who called up and threatened to kill you if you didn't prove Flannigan innocent."

Rip frowned. "We'll take that in our stride," he said. "Right now I'm trying to account for this wet, white wig. How tall did the janitor say Denton was?"

I thought a moment. "Five feet five," I told him.

Rip addressed the manager, who was blinking in the doorway. "You know Kingcade pretty well. How tall would you say he was?"

The manager stuttered, "Why—why, I couldn't be certain. About five five, I guess."

"I thought so," Rip said, and then told him. "Now forget all you've heard or seen up here."

"Of course, of course, Mr. Hastings," the little guy said, hurriedly. "A scandal is the very last thing we—"

Rip pushed passed him and went out into the living room. He picked up the phone and dialed Police Headquarters. He got Bowers on the line, but he

didn't get the information he wanted. They hadn't picked up Kingcade.

CHAPTER VI

The Inconvenient Corpse

LITTLE, the cab driver, was waiting for us in the lobby when we got downstairs.

"You wanted to see me, Mr. Hastings? The doorman said—"

"Right," Rip informed him, briskly. "Do you know Mr. Kingcade?"

The cabby shook his head.

"Well, you picked up a fare here a while ago and took him to Union Station, didn't you?" Rip demanded, his eyes narrowing and scrutinizing the hackman.

"Oh, that fellow," Little said. "Yes, but I didn't take him there."

"What?"

"No, it was this way, you see. The guy told me to hurry. He said he wanted to meet a train. But when we got down on the avenue, just below the Millard, he saw a man walking along and told me to stop. I swung into the curb, and he jumped out and ran up to this fellow. He talked with him for a minute or two. He seemed very excited. Then they both got into my cab."

"Where did you take them then?"

"Down to the river."

"Where?"

"Down to a houseboat."

Rip frowned. I didn't get it at all.

"What did this other man look like?" Rip demanded. "You don't know who he was, do you?"

Little scratched his head. "No, but I've seen him around town a good bit," he said. "He's a tall guy, rather skinny, and always wears loud clothes."

Rip and I glanced quickly at each other. We both had puzzled expres-

sions on our faces, I guess. We didn't say anything. We didn't have to. We both knew the description fitted C. P. Bagley, the attorney who had represented Senator Blake.

"Get going," Rip told Little. "You're taking us down to that houseboat. It's police business."

ANOTHER thunder storm was rumbling down the Potomac, as we swung past the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and turned down Water Street, passed the fish wharves. We rocked over the cobbles, with lightning flashing in back of us. We went for quite a ways, and then Little slowed down and stopped. We drove up alongside of his cab.

"This is the place," he said. "That boat tied up at the wharf over there."

We could barely make it out. And then a flash of lightning lit up the sky and we saw it more plainly. It was a neat job, and must have run into considerable money. I'd never seen it before.

"It's funny there's no lights on it," I said, as I got out of the car. "You're sure that's the boat they boarded?"

"Positive of it," Little said.

"We'll soon find out," Rip said, fishing under the front seat for his flashlight. He found it, and said, "Let's get going."

"What about the cabby?" I asked.

Rip debated a moment, then said, "There's no need keeping him." He paid him, told him he might need his testimony later, and we started along the gloomy wharf.

It was pitch black, except when the lightning flashed, and I stumbled a couple of times. Rip didn't show the flashlight. "No use tipping our hand," he whispered, "but you'll do it if you don't pick up your feet."

We reached the end of the wharf and crossed over to the deck of the houseboat. We crouched there, listening. There wasn't a sound aboard. There wasn't a sound anywhere, for that matter, except the water lapping against the sides of the boat.

"There's no one here," I growled. "What was that cabby doing, kidding us?"

Rip said he didn't think so. "Why should he?" he asked. "Perhaps they've left. He brought them down here quite a while ago, you know. Come on, let's find out."

He flashed on the light and we went into the cabin. I found the switch and snapped it on. The furnishings were luxurious, but they sure had been tossed around. A table was overturned, and a couple of chairs. A lamp lay smashed on the floor. A split humidior was nearby, with several broken cigars dumped out of it. And not far away was a yellow table scarf. It had splotches of blood on it.

I looked quizzically at Rip, but didn't say anything. I was thinking a lot, and so was he as I could tell from his expression.

Finally he said, "You go aft, I'll go forward. Let's see what else we can find. I don't quite get this."

I went into the galley. Everything was ship-shape. There was no evidence that anything had been disturbed. I worked along the companionway, without seeing anything, and then, just as I was about to step into the cabin again, I saw an envelope lying on the floor. It was a manila one and very dirty.

I picked it up and discovered that it was stuffed with newspaper clippings.

I was just about to take them out when Rip shouted at me. "Tiny, come here. Quick!" he yelled.

I jammed the envelope in my coat pocket and scrambled.

I found him in the first stateroom. He was standing there, looking down at the floor, a startled, perplexed expression on his face.

"What happened?" I cried, and then I saw.

Kingcade lay sprawled at Rip's feet. There was a bullet hole in his forehead, and just a tiny splotch of blood around it. He was dead.

"Bumped himself off, eh?" I said, grimly.

Rip shook his head and frowned. "No, that's just it—he didn't," he told me. "I thought so at first myself. But there are no powder marks and, more important, there's no gun around. He didn't hide it after he was dead, that's certain, and he died just like that—"

He snapped his fingers.

A violent crash of thunder sounded just then, and it commenced to rain in torrents.

I just stood there, looking down at the corpse, and trying to figure it out. But I couldn't.

"Kingcade comes down here with Bagley," I said, "and when we get here we find Kingcade dead and Bagley gone. It sure is screwy. Looks as though Bagley killed him, but why?"

"That's what we've got to find out, Tiny," Rip answered somberly.

"But it doesn't make sense at all," I said.

"Murder never does," he replied.

We pulled a sheet off the bunk and threw it over Kingcade. Then we went back into the cabin.

"I've got to get in touch with Bowers right away," Rip declared, picking up the blood-stained yellow scarf.

"There's a dinky all-night lunch-room up the street. I saw it as we drove by," I informed him.

He nodded. "I'll go up there. They probably have a phone. You stay here."

He started toward the door, then stopped abruptly, his steel-gray eyes narrowing, his trim body tense. He stood there, listening intently. Then, slowly, his hand went for his revolver.

Footsteps sounded on the deck. Someone was coming toward the cabin. Now they had started along the companionway.

Quickly, Rip leaped behind the door, and I followed suit. He held his gun tense, waiting.

The footsteps became louder.

Was Bagley coming back? I'd read about murderers returning to the scene of their crime, but I'd never seen it happen in real life. I felt instinctively that I was going to now.

The sweat stood out on my forehead, and my muscles felt tight as drums. I didn't like the suspense. It was worse than being trapped by the brigands down in Nicaragua. I wanted something to happen, and happen fast.

But whoever was coming was taking his own sweet time about it. The seconds seemed like eternity. And then he was almost at the door.

I girded myself for action.

Rip's eyes were sparkling. The cold muzzle of his gun was aimed at the door.

Now it was being drawn open. Some one was coming through.

It was rotund, white-haired Larry McKay, the railroad lobbyist.

CHAPTER VII

The Greek Has a Word for It

YOU could have knocked me over with a feather. Rip ordered, "Up with them—fast," and McKay gave a violent start, flung up his hands, and turned deadly pale.

"Frisk him, Tiny," Rip told me, and I went over him quickly and thoroughly. He didn't have a gun, but he certainly had the jitters. He started shaking like a guy who had just come off a ten-days' binge.

"Well, McKay," Rip said severely, "what have you to say for yourself? You better start talking, and you'd better make it ring true. You're in a spot. What are you doing here?"

The lobbyist made a desperate effort to get control of his nerves. A mystified expression came over his face. It seemed to me that he didn't know what it was all about. Either that, or he was a damn good actor. He just looked at Rip, dumblike.

"I might ask you the same question," was his retort.

"Don't stall," Rip advised him.

"I'm not. This happens to be my boat."

"How long have you owned a boat? That's news to me."

"I just bought it a week ago, but I don't see that it's any of your business. This is certainly high-handed procedure." He had his nerves under control again, and was getting cocky. "A man can't—"

"Forget it," Rip snapped. "So it's your boat, eh? Well, that puts you in an even tighter spot, because a man was murdered aboard here just a while ago."

"What?" McKay started and sweat stood out on his forehead. "Who, Kingcade?" he stammered.

Rip frowned. "You know all about it, I see," he said slowly, scrutinizing the lobbyist through narrowed eyes.

"I—I— Listen, can I take my hands down?"

He'd been standing with them raised above his head all the time.

"Go ahead," Rip shrugged. "You

haven't a gun, and I don't think you're quite fool enough to tackle both Saunders and me."

McKay dropped his hands, pulled a handkerchief from his coat pocket, and shakily wiped his forehead. His nerves were going bad again.

"Listen, Hastings," he said earnestly. "You've got me all wrong. Is Kingcade really dead?"

"Very much so," Rip responded. "He's back there in a stateroom, a neat bullet hole in his head, and no gun anywhere around. What did you do with it?"

"I—I— Now, wait a minute. I tell you you've got me all wrong."

"I also told you you'd better talk fast," Rip said sternly.

McKay mopped his forehead again.

"I don't know why I said, 'Who, Kingcade?' except—"

"Except what?"

"Well, Bagley phoned me a while ago. I was in bed, reading. He was very much excited. He said that Kingcade had discovered who murdered Senator Blake. That it wasn't Flannigan."

"Who did he say it was?" Rip demanded. I could see by the expression on his face that he was inclined to believe what McKay said.

"He didn't," the lobbyist answered. "He said, 'I can't tell you anything over the phone. Can't mention any names. But Kingcade's life is in danger. There's a killer at large.' That's what caused me to say, 'Who, Kingcade?' I guess."

"Go on," Rip instructed, showing ever increasing interest.

McKay said, "Can I smoke?"

Rip nodded, and I handed him one of my cigarettes.

"This is awful," he said, lighting it, and meaning the murder, not the

cigarette. He inhaled deeply and then continued:

"Bagley said, 'Kingcade's hiding aboard your boat. I'm going right back to him. Get down here as fast as you can. I'll tell you everything when you get here.' I dressed as fast as I could and raced down here. I must have passed every red light on the way. Then I get here and—" He shrugged. "Well, you know the rest."

Rip thought for a moment, and then said, "Okay, McKay, that seems to clear you. We can check on it, anyway."

"Be reasonable, Hastings," McKay cried, and tried to smile. He didn't succeed very well. "What would I want to kill Kingcade for?"

"What would anyone want to kill anyone for?" Rip countered.

I'd often wondered that myself.

"Your story doesn't clear Bagley, though," Rip went on. "You said he told you he was going right back to Kingcade. Well, he isn't here, and Kingcade is dead. I wonder how he's going to explain that?"

MCKAY started to say something but the words froze on his lips.

For, just then, a voice snarled, "Drop that gun, Hastings. Stick 'em up, all of you, and don't try any funny business. I've got you all covered."

The voice was harsh. It was the voice of one who meant exactly what he said.

Rip's revolver clattered to the floor and all three of us reached for the ceiling. I shot a quick glance toward the door as I did so. Rip and McKay did likewise, I noticed.

A masked figure was standing there. He clutched an automatic in his hand. The mask covered his entire face. It

was black. But it wasn't the mask nor the polo shirt and slacks which he wore that interested me. It was the fact that he was about five feet five in height.

Quickly the thought flashed through my mind—there is a Mathew Denton, after all, and here he is, ready to kill again.

Gripping his automatic tightly, he moved slowly into the cabin and herded us all into one corner.

"This is a perfect set-up," he said, mockingly. "I couldn't have asked for anything better. The relentless prosecutor Hastings, the man who convicted the unfortunate Tobey Flannigan. Poor Tobey! He was such an innocent cat's-paw."

He laughed crazily, but his automatic never wavered.

"And our friend the lobbyist, Mr. McKay. He is the gentleman who pulled the strings and made the late lamented United States Senator Homer Blake dance. I really shouldn't say lamented, gentlemen, but then, it's always proper to speak respectfully of the dead."

He laughed again, and I started figuring what my chances would be of jumping him. I figured it wouldn't be wise—not just then. That automatic was too menacing, and too near my belly.

"Oh, yes," he went on, "I mustn't forget the respected Mr. Hastings' very amusing stooge, the ex-Marine."

His voice quickened.

"It's too bad you didn't stay in the Marines, Saunders," he said, with an added tinge of sarcasm. "You might have lived longer. But now—" He shrugged indifferently. "Now you're going to die. You're all going to die, and do you know why you're going to die?"

Rip was scowling. His muscles were

tense. I could see he didn't intend to take it lying down, but then I didn't expect he would. I'd been through too many scrapes with him to think that. The nerves had gotten McKay again. His face was blanched, and he was trembling. None of us said anything.

"You're going to die!" the masked figure fairly shrieked, "because you are all getting too inquisitive. And you're going first, Mr. Assistant United States Attorney."

He swung the gun toward Rip.

Rip, I saw, was going to dive for him. I steeled myself to follow through.

But I didn't leap. Not right then. If I had I would have been killed.

A shrill, feminine voice cried, "Stop, or I'll shoot."

To say I was startled would be putting it mildly. Surprise left me cold, for I recognized the voice all too well. But it knocked the masked killer far worse than it did me. It knocked him right off his pins. He hadn't anticipated any interruption, and now that one had come he lost his head.

He swung around and his automatic spit flame twice. The bullets went crashing into the wall of the cabin. He missed the door by a mile. A shot crashed from the door. It, too, was wild. The slug embedded itself in the floor over in a corner.

Then I leaped. So did Rip. But the masked man was agile. I'll give him credit. He side-stepped nimbly, side-swiped Rip on the head with his automatic, and sprang for the window. He took a running dive and went right through it and into the Potomac.

Rip snatched up his revolver and dashed after him, firing as he went. It was pitch black outside and raining hard. You couldn't see a thing, but Rip emptied his gun just the same.

I turned to the door. Teddy Wilson was standing there. She was wet and disheveled. Her hair hung down in kinky strands. She had an automatic in her hand.

"You fool," she cried, "why didn't you grab him?"

And then she started to cry. It was the reaction of the thing. I moved over to her and put my arms around her. She snuggled up to me, and sobbed, "Oh, Tiny!"

I didn't know how she happened to be aboard the boat. I had thought she was home, in bed and asleep. I didn't know where she'd gotten the gun. But it didn't matter just then. Nothing mattered, except the fact I had her in my arms. Whoever it was who had killed Lawson and Kingcade, whether it was Denton or someone else, I didn't know. But whoever it was, he'd enabled me to make better time with this nice little armful in a couple of hours than I'd made before in—well, almost two years.

RIP came over. He was sore as Tophet because the killer had escaped. He didn't say so, but I could tell. He took the automatic from Teddy. "Where did you get this, and what are you doing here, anyway?"

She wiped her eyes, but still stayed close to me. "You ought to be glad I'm here. It seems to me I saved your life," she replied, her old-time fire returning.

I squeezed her, and Rip said, "You did at that, Teddy. I sure appreciate it."

He looked at the automatic.

McKay, still pretty much shaken, came over and said, "Let's see that gun. It looks familiar."

Rip looked at him questioningly and handed it over.

McKay made a quick appraisal. "Yes," he announced, "it's Kingcade's, or was. See, here are his initials." He pointed to the butt.

They were there, the initials "F. K."

Rip surveyed Teddy again. "All right," he said. "Give us the low-down and make it snappy, please. We've got to get a hustle on and notify Bowers."

Teddy did.

"I didn't go home after you had me identify the taxi driver," she related. "I couldn't. My curiosity was aroused. You know what a woman's curiosity is? I wanted to see what else was going to happen. I turned around and parked down Fourteenth Street. I waited until you and Tiny came out. Then I followed you—to Kingcade's apartment. I parked across the street and waited there, too. Then I followed you down here. I almost lost you down near the White House. I was held up by traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue.

"I saw you go down the wharf, and I got out of my car and came part way down. There were some barrels stacked there. I hid behind them. It commenced to rain and I got soaked." She smiled. I thought what a pretty smile she had. "But I stayed there. I was still curious.

"I saw Mr. McKay arrive and come down the wharf. He passed within two feet of me. Then I saw someone else coming along. When he got almost to where I saw lightning flashed and I saw that he was masked and had a gun. I became frightened. I didn't know what to do.

"I stayed there for a while, and then determined I must do something. I had to warn you all, if I possibly could. I started toward the house boat and tripped over something. It was hard, and hurt my toes."

She glanced hastily down at her thin,

water-soaked white shoes. They were not really white any more. Then she continued:

"I reached down and picked it up. It was that gun. Somehow I felt brave when I had it in my hand. I don't know why. I don't know anything about guns. Then I crept aboard the boat and"—she smiled again—"you know the rest."

Rip grinned and patted her on the shoulder. "You're a swell kid, Teddy," he said.

McKay nodded agreement.

I didn't have to say anything. I think she knew how I felt about it. Otherwise, she wouldn't have stayed so close to me.

Rip started out of the cabin. "Come," he said, "we got to get moving. We've wasted too much time as it is. We've given that killer a nice start."

McKay locked up, and we left Kingcade where he had fallen. He'd be safe there until the police and the Medical Examiner arrived. I could visualize Doc MacFarland cursing when he received the call. He lived out near Walter Reade.

"Hope that lunch room's open and they have a phone," Rip said, as we started off. McKay drove Teddy's car and left his down by the wharf. Teddy rode with Rip and me.

"The place is open," I announced as we drew near. "There's a light."

It was open all right, but there did not appear to be anyone in it. There were no customers and no sign of the proprietor—not from outside, anyway.

We pushed in, all four of us, and then we discovered why. The proprietor, a big, swarthy Greek, lay crumpled in back of the counter. He wasn't dead, just knocked out. There was a nasty bruise on his temple.

"You tend to him, Tiny," Rip instructed. "I simply have to phone. This gets screwier and screwier." He strode to the rear of the place, where there was a telephone booth.

Teddy fetched a pitcher of cold water and I doused the Greek. The second one had him stirring. The third had him sitting up and gesticulating as though he were a Frenchman.

There is no need of my recording all of his sputterings. The sum and substance of it was that he had been dozing up at the front of the counter when a man had come in to use the telephone. He hadn't bothered about him because he wasn't a cash customer, and had gone on with his dozing. Suddenly he had opened his eyes to find a masked man standing in front of him.

"He had a gun," the Greek babbled. "He had it raised. I started to cry out, and he smacked me with it. Right here." He rubbed his temple. "He smacked me hard and everything goes black. I don't know anything more until now."

Rip scowled and walked back to the cash register. He rang it up and counted the money in the till.

"How much did you have here?"

"Fourteen dollars."

"Well, you haven't been robbed," Rip told him. "It's all here," and his scowl deepened.

"I don't quite get it," he said, half to himself. And then to the Greek, "This fellow who came in to phone, was he the one who hit you?"

The Greek shook his head. "No, it was a small guy."

"What do you mean? What did the man who phoned look like?"

The Greek rubbed his head, and Teddy handed him a wet towel. He grunted thanks and put it up to his temple.

"He was tall and skinny," he answered, "and wore a pink shirt."

"Bagley!" Rip, McKay and I said almost in one breath.

"Was he still phoning when you were hit?" Rip asked.

The Greek pressed the towel hard against his temple. The cold appeared to help him.

"Yes," he said. "I'm pretty sure he was."

CHAPTER VIII

Starving Woman

DAWN was streaking the capital when we finally got back to Rip's office in the Press Club Building. Teddy was still with us. No amount of argument would cause her to go home and get some much-needed rest. She was plucky, and resolved to see the thing through.

But from the progress we'd made so far it looked as though it might mean going without sleep until Christmas. We hadn't fared so well.

We hadn't located Bagley. He hadn't returned to his hotel and we hadn't found anyone who had seen him. We had learned, however, that he had been in New York all day and had been expected back on the eleven-twenty train.

That explained one thing, anyway—why Kingcade had told Little to drive him to the Union Station. He apparently had known what train Bagley planned to return on. Obviously, too, the lawyer had taken an earlier one. Otherwise, they would not have met on Pennsylvania Avenue.

He hadn't located hide nor hair of the house-boat killer—who we were certain now had also murdered Lawson and Senator Blake, as well. His gloating conversation indicated that. But we'd had plenty of suspects to

scrutinize. Bowers hadn't allowed any grass to grow under his feet, not that it had done him any good. He'd had his men round up almost every one they'd found on the streets. And what a motley mob they'd collected, pan-handlers, bums, gamblers and assorted riffraff. But none of them had answered our purpose.

Rip swung himself wearily in his chair, ran his hand through his rumpled hair, and scowled at the white wig he had laid on his desk.

I motioned toward it. "Kingcade's being bumped off rather knocks your theory of him being the great impersonator into a cocked hat, doesn't it?" I asked.

He thought a moment, then shook his head.

"Not as far as the idea is concerned," he replied. "Kingcade is out, of course. But the wig fits in somewhere. I'll swear to that."

I grinned at him. "You're catching the premonition-intuition fever from Connie, aren't you?" And then, seriously, I said, "I can't see how it can possibly fit in. Kingcade had it, didn't he?"

"Yes, he had it. But how did he get it?"

I shrugged. I had no idea.

"Kingcade knew who the murderer was," Rip went on. "McKay told us that. Now suppose he decided to trap him. We know he went up to that apartment on Fourteenth Street last night. Let's suppose he went for that purpose. And let's suppose, too, that he came upon the murderer just after he'd killed Lawson. The murderer went out the window and down the fire-escape, and Kingcade obviously went after him. Suppose he grappled with him, got the wig off him, and then the killer got away from him. Or suppose he

didn't have the wig on when Kingcade busted in on him. Let's say it was on the table, and Kingcade grabbed it up. Either way it would have come into his possession."

"Yes," I answered, "but—"

But Rip wasn't to be interrupted. "And remember this, also, Tiny. That wig was wet when we found it, and everything else in that hamper was dry. It strengthens the theory a lot, doesn't it?"

I couldn't argue that one.

He yawned and reached in his pocket for a cigarette. He didn't find any, and it was up to me to produce one for him.

It was then that I discovered the dirty manila envelope I'd picked up aboard the house boat. In the excitement of everything, I'd forgotten all about it until now.

Somewhat meekly I hauled it forth and handed it over to Rip, explaining where I'd got it.

"You're a great detective, forgetting your clues," he told me.

"I hope you're right on the clue angle," I answered. "It may be just a dud."

HE pulled out the newspaper clippings and spread them on his desk. The first one he picked up was from the Washington Telegram. It told of the murder of Senator Homer Blake. There were several more dealing with the crime and the trial of Tobey Flannigan. They didn't mean much, except that whoever had dropped the envelope had been vitally interested in the case.

And then Rip spied a yellow clipping among the newer ones. It was so old it had cracked in a couple of places. He read it with interest, his steel gray eyes narrowing, and a puzzled expres-

sion flitting across his countenance. Then he whistled softly.

"Here's our clue," he said quietly, and passed the clipping over to me.

It had a Ransom date-line, and read:

DENTON JAILED FOR THREAT

Farmer Draws 30 Days After Intimidating Congressman Homer Blake

Ransom, Sept. 10.—Mathew Denton, a farmer of Kittery, was sentenced to 30 days in the county jail here today by Judge Roberts, after he had threatened to kill Representative Homer Blake of the Second District.

Denton accosted the Congressman on Main Street and, drawing a revolver, shouted, "I've lost all on account of your double-crossing. Now I'm going to give it to you."

Two policemen grabbed him and disarmed him.

Denton is one of the lower county farmers who stands to lose by the new railroad cut-off between Ransom and Blackston.

Congressman Blake first opposed the cut-off, then switched, and supported it vigorously. He recently announced his candidacy for the United States Senate.

I read it over twice, then looked at Rip. "It's an awful long time to carry a grudge," I said.

He nodded. "You can never tell about human nature," he informed me. "Revenge is sweet to some people."

"Well, anyway," I replied, "it seems to clear up a lot of things."

"I hope so, but you never can tell," he said, reaching in his desk drawer and bringing forth a telegram blank. "Ring for the boy, will you?" he asked, starting to scribble.

The message he dashed off was addressed to "Chief of Police, Ransom," and read, "Advise last known whereabouts of Mathew Denton, Kittery, arrested and jailed Ransom, September, 1915, for attack on late Senator Homer Blake. Urgent."

The messenger boy had just departed with it when Rip's telephone rang. He snatched it up and talked briskly for several minutes. He spiced a lot of "Dears" and "Darlings" through the conversation, so I knew it was Connie he was speaking to.

"She's been trying to get me all night," he advised us, as he hung up. "Bagley phoned her about midnight."

"What did he want?" I interrupted.

Rip frowned. "She said he cried, 'For pity's sake, get Hastings and tell him—' Then she heard a groan and the line went dead."

I frowned also. Teddy just sat over in the corner and seemed half asleep, but I knew she was taking it all in.

"What do you make of it?" I asked Rip.

The phone rang again before he could reply.

We heard him say, "Yes—Where?—Fractured, you say."

"That was Bowers," he informed us, when he'd finished. "They've found Bagley, discovered him dumped out along Pierce Mill Road, in the Park. He's unconscious. His skull appears to be fractured. They've taken him to Emergency."

He sat back in his chair and again scowled at the white wig. He didn't say anything for a time, and then he announced, "I think I know what happened to him. The killer probably trailed him to that all-night lunch room, bashed the Greek on the head, and then cracked Bagley. He couldn't afford to have him talk, you know."

"How did Bagley get out in the Park?" Teddy inquired, rubbing her tired eyes.

"The killer probably lugged his body to his car, drove it out there and dumped him."

"He slipped up," I said.

"What do you mean?"

"He didn't kill him. He must be slipping."

"He probably thought he was dead," Rip said.

THOSE cops out in Ransom worked fast. They were on their toes. It was just a little over an hour before we had a reply, but it was not what we wanted. It knocked everything screwy again.

Rip swore when he read it, then flipped it over to me. I saw the words and was tempted to swear too. They were:

MATHEW DENTON DIED TEN
YEARS AGO STOP IS BURIED
EVERGREEN CEMETERY HERE
RADCLIFFE CHIEF OF POLICE

"Perhaps his ghost walked," I told Rip.

"I've been thinking that," he said, and he didn't seem to be joshing, either.

He deliberated a while and then told me, "Tiny, take Teddy home. She's got to get some sleep. Then go down to Emergency and see how Bagley is. If he's regained consciousness, find out what he remembers, whether he can identify anyone. He seems our only bet at the moment."

Teddy didn't want to go home, but I made her. I took her out to her apartment and locked her in. She put up a fuss, but I quieted her. "Listen, Toots," I told her, "you're asleep on your feet, and pretty girls need plenty of rest. I'll be back at five and let you out. We'll have dinner together. What do you say?"

She yawned and said, "Okay, Tiny."

I beat it from there down to Emergency, but it didn't do me any good.

They wouldn't let me see Bagley. He was still unconscious, the head nurse told me, and in a critical condition. A cop was sitting by him, ready to take down anything he might say.

"Will he die?" I asked the nurse.

She said she didn't think so. That was something.

I left the hospital all befuddled. I could not make head or tail out of the whole affair. Nothing seemed to jibe. It was all a complete mystery. Who killed Senator Blake? Who killed John Lawson? Who killed Frank Kingcade? Who bashed Bagley on the head, and the Greek? Who was the guy who was all set to kill Rip, McKay and myself when Teddy so fortunately interrupted the homicidal proceedings?

I didn't know the answers. Not one of them. And I was completely devoid of hunches. If I hadn't been I might have been prepared for the action which followed as soon as I got back to the office.

Rip was on the phone when I came in. I heard him say, "It's a straight tip, buddy. I wouldn't kid you. They're wise. You better scram." It stumped me, particularly because he was disguising his voice.

He banged up the receiver and jumped up. He saw me and shouted, "Come on, Tiny, we haven't a minute to lose," and almost pulled me out of the office.

Going down in the elevator, I noticed that strange, twinkling light was in his steel-gray eyes. The same expression I'd seen him have in the jungles of Nicaragua. The same one which had appeared when he'd asked Connie Merrick to marry him. The one which always showed when he was certain of success.

We dashed out of the Press Club Building and into a cab. "The Hurley

Building," Rip snapped, "and make it fast. Park across the street."

He sat on the edge of the seat all the way, his chin sticking out, his body tense, and that funny twinkle in his eyes all the while.

The Hurley Building didn't mean anything to me. I knew it was an office building up Pennsylvania Avenue, but how it fitted into the picture I didn't know.

We came to a stop across the street. "We'll wait here," Rip told the driver. "Watch the door," he instructed me.

I looked across the street, and gave a start. The sign beside the entrance read, "Interstate Commerce Commission." Then I commenced to get it.

"You mean—" I exclaimed, and then Rip grabbed my knee excitedly.

"Look, there he is," he cried hoarsely.

John Abbey, the statistician, who had been at the conference at Senator Blake's the night of the murder, came hurriedly down the steps. He was carrying a bag. He looked furtively about him and then plunged into a cab.

"Follow it, and don't lose it," Rip ordered our driver.

We went down Pennsylvania Avenue to Fourteenth and then cut right. We passed the Department of Commerce Building, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and a lot of structures belonging to the Department of Agriculture. They were bounced on to the Highway Bridge, across the Potomac.

"He's making for the airport," Rip said grimly.

"You certainly must have discovered something while I was out," I told him.

He didn't tell me what it was. All he said was, "Did you notice Abbey's height?"

"He's short," I told him.

"About five feet five, eh?"

"I get you," I exclaimed.

The taxi ahead swung into the airport, rolled over to the administration office, and stopped. We were right behind it. Abbey got out, casually paid the driver, and started to pick up his bag. He wasn't aware he had been followed.

Then it was that Rip bore down on him. "Abbey, you're under—"

The little man dropped the bag at the words. With lightning speed, his hand went inside his coat and a gun flashed out. At the same instant Rip's left fist shot out. It traveled less than a foot, and had everything behind it. It caught Abbey flush on the jaw and sent him sprawling through the air.

Rip sprang over to him, his own gun out now. I retrieved Abbey's.

Rip yanked him to his feet and spun him around. He had a dazed look in his eyes. His body was limp. All the fight seemed to have left him.

SUDDENLY, Rip jerked out the white wig. He had had it in his coat pocket. He spun Abbey around again, held him steady, and slapped the wig on his head. It fitted perfectly.

Abbey smirked. "All right," he said, "you win. I killed Blake. I'm glad I did. He deserved to die."

"You killed Lawson and Kingcade, also, and made a felonious assault on Bagley and the Greek."

The little man shrugged. "Sure I did," he said. "And I'd have killed you, too, and this guy"—he nodded toward me—"if that dumb girl hadn't butted in."

A crowd was gathering around us, pushing and shoving, trying to find out what all the excitement was.

We took Abbey into the administration building and the operations

manager turned over an office to us. Rip told him to phone Inspector Bowers and tell him to hustle over.

He pushed Abbey into a chair. "Don't try any funny stuff," he warned.

"Why should I?" Abbey asked. "I've accomplished my purpose."

"Yes, you swore an oath when your uncle, Mathew Denton, died that you'd kill Senator Blake, didn't you?" Rip snapped. "Your uncle tried to kill him once. Threatened to, anyway. He was ruined when that cut-off was put through, and he swore revenge on Blake. He didn't get his chance, but you carried on for him, and succeeded."

"You must be a mind reader, Mr. Prosecutor," Abbey said sullenly. "I don't know where you obtained your information, but it's correct."

"I'll tell you more," Rip said. "You didn't get an opportunity to kill Blake until May 24. Then you were called in to supply some statistics on the Railway Pension Bill. You left when the conference was over. You went back to your rooming house and established an alibi, by talking with your landlady for a time. Then you went up to your room and out the fire-escape. You went back to the Senator's and killed him. You left mud from your shoes in the study and in the hallway. It was the same sort of mud Flannigan had on his shoes. But that's explained now. It came from the grounds of Blake's place.

"Lawson, cruising down Massachusetts Avenue, saw you run out, but it wasn't until just before Flannigan's trial that he knew who you were. Then he accosted you with the fact.

"You realized if Lawson talked suspicion might be cast upon you. You struck upon the idea of impersonating

your dead uncle, bought that white wig, and rented the apartment up on Fourteenth Street. You got Lawson to come up there. No one in the apartment knew you as Abbey. They thought of you as Denton, a little old man with white hair.

"It gave you a perfect out, you thought. You could kill Lawson, and the police would run themselves ragged hunting for a man who had been dead ten years.

"But somehow Kingcade got wise to the fact that you had killed Senator Blake, and also that you were using the Fourteenth Street apartment. He burst in on you just after you had killed Lawson. I don't know whether you had the wig on then or whether it was around somewhere."

"Splendid deduction," Abbey scoffed. "Very true, indeed. The wig was on the table."

"You went through the window and down the fire-escape," Rip continued. "Kingcade went after you, but you shook him off. Then the tracked became the tracker. You followed Kingcade to his apartment and then down to the houseboat. You waited along the wharves. Bagley came out, you saw where he went and then went aboard the boat. You wrestled with Kingcade, got his gun away from him and killed him. In the tussle you dropped an envelope containing newspaper clippings. It was a grave error on your part. You dropped Kingcade's gun on the wharf.

"Then you hurried up to the lunch room. You had to stop Bagley from telling what Kingcade had known. You found the proprietor in front of the place, and you knocked him unconscious. Then you dragged Bagley from the phone booth and slugged him. You dumped his body in your car. Then

you discovered you had lost the envelope containing the telltale newspaper clippings.

"You figured you must have dropped them aboard the boat and went back to look for them. It was then that you came upon McKay, Saunders and myself, and you might have killed us, although I doubt very much whether you would have succeeded had not Miss Wilson put in an appearance.

"You dived through the window and swam ashore. You got back to your car and drove away. You drove to Rock Creek Park, and along Pierce Mill Road you dumped out Bagley's body. I'm not certain whether you thought he was dead or not."

Abbey frowned. "I did," he said, "that was my error. The rest of your recital, however, is perfect. The facts are all correct. Well, I have no regret. I've fulfilled my oath."

He smiled crookedly.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" he asked quietly. "After all, this has been quite an ordeal for a—statistician."

"Okay," Rip told him. "The Inspector will be here any minute now."

Abbey carefully extracted a cigarette from a silver case. The thing was cork-tipped. He tapped on his wrist.

"Ah, yes, the Inspector," he said, striking a match. He held it in his hand a moment while it flared. "Inspector Bowers, I believe."

He lighted his cigarette and inhaled deeply.

"No, Hastings, I don't believe I am going to have the—ah, shall we say pleasure, of meeting the Inspector."

He took another deep puff, and then another.

His body twitched suddenly. The cords stood out grotesquely on his neck. His eyes goggled horribly.

The cigarette fell from his fingers. He toppled forward, then crashed to the floor and lay still.

Rip had his hand on his pulse an instant later.

"Dead," he announced. He looked at me, grimly. "That cigarette, it was poisoned. He tricked us."

"You mean," I said, "he saved the District the expense of an electrocution and you the trouble of prosecuting him."

LATER, back in the office, there were still a few things I had to be put straight on.

"How the devil did you know Abbey had sworn an oath to avenge his uncle and kill Blake?" I asked Rip.

"I didn't. It was a shot in the dark," he replied, sipping the Collins I had just mixed up for him.

"And how did you ever know it was Abbey?"

He grinned. "I got to thinking it was rather odd that everyone, except Abbey, who had been at Blake's the night he was murdered had figured in last night's happening—Kingcade, McKay and Bagley. Then suddenly I had a hunch. I long-distanced the Chief of Police in Ransom and asked him what living relatives Denton had. He replied, 'Just one, a nephew John Abbey. He raised him and he lived with old Denton until he died. But I don't know where he is now.'

"I did, so it didn't matter. But it wasn't evidence against Abbey. So I phoned him, disguised my voice and tipped him off that he was suspected. It all depended on how he reacted. Well, the trap was set and he walked right into it."

He had, at that—into a nice death trap.

The office door swung open and

Connie Merrick, looking lovelier than ever, swept in.

"Lo, darling," she greeted Rip and then shook a finger at him reprovingly. "I understand," she said innocently, "that Tobey Flannigan is innocent of Homer Blake's murder."

Rip grinned sheepishly.

"Woman's intuition," she taunted him. "It has no place in crime detection, says the Assistant United States Attorney."

Rip got up from his desk. I knew they wanted to be alone. I looked at my watch. It was six-fifteen, and I'd locked Teddy Wilson in her apartment and told her I'd be back at five o'clock.

I scrambled. I could visualize the reception I'd get. All the headway I'd made with her since last night gone for naught. I knew it instinctively, for I know you can't talk reason to a starving woman. And I knew she must be that by this time.

CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB FOR AUGUST

(Continued from Last Week)

A total of 6,324 answers were submitted to cryptograms Nos. 181-210, published during August, breaking all previous records for that month in the history of our cipher department, and raising our grand total for the year to 48,664 answers! Your name is in the following list if you sent us one or more solutions to these puzzles! The degree sign (°) distinguishes members of our Inner Circle Club, who have individual records of 1,000 or more solutions with this magazine. Watch for the September Cipher Solvers' Club to be published in an early issue!

Twenty-three—Alpha Bet, Merchantville, N. J.; Denarius, Detroit, Mich.; Lefty Did, New York, N. Y.; Miss Hannah Epstein, New York, N. Y.; G. N. G., Key West, Fla.; °Plantagenet, Paterson, N. J.; Dr. Dirk E. Stegeman, Los Angeles, Calif.; John T. Straiger, Brooklyn, N. Y.; A. F. T., Sidney, Ohio.

Twenty-two—J. B. Emerick, Fort Monroe, Va.; H. L. Evans, New York, N. Y.; V. Genevriev, Globe, Ariz.; Lucille Little, Chicago, Ill.; Ruth, Laramie, Wyo.; °Ike N. Wynne, Great Falls, Mont.; Zarkov, Aberdeen, S. Dak.

Twenty-one—Ernest G. Alstadt, Erie, Pa.; Myrtle Lee Bunn, Washington, D. C.; Mrs. Altie

Mather, West Allis, Wis.; Carl H. W. Oestreich, Grants Pass, Ore.; D. G. S., Colusa, Calif.

Twenty—°H le Care, Norfolk, Va.; Eatosin, Marietta, Ohio; Ralph B. McEwen, New Bedford, Mass.; My Pal, Brooklyn, N. Y.; °Nick Spar, Lynchburg, Va.

Nineteen—Guy Faulkner, Ossining, N. Y.; Jack IV, Boston, Mass.; °Pearl Knowler, Wendling, Ore.; Octogenarian, Fancy Prairie, Ill.

Eighteen—Ah-Tin-Du, St. Paul, Minn.; Thomas Fletcher, Stettler, Alberta, Canada; Joubert, New York, N. Y.; Elvin Crane Paynter, Ocean City, N. J.; Tyro V, Perrysville, Pa.

(Continued on Page 63)



Alkalize with Alka-Seltzer AT ALL DRUGGISTS 30-60¢ SLIGHTLY MORE IN CANADA

"Hurry up! Tighten this before I pass out!
Just missed my jugular by inches—"



Afternoon of a Phony

By Cornell Woolrich

CLIP ROGERS, also known as Real Estate Rodge, also known as High-Pressure Harry, also known as—but look it up yourself in the records—stopped his hired car (his for the next sixty minutes) in front of an imposing construction job which was clamorous with riveting. It was imposing not so much because of its height or breadth, but because of the quality of the materials being used.

Its two-story skeleton was fashioned of steel beams, painted scarlet, of the kind that are usually used only for the tallest skyscrapers. The trim around its base was polished basalt. The mound of bricks that lay in the street waiting to go into the upper façade were bisque, with a high glaze, the best grade obtainable.

Clip swept his arm at it with an air of proprietorship, turned half around

"Clip" Rogers, Confidence Man, Finds a Detective-Badge and Decides to Have Some Fun

in his seat to face the two parties in the back of the car. "Nifty, eh?" he remarked, addressing the more conspicuous of the two. "Nothing like seeing it for yourself, is there? Well, how about it, Mr. Hemingway, think you'd care to come in on it with me? Tell you what I'll do. I'm very hard-pressed for ready cash right now, I've been financing the thing single-handed so far, and as you can see I've spared no expense. It'd be a crime to have to stop now, when it's within an ace of completion. Rather than approach the banks for a loan and pay the exorbitant rates of interest they'll soak me, I'd be willing to cut somebody in on it outright, and keep it in private ownership. Five thousand dollars—and a half-interest in it is yours."

Mr. Heningway, better known as Philadelphia Slim (because he was very fat and badly wanted in Philadelphia), looked judicious, one might even say cagey. "I don't know," he hesitated, "it's a little bit out of my line. Now, my friend Mr. Jeffreys here, goes in for that sort of thing more than I do. He's cleaned up quite a bit in his home town buying property at foreclosure. What's your opinion, Mr. Jeffreys?" he asked deferentially.

Mr. Jeffreys' two main characteristics were an air of unmistakable prosperity and an air of even more unmistakable childlike innocence. Crash knickers, howling golf-stockings, and well-fed, he was the perfect prospect. His and Mr. Hemingway's acquaintanceship dated from the hotel lobby twenty-four hours before. He was down here for a well-earned rest. Mr. H. was down here to put over a big deal. It was quite a coincidence the way he and Clip Rogers had run into each other awhile ago, right while Mr. Jeffreys was with the former.

Mr. Jeffreys' opinion seemed to be one of almost uncontrollable eagerness. He nudged Mr. Hemingway to go ahead, even tried to wink knowingly at him without Rogers seeing it. He was what both of them would have described as "hot."

But Mr. Hemingway was careful to appear only tepid.

"I haven't got that much money in ready cash," he drawled. "I could let you have a check—"

"I've got to have the money this afternoon, or the offer's withdrawn," his partner said. "I've got an obligation coming due that has to be met—"

The lamb between the two wolves looked unsuspectingly from one to the other. "I have twenty-five hundred with me," he burst out. "Would you consider letting me have a quarter-interest in the building for that, Mr. Rogers?"

Mr. Rogers' eyes sparkled a little; outside of that, he appeared quite reluctant. "That's letting it go for nothing," he said sadly. "You'll get your investment back out of the first month's rentals, alone. I suppose it's better than having it taken away from me, though.

"Of course, I've known Mr. Hemingway here for years, but you're practically a stranger to me—"

"I can vouch for Mr. Jeffreys," spoke up Mr. H. quickly. "He's one of the leading citizens of Jonesville, Indiana."

"Johnsville, Illinois," corrected Mr. Jeffreys.

"Well, in that case—" condescended Rogers. "I have the deed all drawn up, in my pocket. It just needs to be signed."

"If you'll come back to my room at the hotel," said Jeffreys excitedly, "we can cinch the thing then and there. I'll

have them turn the money over to me, they're keeping it in the safe."

Rogers and Slim exchanged the briefest of looks. The former cleared his throat. "I'd prefer to have this transaction kept strictly confidential for the present, Mr. Jeffreys. It would hurt my credit to have it known that I was in difficulties."

"I won't say a word," promised Jeffreys.

ROGERS shoved his foot down, swung the car around slowly in a circle. Just as they were pulling away, the foreman of the construction gang went by. Rogers saluted him familiarly. "Everything coming along all right?" He let out the clutch without waiting for an answer.

The foreman stood staring after them, scratching his dome—a sight which Jeffreys missed seeing. "Who the hell was *that*?" he muttered to himself, "Blamed if I know him!"

Twenty minutes later by the clock, Rogers and Slim let themselves cordially out of Mr. Jeffreys' hotel room with a great deal of handshaking. "We'll wait for you downstairs in the lobby," promised Slim. They waited side by side for the elevator to come up, in a sort of silent intensity. It showed up finally, and they descended without a word. They didn't linger in the lobby waiting for Mr. Jeffreys, as they had promised. They left the hotel quite briskly, as though they both had an important engagement somewhere else. They did have; it was Rogers who put it into words as they took leave of one another in an unlighted telephone booth several blocks away. "All right, here's your split, twelve-fifty. Now lam—before he finds out we've sold him a United States Government branch-post office!

I'll see you in New York later in the week, you know where."

They parted, Rogers made his way to the station, bought a ticket, looked all around him, and boarded an express just as it was ready to pull out. The clack of the wheels as the cars got under way was sweet music to him—the lullaby of the lam. He snapped his hat-brim in farewell to the resort they were leaving behind and made his way forward to the smoking-car. He selected a nice comfortable leather-backed seat, sprawled himself out in it, loosened the knot of his necktie, lit up, and looked about him. Apprehensively? Not a bit of it.

You didn't know Clip Rogers if you thought he ever took time off from making easy money the hard way. The busy little bees had nothing on him when it came to being industrious. He hated even to waste a train-trip from one point to another without at least trying to contact one sucker. This, of course, was a very short haul, not much more than a commutation-trip, and the prospects around him were a very crummy-looking lot.

He looked them over, took a stab at drumming up a conversation with the man across the aisle—just because he was the likeliest-looking—and got promptly and definitely squelched. He got up and went out to the washroom, just to give himself an excuse for changing seats and tackling someone else when he came back. While he was in there he took the opportunity of transferring his twelve-hundred from his inner pocket to a safer place, a little felt pouch stitched to his garter. Just in case.

His cuff had dropped over his shoe again, when somebody tried the door. Clip, of course, had it locked on the inside. The tryer didn't go away, kept

trying as though he wanted in in the worst way. By the time he got in, Clip's coat was hanging up on a hook and he was very busy cooling off his hands and arms under the water-tap.

The interrupter was a very stocky man with a—just then, at any rate—light green face. He could hardly see straight. "I never could stand riding on a train, on top of ersters and beer!" he groaned blindly. He pitched his coat at the hook over Clip's, disappeared into the closet, and was too sick for a while to care whether school kept or not.

CLIP, to put on his own coat again, had to remove the other one and hold it up with one hand, while he got at his. This was putting him to a very strong temptation—and Clip tempted very easily. He spaded his hand deftly at it, then snapped it back again almost as though something had bitten him.

A detective-badge had come up in his palm.

He wouldn't have been found dead with the thing, but just then the trembling cabinet-door started opening once more. There was no time to do anything but fling the coat back over the hook. When he started shrugging back into his own, he still had that insignia of his hereditary enemies hidden in his palm, with no chance of getting rid of it.

The late sufferer looked a whole lot better. "They always send me on these out o' town assignments," he complained weakly, replacing his coat. Clip just nodded sympathetically, and when he left there, put the whole length of the train between them. On the way he was going to drop the badge overboard between-cars, and then thought better of it.

Why throw it away? It had its uses. It could come in very handy for a little plain or fancy shake-down, for instance, to liven up slack periods. Might get him a little graft from some bar-keeper, a free show at some club, a free room at some hotel. On the other hand, it was very doubtful that that dick back there would finish out the trip without discovering his loss—and he'd know Clip was the only guy who could have taken it.

Clip was in no position, with his twelve-hundred bucks, to be at the receiving-end of a frisk, just then. So it was a case of doing without the thing, or take a terrific chance. But now that he had it, he hated to give it up without trying it out a little—like a kid with a new toy.

The train started to slow just then for one of its two stops, and a sign reading "Wildmere" gandered in through the window.

And all of a sudden he found himself out on the platform, and the train was powdering again in back of him. Which is one of the beauties of traveling without baggage. He turned and looked after it just in time to see one of the smoking-car windows way up front thrown open, and the head, shoulders and arms of the real owner of the badge shoved way out, gesturing wildly.

He'd either been too busy looking for his badge, or too all-in after being ill, or maybe he'd dozed off—but he'd missed his station.

If he'd run straight to the back platform instead of wasting time, he could have still jumped off and made it. But the line was electrified, and the cars picked up speed much quicker than a coal-burner. By the time he did join the tail-lights, he was just a speck way down the track, whizzing along at such

a speed it would have been suicide to jump.

II

IT wasn't just idle curiosity that made Clip Rogers saunter up to the station-agent's window, although it was a grave mistake on his part to do so. He wanted to know just how much time he had in Wildmere before that dick got back here again from the other direction. He really didn't want any time at all here in Wildmere, but there wasn't anything he could do about it.

He couldn't go back where he'd just come from, because Mr. Jeffreys who had bought one of Uncle Sam's post-offices was there—and there was no other place the trains went from here. And there was no other New York train until seven, he knew that already.

He wasn't worried that the dick might telephone back long-distance and ask the local rubes to hold him. The dick couldn't be sure he'd actually taken his badge, and he certainly wouldn't crave publicity on the score of having had it lifted from him. Wouldn't that sound great: "A dip pinched my badge and jumped off the train with it, and I was carried past my station!" Not the best man among 'em could have ever lived that down afterwards. The Associated Press would have spread it all over the country in one of those little space-fillers the newspapers pad out their back pages with.

The next question came from the agent before Clip could get out of reach, and it packed a wallop that lifted him out of his shoes. "You must expect to mop the blamed mess up in right smart order, inspector, seein' as how you're already askin' about the trains goin' back?"

"Come again?" wheezed Clip Rogers.

He promptly did, which made it Clip's turn once more. "I don't know who you take me for," he said frostily, "but your wires are crossed somewhere along the line."

The agent flopped his hand at him reassuringly. "I won't say nothin' to nobody, as long as you don't want it known who you are. But I know Sheriff Haskell was expectin' you on that train, and I seed you was the only one got off—" His thumb hooked one of his braces. "I'd make a good detective myself, wouldn't I?"

"Just about," was Clip's comment. He was dying to ask who he, Clip, was, but before he could, that took care of itself, too.

"Here's Haskell now, come down to meet you," said the agent, and Clip turned to find himself the center of an admiring triple stare on the part of two constables and the sheriff.

The latter thrust out his hand at him. "Inspector Griswold, I'm Sheriff Haskell," he beamed. "I'm certainly honored to meet you, sir!" (pump, pump, pump.) "When Capital City wired back they were sending *the* great Griswold to help us out on this, I couldn't believe my eyes!" (pump, pump, pump.)

Clip took his throbbing hand back again and said, eloquently, "*Unh?*"

One of the constables wet his thumb and extended it toward Clip's sleeve. "Inspector Griswold," he quavered, "no offense—but lemme touch you." He drew his breath in reverently, "Think of it! The guy that put the great Gash-face Marrone behind the bars at State Prison—"

"That was the Government," said Clip truthfully, "not me."

The second constable sighed like a

sick calf. "I knew he'd be modest; all great guys always are. Is it true that Rat-eyes Houlihan committed suicide the minute he found out you'd been assigned to go after him?"

Clip wasn't the slowest guy in the world on the pick-up. He was in it now, so he was going to stay in it—at least until seven. "Nawr, fifteen minutes after he found out," he corrected without batting an eyelash.

"I've got my car back of the station, Inspector Griswold," offered the sheriff.

"Just call me by my first name," said Clip, by way of finding out.

He did. "Thanks, Clarence, I appreciate that!" said the sheriff effusively. And he looked over his shoulder at the two constables who were following them as much as to say, "Isn't he swell, though!"

"That," amended Clip, now that he knew the worst, "don't go for you two men." There was such a thing as going too far. "Clarence," he shuddered inwardly.

"Nossir, inspector, of course not, inspector," they chorused submissively.

HE got in front next to Haskell, the two constables in the rear. "Of course, the case was outlined to you before you left Capital City, so we don't need to go over—" began the sheriff as he pressed the starter.

"No, it wasn't. They wanted to, but I wouldn't let them," cut in Clip promptly. "I like to tackle an assignment with my mind a perfect blank, no preconceived ideas about it whatever. I work best when I start from scratch. Riding on trains always makes me go stale, anyway, so I wouldn't let 'em tell me a thing before I started."

He saw the two constables nod at

each other gravely in the mirror. "A very good system."

"Then I'll just take you up there and let you form your own conclusions," suggested Haskell.

Wildmere was a good deal bigger than he had taken it to be, not in a built-up city way, but in a sprawling countryfied way. The trees outnumbered the houses, but the houses kept on showing up just the same. "There" turned out to be a large resort hotel on the top of a hill, a rambling wooden structure painted dazzling white, with a veranda all around it and a young army of rocking-chairs lined up in triple rows.

"Everybody," reassured Haskell as they drew up outside of it, "that was here at the time is still on tap, we saw to that! Season's over anyway, place was half empty. It's just that we were getting nowhere so fast, I decided to wire in to you people—"

Clip, who was in complete darkness, just to keep his oar in, took a stab at a remark that didn't turn out to be the dumbest one in the world after all. "Of course, the mere fact that you've got 'em all bottled up is no guarantee; it might have been somebody from the outside, that didn't belong in the place at all." And kept wondering to himself, "What the hell's up anyway—a peterman job, a jewel robbery, a—"

"It is the most brutal murder we've had here in the hundred and fifty years of this town's history!" Haskell added in an undertone as he led the way up the veranda steps.

Clip Rogers stiffened and felt a chill go down his back. Enough of a sketch has been given of his activities to show that he was no plaster saint. But he had his code, and he stuck to it more unswervingly than many an honest man. He'd gypped and bamboozled

and swindled, but he'd *never taken a life*. And it wasn't because he lacked the courage, either. To him murder was filthy, and he detested it. Give the credit where the credit's due. He used his brains to do his fast-work, and not at the point of a gun, nor nitro, nor a jimmy.

And, though he probably didn't realize it himself, it wasn't the easy money that kept him racketing as much as the actual excitement of carrying out the swindles.

He was a thrill-chaser on the shady side of the street, that was all. Just an old-fashioned adventurer in an up-to-date streamlined world. As he might have put it himself, he liked his crime clean.

"Brutal?" he corrected Haskell ironically. "I never heard of a murder yet that was gentle."

THEY went into a gloomy, old-fashioned lobby lousy with rubber-plants, each one of which seemed to have an old maid gawking from behind it at Clip. They would probably beat any underworld grapevine in existence when it came to spreading news, he figured.

"See if you can put the soft-pedal on who I am and what I'm here for," he mouthed to Haskell. "I don't want it to get around; it cramps my style." He wasn't taking any chances; there just might be someone in Wildmere who had once seen the real Griswold or a picture of him.

"Now where would you like to begin?" the sheriff asked deferentially.

"On the spot," said Clip.

They went up in a mousetrap elevator to the third (and top) floor, accompanied by a hand-wringing manager and a pouter-pigeon of a desk-clerk. Both constables stayed below.

They all went down a long hallway with a seedy strip of red runner in the middle of it, and around a couple of hairpin-turns, and finally stopped in front of a door numbered 310. Haskell unlocked it, and Clip went in and looked all around.

The body had been removed, but the bed was a wreck, looked as though it had been drenched with iodine. On the mirror of the dresser, in cold-cream, a skull and crossbones were outlined, and under that two crosses. Nothing else was disturbed.

Haskell said, "She's over in the basement of our station-house; we haven't got a morgue here. If you'd care to come over and look—of course, we took pictures, like they do in the big cities."

He opened a briefcase and handed Clip a group of macabre stills. He glanced briefly at the top one only. It showed a dead woman sprawled on this same bed, mouth open, half of a building-brick balanced across her forehead.

"The other half had fallen to the floor beside the bed. We're sending them both in to Capital City, for fingerprints—"

"All that's passé," Clip said, handing the pictures back. "I use psychology. Now go on, gimme the background, one at a time." He flexed his finger at the manager. "Name, length of stay, habits, and so on."

"She registered from New York five days ago, name of Doll Henderson, took this room and the adjoining one, with a communicating bath between, for herself and her little boy—"

"Where's the little boy now?"

"My wife's looking after him," the manager said.

"All right, now you." He signaled the desk-clerk with his head. "Any phone-calls, any visitors?"

"Plenty, and all from one guy. Fellow here that got stuck on her. They were out on the lake together all afternoon yesterday in an outboard motorboat. He called her again last night at midnight, just a little while before it must have happened—"

"Don't worry, we're holding him," put in Haskell grimly at this point. "Been grilling him all morning, before you got here. He's trying to sidetrack us by saying that while they were out in the boat together she told him she had some mysterious admirer who would kill her if he caught her with this other guy—"

Clip tuned him out with a chop of the hand. "Who was the first one who found her?"

The clerk spoke up again. "I was, unless you count that poor little kid of hers—"

"Oh, the little boy found her first?"

"HE came downstairs to me at nine this morning, poor little devil, hair all neatly combed and face all shining with soap-and-water. He came up to the desk and pulled me by the sleeve. 'Mr. Frost,' he said in a scared little voice, 'I can't wake Mom up; she won't answer me.' I went back upsairs with him and found her, the way those pictures show her. Oh, it was ghastly, awful! Of course, the child didn't realize it even then; he thought somebody had been playing rough-house with her, that's all. Heartbreaking!" said the clerk sentimentally.

"Headbreaking, you mean," said Clip morosely.

"But," said Haskell impatiently, "you're withholding the most important fact of all from the inspector! The kid saw the man *in the act of committing the crime!* He was an eye-witness."

"Now," said Clip softly, "we're getting some place."

"He had a nickel in his hand when he came down to me this morning," the clerk shuddered. "On the way up he dropped it and went after it; that's how I happened to see it."

"What's that got to do with it?" Clip asked.

The sheriff took up the spiel. "He heard a noise in his mother's room, some time during the night. He can't tell time yet on the clock, so that leaves us guessing. Anyway, he climbed out of bed, went through the bathroom, and looked in through the side-door, that one over there. He says he saw a man hitting his mother with a brick, and he said to him: 'Don't hurt my Mom! What are you doing to my Mom?' So the man turned around and answered, 'You go back to bed, sonny. You're just dreaming this.' And he gave him a nickel and pushed him back where he came from.

"So the kid climbed back in bed again and fell asleep, right on top of what he'd just seen! This morning he really thought it was a dream, but, of course, the fact that he still had the nickel clenched in his little fist proves that it wasn't."

"What does he say the guy looked like?" Clip wanted to know.

Haskell shrugged discouragedly. "What d'ya expect from a kid of seven? First it was the boogy-man. Then it was the sandman. Then it was Jack-the-Giant-Killer. Every time we ask him, he hands us another. He's one of those youngsters with too much imagination, and he still thinks he dreamed it, anyway."

"How about matching him up with this suspect you're already holding?"

"That was almost the first thing we did," Haskell said. "We put him into

a sort of impromptu line-up, along with the elevator-boys here from the hotel and all the rest of the male members of the staff, and sure enough — he picked him out!"

"Did he say that was him?"

"No, what he did was stick his finger out at him and say, 'Why did you do that to my Mom? Now she won't talk to me any more.'"

Clip sank down in a chair and looked blank. "Well, if that's the case, why did you have to send to Capital City for *me*?"

"Because this guy, this Joe Fisher, has been able to prove that he didn't come near here all night last night! His younger brother's down with pneumonia, and he passed through the crisis in the early hours of this morning. We have the testimony of two disinterested people, the doctor in attendance and the trained nurse, that he hung around outside the door of the sickroom from the time he came in at twelve, after calling her up, until daylight. He was asleep on the sofa when we went there after him at half-past ten this morning."

"Then, why," Clip wanted to know, "are you holding him?"

"Because the kid picked him out of a line-up of ten people, without having been tipped off ahead of time what they were assembled for." Haskell looked at him helplessly. "It's kind of a vicious circle, that don't make sense."

III

"OH, there's plenty of loopholes in it, don't worry," Clip assured him. "How far is the Fisher house from here? The doc and the nurse couldn't have had their eye on him every minute, if they were busy with a critical patient."

"Well, we checked on that pretty

thoroughly, and the longest stretch of *not* noticing him either one would admit to, was fifteen minutes at a time — at *any* time. It takes half an hour from there here, by car. He kept getting in their hair all night long; the doc even bawled him out several times."

"Then the loophole's somewhere around on the other side of the circle. How about sending the kid up here and letting me see what I can get out of him?"

"*Here*, in the same room?" objected the manager squeamishly.

"I thought you said he didn't understand what it was all about, even yet?" He shook off the blood-stiffened clothes and kicked them under the bed. "We don't have to have that staring us in the face anyway. Anybody got anything sweet?" The desk-clerk silently handed him a stick of gum from his vest-pocket.

In about five minutes the manager's wife came in with a little boy of about seven. He was a stocky little fellow, intelligent-looking, with a cowlick of ash-blond hair hanging down over one eye. He wore a white blouse, serge knickers, "sneakers," fuzzy stockings, and had a sweatshirt or pull-over sweater thrown over his shoulders, tied by the sleeves under his chin. His face was all grimy and sooty, as though he'd been burrowing in the dirt.

Clip motioned everyone out except Haskell and the manager's wife, whose feminine tact he felt might come in handy. His own experience with youngsters was strictly limited.

"Aren't you ashamed to have the nice man see you like that?" the motherly woman was cooing. "You were so nice and clean just a little while ago, before you went out to play — 'Why won't you wash your face, like a good boy?' she went on.

"I *will* wash my face!" the boy said in a reedy treble. "But I don't wanna wash it down in your bathroom, I wanna wash it up here in my own bathroom!"

"Hello, son," purred Clip, crouching forward above his knees, "what's your name?"

"Jimmy," said the boy.

"Like chewing gum, Jimmy?"

"I only like to lick the sugar off it."

He peeled off the tinfoil, stuck out his tongue, and began to strop the gum back and forth across it.

"Jimmy," said Clip, "what was this man like that gave you a nickel last night, when you dreamed someone was hitting your Mom?"

"I told you a million times!" said Jimmy impatiently. "He was big, tall man in a gray suit, with lots and lots and lots of freckles—"

"Joe Fisher to a T," murmured Haskell behind the back of his hand.

Clip sighed, as though he felt sorry for the poor motherless shaver. "Well, Jimmy," he said, "you've certainly got a very dirty face for such a little fellow." He took a clean handkerchief out of his pocket, reached for the boy. "C'mere and let's see if I can't get some of it off for you."

But Jimmy reared back, dodged behind the woman's skirts. He seemed to be afraid of Rogers all at once, for some unknown reason. "I know how to wash myself!" he shrilled. "My Mom showed me how ever since I was five!"

"Well, let's see you do it then," Clip suggested genially.

THE kid seemed to have gotten into a bad temper, without cause.

"I don't let nobody see me do it!" he piped. "I do it when no one's looking!" He dodged out from behind the

woman, swerving to get out of Clip's way, and fled into the bathroom, banging the door after him. They heard him slip the bolt on the inside. A minute later the second door, giving on the next room, had slammed and clicked. Water began to splash.

"He don't seem to like you," commented Haskell, raising his brows. "I got along dandy with him all morning."

"He's been begging and pleading with me to let him come up here," the manager's wife whispered. "He seemed to *want* to wash his face, but I couldn't get him near our bathroom!"

Clip had fallen strangely silent all at once, was staring at nothing lost in thought. His face began to harden, to set grimly in a mask of repulsion as he sat there. He went over to the locked door finally, crouched down, and put his eye to the keyhole. He straightened up and came away again.

"What's he doing?" asked the woman breathlessly.

"He's hung a towel over the inside of the keyhole," was the answer. The door had no transom.

Clip motioned to them to get out, then raising his voice so suddenly that the manager's wife jumped nervously, boomed out: "Let's all go downstairs and look around!" In a hurried whisper he went on, "You'd better go, both of you; this is going to very unpleasant!" He ushered them out, stayed on the inside of the room-door. "No matter what sounds you hear coming from here, don't interfere. Watch that other door down the hall and don't let anyone out, not even the kid!"

Then he slammed the door noisily and cut himself off from them.

There wasn't a sound for the next ten minutes. The manager's wife beat a prudent retreat, but Haskell stayed

within earshot out at the end of the hall, and had one of the constables sent up to lend him moral support.

At the end of the ten minutes there was a sudden crash of glass, as though somebody had broken a window between the two rooms, then an ear-splitting screech like a noon factory-whistle, followed by a hoarse exclamation from Rogers. "Got you now--"

Haskell looked whitely at the constable and breathed, "The killer must 'a' been hiding in that bathroom all night and all morning! Looks like the kid knew, too. Somebody that won his confidence, most likely, and got him to keep his secret. Griswold must 'a' caught on just now--"

"But we was in and outa there a dozen times--" The constable took a step forward. Haskell motioned him back. "We gotta obey him to the letter; don't interfere no matter what happens, he said"

The uproar continued unabated. Somebody tried to get out the nearer door and was knocked aside. There was a scuffling back and forth.

"Griswold" gave a sudden sharp yelp of pain, followed by a deeper groan. There was a momentary lull in the strife, as though he'd been badly hurt. The two out in the hall looked at each other ominously.

THEN the nearer door flashed open and the frantic little boy darted out, beside himself with terror. Foam-flecked like a mad dog, he darted between them before they could stop him and scurried down the hall. Sounds like a peanut-stand whistle came from him.

Haskell's knees were knocking together. "He's gone out of his mind with fright! They've driven him into convulsions!" he shuddered.

He threw open the door and looked in. "Griswold" had a gash down the side of his neck from ear to shoulder, pumping blood. An open razor lay at his feet. He had stripped a pillow-case from the bed, was ripping it into a hasty tourniquet. "Hurry up!" he breathed heavily. "Tighten this around me before I pass out! Just missed my jugular by inches--"

Haskell fashioned him a neck-cloth that nearly strangled him, but stopped the flow.

"Where'd he go?" the constable asked, coming back from the other room, where the woman had been slain.

Clip didn't answer. He went loping down the hall in the direction the kid had gone. They went after him. They caught up to him around the second turn of the hall, in front of the elevator. The car was down, but the shaft-door stood partly open; through the narrow slit the counterweight could be seen moving upward.

"Get down there, head that car off before it lands!" Clip rasped. The constable darted down the stairs, off to one side. Clip funneled his hands and boomed down through the opening: "Bring that car back, operator!"

"In the name of the law!" amended Haskell.

The counterweight reversed itself, the car-roof flushed upward. As it came abreast of the floor, Clip shoved the slide all the way out, gave the horrified Haskell a glimpse of Jimmy, the mad boy, crouched spitting on the roof, clasping the center cable with one hand.

"Hold it, that's high enough!" The ascent stopped, with the car-roof at waist-level. Under it were sprawled two women passengers in a dead faint.

Clip reached in, gave a yank, with his jaw-line set like concrete, the steel-thread cable twanged like a big harp-

string, and little Jimmy came out squirming and kicking at the end of his long arm, held up by the scruff of the neck like a frothing little beast.

Slip carried him that way all the way back to the room, Haskell at his heels babbling, "What's got him—hydrophobia? What's he slavering like that for?"

Clip slammed the room door on the three of them, threw the clawing Jimmy bodily into a big easy-chair with one arm. "Hydrophobia, hell!" he spat out. "He's a forty-year-old midget I interrupted in the act of stealing a shave! He's the murderer of that woman, that went around posing as his mother!"

Haskell nearly sat down backward on the floor.

"I'll get it out of him!" the raging Clip went on. "Take a flying leap at me with an open razor from the top of a dresser, will he? I'll make him talk! Get your shorthand pad, sheriff—" He stepped into the bathroom, returned with a tough leather strop. "Posing as a kid, eh? Well, here's where he gets a kid's medicine!" He stepped one leg up on the chair, pitched the "little boy" head-down across his knee.

The two constables came in, goggled.

"Don't! Don't!" Jimmy pleaded. "That's the one thing I can't stand! I'll talk—but don't humiliate me in front of all these people!"

CLIP uprighted him again, dropped the strop. "I had a hunch that would get you," he said softly. "Cigarette, fellow. No need for playing now any more." He was genial once more, a man talking to his equal.

The diminutive figure sat there, puffing away, his lacerated self-respect re-

turning little by little. "That's why I did it. I couldn't stand it any more. You don't know what it means to go through life like I am—"

"I've been around," Clip murmured understandingly.

"We both worked in a circus, she on the trapeze, and me—for what I am. I fell in love with her, like a fool. Then when we lost our jobs, she thought up this lousy shakedown racket of hers, with me as her shill, dressed up like a kid. She picked guys with money, led them on, and then I wrote them blackmail letters and frightened them out of their wits, pretending to be her racketeer sweetheart out gunning for them. I didn't want to, I'd always earned an honest living until I met her, but I was crazy for her, I couldn't stand the thought of not being near her.

"She was always laughing at me. She forgot that we have feelings, too. And I was jealous of each one that came along, even though she was just playing them for suckers. I'd brought the brick up to the room myself yesterday afternoon, as part of the kid-act. Then when he phoned her late last night, it looked like what I'd been dreading—the real thing, and not a racket any more. So I said, if I can't have you, nobody can—"

"Sign," said the sheriff.

The handcuffs wouldn't fit; he could have slipped his whole hand through them with ease. Clip shook his head at them quietly. "He'll be all right. Just get a pair of long pants for him before you take him out of here—and treat him like an equal."

The midget flashed him a look of wan gratitude. "You *have* been around!" he murmured. "There's something awfully different about you from most dicks."

"You'd be surprised!" Clip smiled to himself.

"I'll drive you down to Doc's," said the sheriff. "Better get a couple of stitches taken in that neck of yours." On the way over in the car, he asked: "Of course, you're Griswold, so I'm not surprised. But how did you spot him so quickly?"

"In a million ways at once. He had that sweater looped around his neck to hide his Adam's apple, but I saw it fluctuate just the same when he licked the sugar off the gum. There were nicotine-stains between two of his fingers. He dirtied up the lower half of his face purposely, of course, to hide the fact that he needed a shave. He jumped back when I tried to touch his face, and he wouldn't use the woman's bathroom, only this one up here—because his razor was hidden in it somewhere. The cold-cream streaks on the mirror were too thin to be made by anything but an adult's pinkey, and a man would only use his index-finger for that. Covering up a keyhole by draping a towel over the knob is too smart an idea for a seven-year-old. I crawled out on the ledge and when I took a hinge in the bathroom-window, sure enough he was standing up on a chair lathering away—"

"Well, Ins— I mean Clarence.

we're certainly going to give you full credit for this!"

"Suppose you take credit for it yourself, and just leave me out of it altogether." And when the doctor had finished stitching the gash for him, "Will it leave a scar?" he wanted to know.

"Apt to, but a little grafting later on can take care of that easily enough. Don't tell me a man like you is vain about your looks!"

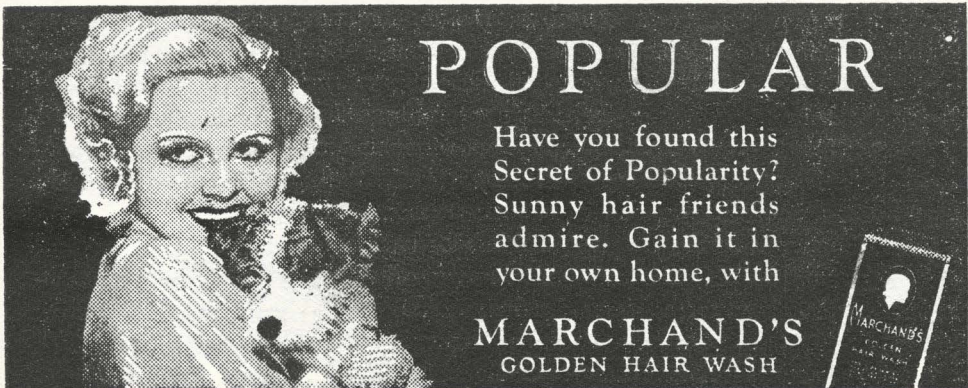
"No-o," drawled Clip, "but it don't pay for me to be too easily identifiable—in my line of work."

It was five to seven when he took leave of Haskell, in back of the station, and a train from New York most probably bringing the real Griswold could already be heard approaching in the distance. The one bound the other way was in, and waiting.

"You just stay here where you are," said Clip, "and wait for me, I'll be back in no time!"

"Then you're not taking this train—?"

"Just hold this for me!" He thrust the badge at him. "Give it to me when I come back." And as he loped off through the station, he called back something that sounded like: "You won't know me at all, I'll look so different!"



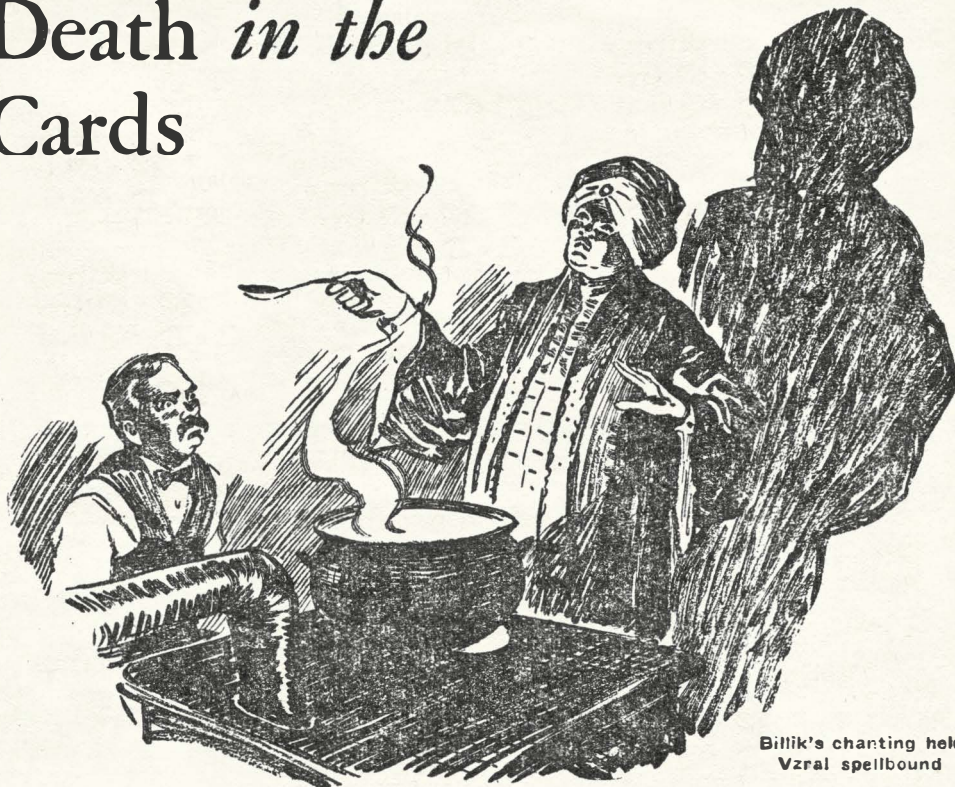
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Death *in the* Cards



Billik's chanting held
Vzral spellbound

By Robert W. Sneddon

THE professor's beady eyes were focussed on the spellbound face of the middle aged woman sitting across the table from him. The words of the old fortune telling patter rolled glibly off his tongue as he spread the lamb's knuckle bones on the velvet table cover and pointed to them with a glass rod.

But for all his apparent concentration, the professor's mind was outside the striped tent with the banner over the door reading: "Professor



Billik: The Bohemian master of mystery, knows all, tells all — the past, present and future. Consult him now before it is too late."

The veiled menace of the last phrase had once been worth twenty dollars a day to him. But now, alas, he could hear the ping-pang of the bullets on the targets of the lead joint next door, token that the nickels were flowing into the cash box. On the other side of his pitch, the reedy flutings of the hand organ of the punk ride

The Story of Murder Was in Those Cards—Yet with Them "Professor" Billik Could Neatly Prophecy Everyone's Future but His Own

told him that the kids were crowding the miniature carousel. Money was dropping like rain into the hands of all—into the grease joints, the kid joints, the rides and swings of the Park.

Time was, when he, without a bark-er, or a single shill, without grinding all day long, could lay up enough of a bank roll to carry him through the winter. But now, what with tight wads and squawking customers that wanted a life's history for a quarter, it was a tough life.

"Yes, lady, the omens tell me there is trouble ahead," he went on mechanically. "Someone in the family wants to make trouble for you. You got a cousin? No. Oh, a brother-in-law. I thought so. The signs don't ever lie. I see jealousy. Someone comes between you and your husband. Yes, here is trouble again. But I can fix it for you, lady. I got the right medicine here against family trouble. You see this bottle. You put three drops on the doorstep where the trouble is—three drops when the moon is full. Then you wait a month and three drops more, and no more trouble."

The woman's eyes dilated. "You say I get rid of trouble?"

"Positive. Sure. Fifty cents for the medicine."

"I give you fifty cents already," she protested.

"For the advice only. But wait, I make a bargain. For the medicine this time only, a quarter. But don't tell no one, see."

He reached out a pudgy hand for the quarter, and passed over the little bottle of water and blueing. The woman rose and passed out with a furtive stealth.

The professor slipped the coin into his vest pocket under his robe, and removed the turban from his heavy thick

hair. In repose his face was that of a clown minus the red and white makeup, dumpy, solid, a small flattish nose, a smiling mouth, twinkling eyes, but now it was lined with discontent.

There was something wrong with the year 1904, but just what it was his occult knowledge could not tell him. People weren't paying money for his advice and medicines, love potions, trouble chasers and the like as they once did.

Herman Billik was, as he described himself, truly a Bohemian—that is, he came from Bohemia, now part of Czechoslovakia. His mother had brought him to Cleveland eighteen years earlier and herself set up in business as a fortune teller. She had been amazed to find as many credulous people in Cleveland as in her native Bohemia where the belief in spells and curses, werewolves, wizards and witches still persisted.

Herman had given her a hand in the business, then tried other occupations. He had been a waiter and a chef, but when he came to Chicago, he reverted to his mother's art, and set up his tent in the park at suburban Riverside. At first all had gone well. He had established his wife and two children in a house on the West Side and managed to draw a steady income. But now there appeared to be a depression. The supply of lovelorn girls and worried matrons had unaccountably fallen low. Something had to be done to remedy the matter.

As a matter of fact he was already considering a remedy. He stood reflectively in his tent for a few minutes, then abruptly pulled off his robe, tossed it with his turban and fortune telling apparatus into the large tin trunk in the corner and secured the lid. He was through for the night. A moment later

he was dodging through the crowds and making for a street car.

MR. MARTIN VZRAL was still in his dairy store when Billik entered. For all his American citizenship this fellow Bohemian had lost none of his national superstitions. A heavy witted, hardworking peasant he had brought his cow knowledge to Chicago and made it pay him a profitable living. He had built up a good business, bought himself a house, and had a family of six daughters and one son. He believed that all this had been accomplished by favorable fortune. But now someone was putting the Evil Eye on him. One of his herd was sick. A new dairy store had opened up in the next block and was robbing him of trade. He was losing customers and, on account of black magic, the future looked very dark indeed.

He had mentioned the matter to the professor who bought his milk, eggs and cheese at the store, but Billik busy with his own worries had given him no consolation or advice. He had merely shaken his head and said it was too bad.

Vzral looked up.

"A quart, Mr. Billik?"

Billik nodded. He saw that he had interrupted the dairyman's pencilled figuring in an old note book.

"Business aint so good, eh?"

"Nah. Today I find Mrs. Linkovitch, the Polish lady, says she gets better milk up the street. Every day more trouble, more trouble. You're an educated man, Mr. Billik. I got to do something. You tell me."

Billik leaped at the opening. He tiptoed to the door, opened it, looked out, closed it and came back to the counter. He leaned across its zinc top and beckoned to Vzral.

"Sh! I don't want no one to hear. No names, Martin. The gentleman up the street, eh? He's the one that's working magic on you. Well, I fix him with my magic. I got better, stronger magic than him—I—"

Vzral took his ear away from Billik's lips. He made a protesting gesture.

"Mr. Billik, I ain't got no money for magic—I'm a poor man."

Only Billik's vision of what the future might bring forth prevented him from telling the man in front of him that he was a liar and that he knew he had over six thousand dollars safely stowed away in bank and other monies available. He controlled his scorn of this tightwad.

"I don't charge a cent, Martin; for a friend I do everything free. Listen, I fix this Dutchman for you."

"How?" asked Vzral directly.

But Billik was ready for him. "You got a big pot I can use?"

"Yes."

"All right, I got to get some stuff. I come to your house in an hour and you help me cook up when I bring! I tell you I fix the Dutchman right."

"You are a fine man, Mr. Billik," Vzral murmured. "Nah—you don't owe me for the milk, nothing. You come to my house in an hour."

The professor stepped away more gaily than he had entered. He had hooked a victim with money enough to make a little labor worth while.

When he turned up at the dairyman's house he had with him a paper parcel which smelled none too sweetly. He asked Vzral to put it in the kitchen and be careful about it, and with apprehensive hands the dairyman did as he was asked. Then he intimated bluntly that his physical strength must be built up for what was to be done and a substantial meal with wine was set

in front of him. He got through with this and a cigar, while Vzral fidgeted uneasily.

Then the magician rose and looked significantly at the clock.

"Time you were all in bed," said Vzral hastily to his children.

"But, pa, it's only ten," protested his daughter Mary.

"What's the matter, pa?" asked Emma.

"Mr. Billik and me has business in the kitchen."

"What sort of business? Don't you go dirtying up the kitchen," protested Mrs. Vzral with a perplexed look.

"Don't worry, Madam," said Billik smiling. "Martin and me, we make a little experiment that will bring lots of money. What is a dirty pot? You can buy a dozen new ones."

The Vzral family saw the pair go into the kitchen and heard the key turn in the lock.

"Well, I never," murmured Mrs. Vzral. "Whatever can your father be doing?"

She would have been amazed had she been on the other side of the door. Billik, dressed in his robes which he had brought along, placed a pot on the stove and emptied into it the contents of his paper parcel obtained at the butcher's, —scrap entrails and a lamb's skull.

Seated on a chair as directed, Vzral watched the wizard stir the mess and mutter strange words over it. Evil alchemy was being performed in this prosaic kitchen, and dark and wicked things summoned to it by ancient incantations. From time to time, Billik dropped in some substance which falling into the mixture caused it to smoke and fume with a pungent vapor.

The clock on the wall ticked monotonously. Billik had extinguished the light. Now and then he opened the

stove and the red glare threw a monstrous shadow on the wall. Vzral's spirit dwindled to nothing. It seemed to him that if this hideous business continued much longer he must die. Billik's chanting rose and fell.

THE mess in the pot dried and stuck with a nauseating odor. Billik peered into it, then lifted it from the stove.

The tips of his fingers to his forehead he bent over it, swaying and murmuring. Vzral closed his eyes. He could not bear to look any longer.

"It is done, Martin," said Billik's voice abruptly. "Look now."

He was standing at Vzral's elbow holding out a spoon heaped with a gray powder.

"That is it?" asked the dairyman in an awed whisper. "Can I have a light now?"

"Yes. That comes from the pot, from the skull of a black lamb, three drops of a viper's blood, and the claw of an owl killed at midnight and other things that I won't tell you."

"And that powder will fix the Dutchman?"

"Yes. We fix him at midnight."

It was almost midnight then. Quiet had fallen on the house. The family had gone to bed. Vzral, still under the spell of his obliging friend, followed him into the street. In a few minutes they reached the darkened store of the rival dairyman. There Billik halted and took the little glass jar in which he had placed the powder, from his pocket. He set it on the doorstep. His fingers wove a pattern in the air above it. Then he bent over, unscrewed the top and slowly poured the powder on the stone in a circle. Within the circle he made an arrow pointing away from the direction in which they had come

from Vzral's house. His lips worked in a fast mumble. He spat four times, turning to each point of the compass.

The dairyman watched him with awe. He lifted his eyes to the clock tower at the end of the street. The hands were at midnight exactly, the hour when spells work best.

He jumped as Billik touched his shoulder and said:

"Go home to bed, Martin. Everything is fixed now. I make good business for you and bad for the German. You can spit on him now and he can do you no more harm."

The fortune teller watched Vzral plod heavily away.

II

TWO days later he dropped into the dairy store. Vzral all but embraced him. Business was wonderful. Three new customers and the sick cow was feeding again.

Billik accepted the gratitude as his due. The new customers he could have explained about. He had visited and coerced three families to patronize Vzral, threatening them with vague misfortunes if they told of his persuasions. As to the cow, he knew nothing about that. Maybe he had worked a cure.

"And now maybe I owe you some money," said Vzral cautiously, fingering a well worn old leather purse. "How much, Mr. Billik?"

"Nothing," said Billik magnanimously. "But I tell you, I am a little short. Maybe you can lend me twenty dollars. I pay you back as soon as I can. But for what I did, forget it. Between friends, eh?"

"That is right, between friends," said Vzral, beaming. "Twenty dollars, eh—you want a loan. Willingly, Mr. Billik. Your credit is good with me."

And with the utmost good faith the dairyman made his first payment on his passport to the country of the Dead.

It was the most fatal move he could have made.

Assured that he had found an easy mark, the fortune teller settled himself down on the Vzral family and like some bloated spider began to extract the life essence of them all. He was soon on terms of easy friendship with all of them—Martin, his wife, Rose and the girls. Martin's son, Jerry, a sixteen-year-old lad, was the only one who did not think much of the professor's home magic, his herb medicines and potions, and his incantations and spells. He saw that every time there was any of this business, it cost the family money.

But everyone else in the family thought a lot of Uncle Herman. When he wasn't working magic, he was full of fun and jokes. Martin Vzral apparently was willing to go the limit for his friend. A hundred dollars here, a hundred dollars there meant nothing to him. Billik was his good friend, his benefactor, the author of his increased prosperity. Billik was going to make money for him. He knew of an herb which, if fed to cattle, made every cow give twenty quarts of heavy milk a day.

Two thousand dollars of Vzral's hard earned money soon found their way into Billik's greedy hands. Only a loan, of course, but a loan which the borrower had no idea of ever repaying. Billik still kept his tent in the amusement park, he still worked there at intervals, but no longer was he driven and worried. Why should he be? There was Martin to fall back on. And there was Rose whose eyes lit up when they met his.

When he wanted a holiday, there was banker to pay for it. He talked to

Martin. In California in a certain valley was this wonderful milk producing herb. He was sure if he went there he could find it. He had consulted his Tarot cards. There was danger to be overcome but great fortune in store.

The outcome was that California received another tourist who lived on the fat of the land, drank its wine, basked in the sunshine, and reinvigorated returned to Chicago with a sad story of discovering that the magic herb had been uprooted by Japanese who did not know its value.

VZRAL swallowed this fable, and suggested that Billik do a little magic in another direction. Emma, his twenty-four-year-old daughter who should have been married years ago, was balking at his choice of a husband for her. He had picked out a steady-going elderly butcher to take her off his hands. And what did the ungrateful hussy do! She said could not marry a man who smelled of meat. She had had enough of cow smell to last her all her days. There was a young man, Niemann, hanging about. He had a good name—Mr. Nobody. A “nobody” he was, but Emma was making sheep’s eyes at him all the time on the sly.

Billik heard this story gravely and promised to fix Emma. He gave Mrs. Vzral some concoction of his own to slip into the girl’s coffee. It would make her crazy about the butcher and there would be a marriage very soon. He had cut the cards four times, and every time there was a marriage.

The cards were right. Only the marriage which Emma made was with Mr. Nobody. She promptly eloped with him and set up house out of reach of the family.

It took the fortune teller all his cun-

ning to twist this to his advantage, but he managed to do so by prophesying that the butcher was headed for bankruptcy, while Nobody was destined to make a fortune.

As the newly married pair made no demands on his purse, Vzral was quite satisfied, and Billik’s reputation was upheld. There was just one thing troubling the fortune teller. Despite having the dairyman and his wife in the hollow of his hand, bound to him by a combination of gratitude and terror, all at once Vzral began to show his old cautious miserliness. He clung to his money as if he never expected to make any more.

Billik determined to attend to this, and within a week the dairyman began to have vague and distressing stomach pains. He bore with them for a time, complaining, then sent for a doctor who looked him over and prescribed. As the nausea and cramps, the numbness in his limbs continued in spite of the drug store medicines, Vzral begged his friend to help him.

Billik did some hocus pocus with the cards and gravely announced that some enemy was hexing him. He would have to work a counter spell and give him a potion or a powder which would put him on his feet again. Vzral thanked him gratefully and begged him to start in his magic at once. So Billik, having given Mrs. Vzral a white powder to administer to her ailing man, left to go into the silence where he might concentrate on his cure.

On March 27, 1905, Martin Vzral was free of all his bodily ills and superstitious fears. The doctor who had prescribed for him signed a certificate of death from natural causes. The weeping family stood about the grave in the Bohemian National Cemetery. The widow was supported by Uncle Her-

man whose tears flowed almost as copiously. There was an enormous wreath with his name attached.

When Rose Vzral found herself a widow with business to attend to, she turned to the man who had been so close to the dead man and herself. She had now the house, the dairy business, two thousand in life insurance and close to six thousand in cash in the bank.

Billik gave her advice, and it was only natural that she should slip him a little change now and then. One always pays for financial advice. Everything was going along smoothly until one evening Mary, the twenty-two-year-old daughter had a violent headache. Uncle Herman happened to be there and with the aid of an aspirin and a few mysterious words in an unknown tongue cured her. But he wagged his head gravely. That old hex worker was busy again. He suggested Mary should visit his tent and he would read her fortune.

She turned up next day with sister Emma who had come on a visit and Billik cut the cards. The card of Death turned up three times and Mary went home sick with apprehension. She went with Jerry to decorate her father's grave with flowers and she said to the boy— "I'm going to die, I know it. I'm going to die."

Sure enough she did die on July 28—just about four months after her father, and with much the same symptoms. A fresh blooming girl, she succumbed to some mysterious ailment. To the doctor attending her there appeared nothing suspicious in her death.

THE plot in the cemetery was opened to receive the body and none sobbed more bitterly than Uncle Herman, but as he told the sor-

rowing mother, at least she was not being put to any expense. Mary had been insured for \$800. Billik went with Mrs. Vzral to collect from the insurance company, and it was only fair that he should get a good slice for all the time and trouble. Was he not waging a constant battle against the machinations of the secret black magician who had put a curse on the family?

There must have been an unguarded point in the protective wall raised about the Vzral family by their friend, for towards Christmas poisonous malice slipped in and struck down twenty-year-old Tilly with the same old stomach trouble. She joined her father and sister in the cemetery and Mrs. Vzral added \$620, less Billik's share, to the bank account. The insurance company paid without question.

But if those who should have been officially alert were not, there were others who began to wonder what was wrong with the Vzral family, thrice visited by the Angel of Death in nine months. In the neighborhood there were two factions. One gabbled about the similarity of the deaths, their suddenness, and the constant attendance of this man Billik about the house. He was up to no good with his herbs and his cards and what not, a worthless good for nothing scoundrel who was hanging about for what he could get.

But for every enemy, Billik had two supporters. He was a wonderful man, a kind man who wouldn't kill a fly. All you had to do was to hear what his wife said about him. He was crazy about his children. And the things he had told people that had come true, the good advice he had given, the miraculous cures he had worked. He was a saint on earth. Maybe he did work magic, but it was good magic such as

the blessed saints themselves would not disdain, healing the sick, bringing prosperity and comfort to the poor.

And gradually gossip and talk died away. But in August, 1906, tongues were wagging again. The hidden enemy slipped again into the Vzral family circle and this time Rose, a handsome eighteen-year-old girl was the victim. Her insurance, \$300, was paid without question.

This poor creature was followed to the grave in November by twelve-year-old Ella Vzral, carefully insured for \$105.

And still no official attention was paid to these five deaths. But this time the neighborhood got busy. At first with talk only. Only the day after Ella's funeral Jerry came in with a wild story of what he had heard—neighbors were threatening violence if his mother did not get Uncle Herman out of the house—they were going to tar and feather him and run her out of town.

Fortunately Uncle Herman Billik was there to advise. Sell the house at once and move. He knew a man who would buy it. Before night the house had changed hands at a price of \$3000 cash, and by morning the moving vans were at the door, and the sad remainder of the Vzral family was being moved to another section of the city.

But it was a move too late. Scarcely had the beds been put up and the dishes on the shelves of the new home than the police were ready to make a call.

III

COMMENTS of neighbors had stirred Emma to action and she had gone to the police with the story she now believed—that her father and sisters had been murdered by Billik with the connivance of her mother.

Detectives were dispatched at once to the new Vzral home, but someone had been before them. Rose Vzral lay dead in her bed. They learned that Billik had been there an hour earlier. What persuasion he used on the woman to take what she knew to be deadly poison no one will ever know. By her death the one sure witness of his crimes was gone.

Billik was arrested at his home. What veil had come between him and his future that he had not foreseen this happening? Or was he so assured of his ability to beat the gallows that he made no attempt at flight?

He was confronted with the hysterical young woman who would have gone the same way as her sisters had she remained at home. She charged him with giving a white powder to her father, to her sister Mary, with taking money continuously from her mother. The insurance money of all her sisters, with killing her mother whom he had hypnotized to do his will.

With an uneasy smile plastered on his clownish face, Billik blinked his eyes and in his most glib tones denied everything.

He was clapped into prison charged with the wilful murder of the five Vzrals.

The police are always up against trouble in a poisoning case. Who, how, when, where, why are questions that sometimes take a lot of answering. As a preliminary the five bodies were exhumed, the organs removed and submitted to the medical experts. Their tests disclosed the presence of enough arsenic in each body to produce death.

Supposedly the white powder given by Billik was arsenic. Where did he get the poison? Detectives working for months explored every drug store in the city, in near-by towns, in Cleve-

land, without coming on any trace of a purchase. Advertisement brought no response from any drug clerk in other cities. No one who knew arsenic had seen it in Billik's possession.

That Billik had poisoned five people with arsenic was self-evident, yet how was it to be proved, and especially to a jury.

Looking about for witnesses the prosecution grabbed at Jerry and from this lad they extracted a wealth of picturesque description of the magician's rites and ceremonies, of his prophecies of death and disaster to the family, his promises to save them, his brewing of medicines and administration of cures. He told of hearing his mother talking to Billik. He made out a good case for the dead woman, saying that she was simply a prey to Billik's powers, and that she handed him out money all the time.

He added a new piece of testimony: that his two little sisters were in the house alone one time after Billik had been there; that neighbors smelled gas; and that they saw Billik hurry out of the house. They waited a little and as the gas grew stronger went into the house and found the two little girls unconscious and a gas bracket pouring gas into the air.

Inspector Shippey, in charge of the case, asked Jerry, "Why do you think he missed you?"

"I dunno, unless maybe it was I had no insurance."

"And a darn good answer, Jerry."

They brought the prisoner into court, July 3, 1907. He was bland and unperturbed. His cunning brain was ready to fight for his life.

He denied the charge of murder. If any murdering had been done, Emma could explain it. She was capable of murdering her whole family.

As for the white powder. If salt was a poison, it was the first time he had heard it so called. If pills of bread with a little yellow soap were poison, drug stores could go out of business. Sure, he had given salt and soda, harmless pills. Why not—it was faith that cured.

As for his spells and fortune telling, he admitted he had worked them on the Vzral family to get money. There was nothing wrong in that. Of course, he had taken the money. Why not, when it was offered to him.

He knew nothing about how Rose Vzral died. She took arsenic, did she? Where did she get arsenic? The state said he had arsenic. Where would he get arsenic? People who made statements had to prove them. They said he had arsenic. Well, that had to be proved. Anyway, it was a lie.

BUT if the prosecution showed weakness, the defense showed more, and the jury found Herman Billik guilty in the first degree. He was sentenced to be hanged October 12, and an overwrought jurymen sprang to his feet and shouted much to the confusion of law and order: "And I'd like to spring the trap myself."

They took Billik murmuring his innocence and shut him up in the county jail.

And there, strange as it may seem, the prisoner far from being an object of detestation, within a couple of weeks was being regarded as a martyr by his fellow prisoners. He put on such an innocent act that even the prison authorities softened their hearts, and so smooth was his work that he brought a tear to the eye of Sister Rose, a nun, whose life was given over to prison visitation.

In all her years of this service she

had never met a man like the Bohemian fortune teller. He told her he had given up such simple dabbings with powers that were frowned upon by the church and renewed his faith. He swore to her that he was an innocent man, by Mary and her son, and begged her to prevent a terrible miscarriage of justice.

Sister Rose came from the condemned cell as if walking in a dream, as if she had seen a vision, little knowing that the wily magician had caught her senses in his web of lies. She carried her belief in his innocence to Father Callaghan of the Paulist Brothers and inspired him to visit Billik. What happened, no one knows, for the secrets of the confessional must not be bared. But after several interviews and moved by the intercession of others in the prison, the priest championed the doomed man's cause.

He went into action with banners flying. A man of positive force, a tremendous power in support of any movement he undertook, the priest made his church a headquarters of defense. In his pulpit he proclaimed Billik's innocence, he charged that the District Attorney and his minions were in conspiracy to railroad him to the gallows.

He even went so far as to pronounce a curse on the District Attorney. He lobbied. He besought the interest of important political figures, until the whole city of Chicago was throbbing with interest. He never directly said that Billik had confessed innocence, but it was assumed this must be so.

Never had any man such a fiery champion. Father Callaghan took Vzal and his little sister in charge and soon was in position to announce that their testimony had been as good as put in their mouths by the authorities.

When the authorities denied this, the priest went on the stump with his two exhibits and toured. He packed halls with thousands crazy to see Jerry and Mina, and to hear them tell a very different story to that in the police records.

They had inherited much of their papa's gift of inspiring conviction and in the old vaudeville phrase were a "wow." Jerry took back the words which had contributed so largely to sending Herman Billik to jail, and wept his penitence as the good father stood with his arm about his shoulders.

Such mass sympathy as was aroused had material results. A stay of execution was granted to allow the Supreme Court of the state to review the case. After a second stay, the Court decided the sentence was just and Billik must die.

WITH this decision the case became, as is often the way in this country, a political issue. It was election time, the District Attorney who had so far borne up under the curse, was ousted, and a more lenient personage elected. The bombardment of influence became more intensified.

But in his cell the magician knew the set hour of his death was at hand. He did not know that his champion was closeted with Judge Landis who was to become Emperor of Baseball later.

Half an hour, bare thirty minutes before the fall of the trap of the gallows was timed, Father Callaghan brought word to the prisoner that a third stay was granted.

An appeal to the United States Supreme Court was denied and once more Billik was billed to die on the high platform. But the defense had not exhausted all its bag of tricks. They secured a new stay on the novel

plea that Billik could not be hanged, as by now he was legally dead. In one of his rescues from death, someone had forgotten to go through the formality of rescinding the execution order and making out the usual official reprieve.

But the courts made small work of this Gilbert and Sullivan opera idea, and once more set the date of Billik's final appearance on any stage. His farewell performance was to be December 11, 1908.

It is not given to all of us to have such devoted friends, as Billik the prisoner had.

Nothing daunted, the defense played a last card. Billik, in his own defense, had suggested that the arsenic dispenser might be found right in the bosom of the Vzral family. He inferred that Emma knew.

An order was obtained to exhume the body of Mr. Nobody, senior, Emma's father-in-law, who had been living with them when he died, and great was the whooping when arsenic was found in the body. Billik had never seen the man, never been near him, had nothing to do with him. There was no

possible way by which he could have administered poison. Though the amount of the poison was infinitesimal—no more arsenic than might be found present in any body—its finding was hailed as a proof of Billik's innocence.

Once more Billik was snatched from the gallows, this time by the word of Governor Deneen, who agreed to consider the case in conjunction with the Board of Pardons.

His fate hung in the balance until January 22, 1909, when it was announced that a reprieve had been granted the prisoner on the grounds "of a considerable public sentiment and a feeling of doubt in some quarters."

Billik smiled a pasty smile. There was a lot of truth in the Tarot cards after all. That one, known as the Hanged Man, with the man hanging upside down, had several meanings, but its most important occult indication was the Law of Reversal. The shadow of the gallows was lifted now for all time, the sentence of the law reversed, life not death.

He went without protest to his future home—Joliet.

CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB FOR AUGUST

(Continued from Page 39)

Seventeen—Arulas, Los Angeles, Calif.; Vasseur and Danette, Denver, Colo.; Leonard Price, New York, N. Y.; Wash, Portland, Me.

Sixteen—Illy, Akron, Ohio.

Fifteen—W. B. Nye, Flint, Mich.; E. Sthar Odilnu, Atchison, Kans.

Fourteen—Duke d'Ekud, Bronx, N. Y.; Mabs, Baltimore, Md.; Gene Miller, Petersburg, Ind.; GeeKaSee, Seattle, Wash.; N. Dak. Ump. Gilby, N. Dak.

Thirteen—Merland Edwards, Twin Falls, Idaho; Electron II, Paterson, N. J.; J. Toscano, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Twelve—Uncle Abie, Burnet, Tex.; Harry R. Bell, Columbus, Ohio; °Mrs. W. C. Bird, San Francisco, Calif.; L. P. Carr, Soda Springs, Idaho; W. R. G., Maywood, Ill.; H. J. Haewecker, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Neon, Rochester, N. Y.; Jerry

Phelan, Bronx, N. Y.; Big Stack, Anaconda, Mont.; Tud Tarbet, Logan, Utah.

Eleven—P. J. B., St. Petersburg, Fla.; A. E. Balinsky, Baltimore, Md.; Bee-Gee-Bee, Hartford, Conn.; Edna D. Brooks, Attleboro, Mass.; Bugler, Elizabethtown, Ky.; How Carso, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; Helen P. Foote, Elizabethtown, Ky.; Rengaw, Chicago, Ill.; Kenneth H. Riggs, Wollaston, Mass.; Albert B. Woolbridge, San Antonio, Tex.

Ten—Epehaw, Long Island City, N. Y.; Fae Malon, Englehart, Ontario, Canada.

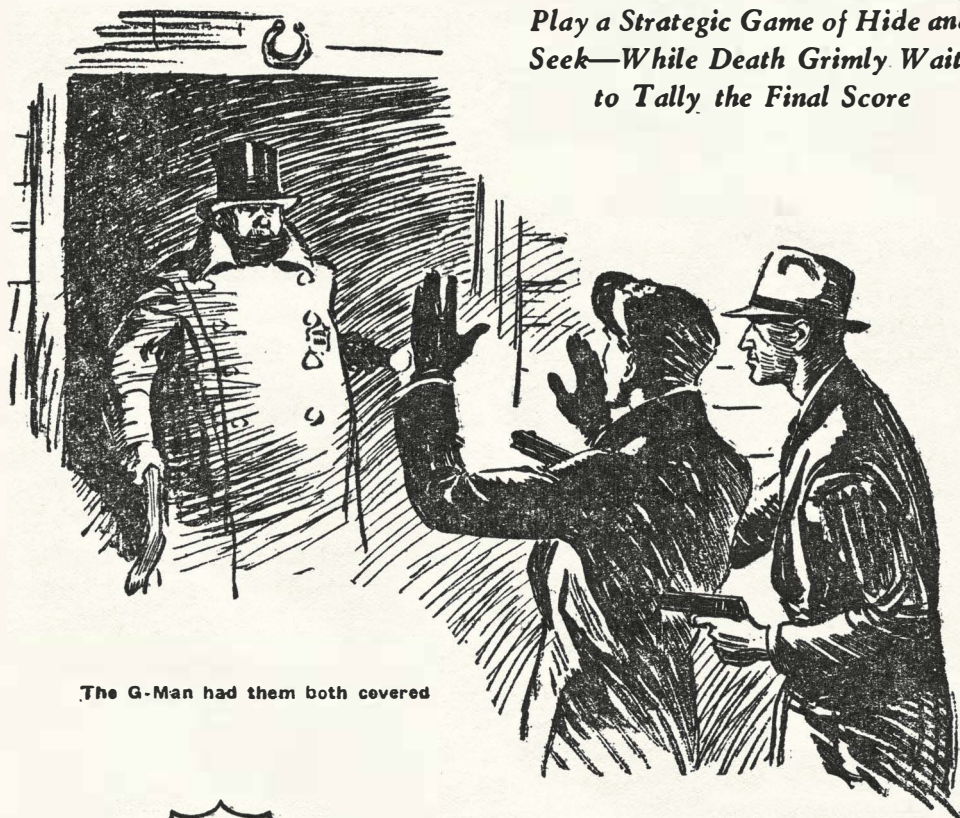
Nine—Segro, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Chi Valor, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Eight—Michael Kasarowich, Bayonne, N. J.

Seven—David Mueller, Cape Girardeau, Mo.; Pap, Kingstown, Mo.

(Continued on Page 83)

*A G-Man and a Public Enemy
Play a Strategic Game of Hide and
Seek—While Death Grimly Waits
to Tally the Final Score*



The G-Man had them both covered



Too Many G's

By D. B. McCandless

THIS is Poppa Quigg's story, but I'll spiel it, for reasons you'll savvy when you get all hep to Poppa. Poppa's a grand old gent, one of the best, but when he's spinning a yarn, he's likely to take detours and wind up boring you with the old one about the night he drove the great Lil Russell up Fifth Avenue in his public hack.

Poppa's still driving the same old Victoria that once carried the great Lil.

That "Vic" is one of the few horse-drawn public hacks left in the Big Burg. It's got a heap of bones between the shafts that answers to the name of Daisy—that is, she answers when she gets damn good and ready. Daisy and Poppa and the old Vic hang around the park entrances, waiting for the nuts who think it's "so quaint" to amble through the park behind a horse. Poppa soaks the nuts plenty. He makes out good.

You should see Poppa, perched on the high box of the old Victoria, with his plug hat covering his pink dome, his black muffler covering his lowest chin, his greatcoat covering his curves, and his red nose covering a large section of his face. You should see him, guiding old Daisy up Fifth, with a stream of shiny paint jobs tooting horns on all sides of him, and him looking down his bulgy nose at all of 'em, and giving old Daisy a flick of the whip when the red light changes. A grand old gent, Poppa!

Me, I drive a hack, too. A swell crate, red and white paint job, with a sweet motor. It does what I tell it to do and I tell it plenty. I'm Jerry Quigg. Not quite the mug the photo inside the cab makes me, but then again, no beaut. Somebody once cracked I was a hard-boiled egg. I ain't hard-boiled. I'm petrified. A guy's got to be when he's running a taxi in this man's town.

Here's the story. (I'm still asking myself why I'm alive to tell it.) I quit early that night. About eleven, it was. And I thought I'd ease up to the park and see if Poppa was still at the stand in front of the Savoy—which I did. They were there, all of 'em—Poppa, Daisy and the old Vic. Tired, all of 'em, too, with their springs sagging.

I slid the cab in behind, getting ready to give 'em a blast on the Klaxon and see 'em jump. I had my hand on the horn button when it happened.

A guy came charging out of an alley beside the Savoy and lammed across the sidewalk. I got a look at him under the street lamp as he came. He had a beautiful pan, like a movie actor, but it looked dead, if you get me.

Anyways, I reached to open the cab door, expecting him to fall in and gasp out an address on Park Avenue some-

wheres. I was figuring he was running a race, with some doll's husband behind, see? Well, I swung the door open and started the engine, and then, what does he do but turn his back on me, race along the curb and throw himself into Poppa Quigg's old Vic!

Poppa sat up sudden, like somebody had run a knitting needle into his spine. He reached for the whip. The next minute, the old nag Daisy came out of her trance and moved. The old Vic was turning into the south entrance of the park before I got my jaws together again and reached around to shut the cab door.

I didn't shut it. A man, a tall feller, shaped something like a lead pencil, had his fingers wrapped around the handle. A nasty looking guy he was, with half-closed eyes and a slanting mouth.

"Follow that rig," he snapped at me, and dived inside, slamming the door shut.

I didn't move. I said: "What's the idea, bo?"

He said: "Follow that carriage," and reached a skinny hand through the window. The hand had the nose of a gun sticking out of it.

I kept my own hands in sight on the wheel. I turned my head and spit words out of the corner of my mouth: "Listen, bo. I'm driving into no gun battles. I'm riding no gangsters in this cab. . . ."

THE guy drew his hand in. When he shoved it through again, there was no gun in it. There was a little gold shield. I said, "Okey, Mister G-Man, if that's what you are," and stepped on the gas, heading for the south entrance of the park. "But listen," I said, "the old guy driving that heap in front is my old man. If

there's going to be any shooting. . . ."

"No shooting," he said, "if you do what you're told. Take it easy. When we strike a quiet spot in the park slide up alongside that rig as if you were passing. I'll handle the rest. When Sardis sees me. . . ."

"Sardis!" I said, tooling easy into the entrance. "You mean Sardis, the Public Enemy? Say, what're you handing me, anyways? That ain't Sardis. I've seen Sardis's ugly pan too many times in the paper. . . ."

"Sardis had his ugly pan operated on a month or so ago," said the G, quick and hard. "Since then, he's been convalescing in private. Now listen, feller. You act pretty or I'll have your license. That guy thinks he gave me the slip. He's probably leaning back in that carriage now, congratulating himself on his smartness in not trying to make his getaway in a regular car, and wiping the blood off his hands while he enjoys the ride. Yes, he's got blood on his hands, a dead man's blood. . . ."

I said, "Huh?" and strained an ear, but the G-man leaned back on the cushions and closed up. Ahead of us, the old Victoria was just ambling under an arc light, rounding a turn. Poppa was sitting straight and important on the box. There was nobody in the carriage behind him!

"Say!" I said, "looks like this feller you say is Sardis has slipped. . . ."

"He's still riding," said the G-man, quiet. "I've had my eyes on him. He's doubled up on the seat, hidden. . . ."

Bang! A blast of fire came over the back of the swaying old Vic and sudden, there was a spider on the glass of my windshield. A spider with long cracks for legs and a bullet hole for its body.

I wrenched over the wheel, zig-zagged the cab. The Vic was still on the turn. More spiders were popping out of the gun over the Vic's back edge.

"Hey you, G," I yelled, getting ready to make a hairpin turn, "we're going away from here!" and I risked a quick look-see into the cab.

The G wasn't there. He was out on the running board, on the wheel side, steadying his gun arm on the window ledge beside me. The gun was spouting fire and bullets toward the back of Poppa Quigg's Victoria.

"Drive," said the G, biting the words, as the old Vic disappeared around the turn. "Step on it, man. After 'em!"

"Nix," I yelled. "I'm going away from here. You said no shooting. The old guy on top of that thing is my. . . ."

The G didn't raise his voice. He said, "Straighten this cab out. Drive. Fast." He said it like you'd say, "Pass the salt."

I passed him the salt. We were going sixty when we hit the turn ahead.

MY eyes felt funny. I didn't want to lift 'em. I didn't want to look up and see that old Vic, swaying ahead of us again, with the old gent on the box sticking up like a target for the bullets I knew were going to explode out of the G's gat. I didn't want to look and yet I did want to look. I wanted to be sure that old gent was still on the box.

Still at sixty, we rounded the turn which the old Vic had rounded maybe a minute before. A long, straight road stretched ahead, trees on one side, open grass on the other. The road was empty!

I stood on the brake. I said bad

words. The G said, "Look!" and used his gun for a pointer.

I looked and shut off the gas at the same time. In the silence, you could hear the clatter and rattle and squeak. The old Vic was hurtling across the meadow at the side of the road, flying like a bat out of hell. Daisy's hooves pounded the turf. Poppa jockeyed forward on the high driver's seat.

I said:

"Gawd, I didn't think Daisy could do it! The old nag's running away!"

The G popped around the cab and into the seat beside me. He said:

"Running away, hell! That horse is being whipped to run. Step on it, you. Head across that grass. We've got to catch 'em before Sardis dishes that rig for something faster. Get going. . . ."

"Oke," I said, "but not across that grass. There's a side road ahead that cuts back. We'll . . ."

I was stepping it up again, eating up the road. I could feel the queer gimlets of the G on me, and now he was leaning close, so the wind wouldn't carry his words away.

"There'd better be a side road ahead, feller," he said. "I don't like the way you're acting. Queer thing, you and this old man you claim is your father should be planted outside the Savoy entrance the very night my partner and I closed in on Sardis. No, feller, I don't like the set-up, and I don't like your face."

"Likewise," I said. "Now listen, G. I'll admit I ain't sweet to the eyes, but get this: That old gent—he's got a knack for getting himself into jams like this, but—hell, you've only got to lamp his face to know."

"I've lamped it," said the G. "It was perfect. Too perfect. You put too much red paint on his nose when

you rigged him for this act, you and the rest of Sardis's pals. Step this bus up, feller, and remember, I've got a gun in your ribs."

I stepped her up—to sixty-five. The side road that cut back across the meadow was just ahead. The G said:

"And I wouldn't mind using the gun, either, wreck or no wreck. Sardis killed my partner tonight. Anything or anybody that gets in my way . . ."

The speedometer showed sixty-eight as we lurched into the side road that split the meadow. The meadow was empty. The road ahead was empty.

The G pushed his gun a little closer. He said: "I'm tired playing tiddle-dewinks. Turn, and head for the Sixty-second Street Police Station. I know some of the boys there. They'll be glad to cooperate."

"So help me," I said, "you're got me wrong, mister. Listen, give me a chance. Maybe we can still catch up with 'em. There's two roads branch off the end of this one. . . ."

The G turned his eyes full on me. They looked worse open than half-closed, but I gave him stare for stare. He said: "All right. I'll give you ten minutes to find that rig, with Sardis in it. . . ."

II

THE ten minutes were up. We were speeding over one of them rustic bridges with purple flowers on it. The flowers smelled damn like wreaths to me just then. The G-man said: "Stop!"

I put on the brake. We slid. The siren on the motorcycle that had been trailing us for the last five minutes grew louder. The G ordered: "We'll wait here for the cop. And don't say 'listen' to me again."

I said: "Listen. So help me! The

old Vic ain't in the park, that's plain. Probably this Sardis guy dished it long ago. Probably my old man's home, with his shoes off by now, drinking his regular glass of light beer. Why don't we beat it there and get the old man to tell us where Sardis lammed, if he knows?"

"Where's home?" said the G.

"Over east," I said, "by the river edge. We got an old frame house, an old barn for Daisy and the cab, and a spot of garden. Poppa grows string beans. . . ."

The screeching motorcycle scorched alongside and teetered. A cop poked his mug in the window, mouth open, ready to give us the works. The G never looked at the cop, just stuck his palm, with the little gold shield in it, under the cop's nose, and kept leering at me.

"Over by the river edge, eh?" he cracked. "Nice lonely spot, eh?"

"Yeah," I said, "it's lonely, G. Want to take the copper along for protection?"

The G balled his hand into a fist and stuck the fist in his pocket. He said to the cop: "All right, officer. We don't need any help."

I stepped on the gas. We left the cop choking on the words he hadn't been able to spit. That tickled my ribs, even though the ribs still had the G's gun jammed into 'em.

I turned the cab off the dark, narrow street that lines the river at East Seventieth and we bounced down the ruts of the Quigg driveway. The doors of the patched-up barn at the end of the drive were open. A lantern was bobbing around inside. Behind it, I could make out Poppa's curves. I couldn't savvy the lantern. The old barn is wired plenty. "Get out," said the G.

I slid from under, with one of the G's guns occupying the small space between him and me, and the other of the G's guns pointed at that bobbing lantern in the barn.

"Call your pals of the barn," said the G. "No tricks."

"Poppa," I yelled.

The lantern went out. The white light of a flash swept over me and the G and the G's guns.

"Jerry!" said Poppa Quigg's voice from behind the flash, in the same tone I used to hear just before Poppa took down the old strap. "So, it was your cab following! You, my sole offspring, allowing a low gunman to use your cab, to follow me, to shoot after me and my fare. . . ."

"Poppa," I yelled, "this is no gunman. But he's got a gat in my side and another aimed at your belly!"

"Poppa," said the G, "if you don't throw down that damn light and put up your hands, I'm going to bump off your sole offspring."

Poppa made a queer, gurgling noise. The flash thudded on the dirt and rolled toward me and the G.

"Pick it up," said the G, "and turn the light toward Poppa." I did.

Poppa's hands were up above his plug hat. Poppa's face was purple and white, mixed.

"Walk, Poppa," said the G. "Walk toward the house. Your sole offspring will keep the light on you. I'll keep the gun on your sole offspring."

WE marched up the back porch, through the back door that leads straight into the big kitchen. The light was on. The old black cook stove was crackling. The usual two bottles of beer, with the sweat on 'em, were on the marble-topped table by the back window, like-

wise the usual hunks of rye and Swiss cheese.

The G ran one hand over Poppa, while Poppa made disgusted noises through his nose. He backed the old man up against the wall on one side of the room, felt me for guns and backed me up on the other side, near the sink. Then he backed up against the wall between the rear door and the rear window, with the marble-topped table between him and us.

"Now," said the G, "I want to know—"

"Listen, Poppa," I said, stuttering because I needed to talk fast and I didn't like the look in Poppa's eyes. "Listen, this man is a G. He works for Uncle Sam. All he wants is to ask you some questions. Please don't do anything rash and get us in a worse jam. . . ."

"Jerry," said Poppa with dignity, folding his arms over his chest, "This man is a low breed gangster. Look at his face. Look at the crime and treachery in his face!" Poppa lowered his voice like a man does when something's freezing the hairs on his spine, "Jerry, *this* man is *Sardis*!"

The G laughed, a funny, rusty laugh. He laid the gun in his left hand down on the table and reached for a bottle of beer. He gave the bottle's neck a quick snap against the table edge and buried his pan in the suds that frothed out, then set down the bottle and looked at Poppa again.

"So," he said, "the fare you ran away with tonight told you he was being pursued by the villain, Sardis?"

"He did," said Poppa, and unfolded his arms.

I took a step forward, my eyes on Poppa's mitts. He was reaching up like he wanted to scratch the fringe of gray around his pink dome, but I knew what

was itching him. The thing that was hanging on a hook just over his dome was itching him. The thing was an old pistol, big enough to blow both shooter and shot to shreds. I knew it was loaded.

"Poppa," I said, quick, "my fare is a G-man. He's the goods. He'll show you his shield. He. . . ."

"My fare had a shield," said Poppa, "a little gold shield. I felt it an honor to serve him, since he was not only a G-man, engaged in Uncle Sam's service, but a man sore beset and wounded by this gunman's bullets. I still feel it an honor to serve a G-man." Poppa reached a little higher. His fingers almost touched the old cannon above him.

"Poppa!" I yelled. "Don't—"

"He won't," said the G, quiet. "Just lower the hands, Poppa. To the sides. That's right. Slide along the wall a little, Poppa, out of temptation's way. Not too near that door there, Poppa. Okay."

I leaned back against my side of the wall, sort of weak. My mouth felt dry. I looked down at the sink. There was a pan of pink water in that sink, a little heap of red stained rags.

"Poppa," said the G, "just where did you drop your fare tonight? Or did you drop him?"

"Poppa," I said, "if you know where that guy is, for Gawd's sake . . . listen, you dumb old cluck, can't you get it through your noodle . . . listen, any guy can buy himself a fake gold shield."

I STOPPED sudden and looked at the man who had showed me his gold shield. He wasn't looking at me. He was looking down at the floor boards, at the trail of small red drops that led from the sink to the back door.

"Poppa," I gulped, "listen. Your fare tonight was running away. A real G don't run away. He runs after—like my G."

Poppa didn't answer. For a minute, you could hear the crackle of the stove and the tooting of the river whistles. The man I was beginning to think of as "my G" had stopped staring down at the trail of blood drops. He had both guns in his hands again. One of 'em was pointing at Poppa, the other was pointing at the door to our front room, just at Poppa's left.

"Poppa, he said, in a low, nasty voice, "I was just beginning to think I'd misjudged you. Just beginning to think the color on your beak was real. *Who's that moving behind that door?*"

The door at Poppa's left swung open. A man stepped through it from the living room into the kitchen. For a tick, I thought this must be the beautiful mug who had ridden in Poppa's Victoria that night. The next tick, I knew it wasn't. This guy just stepping into the kitchen with a sawed-off shotgun on his arm was anything but beautiful and he had a pair of bow-legs like a couple of barrel hoops.

I remember wondering why the two gats in my G's mitts didn't go off, and then I heard the clunk-clank of falling guns from the back of the kitchen and knew why. The G was standing with his hands empty—shoulder high.

His guns were resting on the table beside the beer. Two men who must have sneaked in the open back door while Bow Legs was making his entrance through the front room were behind the G. One of 'em had a gun against the bones of the G's spine.

The bow-legged man shifted his sawed-off shotgun so it pointed at Poppa. He said: "We've come to take Sardis away from here. Where is he?"

Poppa unfolded his arms. There was a gleam of triumph in his bleary old eyes. He said: "Well, my man, why don't you take him? There he is," swept one arm out, and pointed an accusing finger at my G.

The bow-legged man twisted his thick mouth down. He said, looking at my G: "That thing Sardis? Listen, old man, Sardis is my boss, and he ain't to be insulted. That thing over there, with its hands up and a gun in its back, is a G, a dirty G. We've come to get Sardis away from here, and we know damn well that you know damn well where Sardis is, old man, because we followed that wagon of yours with him in it."

Poppa gulped. He dropped the hand he'd been pointing at my G. His face and his neck puffed out and his eyes popped. He made queer noises in his throat.

The bow-legged man eyed him a minute, then spat on the floor and turned his back on Poppa to stare at the G.

"Maybe you can talk better than the old one, G? Where's Sardis? You ought to know. You came here to cop him."

III

THINGS began to happen in flying circles, like a bad dream spinning in your head. Poppa went into action. He took a funny sideways leap, reaching, and suddenly the old pistol was in his hands, swooping down. The bow-legged man folded down to the floor, with Poppa on top. At the same moment, the G did a swan dive to the floor carrying the old marble-topped table, the beer bottles, the rye bread, the Swiss cheese—and his own two guns with him in the crash.

The two men behind the G let off

their guns, but the G wasn't there. He was on the floor, with the table tilted over his head, grabbing one of his guns that had got mixed up somehow with the Swiss cheese.

I came out of my trance. I skidded across the floor, toward the G. Another gun went off, I wasn't sure whose, but I knew the bullet scorched my ear as it passed.

It didn't take me more than three seconds to move from my place beside the sink to the spot where the G was firing over the shield of the table's marble top, but I felt like a slow moving picture, and I saw everything and heard everything as I moved.

One of the two men who had been behind the G was crouched in a corner over by the back window, blood running down his low brow into his eyes, shooting his gun like mad at the slab of marble table-top between him and the G. The other was crawling on all fours, very silent and cautious, aiming to edge up on the G from the side. Poppa was squatting down on the floor in front of the door to the front room, holding the bow-legged man before him like a shield. The bow-legged man's head was resting on one of his own shoulders. He didn't seem to mind.

I don't know why or how, but somehow, I was down behind that old table, beside the G, and the G was thrusting one of his guns into my hand. Then, the G was sticking the nose of his gun around the table's edge on one side and I was sticking the nose of my gun around the other edge.

I'd never had anything deadlier than a Coney Island rifle in my hand before, but I aimed at the corner where I'd seen the man with the blood trickling down his low brow, and, somehow, my gun went off. I heard a high screech

and the screech came from that corner.

The G's gun exploded and drowned the screech. A howl of agony rose on the echoes of the G's shot, and the man who had been crawling on all fours to edge up on us appeared suddenly around the G's side of the table and rolled.

He stopped rolling with his twisted face toward us. His gun waved from side to side as he lifted it and fired.

The G grunted and clapped a hand to his shoulder, then fired again, straight into the twisted face of the man on the floor.

And then, there was silence—silence and curling smoke. The G poked his head above the table, looked at the corner where I had aimed my one shot, sat back again and grinned at me.

He said, quietly and easy, as though nothing had happened:

"Good shot, Jerry. You got your man. I hope Poppa still lives? I want to apologize."

The light went out. Something moved behind us. I felt the G jerk upright in the darkness. I was halfway to my own feet, my gun wobbling in my hand.

Poppa's voice spoke. "I have put out the lights. If there are any more of this Sardis gang outside, it would be better that they should not see in."

The G chuckled. He said: "Smart Poppa! I'll just go and see—" and began to ease quietly away through the dark toward the open back door.

I said, whispering: "Poppa, listen. Get under this table and stay put. You may be smart, but for Gawd's sake, don't get any smarter. And whatever you do, don't shoot off that old cannon. I'm going front to see if there's any more of 'em. . . ."

I LEGGED it across the kitchen toward the front. The door to the front room was wedged almost shut by the body of the bow-legged man Poppa had conked. I squeezed through, gun ready, waited a moment in the darkness of the front room, eying the furniture. Starched curtains were blowing into the room from the open window through which the bow-legged bozo must have come. I made for that window, stuck my head, cautiously, over the sill.

A big, dark car was standing right outside the house, its motor purring. A man was just stepping off its running board, his back to me. I could see the shine of a gun in the hand hanging loosely at his side. I aimed at the shine. My gun didn't seem to want to stay still in my hand. I said to myself: "Jerry, you got one of them hoodlums with this gun. Here's where you get another. . . ."

And just then, the man at the car faced me and it was the G!

My trigger finger almost finished pulling, but I stopped it in time. I sat back on my hunkers under the window and wiped the sweat off my pan with the starched curtain.

The G stuck his head through the window. He said: "Jerry? Well, it seems we got all there was of 'em. Their car's empty, except for a pretty little sub-machine gun. The next question is, where the hell is Sardis? Suppose you step back to the kitchen and ask Poppa."

I squeezed through the door to the kitchen again. Poppa wasn't there. I dived out through the back door, down the porch steps. The G was just running down the driveway from the street. I said: "Poppa . . ." and then I saw Poppa, trotting fast, heading toward the barn. I said: "Sar-

dis!" and ploughed across the beans, the G beside me.

A muffled boom came from inside the barn! The G said: "Sardis!" and spurted ahead.

Poppa disappeared inside the open doors of the barn.

We made the last few feet, the G and me, in nothing flat. We charged over the barn sill abreast. We slid to a stop together.

The big shape of Poppa was there in the gloom, talking: "Sardis," he was saying, very solemn, "you may shoot out the lock of the harness closet where I hid you when I thought your cause was a just cause, but you cannot shoot open the bolt which I fastened to make you doubly safe. I command you now, Sardis, to drop your gun and when I unbolt the door, to come out with your hands raised."

The G made a dive forward, me with him. We fell on Poppa and Poppa fell on the floor. The G said: "Get the old man out of line of that closet door, wherever it is. Sardis will shoot through the smashed lock!"

Sardis did shoot. The flare of it came out of the hole where the lock of the harness closet had been. The crack of it echoed against the old rafters of the barn, and the old nag in her stall gave a frightened squeal.

POPPA and I were rolling toward the doors to the driveway. More shots were popping as we rolled. A bullet hit the floor just behind us.

Poppa snorted. He grunted. He got loose from me somehow and hoisted himself up. I grabbed for him. His hand touched the spot beside the doors where the light button was. The lights went on.

The G was standing to one side of the harness closet, his gun ready. He

blinked in the light, made wild motions to us to back up. He said to the closet door: "Sardis, this is the G-man whose partner you murdered tonight. I have plenty of company out here. It will do you no good to waste bullets through that door. Do you drop your guns and come out peaceful when I shoot the bolt, or—"

I left Poppa and dashed to the other side of the closet, gun ready. A muffled voice came from inside. The G seemed to understand what it said, for he said: "Okay, Sardis. Drop it."

I heard the thump of a gun dropping on the floor behind the closet door.

The G lifted his hand to the big, rusty bolt at the very top of the door. He looked at me and whispered across the space between us:

"Better keep out of it, feller. Sardis will pick that gun up before he comes out. He'll come out shooting. It's just a question of who pulls the trigger first."

I shook my head. I lifted my gun a little higher. The G nodded as if to say, "Your funeral." His fingers were on the bolt. He said: "Now, Sardis—"

A big shadow fell between the G and me, passed on. Poppa had waddled straight by us, straight through the danger zone in front of that splintered door.

He was moving calmly toward the old nag's stall.

The G looked at me. I looked at the G and said, "Poppa, for Gawd's sake!"

Daisy's hooves clumped out of the stall. Poppa was beside her, one hand on her skimpy mane.

"Wait," said Poppa in a hoarse whisper, shoving the old mare around, keeping her between him and the closet

until her hindquarters were close to the closet door, "Wait—"

The G said: "What in—"

Poppa said, still in a whisper: "Let this treacherous vernin, Sardis, come and come shooting, if he will. We are ready. Unbolt the door!"

The G looked at Daisy's bony rear, backed close to that closet door. He looked at Daisy's hind hooves, heavy hooves with shaggy tassels of hair growing down over them. He lifted his queer eyes to Poppa, standing at Daisy's head, and suddenly, the G's mouth slanted up, instead of down.

The G shot back the bolt. "Out, Sardis!" he snapped, and jackknifed his skinny length.

The closet door sprang open. I got a quick side glimpse of a handsome pan that looked dead, all except the eyes, which shone like cat's eyes. I got a snap look at a couple of gleaming gun barrels. And then—Daisy reared. Her hind legs rose. Her hind hooves flew out and up and back. They landed. My stomach jumped up in my throat at the sound of those hooves when they landed!

The G looked down at the man sprawled at his feet. He said: "Sardis will have to have his face made over again, if he wants to look pretty in the electric chair."

AS I said before, this is Poppa Quigg's yarn. Me, I'd stop now, with Sardis sprawled on the floor at our feet and old Daisy clop-clopping calmly back to her stall. Poppa says that ain't the end. He says he wants the "grand finale" put in.

Here it is: Two nights ago, when I hit home at the regular time, I found an extra bottle of beer on the kitchen table—the table that's got some bad dents and holes and cracks in its

marble-top now. I also found extra large plates of rye and Swiss cheese, and I found Poppa on one side of the table and on the other, the G.

"Poppa," the G said, sawing off a slice of rye, "Poppa, maybe you'd answer me a question now? What did you do to dear old Daisy to make her give that superb, that magnificent kick?"

"G," said Poppa, solemn and pompous, "I'll tell you. I stuck her with a pin."

The G laughed. It sounded almost human. He said: "Poor old Daisy!"

Poppa said: "Daisy was proud to serve a G."

The G hooked a bottle of light, struck it a smart blow on the table edge and buried his mug in the suds that frothed out. He banged the bottle down, reached in his pocket and brought out a folded paper, pink. He said: "Poppa, allow me. Your share of the reward for Sardis, dead or alive. Take it and buy Daisy a ton of oats."

I leaned over Poppa and stared at that check. I bellowed, "Ten thousand dollars! Ten G's! Ten G's, and every one of the ten the goods!"

The Workers and the Worked

AS there are only two kinds of people in the world, the workers and the worked, it may be a wise plan to learn something of the methods used by the workers in working the worked.

The type of worker which it is proposed to describe here is known as the confidence man; the work is the confidence game. As the game is always based upon two known qualities, greed and credulity, the basic principles are always the same.

The first stage of any confidence game is the "approach." That is where the pocketbook is dropped so that the intended victim can recover it. Any other method used simply involves the making of the acquaintance of the intended dupe.

Stage number two is the "build-up." That is where the swindler begins to arouse the cupidity, and to whet the appetite, of the proposed sap. Hints of easy money and of fabulous wealth are involved here.

Number three stage is the "in and in." The prospective sucker risks a small amount of money along with the swindler in some venture.

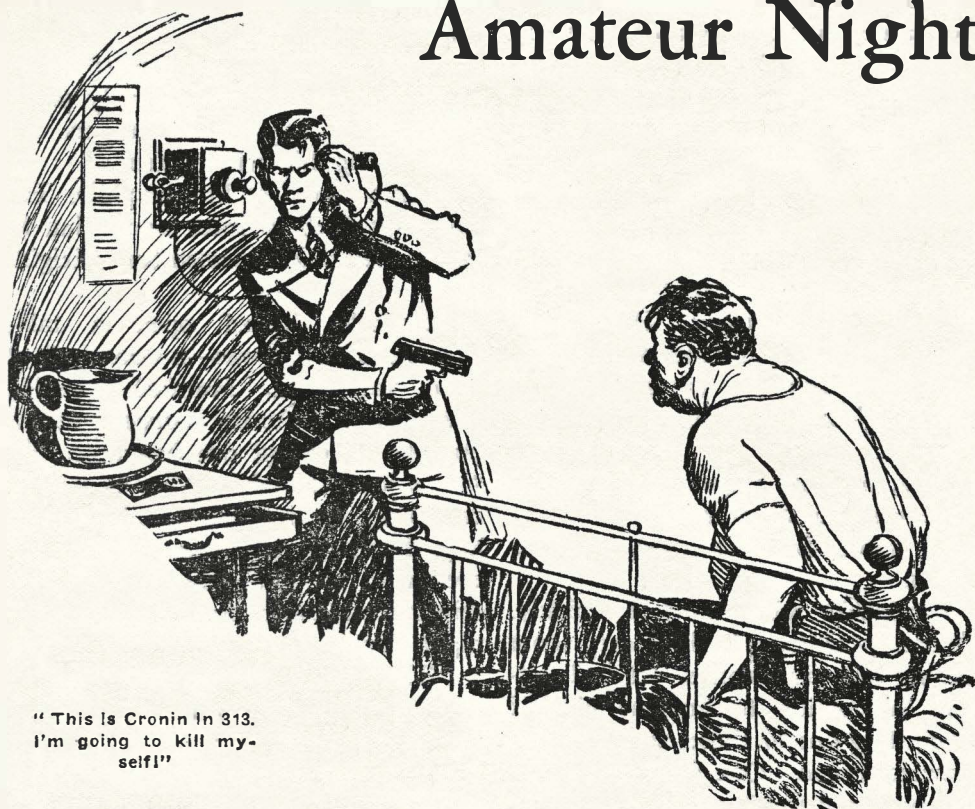
The fourth stage is the "pay-off," sometimes known as the "convincer." The easy-mark is allowed to win the first time.

The fifth stage is the "hurrah," wherein the sucker is led to believe that, with a much larger sum of money, he can make a big killing. He invests the money with the swindler and the game enters the sixth stage.

That is known as the "get-away," wherein the swindler escapes.

—John Berry.

Amateur Night



"This is Cronin in 313.
I'm going to kill my-
self!"

By Stanley Garvey

"EIGHT thousand—
nine thousand—ten
thousand. Ten
grand. That's right, isn't
it?" Murdock pressed his
ear closer to the panel of the
hotel room door. It was hard to dis-
tinguish the other man's reply. A
rumble of thunder from the summer
night storm seemed to blot it out.

"Okay, Cronin,"
the voice resumed,
"this fixes you up,
and the Chief sends
his compliments.
Guess I'll be going
now."

Murdock heard



*Crime Doesn't Pay? There Is
No Perfect Crime? Mur-
dock Laughed at That, and
the Gods Laughed, Too. . . .*

the hall door of the adjoining
room open and close as
Cronin's guest departed. He
could hear Cronin moving
about. He heard him pull
open a drawer. It seemed to
stick a little. Then he heard a window
slammed to shut out the rain. He
knew that Cronin had checked into the
hotel a few hours previously. The

room had been un-
tenanted for days.

Ten grand!

Murdock's faded
gray eyes narrowed.
Just a thin panel of
wood between him
and \$10,000! His

fingers twitched, and his palms itched. He wanted money. For days he had paced the stuffy little room, stopping occasionally to peer through the dusty curtains at the busy street below. He was watching the branch bank directly opposite, calculating the most opportune moment to slip inside that marble entrance and shove a gun into the teller's face. It was very difficult to muster enough courage. Petty thievery was his familiar ground and sticking up a bank for big money was something different. It required a lot of nerve.

Well, he could forget the bank now. Here was \$10,000 practically knocking at his door. Softer picking, less dangerous.

Murdock's mind worked quickly. He had spent hours in the dreary room reading detective stories. It had flattered his vanity to imagine himself committing one of those clever crimes, a perfect crime. One formula that he had read remained catalogued in his mind. Here was the chance to employ it.

Murdock stepped softly into the deserted corridor. He stopped before Cronin's door and noted the room number—313. He rapped, politely.

Cronin opened the door, just a trifle. He was a florid-faced, middle-aged man. His chunky body was partially disrobed.

"I'm the night clerk," Murdock smiled. "Got something for you." Cronin opened the door wider.

Murdock jammed a gun into the man's stomach. The flesh seemed soft and flabby. Murdock closed the door behind him and twisted the key. He motioned Cronin to the bed, made him sit on it. Cronin reached for a gun under the pillow. Murdock's hand was there first. He pocketed his own

weapon and trained Cronin's on its owner.

"Now, where's that money?" Murdock snapped. He was secretly proud of the steady way he held the gun. He was playing his rôle perfectly.

Cronin stared at him stupidly. His thick lips tried to form words, but he said nothing. He seemed badly frightened.

Murdock yanked open a table drawer. There it was—a neat stack of \$100 banknotes. Murdock greedily transferred the crisp currency to his pockets, all except one banknote. He placed it on the table. Then he backed cautiously to the wall telephone. He kept the terrified man on the bed, covered with the gun. He lifted the receiver from the hook. He heard the night clerk's voice answer.

"This is Cronin in 313. Yes, Cronin on the third floor. I'm going to kill myself. No, I'm not kidding. I'm leaving money on the table to pay my bill, more than enough. You keep the change."

Murdock had spoken the words slowly and distinctly into the mouthpiece. He replaced the receiver on the hook quietly. The man on the bed trembled, licked his dry lips. He made a clumsy lunge at Murdock. Very calmly, Murdock squeezed the trigger. The report blended with the thunder peal outside. Cronin tottered crazily for a moment. Then he sprawled across the rug.

Murdock moved swiftly. The night clerk was an old man. It would take him a few minutes to walk to the third floor. Murdock wiped the telephone receiver with his handkerchief. Then he wiped the gun. He pressed the gun, Cronin's gun, into the dead man's hand. Murdock felt no revulsion. Not a nerve tingled in his body. He was cool and smart.

MURDOCK stepped briskly into the corridor. He locked Cronin's door and pocketed the key. He secreted the stolen money in his own room. Then he heard footsteps approaching. The old night clerk, breathing heavily from his climb.

Murdock began to force the locked, keyless door that separated his own room and Cronin's. He heard the night clerk pounding on Cronin's outside door, demanding admittance. He heard a pass key inserted.

Murdock smashed through the inside door as the night clerk entered Cronin's room from the corridor. Unobserved, he placed Cronin's key on the bureau. The night clerk was fussing over the body.

Murdock described overhearing the suicide threat and the fatal shot which immediately followed. He described his frantic efforts to force the connecting door between the two rooms and the difficulty in breaking the lock.

The night clerk mumbled something about Cronin telephoning. He also remarked that he had come on duty after Cronin registered. Stranger to him, but he certainly meant what he said over that phone. Well, they'd better notify the police.

Fifteen minutes later, Detective Sergeant Gibbons stood beside the body. He was a square-jawed Irishman. He kept munching cough drops from a small package in his coat pocket. He chewed them like gum.

"It's Cronin, all right — Gabby Cronin." Gibbons observed to a uniformed officer. "Had some connection with one of those uptown mobs. Always changing his address. Not such a bad guy."

Gibbons munched another cough drop. Then his cold blue eyes shifted to the night clerk.

"So Cronin phoned you and said he was going to bump himself off?"

"That's correct," the clerk nodded, "and I believe this gentleman overheard him."

The blue eyes moved to Murdock.

"It's true!" Murdock agreed. "I was standing close to the door that separates our rooms and heard him make the threat. There was a pistol shot. I started forcing the door."

Gibbons reached for another cough drop. It was the last one in the package. Reluctantly, he crumpled the empty package into a small ball and dropped it into the waste basket. He whispered a few hurried words to the uniformed officer. The officer disappeared.

Gibbons examined the \$100 banknote on the table. He studied it, fingered it.

"So Cronin told you to keep the change?"

The night clerk nodded. Of course, he didn't want the change now.

The uniformed officer reappeared. He handed Gibbons a bundle of banknotes. Crisp \$100 banknotes, matching the one in Gibbons' hand, the same serial number.

"Found them under his mattress," the officer explained.

Murdock grew faint. He fought to regain composure. This wasn't the way he had planned things. Yet he couldn't recall making a slip.

Murdock descended the stairs into the dingy hotel lobby. He was handcuffed to Gibbons. They paused at the cigar counter while Gibbons bought another package of cough drops.

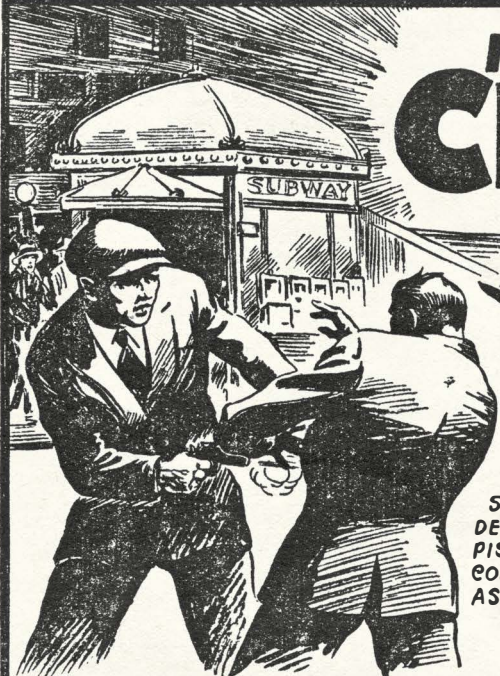
"Funny thing about Cronin," Gibbons mused, as his thick fingers slit the package. "He had sharp ears, but he couldn't utter a sound. He was a dummy. Born that way, the poor devil."

ILLUSTRATED CRIMES

by STOOKIE ALLEN

THE BLUE BIRD CAFE MURDER

IT WAS FOUR IN THE MORNING OF DECEMBER 26, 1920, WHEN TWO MEN EMERGED FROM THE BLUE BIRD CAFE LOCATED AT 14TH STREET AND FOURTH AVENUE IN NEW YORK CITY. THEY HAD WALKED BUT A FEW STEPS TOWARD THE SUBWAY WHEN THE TALLER MAN SUD- DENLY WHEELED AROUND, WHIPPED OUT A PISTOL AND FIRED FIVE SHOTS INTO HIS COMPANION. THE ASSAILANT EASILY ESCAPED AS A CROWD GATHERED ABOUT THE RIDDLED FORM ON THE SIDEWALK.



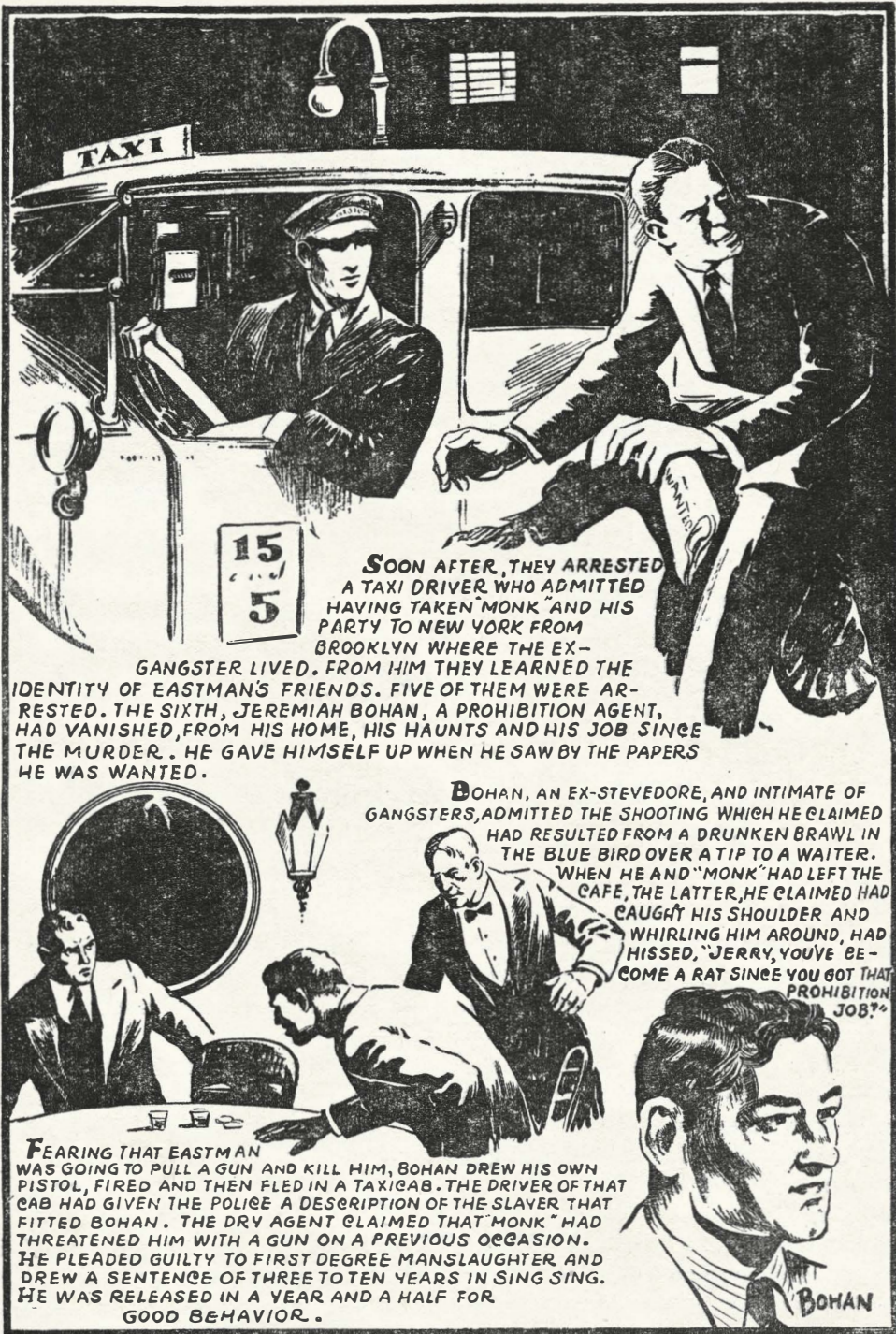
THE VICTIM HAD DIED INSTANTLY WITH HIS HANDS CROSSED BEFORE HIS FACE AS A SHIELD AGAINST THE FIVE BULLETS WHICH HAD BEEN PUMPED INTO HIM. IT WAS SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE TWO VETERAN POLICEMEN IDENTIFIED THE THICK, GORILLA-LIKE BODY AS THAT OF "MONK" EASTMAN, KNOWN TO NEW YORK AS ONE OF THE MOST NOTORIOUS GANGSTERS ON THE EAST SIDE IN THE BOWERY'S HEYDAY. ONCE A LEADER OF A STRONG-ARM MOB THAT HAD SPREAD TERROR WITH MURDER AND OTHER CRIMES, THE "MONK" HAD OUTLIVED HIS MANY TOUGH RIVALS.



IN THIS CASE OF THE "MONK'S" KILLING, THE POLICE WERE AT SEA AS TO THE IDENTITY OF THE PROBABLE SLAYER. THEY COULD ONLY FOLLOW ROUTINE METHODS OF SEEKING A SOLUTION, AND WITH THESE THEY WON. BY PERSISTENT QUESTIONING OF WITNESSES,—NEWSBOYS, WAITERS IN THE BLUE BIRD, ITS PROPRIETOR, AND TAXI DRIVERS—THEY LEARNED THAT "MONK" HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN THE BLUE BIRD CAFE—REALLY A SPEAKEASY—WITH SIX FRIENDS.



COMING SOON—

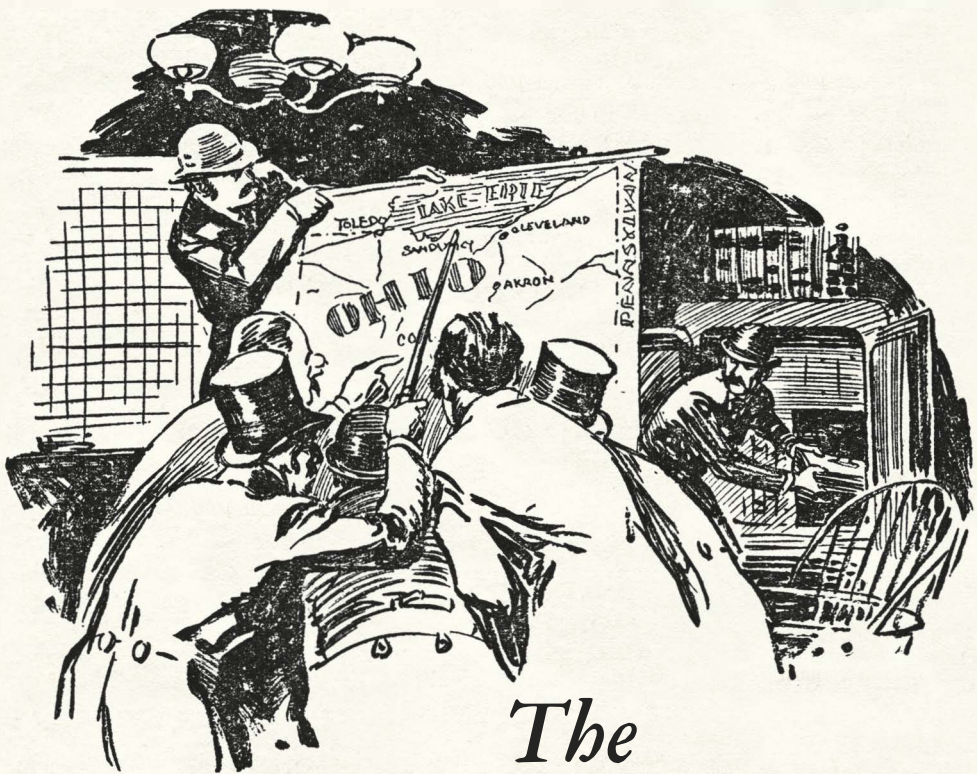


SOON AFTER, THEY ARRESTED A TAXI DRIVER WHO ADMITTED HAVING TAKEN "MONK" AND HIS PARTY TO NEW YORK FROM BROOKLYN WHERE THE EX-GANGSTER LIVED. FROM HIM THEY LEARNED THE IDENTITY OF EASTMAN'S FRIENDS. FIVE OF THEM WERE ARRESTED. THE SIXTH, JEREMIAH BOHAN, A PROHIBITION AGENT, HAD VANISHED, FROM HIS HOME, HIS HAUNTS AND HIS JOB SINCE THE MURDER. HE GAVE HIMSELF UP WHEN HE SAW BY THE PAPERS HE WAS WANTED.

BOHAN, AN EX-STEVEDORE, AND INTIMATE OF GANGSTERS, ADMITTED THE SHOOTING WHICH HE CLAIMED HAD RESULTED FROM A DRUNKEN BRAWL IN THE BLUE BIRD OVER A TIP TO A WAITER. WHEN HE AND "MONK" HAD LEFT THE CAFE, THE LATTER, HE CLAIMED HAD CAUGHT HIS SHOULDER AND WHIRLING HIM AROUND, HAD HISSED, "JERRY, YOU'VE BECOME A RAT SINCE YOU GOT THAT PROHIBITION JOB?"

FEARING THAT EASTMAN WAS GOING TO PULL A GUN AND KILL HIM, BOHAN DREW HIS OWN PISTOL, FIRED AND THEN FLED IN A TAXICAB. THE DRIVER OF THAT CAB HAD GIVEN THE POLICE A DESCRIPTION OF THE SLAYER THAT FITTED BOHAN. THE DRY AGENT CLAIMED THAT "MONK" HAD THREATENED HIM WITH A GUN ON A PREVIOUS OCCASION. HE PLEADED GUILTY TO FIRST DEGREE MANSLAUGHTER AND DREW A SENTENCE OF THREE TO TEN YEARS IN SING SING. HE WAS RELEASED IN A YEAR AND A HALF FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR.

MURDER ON THE NAYATT PIKE



The Bank Sneak

By Will McMorrow

IT was torrid at noontime on that June day in 1878 and the cashier of the minor league bank in St. Joseph, Missouri, was hot and bothered. For one thing, his assistant was taking an overly long time for lunch and, for another, there were several customers waiting to be attended to.

They were well dressed and substantial-looking customers, too—the sort that the bank welcomed—though the

sober-faced gentleman whose black, “Dundreary” whiskers were framed in the cashier’s window seemed a particularly fussy person.

“The notes you present,” the cashier explained plaintively for the third time, “will be collected and the money will be here for you.”

“I am afraid it isn’t quite clear yet.” The other combed his whiskers with fretful fingers. “We physicians are not al-

A Great Business, Bank Sneaking. A Smart Lad Could Get a Fortune in Fifteen Minutes, or a Pittance for Years of Hard Labor—or Both!

ways familiar with business methods. See? It says here, 'On demand.'"

He pointed to the note he held in his hand and the cashier craned his neck to see. He went into patient and detailed explanation of banking customs. Black Whiskers nodded. Even one so naïve in matters of business as he appeared to be could not fail to be convinced.

Perhaps the cashier would have been more hot and bothered than ever had he known then that he was confronting Tom Bigelow, one of a mob of bank-sneaks which had cleaned up a quarter of a million dollars within two years, and that the middle-aged gentleman in the silk hat, next in line, was Charley Adams, tops in the safe-blowing craft but working a sideline now while waiting for his tools to arrive from the East, and that party counting dollar bills so painstakingly in the corner was Charles Bennett, notorious thief with a special talent for window-smashing.

However, there was to be no window-smashing here. In the fraternity of bank-sneaks, rough work was frowned upon. In those forgotten days, professionals depended on adroitness of hand, glibness of tongue and well-laid plans. Slugging, mayhem and murder were left for the lower orders of thievery. Bennett's job was to relieve Bigelow, the "window stall," when Bigelow could no longer engage the cashier's attention. In turn, Charley Adams, operating in this case as a "turner" was to distract the cashier's attention at crucial moments.

There were, of course, others. A man named Carroll, for instance, reputed to be the best "corner stall" in the West, was at that moment button-holing the cashier's assistant on his way back to the bank from lunch and the two were discussing family matters,

Carroll being an old friend of the family who had come to town, allegedly, and a most garrulous fellow, when it came to reminiscences. There was still another member of the mob whom the cashier did not see. He would have seen him cross the space from the doorway but for the fact that, at that moment, the cashier was craning his neck around to see the note Black Whiskers held so tantalizingly askew. It was most important that the cashier should not see the young man in the rubber-soled shoes, for that young man—Billy O'Brien, alias "The Kid"—was the works. His was the star performance.

Entering at a signal from Charley Adams, master of ceremonies, O'Brien ducked into the bank, crouched down below the long, glass-topped partition, and reached the president's room in the rear. It was necessary to enter the cashier's compartment from the rear, cross a space of seven or eight feet and vanish into the vault behind the cashier's back. The signal to do so was given by Adams, who dropped a silver dollar to the floor and, before the ringing had stopped, O'Brien was in the vault and hastily cramming currency into the lining of his coat, especially prepared for that express purpose.

Meanwhile, Black Whiskers had exhausted the matter of the notes. Adams scraped his foot on the floor as a signal for Bennett to relieve the good doctor and give O'Brien an opportunity to leave the vault unseen.

Bennett hurried to the window and slammed down his roll of bills.

"I want a New York draft for a hundred dollars," he announced loudly. "You count 'em. I've counted them twice already and, doggone it, I can't make it come out right!"

As the cashier bent over the bills, the star-performer glided from the vault

and waited a second signal from Adams to cross the open space to the door. Adams stood well to one side, away from the doorway, where he could command a view of the street and the work of the "corner stall" and, at the same time, distract the cashier's attention if it became necessary. In his hand, Adams held a patent burglar-alarm, a primitive affair used in those days, wound up and which he would have set off—on the pretense of wanting to sell some of the gadgets—in the event Bennett was unable to turn the cashier sufficiently. The burglar alarm was Adams' idea. He was a resourceful rascal.

As it happened, the occasion did not call for it. Bennett's "finger stall" worked successfully. The "finger stall," used by bank-sneaks and probably originating among pickpockets, was simple and efficient. Bennett's right forefinger was covered with a piece cut from a kid glove as if in protection of an injury and fastened by a string about his wrist. The string was undone in advance and, when asked to tie it, the cashier obligingly did so but with Bennett's hand shoved through the window at an angle that compelled the cashier to turn his back to the open door leading to the street.

Thereupon, Adams motioned to the "sneak" and the latter walked out of the bank with \$19,500 in his pockets, followed by Adams and the window-smasher who—regretful, no doubt, that things had gone so quietly—parted from the cashier with mutual expressions of esteem. The cashier got no lunch that day.

IT was rather unimportant as major league crimes go—or rather, went in those days—but a fair sample of the methods then in use by bank-

sneaks. As a class, this order of crooks vanished as did the old-time bank-burglar around the turn of the century with the introduction of time-locked vaults and the more scientific methods of protection now in use by the guardians of cash. But in the hey-day of their activities, bank-sneaks were responsible for a large percentage of the underworld's "take."

They were the brains of mobdom. Patient, resourceful, daring in the extreme, they traveled in squads, sometimes in the wake of a country circus, hopeful that the parade would attract the bank employees to the windows, leaving the money unguarded, sometimes with a woman confederate posing as an invalid who would stop her carriage outside the bank and insist on the banker leaving his counter to transact business on the street while the quick snatch was made. They haunted the banking houses and if a customer were seen counting a wad of money, a bill would be dropped at his feet and he would be politely warned that he had dropped it. When he stooped to recover his supposed money part of the wad would vanish from the counter. Not all, of course. Just enough to arouse suspicion in his mind that he had been short-changed by the teller. In the ensuing argument, the thieves would step out of the picture.

They were always on the look-out for easy money. In a broker's office in New York, one fine morning, there was an animated discussion going on among the employees as to just where a certain town in Ohio was located. A well-known sneak happening to enter, on the chance of picking up a dishonest dollar, overheard the conversation. The safe was invitingly open and the cash-box in plain view.

The thief stepped quietly around the

corner to the waiting accomplice and sent him hot-foot to a map-store, then returned to await developments. Presently, a map-peddler arrived in the person of the accomplice. Nobody was interested in maps.

"Can I show you one of our new maps of Ohio?" he insisted. "All the towns, counties, boundaries—"

No need to repeat the offer. Bets were made all around, the new map unrolled and with the employees crowding around the peddler it was decided just where that town in Ohio was located. The location of the cash-box, filched from behind the outspread map by the ready accomplice, was a matter of more heated discussion later on.

Preying on safe-deposit box owners was another branch of a nefarious business. Entering a booth, the thief would tap the victim on the left shoulder, apologize for mistaking him for another and withdraw. Presently the box-holder would discover that part of his bonds had vanished. When he had turned to the left, in natural response to a tap on the left shoulder, the sneak had snatched from the right. A case where the right hand knew too well what the left was doing.

Clever scoundrels they were and,

still, not so clever after all. For, one by one, they seem to have wriggled and schemed their way into the net. Charley Adams, smartest mug of the lot, spent weary years looking out of a barred cage and wondering, perhaps, if the little cashier in Missouri had not been smarter in the end to work for his money honestly. Buck Taylor, Billy Coleman, Horace Hovan—who had a twin brother that he used for an alibi—Bigelow, O'Brien, Bennett, Carroll, to name but a few of the confraternity, spent the best years of their lives breaking rock and emptying slop-buckets in various jails throughout the country. Adams—it was not his real name—the big shot that stole \$306,000 from a bank in Concord, Massachusetts, was forced to beg \$25 from the Commonwealth to start him in life again when he got out of State's prison. Everything had gone to stool-pigeons, fickle friends, blackmailing enemies.

Twenty-five dollars for ten and a half years hard labor! Two dollars and fifty cents a year after getting \$306,000 for fifteen minutes' work. No wonder the trade of bank-sneakery became unpopular.

It does not appear to have paid dividends in the long run. . . .

CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB FOR AUGUST

(Continued from Page 63)

Six—Gladys L. Couch, St. Louis, Mo.; Mrs. Bertram Craven, Rensselaer, N. Y.; G. J. D., Philadelphia, Pa.; The Red Duke, New York, N. Y.; Effjay, Richmond, Va.; Rain-in-the-Face, Los Angeles, Calif.; Ritz-E-Fritz, Berkeley, Calif.; Seymour Gerber, Bronx, N. Y.; Hoodwink, Bastrop, Tex.; Sherry Magee, New York, N. Y.; Martha Mallory, Lexington, Va.; Alexander Marion, New York, N. Y.; Troy Matthews, Los Angeles, Calif.; C. W. Miller, Quincy, Pa.; Harold W. Pickard, San Diego, Calif.; N. H. Russell, Schenectady, N. Y.; Mrs. Marvin P. Souther, Lovell, Wyo.; Waltraw, Detroit, Mich.
Five—Biff, Point Lookout, N. Y.; Blackshirt,

(No Address); D. R. Eason, Grand Rapids, Mich.; G. I. Schuman & B. Franklin, Ferndale, Mich.; Dorothy E. French, Boston, Mass.; H. J. Gronauer, Clarksdale, Miss.; Donald Houghtalin, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Oneal Irvin, Meridian, Miss.; Neil Johnson, Manchester, Iowa; Al. Liston, Newark, N. J.; Mack, Pontiac, Mich.; Pangram, Lakewood, Ohio; Susie Pumphandle, Johnstown, Pa.; W. L. Reynolds, Seattle, Wash.; Ruel, Ocala, Fla.; J. C. Schock, New York, N. Y.; Grace C. Shaw, Milwaukee, Wis.; Stas, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Mrs. M. J. Timmerman, Albany, N. Y.; Hal. E. Tosis, Elgin, Ill.; Will Will, White Plains, N. Y.

(Continued on page 96)



Chris realized he was in a tight spot

DETECTIVE
D W
SHORT

Sweepstakes Payoff

By Robert H. Letifred

THE Sweepstakes - drawing in Dublin had long been a thing of the past. And the lucky names, drawn from the huge drums, had been matched with the names of famous race horses scheduled to run in the Grand National at Aintree.

In due course of time the winners had received their prizes, and the losers—consolation. In the daily papers were pictures of the winners, details of their personal lives, and the ex-

act sum each was to receive in cash. Then these lucky human beings were forgotten, except by those jackals who prey on the lambs of human society.

Chris Larsen, the waterfront detective, had, among other things, two tickets for the famous Sweeps. Both had proved worthless. He had long since forgotten them, and they would have remained forgotten had it not been for the mysterious death of a longshoreman named Arthur

Chris Larsen, Waterfront Detective, Was Smart Enough to Know When Opportunity Knocked — Especially When It Involved a Chance to Avenge the Murder of His Pal

Bruckner which aroused his dormant memory.

Chris, reading back through newspapers kept on file, came across the following: ARTHUR BRUCKNER OF SAN PEDRO WINS A HUNDRED AND SIXTY-TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS OF SWEEPSTAKES MONEY.

When Chris laid the paper down there were creases in his forehead, and a thoughtful glint in his gray eyes.

Captain of Detectives, Judson, saw Chris fumbling through the papers and frowned. "Chris," he pleaded. "Headquarters is putting pressure on me. Put away your reading glasses and do some leg work. Look up Bruckner's friends. Find out where he spent his time. Check up on any lead that looks promising. You're not tied to that chair."

Chris rubbed his chin thoughtfully. "Don't rush me, Captain. I just discovered a lead in a week-old paper."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. Bruckner won a hundred and sixty-two thousand dollars on the Irish Sweepstakes."

"The hell he did!"

"That's what I'm telling you. And if I remember right, there wasn't any such sum found in his room at the time of the investigation."

"How about the banks and Building Loan companies?"

"I checked all of them and drew blanks. But at the time I checked them I wasn't looking for any such sum as Bruckner won on his lottery ticket."

Judson shifted the cigar from the port to the starboard side of his jaw. "Well, the Mayor, the Chief of Police, and the Grand Jury are beginning to ride me. They could have a dozen murders in the Big Town, but once something happens in this port city, they go hog-wild for law and order, and

threaten our station with a wholesale shake-up."

Chris yawned. "Trouble with you, Captain . . ."

The clangor of the telephone broke in. "Take it," said Judson. "It's probably for you anyway."

Chris took it. "Detective Larsen speaking. Yeah. Who? Go ahead. You don't say? Sure it wasn't an automobile back-firing? Check, lady! I'll be right up. Stick around. I'll be seeing you."

"Now what?" growled Captain Judson.

"Nothing much," said Chris, rising to his feet. "From what I could gather it seems like somebody shot somebody else."

Judson began to swear softly to himself.

Chris laid a penciled memorandum on his superior's desk. "If I'm not right back, you'd better come to this address with the squad car and an ambulance."

Judson took the cigar from between his lips and pointed it at Larsen's face. "I knew it," he accused. "Trouble never comes singly to this station house. It comes in bunches."

SLANTING through the casement window, the sun penciled an oblique line across the torso of the dead man on the floor. He lay on his left side, his arm doubled up beneath him, his right arm outflung, the fingers frozen around the butt of a Colt .38.

There were black powder burns around the bullet hole on the right side of his head.

His eyes were wide and staring.

Detective Chris Larsen had just come in from a semi-darkened hall. The room where he now stood was bright with sunshine. His experienced

eyes took in every detail of the death chamber.

Beside him stood an old woman, neat, shawled, wrinkled and alert. Her beady eyes kept shifting from the body on the floor to the face of the waterfront detective.

"My, my!" she complained in a cracked voice. "What's this world a-coming to. They never did things like this in *my* time. Maybe a skull would get cracked and a couple of ribs broken, or an ear chewed off. But killings with a gun . . . Well, *do* something. This is a respectable place I'll have you understand. Don't stand there gawping like a yokel sheriff. You cops nowadays gotta do so much loitering around." She snorted and began to rub the knuckles of a skinny hand against the side of her nose.

A big, blunt man was Chris Larsen, and a terror to the crooks along the port city's waterfront. But he knew his limitations. He was no brilliant detective, yet his record at this Pacific coast seaport town seemed to prove otherwise.

The old woman's nagging upset his thought processes. Being a blunt man he lacked certain niceties of tact. So he put the flat of his big hand against the old woman's face and shoved her into the hall.

"And stay there," he warned her.

"That's no way to treat a lady . . ."

"Shut up!" snapped Chris. "How the hell do you expect me to do anything with you underfoot?"

"I heard the shot, didn't I?" argued the old woman from the hall shadows. "I called you on the telephone, didn't I? I told you I suspicioned that . . ."

"Get me mad, my beauty," threatened Chris, "and I'll sure as hell blow up and slap you in a cell. Now pipe down!"

"Fooley!" came a hoarse whisper from the hall.

As Chris knelt close to the body, feeling for the pulse that would never beat again, he was vaguely troubled by something that was not quite right. There was an element out of place. This was no suicide, even though perfect in setting. And as the solution suddenly dawned on him he heard a confusion of voices in the hall behind him. He half-twisted around.

Judson stood in the doorway, his black eyes surveying the scene. From outside on the street came the siren of the ambulance. Past the Captain crowded a wiry doctor who acted as medical examiner, and he was followed by the official photographer with a camera.

Captain Judson spoke before he looked at the face of the dead man. "Who is it this time?"

From his kneeling position on the floor Chris said: "It's Manny McGuire, the radio cop who was dropped from the force."

"Ummm!" grunted Judson. "I thought McGuire had left town. I would have if I had been in *his* shoes. He stuck around—and look at what happens to him."

The discharge and disgrace of Manny McGuire was a sore spot between Chris Larsen and his superior. The feeling that Manny had been unjustly treated was reflected in Chris's voice.

"I always said that Manny was innocent, Captain. I say so now. And damn it, someday I'll prove it."

Judson shrugged impatiently. "All right, Doc!" He motioned to the wiry medical examiner. Let's get the routine stuff over with. Looks like suicide to me. McGuire must have reached a point where he couldn't take it any more."

WHEN the wiry doctor had finished, and the last picture had been snapped by the photographic expert, Chris and Captain Judson searched McGuire's pockets carefully. There was the usual collection of coins, keys, cigarettes and matches, but not a scrap of writing.

The medical examiner began in a sonorous voice: "A superficial examination of the wound and its various aspects in relation to the distance at which the shot was fired . . ."

"Nuts!" cut in Judson. "Is it suicide? That's all I want to know right now."

"The width and depth of the powder burns—black powder by the way—from the actual flame zone, would indicate that the gun was held close to the unfortunate man's head. There seems to be a considerable quantity of unburnt powder in the corneum, and a closer examination would undoubtedly reveal still more powder within the mucosum. Death was practically instantaneous and painless."

"Does the bullet hole match with the calibre of the gun?"

"Superficially. I'll know beyond a doubt when I have recovered the leaden bullet. Then you can turn it over to your ballistic expert for matching with a test bullet." He cleared his throat. "Unless there is any evidence to the contrary, I will make out the ticket as death from a self-inflicted wound."

Chris opened his mouth as if to speak, changed his mind and rolled a cigarette. If the Captain chose to think that Manny had bumped himself off, let him think that way.

He stood back, while Judson interviewed the old woman who owned the rooming house. It developed that McGuire had roomed there a long time.

Had few callers, and minded his own business. Had there been any visitors in his room before the accident? She didn't know.

"Suicide," decided Judson. "I thought for a time that it was another murder. That lets you out, Chris. So get busy on the Bruckner case. I can handle this suicide myself."

Chris left the rooming house and plodded to a chili joint where he knew McGuire took most of his meals.

"Pete," he asked the proprietor. "McGuire been in lately?"

"Yeah, Chris. He was in this morning. Ate a big breakfast. Why?"

"Nothing. I was just wondering. A man eating a big meal couldn't by any stretch of the imagination be thinking about suicide, eh?"

Pete's eyes bulged. "Suicide?"

"We just found him dead with a bullet in his head, and the gun gripped in his hand. Tough, eh?"

"The hell you did, Chris. You kidding me?"

"Read tonight's paper." He left the chili joint. One thing was established in his mind. McGuire wasn't feeling low enough to kill himself when he could deliberately eat a hearty meal.

In turn he visited two saloons, another hash house, and three pool parlors. His questionings brought no results except that Manny had been low in funds.

Chris kept this fact in mind as he headed towards a pawn shop on Harbor street. "Greenbaum," he said to the pudgy man behind the jewelry counter. "Haven't I always treated you right?"

"Sure," beamed the pudgy man. "Ain't I always maintaining that you're the best police officer in this town. Ask anybody."

"Okay. Then listen, and don't get

your tongue twisted. Did Manny McGuire pawn anything here during the past three weeks?"

A crafty glint appeared in the pawnbroker's eyes. "Now listen, Chris, I'm a respectable business man. I say let well enough alone. I gotta make a living like everybody else."

Chris rocked on his heels. "Quit stalling, Greenbaum. Come clean with an answer. Remember, I ain't trying to crowd you. Anything you tell me is just between the two of us. I'll keep your name out."

"Sure, Chris. Sure. Well, it was like this. McGuire came in one day—about the time the Fleet went south. He was hard up. Losing his job on the force was tough on him. He needed money. He put up a watch and his service revolver. I let him have fifteen on the gun, and ten dollars on the watch. Yesterday a big guy came in and told me that he had won the ticket on the gun from McGuire in a game of draw poker. He paid the fifteen, got the gun and took it away with him."

"Do you know the man?"

The pawnbroker shook his head. "He was a big guy like I said. Well-dressed. He didn't belong to this town. At least I never saw him around."

"Read the papers tonight," said Chris a second time, "then keep your mouth shut about the gun. Get me?"

II

WITHOUT waiting for an answer he returned to the rooming house where McGuire had met his death. There was a cop on duty outside. Chris nodded to the officer and went in, climbed the stairs and reached the room of tragedy.

It was empty now, and there was only a dark splotch on the carpet where blood had stained it. As he turned to

close the door he found himself staring into the bird-like eyes of the old woman. "You still here?" he sighed.

The old one laughed—and the sound was like dry paper tearing in her throat. "Me and you," she cackled, "are the only smart ones. Oh, I was watching you every minute. You're a sly one."

Chris was again feeling the urge to shove her out into the hall.

She seemed to read his mind. "Don't push me around again. I don't like being pushed. When my old man was alive I never let him push me, so why should I let you?"

"Listen," said Chris, patiently. "This is police business, and I don't like to be interrupted by you or anyone else. See? Now be a good old girl and clear out."

The old woman slapped her bony thighs, leaned forward, peered into Chris's eyes. Again there came that sound like dry paper tearing in her throat as she laughed.

"I sorta like you, Mister detective, even if you *are* rough and uncouth. Now listen to one who has lived almost ninety years in this crazy world. I also sorta liked Mr. McGuire. He was like you only—only I think *he* was honest. And he was not a man who would act the coward and kill himself just because he was kicked from the force. He had courage written all over his Irish face."

Chris smiled warmly. "You're going good, my beauty. I'll share my secret with you. McGuire didn't commit suicide. He was murdered!"

From beneath her shawl the old woman took out a nicotine-stained pipe, lighted the dottle within the bowl, took three swift puffs, extinguished the glowing embers with a leathery thumb and tucked the pipe into its former hiding place. Then she spoke.

"I'm not surprised. But what are you going to do about it?"

"Find the killer—with your help."

"Dear me! What can I do?"

"I was wondering myself. You told the Captain about everything there was to tell. Were you holding back any trifles of information?"

"Not purposely. But I kept thinking about . . . well, twice he came downstairs and used my phone. He called long distance operator and tried to make a connection with the Ajax Importing Company in San Francisco. But he didn't get them either time."

"I see," nodded Chris. "I'll keep them calls in mind. Right now they don't mean anything. About trunks now. Did McGuire have any stored in the basement?"

"There is no basement, and Mr. McGuire had no trunks."

"Ummmm!" grunted Chris. "Will you please sit down. I'm searching the room in case what I'm looking for is here among his things."

"What are you looking for?"

Chris sighed. "I don't know."

THE old woman snorted vigorously. "What kind of a detective are you? You don't sound very intelligent to me. I heard that other detective, the one with the mustache, say that he could handle this case himself. That let's you out. Why don't you go home?"

"I'll go when I've finished. Not before." Methodically he opened the drawers of a dresser, searched them, scowled and went into a clothes closet. He searched through the pockets of all the garments and discovered nothing.

The querulous voice of the old woman nagged him wherever he went. Finally he stood in the center of the room, feet spread wide apart, hands on hips.

As he stood there he became aware of the bed, a bulging, brass structure with knobs the size of oranges on all four corners. He regarded them lazily before it occurred to him to unscrew one. No go. He could see that the posts were hollow, but he couldn't look into them. He took off both knobs at once and tugged at a cross piece. It came off easily in his hands.

He looked into the cavity of the nearest brass post and saw a folded square of newspaper. He took it out. It was only part of a sheet. Enclosed in brackets marked with a pencil was an article about the Sweepstakes winner—Arthur Bruckner.

Beneath the article were penciled three names: Silver Jack, Soskind, and Whitey Smith. There was a line drawn through Silver Jack's name, and several question marks after Whitey's name. Soskind's name, in the center of the list, was followed by a single word, Ajax, and some figures—6 and 31.

Chris Larsen's mind was working slowly, but it was working. Ajax suggested the two uncompleted long distance calls to Frisco. But the figures? He studied them with care. They meant something. What? Had they anything to do with Manny's death?

Chris kept on thinking. Could they be a measure of time like the sixth month, June 31? Not unless the calendar was changed, for there were only 30 days in June. His brow wrinkled with concentration. Manny McGuire was a good cop. A radio cop. And he had used figures.

Something clicked in the waterfront detective's head, and everything dropped in place. McGuire's instructions while cruising in a radio car always came to him in code numbers.

Those figures were definite. They meant something. Chris took a small

book from his pocket. His eyes found the radio code and moved down to the numeral 6. He read Waterfront section W, Piers 17, 18 and 19. His eyes dropped to the numeral 31. The code word was Yacht.

Without a word to the old woman, he grinned, tipped his hat and went out to the street.

In the phone booth at the local telephone exchange he said to the long distance operator: "I want to talk to the Better Business Bureau, San Francisco. Police department calling. Rush the call."

When he left the booth some minutes later, two things were clear in his mind. The Ajax Importing Company had quietly folded up following a secret investigation by the Coast Guard agents. The name Ajax Importing Company had been a misnomer—the sole member of the firm being a gentleman by the name of Soskind.

Chris yawned and went out into the sunshine. It was warm and he wished he had a couple glasses of beer.

THE face of the blonde was hard, her eyes metallic. She sat at a table on which were two telephones. There was a wooden railing in front of the table that ran across the room.

Chris leaned negligently on the railing. "I want to talk to Soskind," he stated. His eyes ranged over the office. It consisted of a single, large room. At the far end, facing windows that looked out onto the harbor and Terminal Island, was a single desk. Next to the desk was an old-fashioned wardrobe with double doors—closed.

"He's out," said the blonde. "Won't be back till next week."

From his position at the rail Chris could see a panetela cigar butt laid

crosswise in an ashtray on the far desk. He said without a change of expression: "I want to talk with Soskind. Y'understand? There's a cigar on his ash tray back there. Believe it or not, sister, it's still sending up a cloud of smoke. You wouldn't be smoking cigars. But your boss would. He should have taken it into the wardrobe with him. Just a little mistake, sister, that . . ."

The doors of the wardrobe opened. Out stepped a slim man with a hatchet face. He was smiling with everything but his eyes. And his eyes were smouldering like the cigar he had left on his desk.

"All right, Mister," he spoke. "I'm Soskind. I thought you were somebody else when you came in — someone I didn't care to see."

"You sure as hell got out of sight quick," observed Chris.

"That's all right, too. What do you want?"

"Me," said Chris, "I'm a friend of the late Manny McGuire."

The eyes of the slim man became opaque. "I don't know him."

"My mistake," Chris countered. "McGuire's dead. Shot through the head. That mean anything to you?"

"Not a thing."

"Then he never did any business with your firm?"

"Not that I remember. But then you couldn't expect me to know everybody my firm dealt with."

"Naturally." Chris Larsen's face broke into a disarming smile. He hauled back the lapel of his coat displaying his badge. "Police," he said. "We're trying to check up on him. He was discharged from the force you understand. The reason I came here was because I found one of your business cards in his pocket. The investi-

gation is mere routine. McGuire committed suicide a couple of hours ago."

Soskind nodded. His mouth was still smiling. "I see. Sorry I can't be of help. Have a cigar?"

"Thanks," said Chris, taking the panetela carefully between a thumb and the first finger, and tucking it behind a handkerchief in his breast pocket. "I'll smoke it when I'm off duty," he explained.

He tipped his hat to the blonde. "G'bye, sister." He grinned and went out to the street. But the grin was not one of pleasure. He knew that Soskind was somehow linked to Manny McGuire. Knew also that Soskind had been expecting a caller—one of whom he was mortally afraid.

Returning to headquarters building he went to the crime laboratory on a lower floor. Billings, the keen-eyed chemist and ballistic expert, left off the examination of a gun barrel, and dabbed at the sweat on his forehead. "Huh!" he grunted.

Chris took the cigar from his pocket. "My prints are on this. So are another guy's. What I want to know is do they check with the prints found on the gun that McGuire used to bump himself off."

"There were no prints on the gun but McGuire's. But there was a swell impression on one of the cartridges—and it wasn't McGuire's."

Chris rolled a cigarette and sat down. He watched the expert. Billings was holding the cigar close to a light bulb of frosted glass. He grunted after a moment and sprinkled a pale powder over the cigar's outer leaf. Then he grunted some more and tried another powder. After a time his grunts ceased.

He held the cigar beneath a powerful microscope, squinted and said:

"From a superficial examination, Chris, the prints are not the same. I'll have to make a negative and print it if you want to see for yourself."

"Not necessary," said Chris. "But don't let anything happen to that print on the .38 shell case found in McGuire's gun. See you later."

IN the hall outside he ran into grief in the person of his superior. Captain Judson's face was criss-crossed with storm signals—all dangerous. His upper lip twisted sarcastically as he spotted Chris.

"Where the devil *you* been keeping yourself? Maybe you think you're being paid . . ."

"Whatever pay I get, I earn," said Chris. "I'm in a hurry."

"Hold everything! After all, you're a detective, and accountable for your time and actions. Come clean!"

"I'm checking," explained Chris. "There's been a couple of murders in this town, and I'm the bright young man . . ."

"Bright me eye! What do you mean—a couple? One murder. One suicide. Tell me I'm wrong and I'll fling you to the politicians."

"Start flinging, Captain. You're wrong."

Judson gulped. He looked ready to throw a fit. "The more I work with you, Chris, the less I understand how you get away with it. Ain't it bad enough to have the whole county and city on my neck without having to put up with a dumb dick like you?"

The jaw of the waterfront detective hardened. "You're right about being dumb. If I'd been smart, Manny McGuire would still be alive. If I had gone to the bat for him when he was accused of taking graft from the narcotic mob, I might have uncovered

something that I've got to uncover now—without Manny at my side."

Captain Judson spoke with exaggerated politeness. "I'm only the Captain of detectives in this town, Chris, and your immediate superior. Would it inconvenience you to stop long enough and explain why you think there's been a double murder in this town? Would it!" he scowled.

Chris spoke patiently. "Listen, Captain. Manny didn't kill himself. Someone else blotted him out. Manny was left-handed. He carried his holster on the left side. Had a special one made to order. I know. I've been with him on the target range."

The hairs of Judson's mustache began to curl inward. "Say that again, Chris, and slower."

"Manny was shot in the right side of the head. He couldn't possibly reach around there with his left hand. Try it yourself."

"But we found the gun in his right hand . . ."

"I know it. But the man who killed him didn't know that Manny was left-handed. That's why he put the weapon in the wrong hand. If I was going to shove a gun against my head, I'd sure use the hand that was accustomed to handling guns. So would you. Another thing."

"Another?" Judson asked.

"Yes. The gun used was Manny's own. He pawned it when short of funds. Another guy got hold of the ticket. This same guy got the gun out of hock."

Chris raised his hand to check an explosion of questions. "Now don't hurry me. I'm telling you things as they are and were. There's a man named Soskind, an importer in this town, who is mixed up in this. And the two murders are linked—that of

Bruckner and McGuire. Now, if you'll just leave me alone, I'll have the case cleared up by tonight. Hell, if a man is killed around noon, and I have the murderer in custody by night ain't that fast enough for you—or your big town superiors?"

A faint grimace spread over Captain Judson's face, and the hairs in his mustache straightened. "In case you don't know it, Chris, we have a certain system for handling homicide cases. All information must be placed on my desk . . ."

"Sure. I know all that. What do you want me to do?"

"Write a detailed report from the evidence of eye-witnesses, ballistic reports, possible motives . . ."

"Hooey!" scoffed Chris. "I can't write."

"Then beat it," said Judson in a tense voice. "And don't look to me for sympathy if you get your head shot off."

He pivoted sharply, went to his office and punched a button. To the officer who answered he said: "Send in Barker."

Detective Barker came in.

Judson's teeth sank into his cigar. "Between you and Chris, I don't know who's the worst. You look like a couple of gigolos. Anybody would think you two were bankers instead of waterfront dicks—the style you put on."

He cleared his throat, touched lightly on what had already happened, and added: "Chris is steamed up and headed for trouble. He thinks he's the lone guardian of the whole damned waterfront. Tail him and don't let anybody get rough with him. He's watching a man named Soskind who is an importer. That's all. Get going."

Barker felt of the knot of his silk foulard tie, nodded, smiled his decep-

tive smile and left, stopping only long enough on the way out to pass the time of day with the desk sergeant while that individual looked up the address of importer Soskind.

AT a quarter past six a Packard sport roadster warped to the curb where Soskind had his office. Soskind, furtive and jerky, came out and took the wheel from the Filipino driver. Then the Packard swerved around the corner, headed up Sixth street and stopped before an apartment house part way up the Palo Verde hills.

Soskind got out and went in. The Filipino drove the machine into an adjoining drive, then faded through a side entrance.

Chris Larsen's taxi stopped at the corner. Chris got out and came down the street. The apartment was a swank one. He pushed through the front door. Soskind had vanished. There was a colored boy at a small switchboard. Chris displayed his badge and said: "If you want to keep your job, boy . . ."

"Yes, sah, Boss. You de police?"

Chris nodded. "I'm watching Soskind. He just came in. If he receives a call or makes one, I want to listen in . . ."

Already a light was flashing on the switchboard, and the colored boy was pointing mutely to a telephone extension as he plugged in on the outside wires. After a time, Chris hung up, slipped the colored boy two half dollars and went outside to the street.

III

THE motor yacht, Virginia, moored at Pier 19, was, except for the riding lights in the rigging, quite dark. From concealment behind a pile of dunnage, Chris watched Soskind move along the pier followed by

the Filipino in a white jacket carrying two suitcases.

Lights presently flashed behind the portholes of the main saloon amidships, then vanished as curtains were drawn. After a time, another figure came swinging along the pier—the figure of a big man. Chris heard the creak of the gangplank as the big man crossed it and faded into the shadows. The Filipino came out and vanished somewhere forward on the main deck.

Chris left his pile of dunnage and crossed over the gangplank. Then headed for that round porthole where he had first seen the light. Voices, faintly muffled, reached his ears.

"Trying to pull a fast one, hey? Figured to shove off and leave Johnny Patillo holding the empty bag, hey?"

"Listen, Patillo," This was Soskind's voice. "I tell you a local dick was in my office this afternoon. He said he found one of my business cards at McGuire's place. He lied. I haven't any business cards. He linked me to McGuire some other way. Someone squealed."

"Stop your sniveling," growled Patillo. "It won't get you anywhere with me. And quit stalling. I want my cut on the Sweeps money. And if I don't get it tonight, it's just gonna be too bad for you. I'm sick of hiding out while you hold the dough we lifted from Bruckner."

"I'm getting around to that, Patillo, if you'll only give me time. Now listen. Are you sure you didn't make any mistakes at that former radio cop's room?"

"Not a one. I know my stuff. The cop's gun was used. I handled it with gloves. In my pocket I got his memorandum book in which he kept all the dope. And there's enough in it to send me and you over the road for a long stretch. As soon as you hand me my

cut of the hundred and sixty-two grand we took from Bruckner, I'll set a match to the book."

Chris moved from his spot near the porthole. As he did so he heard a faint click behind him. He whirled, hand streaking towards his hip.

"Please," said a quiet, high-pitched voice. "Do not move. You are covered with a big gun. Please to raise your arms. That is good. Now, please turn around and walk slowly through the door into the saloon."

Chris saw in the darkness the white coat of the Filipino house boy. He could also see the black chunk of metal that was the big gun. He felt very foolish as he lifted his arms and walked as directed.

Patillo's gun came out as Chris and the Filipino entered the brightly lighted saloon. "Who's this guy?" he frowned.

"He was outside," said the Filipino. "He seemed to be listening near the porthole. I thought he should not be there."

"You thought right," said Soskind, quietly. He looked sharply at Chris. Patillo, this is the dick who came to my office."

"Well, well," rumbled Patillo. "A friend of McGuire's, hey?"

"Sure," said Chris. "Any objections?"

"Keep him covered, Charles," ordered Soskind.

Chris's eyes ranged the walls and ceiling. "Nice boat, Soskind. Must be a lot of jack in handling silks, narcotics and occasionally rolling a lush guy like Arthur Bruckner."

"Who the devil are *you*?" clipped Soskind.

"A heel," rapped out Patillo, "that needs to be bumped."

A slow smile wreathed Chris Larsen's face. "Just a friend of McGuire.

He was a good cop till you guys framed him. And he was still good when you turned the heat on him. They don't kill cops in this town and get away with it. Maybe you'll be good boys now and put away your guns. I don't like to get rough."

The gun in Patillo's hand was solid as a rock. Chris couldn't see behind him, but he knew that the Filipino still had him covered. A crafty glint showed in his gray eyes. He waited.

Patillo said: "How'd you get wise to all this?"

"Soskind," said Chris, deliberately lying. "Soskind spilled everything and promised not to leave town."

Soskind's face went livid. "Why you lying heel . . ."

"Shut up!" snapped Patillo. "I know he's lying."

"HE told me," Chris went on, "how you got the pawn ticket and bailed out McGuire's gun.

Why you poor punk, you knew damned well that Soskind was pulling out with Bruckner's money in his pants pocket, leaving you to be picked up by the dicks in this town as soon as they traced you with the pawn ticket on the gun."

"Kill him!" screamed Soskind. "He isn't any cop. He's a hijacker!"

"Sure," Chris taunted. "Kill me, Patillo. But it means you'll have to kill Soskind, and this little brown boy behind me. And what'll it get you? Use your head."

"You keep still," said Patillo in a flat voice. "You've shot off your mouth long enough."

But his eyes were already clouded with doubt as they wavered between Chris and Soskind.

"I swear," pleaded Soskind, "that this heel is lying, Johnny. He's made this stuff up, guessed it."

"You were leaving," flung back Chris. "The Coast Guard was close behind you. You got word tonight—over the telephone. And you were leaving Patillo for the cops to find."

Patillo's eyes slitted. "Wait," he said. His body swiveled around so that his gun covered both Soskind and Larsen. He kept moving in a slow arc.

"Charles," he called out to the Filipino. "You're going to get hurt if you so much as think about turning that gun of yours on me. Get it straight before I blast. The cops aren't taking me, now or ever."

"You're sunk, Patillo," warned Chris. "Soskind's sunk."

"The hell with Soskind and his rattling on me. It's me I'm worried about. What have you cops got on me?"

"Plenty. The gun was found in McGuire's right hand."

"Yeah, but there weren't no prints."

"But McGuire was left-handed."

Patillo whirled on Soskind. "You hear that? You told me to slip the gun in McGuire's right hand . . ."

Soskind's face had turned a grayish green. "I said," he began, "I said to put the . . . hell, Johnny, I didn't know he was left-handed any more than you did. I tell you this heel is trying to turn you against me. It's a trick . . ."

"Call it anything you want to," Chris broke in. "But it happened just the way I told you. Patillo handled the gun with gloves. He did good. But he didn't have gloves on when he loaded it. Patillo will swing for that crime. Soskind, with a good lawyer, will go free."

"The hell he will!" raged Patillo. The gun he held cracked sharply.

Soskind cried out and fell kicking to the floor. Chris pivoted. Powder stung his cheek as the Filipino's gun erupted almost in his ear. The bullet creased

Patillo's forearm. Chris swung at the house boy. The Filipino ducked and scuttled out the door.

Chris whirled and faced the big man. Patillo was raising his gun arm. Chris drove forward, bending low. He grabbed Patillo by the legs. Both men crashed. Out on the deck close to the gangplank a gun began to rap out slow convulsions of sound.

Patillo swung viciously and the sharp-edged gun sight raked Chris across the cheek causing the blood to spurt. The detective sucked in a pained breath and exhaled wrathfully as the flat of the gun next jarred his back teeth. He spat and from a kneeling position flung his bunched knuckles against the big man's jaw.

Soskind meanwhile had staggered to his feet. In his hand was a shiny, chromium-plated .32. The hand was shaking as he tried to draw down on the waterfront detective.

Chris got his hand around Patillo's gun, jerked it free and hurled it across the room. It struck Soskind in the face. Slobbering with pain, he sagged to the floor.

THE fists of Patillo were sledgehammering against the detective's face. Chris shoved the big man back with the heel of his hand. Heat lightnings flashed in Patillo's eyes. He went crazy mad. His powerful arms started to flail like clubs.

Into the flailing clubs of fists walked the waterfront detective. He forced the big man against a porthole and nailed him there with a looping left hand smash that jolted him clear to his heels, then followed it with a haymaker that caused the whites of Patillo's eyes to roll slowly upward in glazed surprise. Patillo crashed to the floor—out cold.

Chris snapped a steel cuff around one wrist. Crossed the saloon, collared Soskind, dragged him to Patillo's side and linked the remaining steel circlet to Soskind's wrist.

Soskind was cursing and rubbing his bloody face. Chris ignored him. His fingers were in Patillo's pockets. Suddenly he straightened. He had McGuire's missing memorandum book in his fingers.

The door to the saloon slammed open. In shuffled a bedraggled Filipino, a little the worse for wear. Behind him, immaculate though bloody on one pants leg, strolled Barker swinging a Colt .38. He figured the situation at a glance. "Here's the one who almost got away," he said, cheerfully.

Chris looked up from the writing in McGuire's book. "Who let you in on this pinch. Hell, can't I handle a couple of mugs . . . ?"

"The Skipper did it," said Barker, quietly. "He said: 'Chris is steamed up and headed for trouble. He thinks he's the lone guardian of the whole damned waterfront. Tail him and don't let anybody get rough with him.' That's what he told me. So I did like I was ordered. See? And I collared a little dark boy with one hell of a big gun in his hot fist. My leg feels like a

two-pound chunk of steak has been sliced out of it."

Chris rubbed the gun slash in his cheek. "I guess I ain't so fast as I used to be. I . . ."

"What's going on here?" The light of a pier watchman's flash was making a white ring on the deck outside.

"Get to a telephone," ordered Chris, "and call police headquarters. Tell them to send over a squad car."

He grinned at Barker after the watchman had left. "See this memo book? Belonged to McGuire. The big guy on the floor had it. There's evidence plenty on its pages that Manny had been uncovering after he was kicked off the force. Enough to send Soskind up for twenty years and Patillo to Quentin and the rope."

Barker gazed ruefully at his blood-stained white pants.

Still rubbing his jaw Chris added. "This evidence will sure clear Manny McGuire's record, along with what I've gathered in myself. And won't Captain Judson be sore. Serve him right, too. He'll learn some day—if he's ever going to learn—that there are more honest cops on the force than dishonest."

"You telling me?" drawled Barker.

"No," said Chris. "I was just talking to myself."

CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB FOR AUGUST

(Continued from Page 83)

Four—Ajax, Staples, Minn.; Aubercan, Washington, D. C.; Frank Brady, New York, N. Y.; Cotton, Arlington, Tex.; Cub, Chicago, Ill.; William Eymer, New York, N. Y.; Pearlle Glen, Baltimore, Md.; Gregory, Taos, N. Mex.; Mrs. Patricia Hall, Lagrange, Tex.

Three—Mrs. George E. Currie, Gulfport, Miss.; E. L. Davis, Jr., Austin, Tex.; Joe Fucarino, Ridgefield Park, N. J.; William E. Gilbert, Alexandria, Va.; Sydney Grablowski, Newark, N. J.; Lloyd Jenne, Lennoxville, Quebec, Canada; J. S. N., Butte, Mont.; Benjamin Skowronski, Yonkers, N. Y.; Robert Voorhees, Battle Creek, Mich.

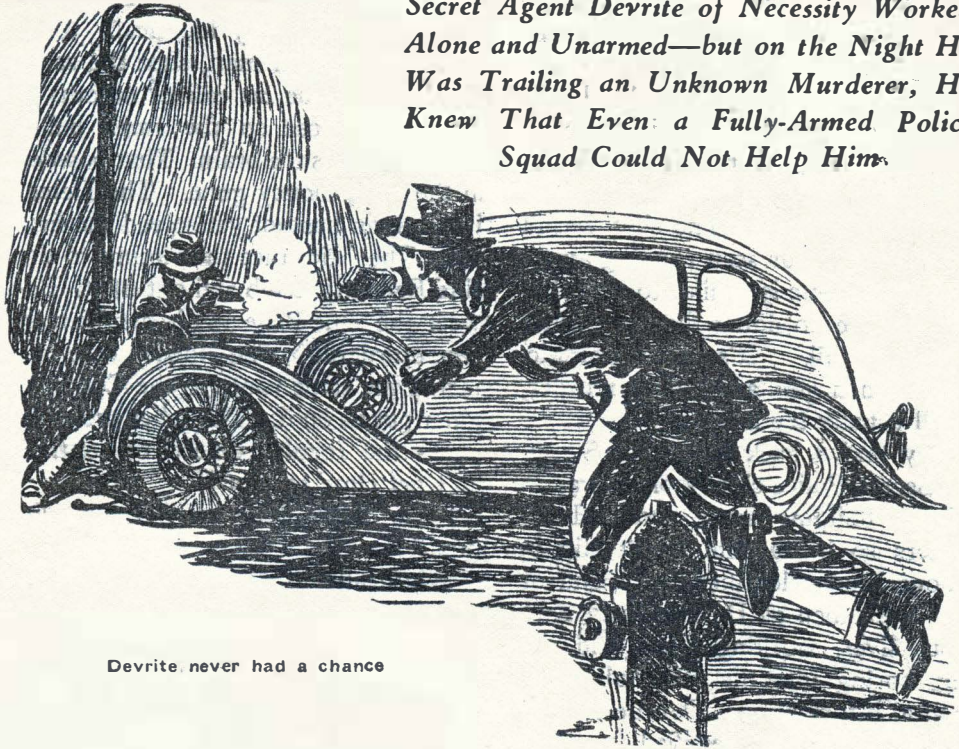
Two—A. Convert, Denver, Colo.; Howard Grindlinger, Kew Gardens, N. Y.; The Wizard

of Oz, Blasdel, N. Y.; H. J. Rudniak, Wilmington, Del.

One—Alice, Riverside, Calif.; August Fromm, Elizabeth, N. J.

Corrections—N. Dak. Ump, Gilby, N. Dak., 21 answers for July instead of 11, also 21 answers for June instead of 20; Illy, Akron, Ohio, 10 answers for July instead of 14; Elvin Crane Paynter, Ocean City, N. J., 15 answers for July not previously credited; Jay Abey, Los Angeles, Calif., 24 answers for June instead of 23; Comrade, Baltimore, Md., 24 answers for June instead of 23; B. P., Miami, Fla., 20 answers for June instead of 15, as previously credited.

Secret Agent Devrite of Necessity Worked Alone and Unarmed—but on the Night He Was Trailing an Unknown Murderer, He Knew That Even a Fully-Armed Police Squad Could Not Help Him.



Devrite never had a chance

Powder on the Body

By Tom Curry

SECRET Agent George Devrite looked at the dead man on the Morgue slab. Inspector Hallihan stood aside to allow him an unobstructed view — Hallihan, chief of the Secret Police, sometimes found it necessary to give his star operative such a showing before starting him on a murderer's trail, a trail which might end in death for the undercover man.

"What are those white specks on the coat?" asked Devrite. His voice was low, for he was a sensitive man and no matter how often he looked on violent



death he was always affected. This victim had left a widow and children. There had been others and there would probably be more, unless Devrite could stop the killer. Devrite was aware of an eager, burning hope that he could do that.

"That's powder," replied Hallihan. "All three dead ones have had a sprinkling of it on their clothing."

"Is it face powder, left by a woman?"

"The chemists say it's plain talc, dusting powder. Not smeared but sprinkled. Perhaps a woman's."

Devrite observed the small, blue-tinted bullet hole behind the left ear. "Twenty-two caliber," he observed.

"And fired close up," nodded Hallihan. "I told you this is William Nardan, a wealthy broker. He was found early this morn up a dark alley. He died around 3 A.M. The shot wasn't heard, no one was seen running away. The whole set-up is similar to the other two. I have no doubt the same killer did them all. It's characteristic. When a man gets away with murder, he will usually try it again."

They taxied back to Centre Street. The Secret Police chief's office was in a dingy building away from Headquarters so his agents might slip in without being identified by friend or foe. Such men as Devrite lived dangerous lives, working alone and unsung, boring into the criminal world for vital information. Devrite did not make arrests, never testified in court, simply playing the rôle of an observer.

Climbing a flight of stairs to the frosted-glass door marked, "James Brown — Beaded-Goods Importer," Devrite took a chair across the desk from Hallihan. The agent's wide shoulders were hunched and there was a vertical wrinkle between his eyes as he listened to the puzzle expounded by his superior. Devrite knew that already he hated the killer, that he would stay on that death trail until the end. . . .

Hallihan's naturally humorous Irish mouth was lined and there were dark pads under his eyes, for sleep was a luxury to him. He worked day and night without regard to hours. He was seldom without a cigar, clinched at one side of his teeth to facilitate speech; it bobbed as he talked, bits of gray ash sprinkling his coat lapels until it reminded Devrite of the dinner-coated body in the Morgue.

"These three murders," said Hallihan, "are practically identical. Each victim was a rich man, shot the same way by the same .22 caliber automatic pistol held close so the small bullet would not miss the brain. That powder on the coat, money gone. The Detective Bureau has not yet solved the first two. They did trace the victims to the Blue Belle nightclub and out of it. Between the Blue Belle and home the men were murdered. The Nardan case has started the same route so the Commissioner put us on it. The killer probably knows the regular detectives so they can't get close to him."

"The Blue Belle may be a clip joint."

"Naturally they thought of that. Men checked the movements of David Rogers, owner of the club. He lives on Central Park West—the address is in this DD-4 report. Rogers was at home during all three murders. After all, it's the habit of clip thieves to spy on such places for a victim. A young man, Frank Iverson, was picked up, lurking near the Blue Belle, but he was waiting there for a young woman dancer named Evelyn Payne and nothing was brought out to incriminate him. Iverson claimed he kept out of sight because Rogers doesn't like him. That's all, except I warn you this is a very dangerous job. Go to it."

Devrite went to his furnished room in the Forties. He was a careful worker but endowed with reckless courage in emergencies. Trained in jujutsu and police work, he was a super-detective, a lone wolf who hunted in the dark Underworld.

HE dressed in a tuxedo and around 10 P.M. stood across the side street. For an hour he watched patrons entering the Blue Belle.

Among them his trained, retentive memory identified an ace gambler, Barney Brown, and a short while later, a tall youth with a shock of tow hair, wearing full evening dress, lurched under the red marquee into the club. Devrite also recognized him as Kenneth Van, latest Broadway playboy whose pranks delighted the tabloids. They printed his pictures regularly as he tossed away with both hands the millions he had inherited.

The secret agent decided this would be an opportune time to inspect the interior of the Blue Belle and, crossing over, passed into the lobby. A majordomo escorted him to a table. The main club was elegantly expensive—white-clothed tables, shaded pink lamps, a polished dance floor beside which was a swing band. A stage show was going on, a very pretty young brunette singing a song. The buzz of talk, odors of food, alcohol, tobacco, were familiar enough.

Devrite looked around for Barney Brown and Van. Neither was in the big room. A man with bulging shoulders, curly dark hair brushed wet, naturally brown skin, was whispering orders to the headwaiter. Devrite had read the description of David Rogers in the DD-4 reports—he did not miss the eager looks Rogers cast at the pretty girl singing in the spotlights.

A door banged open at the rear. Kenneth Van, the playboy, stuck his head out and shouted impatiently, "Come on, Rogers."

Everybody looked, including Rogers. The singer faltered, then went on. People smiled broadly. Rogers frowned, put a finger to his lips as he hurried to the noisy youth who had so rudely interrupted Evelyn Payne. The proprietor pushed Van back, closing the door.

Devrite ordered a drink and waited. Around midnight he ate a meal. At 1:30 Rogers emerged, called his headwaiter, giving further orders. He then left the club.

The secret agent rose and followed. Despite the clear bill given Rogers by investigators, Devrite knew he must check him and all concerned; it was the only way. The white powder on those bodies was too vague a lead to start him on a direct trail, so he must cast about until he could pick up something more definite.

Rogers stood under the marquee as the secret agent came out on the sidewalk. A taxi was waiting at the curb with open door but Rogers was frowning, staring across the street. Devrite heard him curse, and then the stocky proprietor hurried to the opposite walk, where he accosted a tall young man loitering there.

"Iverson, didn't I tell you to stop hanging around here?" snapped Rogers.

"I'm waiting for Evelyn."

"Wait somewhere else. You're a nuisance. The police think you've been clipping my patrons, and I wouldn't be surprised if they were right."

"You're crazy," growled Iverson.

Rogers glanced back over his shoulder, and Devrite, following the look, saw the beefy figure of the Blue Belle's bouncer. Without warning, Rogers hit Iverson in the nose, knocking him back against the building wall.

I VERSON recovered and tore at the nightclub owner. He was slim, but his fists smacked Rogers' face, drove him stumbling over the curb. The big bouncer ran to help his boss, caught Iverson's shoulder, whirled him around and drew back a hamlike fist to knock him out. Rogers stood back,

breath fast, eyes shining with fierce pleasure at seeing Iverson about to be beaten.

Devrite had slipped over. He did not wish to call undue attention to himself, yet the big bouncer might seriously injure Iverson, and besides, it might be a chance to contact Iverson in a favorable way. He stepped in and seized the bouncer's thick wrist, tore it away.

"Stop it," ordered Devrite quietly.

"What's it to yuh?" snarled the big bouncer, turning on Devrite.

"He's a friend of mine," Devrite replied.

The bouncer, being a man of force, tried to hit Devrite. The secret agent caught the moving fist, fell back and stepped aside. The jujutsu trick, using the big man's weight and strength, sent the bouncer crashing on his stomach, the wind driving from his lungs. Street dirt stained his tuxedo front.

"Here comes a cop," said Iverson, as he came to stand by Devrite.

Rogers backed off hurriedly, entered his cab and drove off. The bouncer picked himself up, dusting off his clothes, his lower lip sullen. He saw the approaching patrolman and walked back into the Blue Belle.

"Thanks for your help, mister," Iverson said gratefully.

"Don't mention it," Devrite said, nodding. "Two on one's hardly fair, is it?" He found Iverson intelligent and with a pleasing, youthful face.

There was a taxi near by, and the secret agent got in, with a goodby wave to Iverson.

The agent's cab drew up at the Central Park apartment house where David Rogers lived, as Rogers was paying off his driver. Rogers went into the huge place. Devrite left his taxi and stayed on the east side of the ave-

nue. He could see Rogers enter an elevator. He sat down on a handy park bench and waited.

It was late, but there were plenty of people around; cars whizzed past and Broadway still glowed white. After a time a man and woman came out of the apartment house and swung downtown; a late homecoming tenant appeared to give a chow dog a run in the Park, and an elderly gentleman, with narrow shoulders bent over his tapping cane, emerged, and went for a stroll.

For over an hour the secret agent waited. He saw the chow dog come back and the old man, too, returned, cane tapping the cement.

Evidently David Rogers was set for the night. Devrite yawned, thinking of sleep. It was almost dawn when he went to the subway and rode downtown to his furnished room.

II

DEVRITE was up at eleven next morning. Going out for breakfast, he picked up an afternoon paper at the corner stand. His face was relaxed as he glanced at black scare headlines. He stopped short, staring at the print, cursed under his breath as he realized the import of what he read, and forgetting breakfast, jumped into a cab and rode down to Hallihan.

"Well—did you get it?" cried the big inspector eagerly as Devrite hurried in, the newspaper clutched in his hand.

There was chagrin and shame in Devrite's heart as he was forced to shake his head. "Kenneth Van's really dead?"

Hallihan's face went sour. "Sure. The same way. Powder on the body, Devrite. He was shot about 2:30

A.M. with that same .22 caliber automatic pistol. I was hoping you had the answer." Hallihan's chin touched his chest; he said nothing more in blame of his star agent, but Devrite could read his great disappointment.

"It was done right under my nose," muttered Devrite, face burning hot. While he had been idling at Rogers', the murderer had gone to work.

He told Hallihan all that he had done. "Then Rogers runs a big game in back of his club," growled the inspector. "Barney Brown never plays for anything but high stakes. It's pretty exclusive, I suppose."

"Van was in that game." Devrite paused, then asked, "How does Brown rate with the police?"

"Okay, far as I know. He's supposed to be a square shooter."

"Send a man to tap him and find out what happened last night. Ask Brown how much Van won and if he sat in the game the night Nardan was there—let him take it for granted we know all about it."

Hallihan nodded as he reached for the phone at his elbow. "You got it about right, Devrite. Both of them must have been winners and were carrying big rolls of cash."

An hour later the report came back. Hallihan took it, turned to his agent. "Nardan won about forty grand, Brown says. Van had a drunk's luck and took away sixty thousand."

"How many playing?"

"Five. All professionals except Van—the game was square, you can't fool men like Brown, of course. He claims he went with his friends for a meal, until 4 A.M. Van left as soon as the game closed, which was a little after two."

"Did Rogers himself play?"

Hallihan shook his head. "Brown

told our man that Rogers never takes a hand. He went home early last night."

"I wonder if he went home early the night Nardan died?"

Hallihan thumbed over the DD-4 reports, sheafs turned in by investigators. "Yeah. He left his club around 1:15 and arrived home at 1:30, but he didn't leave his apartment till the following afternoon at five o'clock."

Devrite asked himself why the nightclub owner should leave early. He had to fight against the feeling of self-condemnation at having failed to spot Van's murderer. It had, as he said, occurred almost under his eyes. His face was set as he rose.

"I'm going after Iverson," he said. "Rogers was in last night. Iverson was hanging around that club. He's a decent looking young fellow, but you never can tell." Hallihan nodded, cigar bobbing with his head.

Devrite went to the address given by Iverson to investigating detectives. It was a furnished rooming house. The landlady informed the agent that Iverson had moved two weeks before, but had left a forwarding address. On comparison, Devrite found it was the apartment where Evelyn Payne, the dancer, lived, a self-service building in the West 60's.

IVERSON came out around 1 P.M. and sauntered to Broadway where he bought papers and some bags of food. It was simple for Devrite, strolling in the opposite direction on the same side of the street, to contact him. Iverson recognized him after a moment, smiled and stopped, holding out a hand—as he took it, Devrite noted powder smears on Iverson's blue coat.

"Why, hello," cried the agent heartily. "Did you get home all right last

night? That was surely a big fellow who had hold of you."

"Yes," replied Iverson. "He's the bouncer in the Blue Belle nightclub. I sure thought I was in for a bad licking. He used to be a prizefighter, but you handled him swell."

"That's a wrestling trick I learned in college," explained the agent.

"Do you live around here?" inquired Iverson.

"I'm staying in a hotel over on Broadway. But I come from Detroit."

"I thought you must be from out-of-town." Iverson smiled. "No New Yorker would ever help another man in a street fight. Why not come up to my apartment and have a drink?"

"That's a good idea."

There was something open and likable about Iverson, Devrite felt, as he walked beside him. But—he had contacted many killers, and sometimes they were decent, polite in appearance.

Iverson led him toward the Hudson to the brickfront tenement. A taxi stood outside with motor idling as they entered the lobby. Iverson took Devrite up a flight of steps and opened a second-floor door.

"Oh, sweetheart," he called. "I want you to meet a friend of mine, the man who helped me last night—"

They had passed through a short hall and Iverson was already in the living room. Devrite looked past him and saw Evelyn Payne, face white, standing in the middle of the floor with the scowling Rogers, half-turned toward them.

"So this is it," Rogers was growling, reddening. His fists clenched.

"Oh, please, Mr. Rogers," cried the girl. "Frank and I—we didn't want anyone to know—but we're married, two weeks—"

Rogers was furious. "I came here,"

he said, voice grating "to tell you you could choose between that bum Iverson and me, Evelyn. You've already done it. I don't want you in my club any more. You're through, you understand—*through!*"

Tears showed in her eyes. She made a gesture of appeal. "Mr. Rogers, please don't. This is my first real chance on Broadway. You can't—"

"You're fired," snarled Rogers. He glared at Iverson and Devrite, pushed past them, slamming the door after him.

"Whew," exclaimed Frank. He took his wife in his arms, patted her. "Don't cry about it. I'm glad you're through at the Blue Belle. I never did like Rogers."

"He—he just came in—and said, either I would stop going with you or he would fire me," she sobbed. "He said—you attacked him last night without provocation."

Devrite watched them with one eye while the other took in the small apartment. There was a bedroom, a kitchenette, a bath. On shelves in the last room he saw an array of toilet articles, makeup, a can of dusting powder used after bathing. He also noted that after Iverson had held Evelyn in his arms there was fresh powder on the young man's coat. Yet, he thought, it was smeared rather than sprinkled as was the powder on the dead bodies—

"We've got enough money to skin by on," said Frank, comforting his wife. "To hell with Rogers."

Devrite fought his instinct, which told him these two were decent young people. He liked Iverson and the beautiful woman. He hoped they might be entirely innocent. But—he had eliminated Rogers, unless the nightclub man had an accomplice doing those jobs for him. Barney Brown had claimed that

he and his friends had gone to a public eating-place until after the time of the murder.

It was most likely that someone had spotted Kenneth Van coming out, had followed him, killed and robbed him. Iverson had been hanging around outside.

There must have been an inside connection to tip the clipper off to the big winner, the big money.

"Did you leave the club right after that fight we had?" he asked casually, as he lit a cigarette.

"I went away for a while, but I met Evelyn when she quit at three o'clock," Iverson replied.

When Frank and Evelyn asked him to stay for lunch, Devrite was glad of the chance for further contact. The girl was preparing the meal when the telephone rang.

"It's Rogers," growled Iverson, answering.

Evelyn quickly came and took the receiver. She listened for a moment, then cried gladly, "Oh, thanks, Mr. Rogers." Her face was radiant as she hung up and turned to them. "He says he's sorry about the way he acted and wants us to forgive him. I've got my job back."

Iverson frowned. "I'd rather you stayed quit," he said. "We've plenty to live on. Next week I start my new job and we'll get on fine without your working."

"But I love dancing. You call for me tonight as usual, dear."

Iverson nodded, morosely. After an hour with them, Devrite took his leave. He noted the make of the door lock, for he had determined to have a careful look about the apartment. They would be out late that night which would give him a chance to slip in for his search.

III

HE came back again around 1 A.M., watching for Iverson to come out. Evelyn had gone to the Blue Belle early in the evening. The side street, west of Tenth Avenue, was deserted at that time of night, save for a few parked cars and an occasional passerby. There was one sedan down near the corner, motor softly idling. Devrite was across from the tenement, loitering in a dark doorway, as Frank Iverson emerged and walked east.

The secret agent waited, glancing after the young man. In his pocket was a skeleton key that would fit Iverson's lock. Iverson was close to the corner, and Devrite started across the street, still looking toward Iverson.

A man in that parked sedan suddenly leaped upon Iverson from behind. Devrite saw a club descend, crack down on Iverson's head, knocking off his hat. Iverson dropped, folded up on the sidewalk. The car bulk partially hid the attacker from Devrite. The man who had hit Iverson was bending over him, and the secret agent, starting toward them, saw light glint on a pistol barrel.

Devrite, likely to be picked up and searched by police, and never in a position to identify himself without endangering his value as a secret agent, seldom went armed. He had no gun on him then. A hoarse shout issued from his throat as he put down his head, rushing toward the sedan. The man bent over Iverson started violently—the street had seemed clear to him, Devrite having been hidden in his doorway.

The gun gave a "whoosh," a crackling sound followed. A moment later, the gunman swung, crouched by the fender of his machine, and a bullet whirled past Devrite's head. There was, he realized, a silencer on the pis-

tol, that muffled explosion much less startling than a car backfire. He felt a sudden, sharp sting in his left side. The world grew confused to him, his legs would not work as he wished them to. He lost stride, staggered, whirled and fell on the sidewalk, black spots kaleidoscoping across his vision.

He grew aware of a car motor suddenly accelerating, as the black sedan made a U-turn and swung out of sight.

Gasping, the secret agent pulled himself together. The shock of the bullet which had torn the flesh of his side had stopped him for several moments. But he recovered his wits and, though pain shot through his heart, he managed to reach Iverson. There was pity in him, pity for the young woman who was dancing while her young husband lay seriously wounded.

Bending over Iverson, who was completely unconscious, he found blood streaming from a head wound. His long fingers probed for the extent of the injury. Iverson was still breathing. The secret agent knew wounds; he was aware his own was hardly more than a cut. And with relief he realized that the gunman's aim as he fired at Iverson had been slightly deflected, undoubtedly by his start as he heard Devrite's shout. The bullet had ploughed through the scalp, grazed the bone, missing killing Iverson only by the fraction of an inch.

His lips were grim. He put his hand on the sidewalk to help push himself up. It was pricked and he raised it to see what had struck him. It was a splinter of wood, about three inches long, the top smoothed and painted brown, the rest white, jagged wood fresh to the air. He dropped it in his pocket. It was probably off the club that had struck Iverson. He closely inspected Iverson's coat; there were

still those powder smears, rather faint since Frank had evidently used a whiskbroom on his coat. There was, too, a faint sprinkling of fresh granules.

He rose. He did not wish to be caught there, for that would mean explanations and identifications he could not make without exposure. The swift scuffle, the muffled shots, had not attracted any attention, but a passer-by on the nearby avenue had paused at the corner and was staring up at him. Devrite hurried to him.

"Is he drunk?" asked the man.

"No, he's been hurt. Will you please call a policeman while I tend to him?"

THE citizen nodded and hurried toward a phone booth in an all-night drugstore. The secret agent turned the other way and caught a night-owl taxi which took him to the Central Park West apartment house where David Rogers lived. This attack made him think at once of Rogers, who plainly hated Iverson.

He had forgotten how his own appearance might startle anyone seeing him in the full light. His hands were dirty from the pavement, clothing, too. And there was blood coming through his coat from the wound. But as he strode in under the marquee he was in no mood to turn back.

The doorman came quickly to him, looking at him suspiciously.

"Is Mr. Rogers in?" inquired Devrite.

"Yes. He came home about 12:30. But he can't be disturbed now."

"It's very important. Call up, tell him Mr. Iverson wants to see him." Devrite handed the doorman a ten-dollar bill.

The tip melted the ice at once. The doorman went to the switchboard at

the rear. As Devrite waited, standing at one side of the board, he heard the tap of a cane on the marble lobby tiling. He turned to see the elderly gentleman enter the elevator. The gates closed and the car climbed up, Devrite staring at the indicator, which stopped at the 12th floor.

"Who's that who just went up?" he asked—the doorman was still ringing David Rogers' apartment.

"That's Mr. Bartell. He lives in 1456. I'm afraid Mr. Rogers is asleep. He don't answer."

"Let me go up and see, it's terribly important."

He had no official card, no position he might announce, but usually he could obtain what he wanted in one way or another. More money melted the doorman, and Devrite rode up to the 12th. The elevator boy waited for him, after pointing out the door of Rogers' apartment. On the next floor above, Devrite heard a door open and close. He put a finger tip on Rogers' bell. There was no answer for a time; then the nightclub owner's voice asked from inside, "Who's there?"

"I've come from Evelyn," Devrite told him through the door. "She's in trouble."

The lock clicked and Rogers, wearing a blue-striped dressing-gown, dark curls plastered wet on his head, looked out. He was frowning heavily.

"Why—you," he growled, as he recognized Devrite. To Rogers, the agent was Iverson's friend, who had intervened in the street fight, and had come to the Payne apartment with Frank.

ROGERS tried to block him, but Devrite put an elbow in his stomach and shoved inside, closing the door. The apartment was a large duplex, extending two floors.

"Get out," ordered Rogers angrily. "What do you mean by pushing in like this. I'll call the police."

"You'd better not," advised the agent. "Iverson has just been shot, Mr. Rogers."

"What's that got to do with me? I've been at home all evening."

"But *Mr. Bartell* hasn't been," sneered Devrite. "He lost a chunk of his cane; it cracked off when he struck Iverson. You know such a weapon holds fingerprints. I've just realized the trick, Rogers. You've made an error."

"Who are you?" snarled Rogers.

"A friend of Iverson's, I tell you—"

"I don't know anybody named Bartell. I've been here all evening," insisted Rogers. "Now get out." He reached to shove Devrite, who put a hand on the nightclub owner's shoulder; it was soft under his touch.

"There's no 13th floor in this building," Devrite went on coolly. "Your duplex opens on the 14th, where the Bartell apartment is. When you got out of the elevator on the 14th just now, as Bartell, you could hear the phone ringing in here. You were in such a hurry to answer it and prove you were at home, that you failed to wash all that powder out of your hair, the powder that whitens it when you disguise yourself as Bartell. That slip has told the story. There is no Bartell, for you are one and the same person."

Then the fear flashed in the man's eyes, the secret agent knew he was right.

"What are you talking about?" demanded Rogers.

"You know," the triumphant Devrite cried, pressing swiftly on his mental trail. "You made a bad mistake when you let your personal hatred send you after Iverson."

Rogers backed away. "You—you're not Iverson's friend. You're a detective, a spy," gasped Rogers.

Devrite shook his head, but Rogers knew now. Nothing Devrite could say would convince him that this was chance.

It was to be regretted. Devrite was sorry he had entered this way. It might mean he would be uncovered, that his work would cease.

He nearly lost his life in that moment. Rogers whipped out a pistol and fired pointblank. The bullet passed within an inch of Devrite's face as he lunged in, butting his head into Rogers' chest. The nightclub owner fought to swing his pistol muzzle, fingers trapped in the trigger guard. Devrite turned the muzzle with a deft bone-twisting trick, which brought a scream of pain from Rogers as the forearm cracked. Then the gun spat again.

Devrite felt Rogers go lax. The nightclub owner's eyes glazed as he crashed back on the thick rug. Rogers had pulled the trigger on himself by accident. The slug had ranged into his vitals.

The secret agent stepped away from him, quickly searched the apartment. There was little there to interest him. On Rogers, however, was a keyring which he took. He climbed to the second floor, went out into the hall. These doors were marked "14" as he had guessed. Across from the upper door of Rogers' apartment was 1456, "Bartell's."

Devrite rang the bell but knew he would get no response. A key on Rogers' ring let him inside.

Half an hour later the secret agent phoned Inspector Hallihan.

"You'll find your murderer in Rogers' apartment," reported Devrite.

"He shot himself in a scuffle with me. Rogers committed those killings. He spotted his victims at his gambling club, left early to fix alibis for himself. Then he crossed over to another apartment where he disguised himself as 'Bartell,' an elderly gentleman.

"He did the murders with the .22 automatic, silencer attached, you'll find up there — you know there are few types of pistols on which a silencer may be used, and they are only efficient on small calibers. You'll find also large sums of cash Rogers took, and the Bartell disguise he used.

"There was a piece of cane picked up beside Frank Iverson which fits into 'Bartell's' stick. I saw 'Bartell' go in, coming back from his attempt to kill Iverson, after he garaged his car.

"I finally guessed it when I saw the state of Rogers' hair, after he had changed from 'Bartell' back to Rogers. He wore shoulder pads to make himself look powerful, part of his vanity. He loved Evelyn Payne, couldn't stand losing her. He had a fortune he had taken clipping victims after those games. He would waylay the big winner, force him up an alley at gunpoint, then finish him and rob him. He killed them so there would be no chance of his being identified."

"And the powder on the body?" asked Hallihan.

"That's simple. Rogers whitened his hair with plain dusting powder, in his guise as 'Bartell.' When he bent over his dead victim to remove the money from his pockets, a little powder would fall out and sprinkle the corpse. I found the powder he used. When I saw how wet his hair was, and streaks of powder in it, too, where he had failed to clean it entirely—being in a hurry then—it clinched the identity and gave me the real answer."

Seven Faces

By Max Brand



"Do I feel something in here?" asked Burman.
"I have a license for it," declared Grosvenor

What has happened—

JOHAN COBB, an eccentric multimillionaire, vanished from the crack Chicago train, in spite of the fact that Detectives Patrick O'Rourke and Angus Campbell of New York's homicide squad were guarding him.

O'Rourke, certain he can solve the mystery in his own way, leaves the train, goes back to Fullerton, where there had been a brief stop. A youngster named McGuire accompanies him. O'Rourke discovers Cobb's body, disfig-

ured past recognition by burning gasoline. He finds in Cobb's bedroom seven strange photographic portraits, one that of Charles Latimer, a young man whom he had met on the train.

O'Rourke and McGuire also capture an elderly marauder named Pete, whose picture is one of the seven. Pete manages to escape, with the aid of an accomplice called Champ. Returning to continue their fine-tooth-comb search of Cobb's place, they wound young McGuire.

With Plenty of Clues and an Overabundance of Villains—Still Campbell and O'Rourke Cannot See the End of Their Strange Murder Trail. . . .

This story began in *Detective Fiction Weekly* for October 17

O'Rourke uncovers the treasure trove, a cryptic map.

State troopers recapture Pete and Champ, bring them back to O'Rourke. They outsmart him again, however, leave for Chicago in an express passenger airplane. There they would have been trapped by Chicago police, working under orders from New York, had not the radio exposed the plot and forewarned them. They force the pilot to land at a distance from the Midwestern metropolis. O'Rourke, still on their trail, follows on to Chicago in a speedy plane.

In the meanwhile Campbell is convinced that the heart of the mystery is still on the train. His clues lead him to believe that Charles Latimer, a beautiful girl, Josephine Worth, and a bearded, foreign-looking chap named Grosvenor were all in Cobb's stateroom before the disappearance. In Buffalo, Josephine, trailed by both Latimer and Campbell, meets a friend. Latimer gains possession of an old newspaper, the *Willoughby Messenger*.

Campbell steals the paper, a bit later, reads a long article about a bonanza strike made by seven partners: Winslow, Champion, Worth, Latimer, Waterson, Markham and Green. It all seems to tie together. A certain difference in Cobb's signature and the body of the will he had made O'Rourke and Campbell witness is worrying the Scotch detective when the train arrives in Chicago.

O'Rourke is waiting at the station for Campbell, and they separate again. O'Rourke is going to follow Latimer and Campbell is to tail Grosvenor.

"Where do I keep in touch with you?" O'Rourke asked.

"Ring me at the Clifdon and leave a message for a Mr. James Angus," Campbell replies as they move off into the thick crowd.

CHAPTER XXV

Setting a Stage

THE Clifdon Hotel is all marble, glitter, noise, and immensity. New York hotels are mild-mannered in comparison. The flow of guests for dinner and dancing and the huge bar is even greater, perhaps than

the current of those who actually have the expensive rooms of the place.

Campbell checked his bag at the luggage room, went into the bar, and took a Scotch neat, in small sips. He was in no hurry, for he had seen a small, dark-faced man with the white of tape across his upper lip. That would be Lawrence Purvis Pelton, he was reasonably sure, who leaned over the card of registry and wrote.

Grosvenor, after entering the place, had disappeared before Campbell could spot him, but there was no haste if Pelton had a room in the hotel.

The warmth of the bar soothed Campbell. Each moment, he felt the long vibration of the train easing out of his body, leaving his brain also, so to speak. The Scotch pleased him, to his very nerve centers, also.

When he had finished it, he went to the mail clerk.

"If messages come in for James Angus, please take them," he said. "I'll be registering for the night, I think."

After that, he went to the room telephones and asked for the room number of Mr. Lawrence Purvis Pelton.

"No Pelton registered," was the answer.

"Maybe not," agreed Campbell.

"Try Purvis. Lawrence Purvis?"

"1709," said the operator. "Shall I connect you?"

"Not now," said Campbell.

He went to a corner of the great lobby and waited with that hungry patience which had devoured him for so many years of his life. At last he saw Grosvenor come out of the elevator, looking taller, more magnificent than ever, with Lawrence Purvis Pelton stepping rapidly beside that stately stride. They turned into the entrance of the dining room.

Campbell, following as far as the

great arched entrance, saw the pair take a corner table at the farther end of the big room.

He returned to the desk and asked for the key to 1709. It was given without question, and a moment later he was unlocking the door.

It was a single room furnished in greens and yellows. Rather a small chamber, and rubbed a little dingy already in its short year of life.

Grosvenor, he saw, had stood in front of the fake fireplace. Three big gray dabs of cigar ashes littered the floor, there. They reminded him of the stateroom on the train. Signs of foot-falls went up and down, slight dark-nesses in the nap of the deep, gray rug. This, then, was where little Mr. Pelton had hurried back and forth.

It had not been an amicable meeting.

Mr. Pelton had walked up and down, the sign showed, and occasionally had made sudden darts at Grosvenor to make a point.

A pigskin bag lay in the corner. Campbell opened it and went through the contents. There was nothing in the slightest degree suspicious about the contents of that case.

He went to the desk in the corner and examined the white blotter upon it. Even when he squinted from the side, he could make out no more than a few vague impressions. He took out a pencil with a broad, soft lead and commenced to shade the blotter, making strokes so light that an almost imperceptible layer of gray was transferred to the paper.

He had started at the center and worked outwards; he was almost at the lower right hand corner before he found what he had hoped for. Not a single word except the signature, but even this pleased him a little. It was very dim. The impression was so very

light that he barely was able to make it out. He took from his pocket a slip of very thin, transparent celluloid, and onto this he traced the signature with the utmost care, moving the pen as though he were incising a design in metal.

But he had the letters at last, not trembling and uncertain as most tracings are, but running with a bold, free movement: *Lawrence P. Pelton*.

That bit of celluloid he returned to his wallet and left the room.

On the whole the trip had been not disappointing. He had learned to his own satisfaction that Pelton and Grosvenor, in spite of that signature of "Partner," were not friendly. And certainly the hired murderer could hardly be on amicable terms with the man who paid him!

The elevator slid down to the first floor with a breathless whisper. He walked out into the echoing noise, the marble brilliance of the lobby and returned the key to 1709. The clerk, remembering him, gave him the usual swift, mechanical smile and nod of recognition.

All clerks are fools, mused Angus Campbell.

HE passed slowly across the entrance to the dining room and marked his pair in the distance, Pelton listening with a frown, Grosvenor talking with large and formal gestures, including a large sector of the room like an actor to a public audience.

Campbell went to the desk and asked for one of the hotel detectives. A fat man, wrinkled from the chin to the eyes with queer cross lineations, was instantly beside him.

"I'm Angus Campbell, from New York," Campbell began.

"I know about you, Campbell," the hotel detective answered.

"You do?"

"I remember you and O'Rourke—that poison case in the house on 'he island—I read it, Campbell. Tell me, what can I do?"

"There's a man called Grosvenor in the dining room. Wait till he finishes dinner. Then take him somewhere so that you can go through him. You'll get a gun on him, I think. You'll also get a wad of hard cash. Put me somewhere to listen to what he says. Can you do that?"

The detective scratched his chin. "We're here to protect the guests, not to bother 'em," he said, plaintively.

"Brother," said Campbell, borrowing O'Rourke's usual word, "I think Grosvenor has bothered one of your guests, all right. I think he's bothered him for several thousand bucks. And if he has—it's murder!"

"Murder?" murmured the house detective. He licked the fat of his lips. "Come along with me," he said.

He took Campbell to a small office which opened from a hall behind the lobby. An inner door opened into a larger room with a counter across it, as though to make a bar for the handling of questions.

"Suppose we keep this door open a bit?" he suggested.

"What's your name?" asked Campbell.

"Burman."

"Burman, when you get Grosvenor, handle him with gloves. Mind you, I think he's a good shot and I'm pretty sure that he has a gun. Take another one of the boys along with you. Will you do that?"

"Sure," said Burman. "If you've ever been burned, you're glad to wear gloves."

"Now, mind you. If you find that he has a gun, and if you find that he

has a wad of new money on him, you're to say one thing to him. Will you remember?"

A frown of anxiety came to Burman.

"You tell me. I'll try to get it," he said.

"Say this: 'Does murder pay that well?' You have that?"

"I have that," answered Burman.

"Say just that: 'Does murder pay that well?'"

"All right. And then?"

"Then give him back the money. Give him back the gun. Let him go."

"What?"

"I mean it. Give the stuff back to him and let him go."

Burman began to sweat. "If he thinks that I haven't got anything on him, he'll complain to the manager."

"Complain? With an unlicensed gun on him. Complain?"

"Sure, sure! The gun . . . if he's got a gun, it's all right. But you want to turn him loose?"

"I do. The main thing for you is to watch his face. If you find the money and the gun on him. Watch his face when you speak your line about murder. Will you do that?"

"Like a hawk."

"I'll wait in here. Go get him when you can," said Campbell.

"What murder is it?"

"One murder's as bad as another," said Campbell. "Go ahead and do your stuff!"

CHAPTER XXVI

Conference by Duress

THE door of that inner room Campbell kept ajar the least fraction of an inch, just so that his eye, placed behind the crack, would command a considerable wedge of the

smaller office. He could see half of a map of Manhattan and its environs on the wall, and part of a brown, varnished desk. He knew, even as he stood there, that he would remember this slice of existence as long as he lived.

A moment later, Burman and another fellow brought in Aloysius Grosvenor; and Campbell almost groaned aloud because he had not warned Burman before to keep the suspect facing the inner door. True, Burman could report how the fellow had looked at various points in the examination, but no description would satisfy so much as a single glance at the man. As it was, the three men moved back and forth over Campbell's field of vision.

What had happened in the dining room or the lobby before Grosvenor had been brought in could be implied by the first words of the talk. Grosvenor said: "Well, gentleman, this is a very pretty to-do. I should like to have an explanation as quickly as possible. I do not wish—" here his voice deepened and grew rich with a human sympathy—"I do not wish to get you in trouble with the management of the hotel but—"

"What's your name?" demanded Burman harshly.

"By what authority, in the first place, do you ask me? What is your power to question me?" said Grosvenor.

"Show him the warrant, Steve," commanded Burman. Then, as papers rustled: "Wait a minute. See if he's gonna refuse to tell us his name. *That's* important, too."

"I don't refuse my name," answered Grosvenor. "But I wish in the first place to understand. . . ."

"He's gonna hold out on us," said Burman, walking impatiently back and

forth across Campbell's field of view. To the bottom of his heart, Campbell was appreciating Burman's bluff. "We oughta take and drop him in the jail and let him ripen. They ripen 'em fast, down there."

"About ten minutes is all they need to ripen 'em," said Steve. "Shall I take him down?"

"If you intend an arrest," said Grosvenor, "I demand to know the nature of the charge."

"Tell him, Steve," said Burman.

"To hell with him," answered Steve. "Why should we treat him better than any low bum, seeing what we know about him?"

Campbell warmed one hand against the other, smiling broadly. He felt a deep sense of personal gratitude to both of these house detectives.

"All right," said Burman, "but I'll try him once more. What's your real name?"

"Albert Gresham," said Grosvenor. "And that name . . ."

". . . can be changed around for Aloysius Grosvenor, eh?" asked Burman.

"Aloysius Grosvenor?" he queried. There was an instant of pause. Burman laughed.

"Aw, why not come clean?" he demanded.

"You speak of coming clean, my friends," said the magnificent Grosvenor, "but I wish to tell you that—"

"Ah, take it easy," cautioned Burman. "Steve, get behind this bozo and keep a gun on him."

"I protest!" Grosvenor began in a loud voice.

"Go on and protest and be damned," growled Burman. "I'm gonna go through you, brother. Keep your hands up as high as your shoulders, will you!"

"This damnable outrage . . ." shouted Grosvenor.

"Nobody's damned around here," said Burman, "except the crooks that wear two pairs of names."

"That little matter?" said Grosvenor, pouring an oily persuasion into his tones. "You have to understand that my mother . . ."

"Don't rat it," advised Burman.

His hands began to move over the stout body of the big man. These hands paused.

"Do I feel something in here?"

"I have a license for it," declared Grosvenor.

BURMAN pulled out an old-fashioned single-action Colt from Grosvenor's clothes.

"What name you got the license under?" he asked, shortly.

"What name?" said Grosvenor. "As a matter of fact it's under the name of Grosvenor. My proper name, but the other I used to prevent any embarrassment. . . ."

"What a big, soggy bum you are, anyway," said Burman. "Steve, go telephone to New York and ask if there's a gun license there for Aloysius Grosvenor. . . ."

"Now that I remember," said Grosvenor, "I think that this year I took out the license in Wrayneville."

"The heck you did!" commented Burman. "Where's Wrayneville?"

"Wrayneville, Colorado? You must have heard of Wrayneville. No, perhaps you haven't. Wrayneville is a very charming place, delicious air, a great deal of sun. . . ."

"You got a gun license there, did you?" asked Burman.

"We Westerners grow in the habit of carrying weapons for self-defense," said Grosvenor.

"Yeah, and so do a lot of us Middle Westerners," said Burman, "and so do a lot of Easterners, too. A pile of them go to the chair every year, they're so damn used to defending themselves. . . . How many times you been in jail, Grosvenor?"

"Jail? To whom are you addressing yourself?" squalled Grosvenor.

"I'm asking: Were you ever in jail, Mr. Grosvenor, alias, Grosham?"

"My friend," said Grosvenor, "I see that you are determined to misunderstand me. A childish prank when I was a boy in school—otherwise, certainly I never have been in jail."

"Why don't you slide him down to jail?" suggested Steve. "This bozo is somebody that they'd like to talk to. They know how to put on the pressure, and a whole lot of juice could be squeezed out of this sap."

"Well just scratch around and see for ourselves," said Burman.

He continued his search and, in full view of Campbell, pulled out a wallet.

"You can't do that!" shouted Grosvenor.

He made a lunge for Burman who, springing back from the hands of the big fellow, bumped a shoulder against the inner door and flung it wide open. Grosvenor stood staring at the revealed face of Campbell.

"Still smoking those swell cigars?" asked Campbell.

But, from the corner of his eye, he damned the clumsiness of Burman. The house detective, screwing his mouth, made a gesture of despair.

"Ah!—I remember you," said Grosvenor.

"Yeah. You remember me, all right," answered Campbell. "How many extra names do you pack with your things, Grosvenor?"

Grosvenor at this moment was mag-

nificent. He held up the flat of his hand and laughed a little, a truly melodious chuckle, as of one honestly amused.

"Ah, that?" he said. "I want to assure you, Mr. Campbell, that the name of Grosvenor is much dearer to me than my person. I would be a pitiable fellow if I permitted that name to be associated with trouble of any sort. These honest fellows have been put on my trail by you, Mr. Campbell. But you must have a superior knowledge, as a man of the world, to a . . ."

"Jeez, I'd like to rap him for that," commented Burman, softly.

"Give me the wallet," said Campbell.

He extended his hand for it, never moving his eyes from the face of Grosvenor. And he saw Grosvenor's glance flicker wildly to the side as the wallet came in view again.

It was a fat purse, and the stuffing was all in greenbacks. Campbell flicked his thumb over the corner of the stack. All were hundreds and fifties.

"You're sweating, Grosvenor," he observed. "What's the matter?"

"Do you think a man will submit to being robbed?" cried Grosvenor. "Do you imagine a man can stand and see his property handled by strangers who—"

"Ah, shut up, mug," cautioned Burman.

"Why are you sweating?" demanded Campbell again. "It's running down your face. You look gray and green."

"For this conduct, you'll be answerable, all three," said Grosvenor.

"How yellow are you?" asked Campbell. "There's five thousand dollars, here."

Grosvenor closed his eyes and opened them again.

Steve said: "Sure, he's no petty larceny bum. He's the goods, he is."

"Five thousand is a pretty big stack, isn't it?" persisted Campbell.

"As for that money—" said Grosvenor.

"Yes, what about this money?" asked Campbell. "You didn't have it on the train."

The whole frame of Grosvenor was shaken by this remark.

"How do you know that?" he cried. "How do you—how did you dare to search . . . ?"

"I didn't search," said Campbell. "I just knew. That's the way with some of us. We just know. Where did you get this five thousand, Grosvenor?"

"I refuse to answer," said Grosvenor, his face now dripping wet. "This outrageous inquisition cannot be permitted to—"

"Who gave you this money?" Campbell repeated quietly.

"I'll not be bullied into talking," shouted Grosvenor.

"I don't think you will," said Campbell. "But I want to ask you something: Is five thousand enough? Is that a big enough price for murder?"

"Murder?" breathed Grosvenor.

His knees went loose. He got a hand on a chair and sat down with a heavy slump of his body.

"Ay, murder," said Campbell, stepping close and leaning to study the greasy white face. "An accessory before the fact—you can hang by your fat neck for that, Grosvenor. Understand? Hang by the fat of your throat!"

GROSVENOR began to pull himself together. He stood up and towered above them.

"I demand my instant liberation or

else instant incarceration and a crime placed against me," he said. "As an American citizen, I have that right."

"Sure he has," said Steve. "Leave us take him down to the station and charge him with the gun. Maybe murder'll leak out of him somehow later on."

Campbell, staring continually into the handsome, strange face, held out the wallet.

"Take it back," he said. "I don't want it. Give me the gun, Burman."

Grosvenor got the wallet in both hands, dragged in a breath, and shoved the money away inside his coat.

"Here's your gat, too," said Campbell, passing it over.

It disappeared with expert swiftness under the coat of Grosvenor. "The whole detail of this circumstance is firmly pictured in my mind," he said, "and I shall not forget your names, your faces, and every act which has taken place, here, and every word that has been spoken."

"Get out!" said Campbell.

The big fellow pulled a snorting breath, reached the door with a stride, and went out with a sudden jerk of the body, as though he were kicked from behind.

"Why?" growled Burman. "Why'd you let him go?"

"Tail him, Steve, will you?" asked Campbell. "Better dodge is to get another one of your boys to look after him. He'll have his eye out for the rest of us. Get somebody on him, will you?" Steve nodded and went out. Campbell sat down, lighted a cigarette, and immediately drew in a long breath of the smoke. He stared down at the floor.

"It beats me," exploded Burman, at last.

"What does?" asked Campbell,

rather faintly, his thoughts were so far away.

"Why you'd let a skunk like that go."

"Don't you see?"

"No. I don't see at all. You could sock him in the pen for carrying a gun. They take gun-carrying in a big way, here in this town."

"He's a big fellow, isn't he?" asked Campbell.

"Yeah, he's big all right, but is he too big for you?"

"He's big," said Campbell, "but the only use he is to me is as a feather."

"Meaning what?"

"Why, to show which way the wind blows. Steve is a wide-awake fellow, isn't he? He won't let Grosvenor get out of sight will he?"

"He'll tail him. Steve's a bright lad."

"That's good," said Campbell, "because if he doesn't keep Grosvenor in sight, then I'm done in by this trick; I've made a terrible fool of myself."

"You big time fellows take the big risks, don't you?" said Burman, with admiration. "It beats me the way you all go out. Some time you'll have a twenty-story fall; the ground'll cut right away from under you."

Here the door jerked open and Steve thrust in a startled face.

"I put Jigger Wilson on him, and the Jigger just tells me that he's disappeared. Got into a big sweep of people from the elevators, and Jigger was elbowed back at the front door. . . ."

CHAPTER XXVII

Latimer Treads Softly

HERE is nothing that makes one so forward-minded as a taxicab in Chicago. The traffic moves with a swerving rush in that town and

the taxicab drivers are inspired devils who seem to think their cars are threads which always can be put through a needle's eye. Passengers regret that their insurance is not larger and wonder why they have never learned to appreciate the pleasures of pedestrianism; and all the while, they keep their eyes fixed fast forward on the dissolving and reforming currents of the traffic.

But Latimer, as he left the station in the cab, sat back with a small hand mirror which he raised just high enough to enable him to study what went on behind the car. He printed on his mind's eye the picture of the machines immediately behind; he studied their radiators until he knew their names, and that is not easy in 1936, where so many draw out to a sharp point, like the bows of a ship. Then he gave the driver a new address and felt the sway as the machine took the next corner to the left.

They went for three blocks and he studied the traffic again. Half of the cars were sure to be of identical models, of course, but he noticed one long, low, gray affair which was there behind him, two rows back. It had followed before; it still was following.

"Take the shortest cut. Step on it, driver!" called Latimer.

The driver shrugged his shoulders, slid down lower beneath the wheel, and turned the car into a thing with wings. For ten minutes they dodged through the field like a running halfback; then Latimer studied the traffic behind him again. The long gray car was there again, still two files back.

Then they had their speed quenched in the traffic jam of a one-way street. Latimer leaned forward and slipped a bill over the shoulder of the driver.

"I forgot something back there," he

said. "Leave my bag at the Hotel Chester; keep the change."

He stepped out, walked through the jam of cars, and gained the opposite side of the street. Deep in the shadows of the doorway of a closed store, he withdrew and watched the jam break, slowly start. The gray car was among the others. There was no one inside it except a liveried chauffeur; and Latimer pursed his forehead and forgot to smile.

He turned the corner, went up three blocks, and took another cab. Again he went with rushes and pauses towards his address. But estimating his progress, he decided that an active man on foot might have kept pace with the taxi, so thick was the press of cars and so long the waits. Still he studied the cars behind him, and as he went on decided that not one of them was sticking to his trail.

It was not certain, by this time, that he had escaped being trailed, but he decided that the chances were ten to one against.

At last he reached the corner he had selected, paid the cab, and went along on foot. Again he turned a corner, stepped back into the twilight of a doorway, and for ten long minutes watched the pedestrians and the automobiles go by him.

When he went on again, it was with few glances behind him. For he was satisfied that he had dodged pursuit; and in fact he could not have been expected to study not only his own side of the street but also the opposite sidewalk, where a rather chunky figure walked briskly ahead, waited for the traffic, and went on. But when Latimer fell into his proper walking gait, the chunky fellow dropped well back, following at a distance of perhaps half a block. On the few occa-

sions when Latimer turned, the fat man was idling in front of a shop window or talking to one of the children who littered the street as they entered a Negro quarter. Furthermore, the fat man had various attitudes in his walking, and each was different from the others. He was at times affected by a limp, and again he walked brisk, head high, with all the demeanor of one who went whistling on his way, content with the world; or yet again, with his collar turned up against the drizzle of the rain, he seemed a poor unfortunate without a home or a friend. That, perhaps, was the greatest reason why Latimer, in the doubtful light between day and night, failed to spot that trailer.

The Negro quarter which he had entered was one of those new districts which the black tide had invaded. Before the great War, Chicago had been districted within certain clear lines and boundaries, but in the post-war years, Negro population increased, lured from the South by the reports of high wages. The dark mob began to leave its old abodes and press outwards in new directions. Wherever it went, the value of real estate for the whites declined. What was the height of fashion one year was overclouded the next; cunning landlords bought in abandoned property for a song, cut up the big rooms into crowded little apartments, and filled the houses with mobs of Negroes. Their individual rents were small but their numbers were so great that the investments paid hugely.

It was into such a district that Latimer had passed. The evening was cold and wet, but the children were still out at play, and in the half-light, the pavements were filled with faceless men and women who came out of shadows into life only when they were

close enough for Latimer to see the white flashing of their eyeballs.

HE entered a street of dignified houses, leaning shoulder to shoulder, an almost empty block with "For Sale" signs dimly visible on the front of nearly every one. The whites had removed from that sector only recently, and the blacks had not yet taken their place. It was a sort of No Man's Land; a gloomy air of emptiness and despair in some manner looked out of those tall fronts and depressed the passer-by.

In the middle of the block, Latimer turned down the steps to a cellar door and fitted a key into the lock of it. The bolt slid stiffly back. He had to press down before the door gave way a little, yet he managed all with such care that he made no sound; only the wind entered before him and whistled faintly through the interior.

He took out a pocket torch and slashed the darkness right and left. It had been a servant's room, perhaps. The worthless frame of an old iron cot, together with badly rusted springs, fitted askew into a corner. Near the cot, the floor was spotted with black where cigarettes had been allowed to fall and had burned out on the wood. The ceiling was badly cracked and rain-stained at one end. Otherwise, there was nothing to note except the dust on the floor, and into that dust Latimer peered closely.

It was not thick enough to take a good imprint but it seemed to him that he made out the dim trail of footprints across the boards.

He slanted the light across them to bring out the definition more clearly. He blew on the delicate edges of the prints and watched the dust dissolve under his breath. Someone, he de-

cided, had entered the house within the last few days. He could come no closer to the time than that, but it was enough to make him go ahead with the greatest caution.

Behind the front bedroom, there were four other chambers, each clean swept, the doors ajar. He looked into them one by one. He entered them, and opening the closet doors, he peered inside with his light and his revolver.

The last room on the cellar floor was a big laundry. He stood only for a moment to scan it with his torch. The light glinted across a huge spiderweb which hung across a window face. And Latimer thought how pinched the belly of that lady spider must be in the deserted old house where even the flies would lose interest, after a time, and no longer try to get through the crevices into the interior, lured by the smell of food.

There was no odor now except a damp mustiness together with a faint stain in the air which lingers so long after human habitation. As though the walls and the floor had soaked it up and then gave it out again by degrees, for years and years.

The cellar steps were finished and painted wood. He went up them treading close to the wall, where the heavy weight of his body would act on a shorter leverage and would not be apt to make the boards creak. At the head of the straight flight was another door, also locked; but the same key which had opened the outer cellar door fitted in this one also. It was not swollen with damp but gave inwards at the first touch of his hand.

He was now in the hallway on the first floor. Every door, right and left, was closed. So he started at the left. The doors were closed but not locked. The first one he opened held the empty

shelves of what had once been a library, with a deep, bricked fireplace; next came a long living room that ran on to the front of the dwelling. When he turned his torch ray up, it was multiplied into a million brilliant particles, for a big chandelier had been left hanging from the center of the ceiling. The new fashion was against chandeliers, and he wondered why it had been left. Because it had value, it seemed to Latimer, like a living thing, abandoned here by a cruel folly.

This side of the first floor was empty. He passed across the hall. Here the door stuck a little. He had to lift up hard before it came clear and, opening wide upon the room, let in a damp breath of draught about his head and shoulders. More than this attracted him. In the air of the room there was the stale, disagreeable odor of cigarette smoke!

People had been in that room not long before; within a few hours, in fact. A little deal table occupied the center of the floor; there was a stool on one side of it, and two broken chairs were near by. Three people, perhaps, had been conferring here.

Thrusting his head around the corner of the door, he cut the darkness of the ends of the room with the ray of the torch. All, so far as he could see, was empty, but there was a closet at one end to be examined, and there were two deep window embrasures at the front end of the dining room.

He walked gingerly towards the table, picking up and putting down his feet with separate acts of the mind, until a sidecut with his torch glinted on a bright bit of metal in the second embrasure.

The light winked out in the hand of Latimer. He took one swift, silent step to the side, dropped to a knee.

The silence continued for a long moment. He might, perhaps, have withdrawn from the room, feeling his way to the hall door; instead, he began to move very stealthily towards the second embrasure. He rounded the table, reached the farther wall, and moved on little by little. His outstretched hand touched the cold marble front of a fireplace; it regained the rough plaster of the wall's face. Still he stalked forward.

"Where are you, Charlie?" called a sudden voice.

"Ah, Pete Winslow!" exclaimed Latimer, and snapped a flood of light into the face of Pete himself, still standing in the embrasure, still with the gun in his hand.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Gathering of a Clan

PETE Winslow, leaning a hand against the wall, nodded and grinned at the big fellow.

"I kind of thought that you'd back out of the place," he said. "I kind of thought that you'd slide back into the hall. But when a cat smells a canary, it just follers its nose. I should of guessed that."

He began to laugh. He licked his lips and stared earnestly at Latimer. "Like father, like son," he commented.

"Why didn't you speak up when you saw that it was I?" asked Latimer.

"I dunno," said Pete. "I was just wondering if you *were* like your old man, that never took a backward step. I remember down in the Patridge Saloon when there was big Joe McCarthy and Sid Devon, and three more that come in looking for your old man"

"I've heard that story," Latimer interrupted. "Where's Champion?"

"Here, your honor," said the husky voice of Champion.

Latimer turned quickly about on him. "What's the matter with you fellows?" he asked. "Are you trying to make a fool of me?"

"How could we make a fool of a man that's spent so much time in school?" asked Champion. He took off his hat and rubbed the flat of his hand over his bald head and grinned.

"What have you swallowed, the pair of you?" asked Latimer. "What makes you act so fat and foolish, anyway?"

"Why," said Pete, in his genial way, "it's just realizin' that we got a Latimer with us. That's what makes us happy. It would make *anybody* happy, wouldn't it?"

"Sit down," commanded Latimer.

"Take a chair, Champ," ordered Pete. "I wanta walk around and stretch a little. It was kind of nervous staying there in the dark, waiting for the big cat to creep up on me. . . . Look at here, Charlie. What would you of done if you'd found me in the dark? Not knowing who it was, what would you have done?"

With that cold, faint smile, Latimer continued to regard him. At last he said: "Sit down, Pete."

Pete obeyed.

Champion pulled a flask out of his pocket. "Have a shot, Charlie?" he asked.

"Where did you get that stuff?" demanded Latimer.

"Just picked it up off the street," said Champion.

"Where did you get it?" asked Latimer, raising his voice not in pitch but in volume.

"Why, just outside of town. There was a little joint along the way. Me and Pete felt kind of cold."

"You'll feel a damned sight colder when you've been hanging up by the neck for a couple of hours," said Latimer.

"Charlie, you're enough to give a gent bad dreams," observed Champion.

"You've raised hell, the pair of you," said Latimer. "And you're old and in your dotage. You sit here laughing like a pair of old fools."

"You can't help that," answered Pete. "When a fellow gets old, his brains gets old with him, right?"

"Yes, the brains get old," said Champion.

BOOTH he and Peter were so highly delighted that they hardly could contain themselves. And big Latimer, with his faint smile, looked back and forth from one face to another.

"They've had plenty of chances to see you," said Latimer, at last. "That's one reason you're so happy. That's the real reason. What you'd like best of all would be to have your pictures in the papers. You'd like that, wouldn't you, Pete?"

"Some folks have told me that I got a kind of an interesting face, at that," said Pete.

"You've been using an interesting gun, too," said Latimer. "As though there weren't enough hell around us, you've had to use a gun!"

"I didn't shoot to kill," said Pete, complacently. "I seen the big gent and just drilled him through the leg, high up. It kind of discourages most folks when they get drilled through the leg, like that. But the kid was Irish. He tried to come right in on us, and then he fell and whanged his head. It wasn't the shooting that might of killed him, but him being such a nervy young damn fool."

"When you get to hell-fire's edge," said Latimer, "you'll still have excuses; you'll still have reasons why you shouldn't burn."

"A man has to talk," said Pete. "You know that, Charlie. We ain't all like you and your father before you, that can keep our mouths shut so good."

"Were you followed after you brought the airplane down?" asked Latimer.

"Not a bit that we could see. We headed back south, and showed ourselves a coupla places so's the other boys would be fooled."

"That was good enough," said Latimer, "if they don't find out where you doubled."

"Even O'Rourke ain't likely to find us," remarked Champion.

"Who's that? Oh, Campbell's partner on the train. . . ."

"Who's Campbell?" asked Pete.

"The hardest Scotchman you ever saw, and the smartest," admitted Latimer. "He's made of tool-proof steel with a diamond finish. . . . I'd expect anything of him."

"He may be a fine head," said Pete, "but O'Rourke is a funny kind of devil. He thinks out your thoughts for you. After I seen him a coupla times, I was scared to do any thinking for fear that he'd read what was in my head. You'd think he was too fat to have a head on him, but he's quick with the old brain. I'm glad we've shaken him off, Champ."

"If we'd busted his head wide open, it wouldn't of been bad," observed Champion.

"When you bought that whiskey, were you traveling south?" asked Latimer.

"No, we were comin' on towards Chicago," said Pete.

"Then they'll pick up your trail at that point," observed Latimer. "You had to have the whiskey, did you?"

"It was kind of a time to celebrate, wasn't it, Charlie?" asked Champion with some anxiety.

"That kind of celebrating will put you in jail," said Latimer.

"Pete kind of misses jail, anyway," said Champion, and he laughed again.

Into this laughter, Pete fell. Regarding one another, the two veterans tilted back their heads and indulged themselves until the tears went down their faces. And Latimer, high of head, patient, examined their faces.

He said at last: "You have it!"

"Have what?" asked Champion, wiping his eyes.

"You have the plan," said Latimer.

"How would we get that?" demanded Pete, innocently.

"You'd get it out of the rathouse where Cobb was living," said Latimer, eyeing them still.

"Well," said Pete, "we looked all through his things but we couldn't find it."

"You couldn't?" said Latimer.

"We couldn't find it," said Champion, shaking his head.

LATIMER lighted a cigarette and blew the smoke straight ahead of him. He reached up a swift, impatient hand and cut the draught of smoke in two.

Afterwards, he stared into the bright, mocking eyes of the two elders.

"You found the plan," he insisted, quietly. "I can tell by the look of you."

"We didn't find it," declared Pete. "O'Rourke found it for us."

"O'Rourke?"

"Ay, it was O'Rourke that found it for us. One day, we might send a

present to him. He's a brainy man, and only a little crooked."

"How crooked?" asked Latimer.

"He wanted to come in with us."

"I guess he was only stringing us," commented Pete, a moment later, as he thought the matter out. "He just wanted to start us talking. A feller like O'Rourke wouldn't touch crooked money unless he got it through political graft, or something like that. Just good enough to be bad, is the way with his kind."

"Give me that plan," put in Latimer.

The two looked at one another. "He says he wants it," interrupted Pete.

Champion nodded his head. "He thinks he ought to have it," he agreed.

"Why should you have it, Charlie?" asked Pete.

"Because the pair of you will be in jail, inside of another couple of days," explained Latimer.

"And the boys would trust you to keep out of trouble?"

The smile of Latimer went out and that hard, still look of danger entered his eyes.

"I always stay out of trouble," he said.

"Yeah, and he does," said Pete, sighing. "He wouldn't of been back in the hands of O'Rourke three times, like we were. Or me, anyway."

"O'Rourke had glue on his hands. You couldn't get away from him," answered Champion.

"Give me the plan," said Latimer.

Pete shrugged his shoulders, whistled a dreary note, and then reached inside his coat. Latimer reached his own hand inside his coat and waited, tense.

"You think I'm grabbing for a gun?" asked Pete, curiously.

"You might be," said Latimer.

"You wouldn't trust me, eh?"

"No more than I'd trust prison snakes."

"Listen, boys," said Champion. "You wouldn't be arguin', would you?"

"Be still, Champ," commanded Latimer, keeping his cold eyes on Pete.

"Why should I trust *you*, then?" asked Pete.

"Because you know that the thing would be safer with me. That's the only reason."

"He's right," said Champion.

"Yeah," drawled Pete. "I suppose that's true. I suppose that he's right."

He pulled out the fold of paper and pushed it gingerly across the table. Latimer opened it and glanced it over.

"Did O'Rourke see this?" he asked.

"Yes. He saw it, all right. He found it," said Champion.

"Damn!" muttered Latimer.

He lighted a match, held up the paper, and applied the flame to a corner of it.

Pete yelled out as though he had been struck with a knife. Champion lurched from his chair, grabbing. But Latimer caught them by the wrists and held them easily.

He said: "Let it burn. We don't need it now."

The paper wafted to the floor. They could hear the tiny crinkling noise of the flames, so perfect was the silence of the moment.

"Why don't we need it, for cat's sake? demanded Pete.

"Because I've got it drawn down in my memory, now," said Latimer.

"The figures and the angles and everything?" cried Champion.

"The figures and the angles and everything," said big Latimer.

A gust of wind struck the house. Latimer turned his head and listened.

"Yeah, maybe you can remember them," nodded Pete. "That's better than having the stuff on paper that can be grabbed."

Latimer, lifting his hand for silence, stole with soundless, flowing steps to the door, caught hold of it, and tore it suddenly open. Josephine Worth pitched inwards, into his arms.

CHAPTER XXIX

Oil and Water

BIG Charles Latimer gave the girl only a glance, and then passed her into the room. Afterwards, he made a cautious step onto the threshold of the doorway and glanced his torch up and down the hall.

He turned, closed the door behind him, and heard Pete Winslow saying: "Hello, Jo. Now, doggone me but I'm glad to see you! Who you got along with you?"

"Hello, Jo," said the unctuous voice of Champion. "This is mighty fine. Never seen so much color in your face before."

She was smiling at them, and shaking hands.

"Who brought you here?" asked Pete.

"I came by myself," said the girl.

"Now look at here, honey," said Pete, "I allow you a mighty brave girl, but you wouldn't be hunting ground by yourself all through black town, would you?"

"I didn't have to hunt," said the girl. "I knew that his father owned this house. I could guess where you'd show up."

"That sounds more reasonable," said Champion. "Still, you must of taken somebody along, Jo. You wouldn't go prying all alone into an empty house, would you?"

"She'd be able to come alone," announced Latimer. "She'd be able to do anything, alone. Look at her now! D'you think that she's afraid of the dark?"

The girl had turned to Latimer with her head thrown high, her face cold as stone.

"You sure look kind of resolved, Jo," remarked Champion.

She altered at once. She threw out both hands to Latimer and cried out: "Charles, why do you treat me as though I were a poisonous beast?"

Latimer's faint smile did not alter. He looked her up and down with a quiet detestation.

"No," he said, "not a beast. The beasts don't have the sort of brains you carry around with you. Sit down!"

She obeyed that command, slipping into a chair with her hand down, inert as though she had been struck from her feet by his words.

"Hold on, Charlie. Don't be so damn mean," said Pete. "A gal as pretty as Jo . . . you don't act hardly human to her."

"Lift your head!" directed Latimer.

She dropped it still lower.

He put his big, brown hand under her chin and raised her head. Tears made her eyelashes glisten. Her lips seemed to tremble.

"Look at her!" said Latimer. "It's wonderful, isn't it? I've seen the great ones on the stage work themselves into real tears. But she doesn't have to work. She presses a button, and the tears are there!"

She struck his hand away with both of hers.

"I despise you!" she said, half whispering the words.

"That's more like it," said Latimer. "Did you see her face, just now? See how the baby went out of her eyes and

the devil came into them? How would you like to meet a face like that on a dark night?"

She drew a handkerchief from her sleeve and dabbed her eyes with it. So, leaning back in the chair with her lips slightly parted, she breathed like one exhausted.

"There's the fourth change," remarked Latimer. "Now, I ask you, why should a talent like that be wasted? Why the devil shouldn't she be on the stage where the millions could see her and adore her? Why does she have to be simply a crook?"

"Charles!" murmured the girl. "Please!"

"She'll have tears again, in a moment," said Latimer. "You can trust her for that. There—see 'em come?"

"Pete, will you make him stop?" asked the girl, making a suddenly pleading gesture towards Winslow.

"Ain't you kind of ashamed of yourself, Charlie?" asked Pete, with a great deal of curiosity in his manner of asking.

"She's a sweet thing, isn't she, Pete?" demanded Latimer. "She's nothing but sweet, would you say?"

"I dunno much about gals," said Pete.

"Neither do I," said Latimer. "Thank my stars, neither do I! This one is enough for me. Just thinking about her will keep me away from the females as long as I live. . . . Jo, listen to me!"

She turned her head. She looked up at him with wide, wet eyes.

"Yes, Charles?" she said.

His mouth twitched. He compressed his lips. "How can you be the way you are?" he demanded.

"What way, Charles?" she asked, with a helpless gesture.

"Bah! he sneered at her. "Every

time you look in the mirror don't you see what you could have made yourself? Stop playing that damned part; be yourself and get your head up. Do you think you win anything from me, when you act this way? Why don't you wash your hands as clean as you can get them and try to make a new start."

"Will you help me to, Charles?" she asked.

He stepped back with an animal grunt of disgust.

"There you are," he said to Pete. "No matter what you do, she's always on the stage. And she can play the real parts, too. Up to murder. Up to murder!"

Pete and Champion watched the girl with steady, bright eyes, and said nothing.

"Get out of here," commanded Latimer. "I'm sick at the sight of you. Get up and get out of the house."

"Wait a minute, old-timer," said Champ. "Ain't she got a kind of a right to talk with us?"

"Didn't she have her old man in the business?" suggested Pete.

"Her father was a decent man," said Latimer. "But there's none of his blood in her. Let her be cut in for her share. But keep her out of my way."

"He's kind of got his back up," said Pete. "Maybe you better go, like he says, Jo."

SHE jumped out of her chair and cried out furiously at them: "Are you going to let him be the head of everything? What right has he to give the orders? You're both older; you're worth twice a Charles Latimer."

"Now I like her best," said Latimer, with the half-closed eyes of a connoisseur. "When she picks up the fire and

throws it in one's face. That's when she's at her best."

She turned on him, to add: "A great, lounging, self-assured hulk; a chunk of cannon-meat; and you treat him as though he were something to look up to!"

"Well," said Pete, "I'm kind of short, and it's easy for me to look up to people. I don't have to sag at the knees none. It just comes natural."

"Leave the house!" said Latimer. "If you don't get out of your own volition, I'll carry you out."

"I don't think you'll do that," said the girl. She was white-faced, her nostrils trembling with her excitement.

"Are you going to march through that door?" demanded Latimer bitterly.

"Not a step!" she answered.

He strode to her and, standing behind her, took her by the elbows.

"Pete . . . Champ!" she gasped over her shoulder.

"He looks kind of big and young. I'd do what he says, if I was you," answered Champ.

"You better go along with him, honey," said Pete.

"I'll go," she answered. "Will you take your hands away?"

"I'm glad if I never have to touch you," said Latimer, but he followed her to the door.

"I'll go alone," she said.

"I'll see that you get outside the place," answered Latimer.

She turned there in the doorway and looked back and up to him, her face stone-white and her eyes blazing. Then she went on through the outer hall, carving her path through the darkness with the penciled ray from a very small flashlight.

She went down the steps into the cellar. The shadowy bulk of Latimer

followed behind her with that soft, padding step which was peculiar to him. When they reached the door, she turned suddenly into his arms.

"Charles, will you please listen to me for five minutes?" she pleaded. "I'll tell you every step of my life!"

"I've read Dante," said Latimer. "I don't care a great deal about the dirt in your own personal hell. . . ."

He pushed open the door. "Get out!"

Josephine whirled quickly away from him and hurried down the street. She walked briskly around the corner, up the block to the left and turned again onto the street behind that where Latimer's house stood.

She went on to the mid-block, narrow alley—a relic of very old building

days—and hurried down it. It stopped at a high board fence. She rolled skirt and slip to her hips and went over the fence like a boy. Only at the top of the fence, she delayed long enough to scan the rear views of the houses before her. Latimer's place she picked, numbering the houses from the corner to the right spot. Then she dropped down into the back yard. There were two other fences to climb before she would reach her goal.

But she set about her work with a perfectly cool confidence. It was only when she had reached the rear of the house that she paused again to right her clothes, and pull the skirt down snug about her hips; after that she went forward again with her graceful dancer's step. . . .

Seven faces in dead John Cobb's bedroom . . . connected, somehow, with Cobb's death, and a silver mine, and evil deeds done when the century was young. How are they all tied together? Will Detectives Campbell and O'Rourke, smart as they are, be able to outwit the many factions working against them—and each other? A great surprise is coming in next week's blood-speeding conclusion!

The Odd Case of the Initialed Check

"**Y**ES, I should be glad to initial your check for payment, Mr. Flammer," smiled the bank's president. "Thirty thousand dollars. A rather large sum."

"It represents my entire account here, which I must have for a quick business deal. In a few days, I hope to re-deposit the whole sum together with additional sums."

The elegantly attired Mr. Flammer betook himself to the window of the paying-teller where he withdrew his entire account. Whistling softly, he stepped out of the bank and into one of Chicago's many dispensing centers for the escape from reality associated with the swallowing of certain liquids while one foot rests upon a brass rail. Mr. Flammer's courage came from more reliable sources than a bottle, but, even so, one needed a certain deadness of the inhibitory sections of the brain which persisted in saying, "BEWARE."

Back in the bank again, he shoved the check for thirty thousand dollars, bearing the O. K. of the bank's president, into the hands of a paying-teller who noted the O. K. and passed out the money.

Later, it was found that this had been the method which the swindler had taken to relieve the bank of thirty thousand dollars. —*John Berry.*

The Counterfeit Counterfeiter



Rush had pulled a fast one on his visitors

By Wyatt Blassingame

MCDOWELL tilted forward in his chair, resting both fists on the desk and pushing his full-moon face forward. "I've six other agents here, Rush. They've collected a lot of information, some of it valuable. But as for breaking up this con ring, finding who's the head of it and where the money comes



Detective Rush Had to Break Up That Shrewd Counterfeit Ring—so He Played at Their Own Game. He Shoved the Spurious Green Right Back into Their Greasy Hands

from, they haven't got to first base. The local police are good and they cooperate in every way. But all we do is bump our heads on a blank wall."

Steve Rush said, "Well?" He stood in front of the desk, so tall that he seemed lean despite the width of his shoulders. His face was bony. He had shaved not an hour

before, but the stubble of his beard showed blue-black beneath his skin. His eyes were black, and with the hard, brittle glitter of glass. His brows were black and bushy. He had the name of being one of the toughest men in the Treasury Department. He looked it.

McDowell said, "I sent for you because of your reputation and because no one here knows you. This counterfeit ring is burying Birmingham with queers, most of it in bills as low as five dollars. That's one thing that makes it hard to catch the shovers. We have caught a number of them, but—what the hell!"

McDowell gestured, palms up. "They don't know the real source, and they are afraid to talk about what they do know. Two or three tried to squeal and later we found them in ditches out past East Lake. The local crooks aren't used to organized murder and they've been scared into swallowing their tongues. There's never been a real gang chief in Birmingham before, but there's some big-time man back of this. It's not going to be easy—but you've got to find him!" The chief struck the desk viciously with his fist.

No expression showed in Steve Rush's dark eyes. His mouth was a red line through the blue-black of his cheeks and chin. For a full minute he stood silently, looking down at McDowell as if he did not see him. Abruptly he said, "Could I get the names of some shovers who are working? Persons you know are handling the queer, but that you haven't caught doing it?"

McDowell said, "Sure," and pushed a button on his desk.

Still without expression Rush asked, "And the police will cooperate?"

"To the limit."

"I'll break the ring and get you the headman," Rush said matter-of-factly, "or you'll pick me out of the ditch in East Lake."

STEVE RUSH had selected the persons to attend the first meeting carefully. Now he sat in the living room of his apartment on the south side and looked at them.

In the chair to his left was a small, gray-haired lady. Her clothes were sedate and black, her face was sweet and innocent. It was this innocence, the Treasury agents had told Rush, which enabled her to pass queers so easily. They had never been able to get the slightest evidence against her, although they were sure she was connected with the ring.

To her left sat two pasty-faced local crooks, beyond them a couple of negroes, and on the extreme right a man with eyes like gray beads and a mouth as colorless as his eyes. This was the man that Steve Rush put his faith in. He had come to Birmingham at the same time the snow of counterfeit money had arrived. He had a police record in several northern cities. He was a killer.

Rush centered his attention on the others. "I'm taking over the queer racket in this city," he told them. "From now on you'll buy your phones from me—or you'll get out of town. And we're not wasting time on fins, either. I'm letting you have twenties, but I'm letting you have them cheap."

The old lady on the left said, "But suppose we're working for somebody else?" She had a sweet, piping voice.

Rush turned his dull gaze toward her. His finger slid hard along his chin, making it white for an instant. "You'll work for me or nobody. This is going to be *my* town."

"So you said." The old lady looked very sweet and prim perched on the edge of her chair. "But what of all the other punks in town who are shoving queer?"

"I'll get to them as fast as I can," Rush said. "They are all going to work for me, or get out."

There was a moment of silence. The pasty-cheeked men glanced at one another, twisting nervously. The negroes looked frightened.

Abruptly the man with the gray eyes and mouth stood up. He wasn't tall, but heavily built. On the left side, near the shoulder, there was a bulge in his coat. His right hand toyed with a coat button. He stood feet apart and raised slightly on his toes. There was something about him like an animal ready to spring. The others glanced at him and edged their chairs away.

The man said, "Listen, guy. The con racket is already bein' run in this town. By a guy that don't want no trouble. And he ain't gonna have any. If you're around here two days from now, it'll be 'cause nobody claimed the body. See?"

Steve Rush turned slowly. There was no expression on his gaunt, dark face. He said, "Are you giving those orders, Bonaldi, or do they come from somebody else?"

"The boss heard about you askin' us down for this meetin'. I was told what to say."

"All right," Rush said. He stood up, surprisingly tall and lean. "You can tell your boss that I've seen some of his bills. They're not bad. If he's willing to play ball, I'll let him stay and take a small cut. Otherwise he better clear out."

Bonaldi said, "Clear, hell! He don't play with punks."

Rush said, "All right. If he doesn't

want to play." His voice was totally without emotion. He took one long stride that ate up the space between him and Bonaldi. His left fist swung hard. It made a clear crack against Bonaldi's chin, lifting the squat man from his feet and slamming him back against the wall. His knees buckled and he went to a sitting position.

But he wasn't out. He cursed, the corner of his mouth flicking with the same motion that sent his hand plunging inside his coat, ripping out with one streaking action. An automatic gleamed.

RUSH was a full five feet away. His right foot moved in a tiny, dancing motion, his left foot swung. The toe struck Bonaldi's wrist and the gun sailed upward. The Treasury man stepped forward, caught it with both hands and dropped it into his pocket.

The prim old lady, still on the edge of her chair, said sweetly, "Well, you certainly knocked hell out of that buzzard."

For a moment the red line of Rush's mouth showed signs of curving into a smile. He said, "Thanks."

Bonaldi was on his knees now, shaking his numb right hand and cursing. His face was bloodless, but in his eyes was a red flame. "You'll be leavin' town." He was panting, almost crying. "Leavin' on a slab."

Rush said, "Maybe. Where'll you be tomorrow night at nine?"

Bonaldi's gray mouth tightened. "I'll be around—on my feet, not in any rotten morgue with you."

"All right," Rush said. He looked at the others. "If Bonaldi is in the lobby of the Wilson Hotel tomorrow night at nine, you needn't come out to buy the queer. If he's not, you'll know

that he has—er—left town. You might bring some other shovers with you.”

“I’ll be there. And if they come out here, all they’ll find is a stiff,” Bonaldi snarled. He heeled and went out, opening the door with his left hand, his right hand still numb at his side.

The old lady said, “Somebody is going to get a belly full of lead.” She smiled at Rush. “If you’re not careful, it’ll be you.”

Rush said, “Thanks. I’ll be careful.” He watched the old lady, the pasty faced men, and the negroes file out. The men glanced at him from the corners of their eyes as they went. He knew what they were thinking: that tomorrow he would be dead.

II

THE apartment house was situated where the Montgomery highway first begins to coil upward over the mountains. “He’s being very r e s p e c t a b l e indeed,” Steve Rush thought, pausing just outside the glow of a street-light to look at the building.

He circled the building and found an alley in the back, a locked delivery door. From his pocket he took a huge bunch of keys and after some two minutes the door swung open. He pulled it shut again, went down the alley and along the street to a corner drugstore where he put in a telephone call. Then he went back to the alley door, slipped through, and closed it behind him.

He had no trouble finding Bonaldi’s apartment on the fourth floor. For two full minutes he listened outside the door, then went to work with his keys. Another two minutes and the door opened. He stepped over the sill into darkness. With a flashlight he examined the apartment, found nothing.

He pulled an overstuffed chair close against the wall on the left of the door and sat down to wait. Occasionally he smoked, keeping the cigarette so cupped in the palm of his hand that no glow escaped. His lank body was completely relaxed, but his eyes were wide open, the tips of his nostrils slightly dilated. The slightest odor, sound or movement would have sent an alarm screaming to his brain. He was playing with death and he knew it. Though he rested comfortably, he was keenly alert.

Two, three, four hours dragged by. The red line of Rush’s mouth curled upward slightly as he thought that Bonaldi was probably waiting for him outside the house where he had met the counterfeit shovers earlier that night—waiting to kill.

It was almost dawn when someone touched the outside of the door. While the key still scraped on the lock Steve Rush came to his feet. One utterly silent stride put him where the opening door would shelter him. How many men were coming in he didn’t know. They would be ready to murder him, while he couldn’t afford to kill, even in self defense, since he had no legal right to be there.

A man cursed. Another one answered him. At least two of them, Rush thought. Every muscle of his body was rock hard and motionless. He held a police positive in his left hand, the flash light in his right. The door swung open.

A man came in, paused just over the sill. “Where in hell’s the light?”

“Here.” It was Bonaldi’s voice. Rush heard his hand fumbling along the wall.

Steve Rush stepped forward. The thud of his gun barrel striking the man’s head was the first sound he had

caused in the room. Breath hissed from the fellow's open mouth and he folded. At the same instant light burst in the room.

Rush and Bonaldi stared at one another across a space of some ten feet.

IT seemed to both men that for a long while all motion was suspended and they faced each other like two wax figures in a deserted side-show: Bonaldi half crouched, one hand still on the wall switch, the other hand close to his coat lapel; Rush, tall and with his face blackened by beard, holding the pistol with his left hand, the flashlight in his right. In fact, however, there was never an instant when both of them were not moving. Bonaldi's hand went inside his coat and came out with the same motion, swinging an automatic. Rush was plunging forward.

He was too far away! Rush saw that even as Bonaldi's gun cleared the coat lapel. A bullet would get him before he could reach the other man! With a flip of his left wrist he flung his gun, still charging in. It whirled straight for Bonaldi's face.

Instinctively, the gangster ducked. That was the added second that Rush had wanted. His left hand slapped on the automatic. His right hand smashed downward with the flashlight. Bonaldi moaned and went down, glass tinkling on the floor from the broken light.

With no break in his action Steve Rush scooped up both guns, cropped them into his pockets while diving for the door and closing it. There was a desk across the room with paper and ink. With his right hand, awkwardly since he was left handed, he printed a note.

Tell your boss Bonaldi will be of no more use to him. Neither

will you, if you try to be smart. Tell him I'll give him five days to clear out of town or take my proposition.

He stuck the note between the clenched fingers of the first man he had knocked unconscious.

Bonaldi was moaning slightly, eyelids twitching. "The flashlight wasn't heavy enough," Rush thought. He took Bonaldi's gun from his pocket, weighing it with his left hand. Then he struck the gunman above the ear. He went limp without a sound. Rush put the gun in his pocket again, tossed Bonaldi over his shoulder, and went out of the room into the hall.

He walked down the stairs. On the second floor a woman came out of an apartment and saw him. Her mouth opened as though she were going to scream.

"He jush had one dwink too mush," Rush said, wavering a little, and kept going. Behind him the woman laughed.

He went out of the back door into the dark alley. A police wagon stood nearby without lights, although the motor was running. A man in uniform stepped out of the wagon, whispered, "That you?"

Rush said, "Yes." He tossed the unconscious figure from his shoulder into the wagon. "Don't let anybody see him. Keep him locked in solitary. He's supposed to be dead."

The policeman grinned. "He's playin' the rôle good." A moment later the wagon purred out of the alley. A block away the lights switched on.

THE following night the old lady and the other four shovers reported at Rush's apartment. They had three new workers with them, and there was a look of respect in the eyes

of everyone. Rush greeted them without words, the sharply chiseled lines of his face making him look more gaunt and dark than ever.

"Well!" the old lady said. She perched bird-like on the edge of a chair, her head cocked to one side. "We noticed that Bonaldi wasn't in the hotel lobby tonight."

"I knew he ain't gwinea be there," a negro said. "I seed Mistur Tomaselli on de street dis mawnin' and he say somebody konked him on the head las' night an' kill Mistur Bonaldi an' run off wid his body."

"Who is this fellow Tomaselli?" Rush asked.

The old lady nodded sweetly. "Just another cheap hood like that guy Bonaldi. But I've heard that he shoots very straight."

Rush said, "If he shoots, it better be straight." Then he got down to the business of the night. For twenty-five dollars he sold the shovers five queer twenty-dollar bills each. He had never before aided in the distribution of queer money and the red line of his mouth twisted into a crooked grin as he did so. He was beyond the law now, but it was better to add to the number of phonies being passed for several days than to allow the steady flood of it to continue indefinitely. And this was the only way. He *had* to take the job from the big shot who now controlled it. If he couldn't find his way to that man, he'd force the man to come to him.

"Be back tomorrow night for another hundred," Rush told the shovers before he sent them out. "And bring more men with you. If they want to work, they're going to work for me. I've told you I was taking over this town, and I'm doing it."

"It sho' sound dat way after what

happen to Mistur Bonaldi," one of the negroes said. "But dis other guy, who ever he am, am bad. I'se scared."

"I'll look after him," Rush said.

During the three days that followed, death stalked Steve Rush constantly, waiting for the error that every human being makes sooner or later. "One of us is going to slip first," Rush thought. "And the one who does . . ." His lean hands gestured, palms upward.

More and more men came each night to buy their queer money from Steve Rush, and he knew that he was eating into the other man's business. Since Bonaldi's disappearance, Rush's fame had spread and the underworld turned to him. But the man who had controlled this racket was not going to give up so easily. Steve Rush knew that. He knew that he had to make only one error—and die. He never went out of his house in the daytime, although he kept a constant watch from behind curtained windows. When he went out at night it was through the back way, lurking always in dense shadows. He did not dare telephone McDowell, the local T-man chief, or the police, from his house for fear the wire had been tapped. When he slept it was only a half-doze, with every nerve constantly alert.

THEN came the first break. It was on the third night while the old lady and three shovers were in his house to buy queer. He was seated back of his desk talking to them when the door of the room opened and two men came in. Each carried a sub-machine gun. Cloth masks hid their faces.

Silence burst like thunder in the room as they came over the sill. The line of shovers broke, flowing to each side and leaving a clear path between

the machine guns and Steve Rush. The air was suddenly electric, charged with a hidden and terrific current that needed only a twitching finger to set it bursting into death. To Rush the muzzles of the tommy guns seemed as large as his face, eating his gaze into their black depths.

One of the men spoke through his mask. "The boss said to come while there were showers here. He wants 'em to see who's running this town. He wants 'em to see what'll happen to 'em if they quit him again."

"That's good," Rush said. His voice was utterly toneless, but with a strained sound. His eyes were wide, expressionless, his nostrils dilated. Sweat began to stand in large beads across his forehead. "I want these men to see for themselves whom they ought to work for. But do you think it polite to shoot me while the old lady's present?" Even as he spoke a gray fog was coiling up from the floor just behind the gunmen.

The old lady said spryly, "It's going to be a hell of a mess, but I've seen worse things before."

"Still," Rush said, "I don't think . . ." The fog coiled higher.

One gunman said, "Shut up, Punk. Do you want to stand up or do you want to take it sitting down?"

"I think"—Rush's voice was husky now, tense—"I'll stand up." In that same instant the coiling fog spewed upward, enveloping the gunmen. Steve Rush went over with a crash behind his desk. A man screamed. There was a ripping blast of fire. Then hell burst in the room as the showers began to shriek.

The gunmen staggered through the door, clawing at their eyes, flinging wild spurts of shot into the walls and ceiling.

With cool precision Rush took a gas mask from the bottom drawer of his desk, put it on. He pulled the police positive from under his coat. But he did not hurry into the hall. He wanted the gunmen to escape, because if he shot one or both of them there would be a trial and the whole case on which he was working would fall through. So by the time he reached the front door the gunmen were gone. He went back into the tear gas-filled room and helped out the showers who hadn't already escaped.

The old lady stood at the front of the hall, dabbing at streaming eyes with a handkerchief. She looked like the portrait of a mother weeping at sorrow. "Well, you sure took them easy," she said. "How the hell did you do it?"

"Tear gas, with a release under the desk to be pushed with my foot," Rush explained. "I knew this fellow would make a play for me sooner or later and I got the house fixed up with dozens of tricks. They won't take me in here, that's certain."

The rout of the gunmen was what turned the trick. After that all the local underworld came to Steve Rush. He had dozens of showers, professional and amateur, wanting to buy queer from him. He had secured several thousand dollars of counterfeit from McDowell and now let out as little as possible, stalling whenever he could.

But he had to let most of them have some each day in order to keep their allegiance.

"The final break is coming soon," he thought. "The next time, I win—or die." So far he had won over the unknown gangster, but neither had made a real error. The penalty for that error would be death. Slipping out of his house at night he mailed a letter to Mc-

Dowell, taking what precautions were possible.

III

AFTER the shovers left one night, the old lady remained behind, sitting nervously in her chair and twisting a handkerchief. Her small, pert face was drawn into anxious lines. The old-fashioned hat sat ridiculously on the side of her head.

"Well?" Rush asked. He stood near the door, watching.

She said, "I—I've got a message for you. It's from the fellow who used to be in charge of the queer racket."

Rush's whole body jerked taut. He leaned forward on the balls of his feet, the sharp angles of his face growing clearer as his jaw tightened. The last move of the game had come now, he knew.

"He wants you to come to see him," the old lady said. She looked up suddenly, almost brightly. "My personal opinion is that he wants a good chance to fill your belly with lead."

"Do you know him?" Rush's voice was flat as he asked the question.

"I never saw him in my life. But I've an idea who he is. He telephoned me."

"Why doesn't he come here?" Again the toneless quality was in his voice.

"He said he wanted you to come where he has his presses. Then you could look them over and make a deal with him. But as I said," she remarked calmly, "my idea is he wants a chance to bump you off and is afraid to tackle you here."

For a long moment then Steve Rush stood motionless, body tilted forward on the balls of his feet, muscle ridging the angular lines of his jaw. He knew what it meant to walk into the other

man's trap. But it seemed the only way. He wanted those presses—and proof.

He said, "What's the address?"

"And I was beginning to like you," the old lady said. "But I reckon it doesn't matter. I'll work for whichever one is living." She shook her gray head. "Let's get started. I'm supposed to take you there."

"Okay," Rush said. "But you won't mind if I dictate our method of getting out of this house and the way we travel. Of course, I don't suspect a double-cross, but this fellow might have planned on the way you'd bring me."

"Any way you like. I'm not so old I want to get knocked off by a stray bullet."

They went out the back, Rush keeping the old lady ahead of him and hugging the shadows. Four blocks away they called a taxi, later changed to a You-Drive-It which Rush examined carefully before accepting it. From there on he followed the old lady's instructions only as to the general direction, but finally they reached the place, a hulking warehouse just off First Avenue.

In the alley behind the warehouse Rush left his car. "We go in here," the old lady said, rapping three times on a huge, closed door, pausing, and striking twice more. The door slid open.

Rush kept close to it as it opened, moving sideways with it. He spoke loudly, "The guy who opened this door come out in the open." There was a moment's silence, then Tomaselli, the gunman that he had knocked out in Bonaldi's apartment, appeared on the sill.

"All right," Rush said. "Back inside." He followed the man and the old lady, his police positive in his left hand, stood aside while Tomaselli closed the

door. Then he said, "You can show me to the head man now. It's not that I don't trust him. I just want to make sure."

IT was a huge, dully lighted, bare space across which they moved, Tomaselli first, then the old lady, and Rush behind, his gun drawn. A flight of dusty stairs opened on the right and they went down to come suddenly on a large room, the center of which was brilliantly lighted although the walls were in shadow. In that first glimpse Rush saw enough to know that here were presses and engraving equipment capable of turning out thousands of dollars of counterfeit money each day. He was in the right place at last!

Behind him a voice said, "Don't move, guy, unless you want to be cut in twenty parts!"

Rush felt his whole body jerk, stiffen. His heart struck savagely at his ribs, and seemed to stop altogether. The air drained from his lungs, leaving them empty and aching. The voice behind him was that of the man who had come to kill him at his house. One move and a machine gun would blast his spine apart.

Somehow Rush kept his voice steady despite the pain in his lungs. He said, "Don't shoot until you ask your boss." As he spoke the old lady turned. She was facing squarely into Rush's revolver. A finger held the trigger tight against the guard; his thumb on the up-raised hammer was all between the old woman and death. Beyond her Tomaselli stood poised, hands empty but ready.

The old lady looked at the gun in Rush's hand and her mouth opened, "Why . . . why . . . ?"

Rush said, "You needn't ask questions, Pete. If you want that hood be-

hind me to pull his trigger, just tell him. But you know that before I fall I'll pull this trigger. And you know where the slug will land. You can kill me, but you can't do it without killing yourself. You better think carefully, Pete."

All the sweetness went out of the old lady's face. It hardened and the mouth curled savagely. The voice dropped an octave, became semi-masculine. "How in hell do you know who I am?"

"Simple enough," Rush said. "Your third finger is longer than your first; you don't hold your legs as far apart sitting down as a woman. Four or five other things made me suspect you weren't a woman. And if you weren't, then you were probably Pete Nelson. Working my job you keep a close track on most crooks. Pretty Petey the boys used to call you."

Pete Nelson cursed. "I *thought* you were a damn T Man. That money you were handing out didn't all come from the same press. And the shovers that worked for you never got pinched. It all tied up, but I wasn't sure."

THE red line of Rush's mouth twisted the dark stubble of his beard. "You couldn't be sure. And if I wasn't a government man you had to get me out of the way. You were afraid to try any move in my place, so you brought me here. That was where you made an error."

Nelson said, "Okay, I slipped. But you came and that was your error. It's better fun to gut a Treasury man than some cheap crook."

"Maybe," Rush said. "But when you tell this fellow back of me to shoot, think of what is going to happen to your belly. It's a stalemate, Pete. You better take me to the door and let me out."

"What we gonna do, Boss?" It was

the man behind Rush. "Do I cut him down?"

"Wait a minute," Nelson cried. "Wait!" And then Rush saw his eyes flicker toward the shadows to his left. A smile touched the gangster's face. "Wait a minute," he said. "He's not going to shoot as long as we stand here because you'll kill him if he does. There's plenty of time to think." Again his eyes flickered toward the shadows.

Rush looked at the same instant, letting his gaze whip to one side and back again. But in that second he had seen enough. A shadow, denser than the others, was moving softly along the far wall of the room. There had been the dull gleam of a rifle barrel and of telescopic sights.

Another one of Nelson's gunmen was moving to get a clear shot at his gunhand! Rush pulled it close as possible, turned to shelter it with his body. But he couldn't turn too far and still cover Pete. Sooner or later the man would get a clear shot. A marksman with a rifle could take the gun out of his hand. Then the man behind him would open fire. If he swung to shoot at the marksman, the man behind would get him first.

There wasn't a chance!

"Figure a way out of this one," Pete Nelson said. "You can shoot me down, or you can live three or four minutes longer until Nick gets a bead on your hand. Which are you going to do, Tough Fellow?"

"I'm going to live the extra minutes," Rush said. He had twisted as far as possible to shelter his hand and cover Nelson. But the gunman was no longer making any attempt to keep hidden and was moving rapidly. The sweat streamed across Rush's forehead to slide into his eyes and burn.

"He'll have you in another minute,"

Nelson sneered. "Why don't you plug me now, unless you are yellow?"

The answer came from the shadowed foot of the stairs. "He won't need to. We'll be taking you off to the Federal Pen, unless we can prove some of these past murders on you." McDowell came striding into the light, a revolver in his right hand. Behind him the shadows filled with Treasury men and local police.

Rush felt as though his knees were wabbling under him with relief, but he kept his voice steady, his face calm. "You see, Pete, we wanted to clean up the whole bunch of crooks when we went to work, shovers and all. So Treasury men tailed everybody who bought queer from me, getting evidence that they passed it, but not making any pinches until the time was ready. They trailed the sweet old lady too, but she never passed any. She never took any chance of getting caught. It seemed fishy."

He turned to McDowell. "You were late getting here. I was thinking that maybe you hadn't got my letter to tail me wherever I went, or had lost my trail on the way down. I figured the head man of this ring would be wanting me to come to him soon. That's why I wanted you to tail me. But I was afraid to come straight as the old lady told me, because she might have somebody planted on the way to knock me off. I was afraid I'd lost you while dodging them."

"You would have," McDowell said, "if the oil gauge of your car hadn't leaked. When we lost you, we could follow the trail."

"That's why I opened it," Rush said. He looked at Nelson. "Your error was in not watching me as carefully as I watched you. I opened that gauge when I rented the car."

Civil Service Q & A

By "G-2"

Could You Qualify as—

Special Agent (G-Man)	Police Patrolman
Secret Service Operative	Police Detective
Post Office Inspector	Policewoman
Customs Patrol	Fingerprint Expert
Immigration Patrol	State Trooper
Anti-Narcotic Agent	Crime Prevention
Parole Investigator	Investigator
Prison Keeper	Probation Officer
Internal Revenue Agent	Criminologist
Alcohol Tax Agent	Police Radio Expert

This department will give you every week typical questions asked in civil service examinations.

Account Clerk Test

THE test for senior account clerk given below was actually used, during 1935, in an eastern state, and while the same test will not likely be given again in precisely the same language, it may nevertheless be considered a uniform test for this type of position. Applicants who took it were eighteen years or over and the job paid \$1,200 to start. A minimum rating of 60 was required for each part and a general average of 70 on the entire test.

SECTION ONE. *Education.*

Q 1—For what position are you taking this examination?

Q 2—Name the courses you have taken, other training or education.

SECTION TWO. *Duties.*

Q 3—Explain the meaning of five of the following: (a) a resource; (b) buying on account; (c) inventory; (d) overdraft; (e) liability; (f) savings account; (g) requisition; (h) sight draft.

Q 4—(a) What is a trial balance? Its

object? When taken? Does a true trial balance prove that the accounts are correct? Explain.

SECTION THREE. *Letter Writing.*

Q 5—Write a letter to Mr. John Doe, 22 High St., Washington, recommending a friend of yours (you to assume a name) for the position of senior account clerk in a state department. Give his or her education, experience and other qualifications, and why you believe he (or she) would be a good senior account clerk. This letter will be rated as to spelling, punctuation, penmanship, sentence structure, paragraphing, content and arrangement.

Q 6—On the (show your work) first Saturday of each month of the fiscal year ending June 30, 1912, the wholesale price of raw rubber in the United States was \$1.45, \$1.87, \$1.92, \$2.03, \$1.84, \$1.75, \$1.76, \$1.84, \$2.06, \$2.80, \$2.47, \$2.28 respectively. What was the average price for the year and what percentage increase or decrease was the average over the price during the first month?

Q 7—In a hospital having 1,048 inmates there were consumed the following articles; fresh meat, 206,710 lbs., average price 19 cents per lb.; smoked meat, 7,614 lbs., average price 23 cents per lb.; canned meat, 6,520 lbs., average price 17½ cents per lb.; poultry, 3,672 lbs., average price 32 cents per lb. Find the total cost and the

cost per capita and show all your work.
SECTION FOUR. *Financial Records, Practices and Terms.*

Q 8—Fill each blank space in the following with a word or short phrase so as to make the statement complete and true.

(a) Two common systems of bookkeeping are and

(b) Money paid for the current use of money is called

(c) In bookkeeping parlance, CPA means

(d) Controlling accounts are usually kept in the ledger.

Q 9—Which of the following is true or false? (a) Interest earned is an asset; (b) a financial statement is the same as a balance sheet; (c) prepaid rent is an asset; (d) a check bearing date of a legal holiday is valid.

SECTION FIVE. *Mark with a check the answer you select among the following:*

Q 9—You work in an office which opens at 9 A.M., but your immediate superior hardly ever reports until 9.30 A.M. You should

(a) Report promptly for work at 9.

(b) Time your coming so as to arrive at the office just ahead of your immediate superior.

(c) Report the situation to the department head.

(d) Warn your immediate superior that he will get into trouble unless he changes his ways.

The attitude of a senior account clerk to his subordinates should be (a) strict; (b) confidential; (c) neutral; (d) firm.

SECTION SIX. *Understanding and following written directions.*

Q 10—(a) Indicate by a cross in the last column (at right) the youngest employee listed.

Title	Sex	Age	Tardy	Salary	Check
Typist.....	M	17	1	\$ 800
Checker.....	M	21	1	\$1200
Typist.....	F	19	8	\$ 950
Cashier.....	M	24	0	\$2500
Typist.....	F	26	3	\$1000
Clerk.....	M	19	5	\$ 720
Stenog.....	F	18	2	\$1250

(b) Indicate by placing a zero in the last column the female employee earning the highest salary.

(c) Indicate by a cross in the last column the oldest male employee.

(d) What percentage of difference is there between the highest salary and the lowest?

(e) Assuming that the above employees work six days a week and a day's pay is docked for 6 instances of tardiness, which employee in the list would be docked and how much would be deducted? Indicate the employee by a plus sign in the last column.

Key answers will not be provided. If you believe the test is an easy one, and you have made a high mark, do not assume you have passed the basis of this written test. In selecting candidates for eligible lists examiners usually subject each one to a personal interview during which any number and type of questions may be asked. In general practice the personal interview carries a weight of from 20% to 40% in the final marking. Oral tests, however, are passing out where candidates are required also to take a written test.

INTERPRETING THE LAW

In a recent Civil Service test administered to a class of 410 civilians seeking appointments as patrolmen, 125 of the aspiring competitors protested that they were required to have a lawyer's knowledge of the criminal code. The 125 had failed on one question. On appeal to the Civil Service Commission, they were overruled. Here is the question:

A section of the local penal code provides that "any person who willfully burns or sets on fire in the night time, a dwelling house in which there is a human being at the time, or a building, car, vessel, vehicle, structure, knowing a human being is therein at the time is guilty of arson in the first degree." You, as a patrolman, are confronted with this case: Brown set fire to a storage building in the yard of a dwelling house in which the owner was sleeping. The owner was aroused before the dwelling caught fire, but remained therein until the building was burning. With what degree of arson would you charge Brown?

The 125 who missed gave the same answer—first degree arson—and were marked wrong, whereupon they protested claiming that they were required by that question to possess a lawyer's knowledge of the law. The Civil Service Commission ruled that it was not a matter of a knowledge of the law, but rather a matter of in-

interpreting a law which was given in full on the test paper. The correct answer should have been, the commission held, that the degree of arson committed by Brown could not be fixed until it was known to the patrolman whether the fire was set during the day or night time.

Such questions often occur in police tests and lead to considerable grief. It's really not a matter of knowing the law but rather a matter of being able to read a law clearly and understand its meaning. And you'll run across these seemingly tricky questions in many Federal Civil Service tests for government police jobs.

Lawyers write the laws and often employ legal phraseology and sentence construction which involve the law in complications, at least complications which puzzle the lay mind. In order to simplify this type of legal question for readers who may go in for a police test, G-2 submitted the question above to a prominent police inspector who has trained thousands of police rookies.

"The only thing to do when a man runs up against a test requiring the interpretation of a complicated law," said the inspector, "is to break it down into its several parts, like this: (1) any person who willfully burns or sets on fire; (2) in the night time; (3) a dwelling house, in which there is a human being at the time, or (4) a building, car, vessel, vehicle, structure; (5) knowing a human being is therein at the time (6) is guilty of arson in the first degree."

Even the most complicating masterpieces written by lawyers, the inspector added, could be broken down or dissected in this manner. If you will apply the breaking down process to the question miffed by the 125 aspiring pavement pounders it will be seen that the element missing in the case of arsonist Brown was the time he applied his torch.

STATE POLICE DATA

About half of the letters which come to us from readers ask for information as to procedure in getting an appointment to state police organizations. In the order of their age we present a list of state police organizations and other details for which most readers ask.

PENNSYLVANIA. Training course 3

to 5 months. Apply to Commander, State Police, Harrisburg, Pa.

CONNECTICUT. Training course 10 weeks. Apply to Superintendent, State Police, Hartford, Conn.

MICHIGAN. Training period 4 to 6 weeks. Apply Commander State Police, Lansing, Mich.

NEW YORK. Training period 6 weeks. Appointment for 2 years. Apply to Commander State Police, Albany, N. Y.

WEST VIRGINIA. Training period 2 months. Apply to Commander, State Police, Charleston, W. Va.

MASSACHUSETTS. Training period 3 months. By enlistment. Apply Superintendent, State Police, Boston, Mass.

NEW JERSEY. Training period 3 months. Apply Superintendent State Police, Trenton, N. J.

RHODE ISLAND. Apply Superintendent State Police, Providence, R. I.

MAINE. Apply Superintendent State Police, Augusta, Me.

OREGON. Apply Superintendent, State Police, Salem, Ore.

The Texas Rangers, though sometimes referred to as a state police organization, is not so regarded in official quarters. It is, however, the granddaddy of all state-wide police services, having been organized in 1835. The pay of a state trooper ranges from \$500 to \$900 for recruits in training, to \$2700 for senior patrolmen. Recently four states have added state police detective bureaus. Men for this work usually are selected from among the existing patrol staffs. The pay of a state police detective ranges from \$2100 to \$3000. In some states the commander of troopers may select from among outsiders men he deems specially suited for state detective work. Just now, commanders have more applications from candidates for both patrol and detective work than they know what to do with. The list of state police organizations given above does not include State Highway Police forces. Five states maintain a separate police force to handle highway traffic and motor vehicle law violations. Frequently motor vehicle police are mistaken for state troopers and nothing more thoroughly ruffles a state trooper than to be made the victim of such an error.

Next Week—Sample Bookkeeper Test



Picking' Your Own Pocket

Own Your Own Home

By

Frank Wrentmore

This is the fifty-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.

STRANGE as it may seem, some people gyp themselves, although in most instances the process is competently aided and abetted by those who stand to profit most. Negligence in protecting yourself against the gyp is one way of "Picking Your Own Pocket."

When the government inaugurated the Better Housing program there were, and still are, plenty of hitchhikers ready to thumb their way back to prosperity at your expense. Promoters organized firms with titles which incorporated such words as "Federal," "U. S.," "Interstate," etc., and one of them devised a name which enabled it to use the initials, "N.R.A."

These promoters, masquerading as contractors, although lacking the experience, reputation and equipment, obtained contracts for building and remodeling homes and then farmed out the work to whichever company would do the job at the lowest price, with no regard to responsibility, ability or satisfaction to the customer—but the customer paid!

They paid because they signed "cognovit notes," which the promoter explained offhandedly to be simply "credit information" to submit with an application for a government loan. Had he described it by the more familiar term of "judgment note" he would, of course, have placed the victim on his guard. The word "cognovit" is also in the dictionary, and the definition is quite lucid. It means "a confession of judgment."

Reputable firms lost contracts because they were unwilling to equal the promises and methods of the irresponsible promoter-contractors who, in a number of cases were merely "advance fee" artists claiming to have a "pull" with Federal Loan officials or "special financial connections."

The danger isn't over. The home-buyer or home-builder who is not familiar with the tricks of the unscrupulous is easy to fool, so I am going to erect a few danger signals for those who are going to build or buy a home.

Get a good lawyer to close the contract. Don't depend on your own knowledge of the intricate laws of contracts to safeguard you against loss. The lawyer's fee is a form of insurance on the amount of money covered by the contract. Hire your lawyer to keep you

out of trouble, not after you are in it up to your neck. He may not be able to help you then.

Insist upon title examination and insurance *before* the contract is signed. If you fail to do this, you may have trouble when you want to transfer title or borrow money on your property.

Likewise you should have your property surveyed by a licensed surveyor, to assure yourself that you are not buying or building on property that belongs to someone else and which may later cause you expensive litigation.

LOOK over the ground carefully. You should observe the grades adjacent to your property to guard against the possibility of having surface water drain toward your basement.

If you are purchasing just a lot, and particularly if it is in a new subdivision where certain improvements are promised, such as paving, sewers, sidewalks, curbing, gas and even water and electricity—when such promises are made to you, don't fail to have them put in writing, also have in writing who is to pay for such improvements. *Don't do business with any firm which will not put oral promises in writing.* They don't intend to keep them.

If you are going to build a house, before you buy your lot, make absolutely certain that the kind of a home you are planning is permitted under the Building Code and Zoning Laws.

If you are going to build a home, get an architect and pay him a fee to supervise the construction of your house. Remember, you are going to live there for a long time. Follow his advice when you select your contractor,

but be sure and get one whose reputation for good work and fair dealing has been established. His may not be the lowest bid, but it may be the cheapest when all things are considered. You cannot get something for nothing.

A low bid may be comparable to cheap merchandise and the contractor who gives you an extremely low bid, may, in the end, make a large profit by taking advantage of your lack of knowledge—unless you have a supervising architect—of the different grades of material and workmanship. He can make substitutions and skimp his work. Substitutions of inferior grades of lumber, second grade mill work, poor roofing materials and other items will cost you dearly.

There is much watered paint in the market and cheap paint is no bargain at any price. Good paint and quality material is essential to the durability and permanence of home construction. Make sure that plumbing, heating and electrical work is installed by licensed contractors and that they use standard equipment. To avoid mechanic's liens and subsequent litigation, find out *before* paying the contractor in full if he has paid for *all* the work and material. Get the receipted bills.

If you are planning to build your home on a payment basis, see that this is set up in the beginning, so that you may know the amount of your payments and that they are within your income or means, thereby guarding against possible loss due to your inability to meet the payments.

Seek and follow competent advice at every step. Remember the fable of the three little pigs and the big bad wolf!

Next Week—Doctor Bunk

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. E. 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.

EDMACA'S Cryptic Square Root, No. X-29, published two weeks ago, was novel not only in the type of the problem itself, but also in the colloquial form of the key phrase. The puzzle is given below, with answer and key, so that you may check over your results if you failed to solve it.

	YUOTAU(UYE	576127(759
	<u>KE</u>	<u>49</u>
TKY)	SOT	145) 861
	<u>UAY</u>	<u>725</u>
TYIE)	TNOAU	1509) 13627
	<u>TNYST</u>	<u>13581</u>
	KO	46

Key: o 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
I T A N K Y O U S E

The multiplication $Y \times Y = Y$, where Y must be 5 or 6, provided entry to this puzzle. Noting these values, symbol T in $TKY \times Y = UAY$ would have to be z, to avoid a four-digit product in UAY. Next, using the sequence YO indicated in the third subtraction, $T(z) - Y = O$ would give 5 and 6, respectively, for Y and O. Whereupon symbol K would follow as 4 in the sequence KY shown in the first subtraction. And the rest of the problem would unfold in like manner.

The importance of final y in the solution of a cryptogram was well illustrated in last week's Inner Circle cipher, No. 270 by U. U. Jeff. Y can often be identified by its low frequency coupled with its use mostly in the final position. And when it occurs in non-final end positions, it is often followed by such suffixes as -s, -ed, -er, -ing, etc.

In No. 270, symbol X reacted as y, being used but twice altogether, and once as a final letter. Whereupon the ending -BML, following X in HXBML, could be tried as -ing. Using these letters, LDLMN (g-ng-) would become gangs or gongs, with the former leading to vigilant for

CBLBEDMS (-igi-an-). Thus to ABCDE (-ival), evidently rival; and so on.

Now for this week's puzzles! P. B. Spofford's division problem employs a key phrase numbered 01234 56789. Note $L - L = C$ for the value of C. $U \times Y = L$ and $U \times B = L$ will show if U and L are odd or even. In Captain Kidd's crypt, consider Z and -O, and the phrases YDL Z, YDL LPU, and PZO LPU. Then complete XFOLO and XUGLO.

A comparison of RFZ and the phrase RFZ'E AFXOX will unlock RXX in Segro's contribution, leading also to *TXAXNA and the starred groups 8, 9, and 10. Observe the endings -YYVY and -VY in G. Hirano's cryptogram. Then fill in the pattern groups YAVBXNNY and UNNVBVG. Next, supply the middle letter in BUSGY and the two middle letters in BVPSBG.

Try to guess *ESBEYS by its peculiar pattern, in Arthur Tebbe's construction. If your guess is right, you can readily identify HEY, YNNEHU, and YEN. Find your own leads in Waltraw's pangrammatic Inner Circle cipher! A solution of No. 276 and the answers to all of this week's puzzles will appear next week. Asterisks indicate capitalization.

No. 271—Cryptic Division. By P. B. Spofford.

Y R L U) M Y L P U L (T Y B
U L B Y

A M R U
T P P L

R A U Y L
R A R B L

L A C

No. 272—Universal Sport. By Captain Kidd.

ZG ZDLF VHNEUH'O KNXUGOU XFOLO YDL Z TUR XUGLO,
YDL LPU PFKVUH PZO LPU BHNEKUSU FT PDGLNGS
BUVUOLHNZGO TFH Z RPFKU AUZH!

No. 273—Welcome Arrival. By Segro.

DVZND! DVZND! "RFZ'E AFXOX?" "*TXAXNA." "*TXA-
XNA RFZ?" "*TXAXNAGLX *UGNAGZV *RXXDHK!"—DVZ-
ND! DVZND! "RFZ'E AFXOX?" "RXX." "RXX RFZ?" "RX-
XDHK NOKYAZSOBPE!"

No. 274—Spreading the Net. By G. Hirano.

HUYVVY, LXTXRSZEVY, GVHFED YAVBXNNY PSEOA BUS-
GY, KDPSDY; AFZE TSZTRXZT, SGURVYOVZE KUD OBXC-
XZSR. KXT BVPSBG UNNVBVG!

No. 275—Imitations Preferred. By Arthur Tebbe.

BOLVC *LEAOJ SUUBL ZANU *ESBEYS FTYSVURL. LUSBL
ZYET ANBUN KNASRA. FTYSVURL POEMVTC YNNEHU
HEY YEN ZYET. UHUNCFABC GYKCC SAD. OXG! OXG!

No. 276—Objects of Art. By Waltraw.

NYCGU RGYST ZGYKVALMV, XBEVSF DYBLGKG, MLSEK
XSFLJYV PLBFY ALFZLS FGHKR-FYBPR OYSI KZGH. NYRK
XSDLVSF NBGSWV EVULOGZS HQYK AVLBE DXBPVE
LPGBR LUXTV.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

265—Key: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 C O R N F L A K E S

266—"Cocoa" and "cacao" have a triple similarity, being related in meaning, spelled with the same letters, and of like pattern.

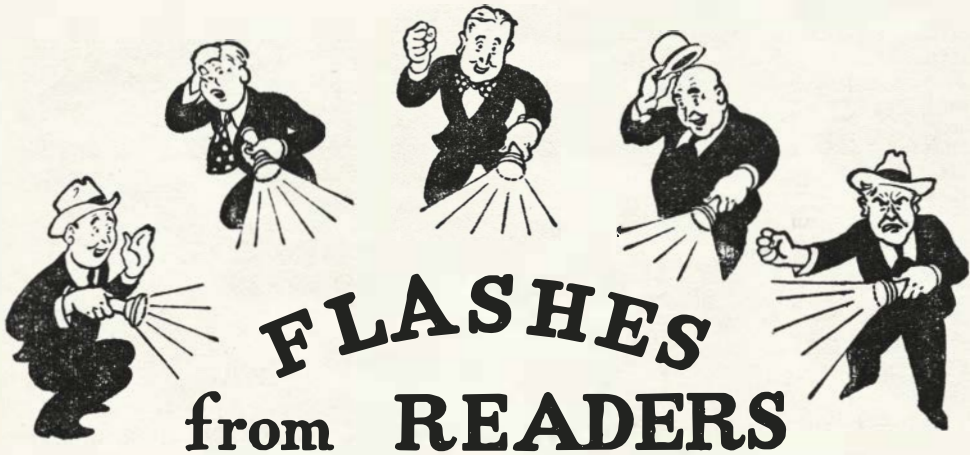
267—Small-town railroad bulletin: "The ten o'clock train'll go at eleven o'clock to-night, and there'll be no last train."

268—Broadway Bill, famous turf communicator and story teller, says: "Only wager what you can afford to lose; but not what you expect to win!"

269—Gin fizzes, plus habitual buzz of prattle of habitués of bizarre bazaar, "Zee Rendezvous," bigwig bivouac, befuddle morose wits of lecherous *roué*.

270—Rival hoodlum gangs hijack rum-laden truck. Ensuing fracas draws big crowd, vigilant police. Eight dead, four dying, six slightly hurt. Cops uninjured. Bravo!

Answers to any of this week's puzzles will be credited to the solver in our *Cipher Solvers' Club* for November. Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.



AS we write this, it is evident from trade reports and other statistics that the nation has emerged, at long last, from the ravages of the Great Depression. Money is freer; credit is more easily obtained. Once more steel girders are rising, like skeletons, above New York thoroughfares.

Naturally, every reader of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY has known that times are definitely better. And with better times, and more money circulating, it is necessary for us to voice, once more our warning against that unscrupulous tribe, the swindlers.

Now that confidence has largely returned, ill-advised persons will be lured by countless get-rich-quick schemes. Some of them will be legitimate—great risks and great profits. Others will be bottomless pits into which the unwary will drop small fortunes.

We suggest that now, especially, is a good time to study FRANK WRENTMORE'S authoritative, informative articles in this magazine. Now is the time, when in doubt about strange financial transactions, to get the best possible advice before investing. Like many other reliable ad-

visors, Mr. Wrentmore will be glad to answer letters from readers.

The job is yours, Mr. Quentin!

DEAR EDITOR:

I have held my peace long enough. For several months now, FLASHES FROM READERS has been overrun with people who have various axes to grind. Some of them want more serials or less. Some of them want more accuracy in the stories or less. All of them are clamoring for some radical departure from the magazine as it is now.

Well, here's a letter from a confirmed stand-patter. I like DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY better than any other magazine I can buy on the stands. I have liked it to that extent for a goodly number of years. I'm perfectly satisfied to have it remain exactly the way it is.

Some very smart stories have been appearing in your pages. Smart stories always have. Any single one of them would have been worth the price of the magazine to me, and I'm not a person to throw my money around, by any means.

It seems to me that it's far too much to expect of a great magazine that it please every reader with every story. I know in my own household that when any particular issue has been digested, there is always great difference of opinion about this story and that, and their respective merits. I assume that the same thing would be true on a larger scale.

Personally, I like serials. They enable the author to depict his characters more in detail, and they provide a more sustained period of consuming interest. But even if there were no serials, there is still more than enough in the magazine to make it worth my while.

Even when I fail to work the ciphers, and skip a couple of stories or departments, I still am satisfied with my bargain. I wonder if there isn't a great host of DFW readers who feel the same way about this that I do?

Sorry to have made this squib so very long, but I've been on the team for a long while, and I think it's time for someone to lead the cheering section.

EDGAR QUENTIN,
Dallas, Texas.

This was a surprise.

DEAR SIR:

I suppose you'll be searching the map of Pennsylvania for Pietermaritzburg, U. S. A. when you receive this letter. I'll gamble that few Americans realize that besides meaning United States of America, the abbreviation U. S. A. also signifies Union of South Africa.

I expect that I'm one of the most backward readers you have. My cousin in Chicago bundles up his copies of DFW and ships them on to me. So I'm always two or three months behind schedule. That doesn't lessen my enjoyment of the magazine a whit, however.

The first year I was out here (I'm working in the branch office of a large British banking concern) I would have died of loneliness had it not been for DFW. Now, your magazine so neatly fills my leisure time that it's troublesome keeping up with my correspondence.

I cannot know if you've ever experienced the pangs of nostalgia. I'm London-born, and whereas Pietermaritzburg is a thriving little town, it is pretty much lacking in the glamour and bustle of the great metropolis. But vicariously, through the agency of DFW, I have traveled the length and breadth of the United States.

I presume that you will consider this a pointless letter, but I have derived so much pleasure from reading your periodical that I thought I should tell you about it.

Yours most faithfully,
JNO. COWPERTHWAITTE,
Pietermaritzburg, U. S. A.

We're mighty glad to be able to help.

DEAR EDITOR:

Well, here is one reader who is more than satisfied with the stories DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY has been publishing. I have just finished the September 26th issue, and it's a honey, all the way through. Cornell Woolrich's story, "Murder in the Middle of New York," lives up to the little squib about it in FLASHES FROM READERS in every detail. It is one of the very best stories Woolrich has ever written, and DFW is to be complimented on publishing it, because there is

no magazine in the country of a general type which wouldn't have been more than glad to do the same.

I was also glad to see L. G. Blochman in the magazine. He is a very fine author, and this little story by him, "Bokor the Great," is quite in keeping with the usual excellence of his work. "The False-Face Murders," Judson P. Phillips' newest adventures of the *Park Avenue Hunt Club*, are quite in character with their predecessors, and I think that probably this is the very best story there has ever been about *Geoffrey Saville* and the others.

All the remaining stories are up to par, too, and this turned out to be a magnificent issue. For a number of years now, DFW has been my favorite magazine, since I'm a shut-in-veteran—and because of that very fact, I do most of my adventuring in the pages of your magazine.

May I thank you most sincerely for helping me by making my vicarious sleuthing so very enjoyable? With all my best wishes.

Sincerely,
JAMES QUINN,
Ft. Snelling, Minnesota.

A rebuttal.

DEAR SIR:

I notice several issues back that some gentleman took exception to the letter I wrote you recently. So he thinks I'm in my second childhood, does he? Well, I am getting along in years—far enough along to know better than to bandy words with young whippersnaps.

I still think that DFW is a swell magazine and I still maintain that only a half-wit can expect every story to please him.

This is just to let you know I haven't gotten too far along.

Sincerely,
THOMAS V. TOLLIVER,
Spokane, Washington.

Authors, take a bow!

DEAR SIR:

I just wanted to write in and tell you that I think DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY is a dandy magazine. I have a couple of snobbish friends who won't read it, and I really feel sorry for them for being so short-sighted and dull-witted. I think that probably the best writing being done in America—by the authors whose names will be household words a few years from now—are appearing in the pages of DFW and ARGOSY and a few other high-class magazines.

Yours,
GEORGE WATSON,
Dallas, Texas.

COMING NEXT WEEK

MARTLING'S MILLIONS

By T. T. Flynn

MARTLING, the Millionaire, was giving his annual banquet for his relatives—the most hard-bitten and hypocritical clan ever gathered under one roof. At the end of that ill-fated feast, young Philip Martling was murdered. Yet the murderer struck so swiftly and secretly—so many were the possible motives—that Detective Cranston was forced to confess, for the first time in his brilliant career, that he was completely baffled. Gambling on the uncertainties of modern black magic, he invoked the aid of Ramah, cunning wizard of the stage, to make the dead speak the truth. . . .



FOUR THOUSAND DOLLARS CHANGE

By D. B. McCandless

SARAH WATSON, she-devil detective, wanted money and a certain shoebutton, even if it took gunplay, thievery, brazen treachery and risking her own precious neck to get it!



TIME AND TIDE

By Carl Clausen

LIEUTENANT LAIRD McLEE was a hopeless landlubber. He admitted that he didn't know a chain hook from a davit, but he did have an unerring instinct for ferreting out murderers!



Stories by:

MAX BRAND

--

TOM CURRY

JAMES W. BOOTH

Plus the usual DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY features by FRANK WRENTMORE, "G-2," STOOKIE ALLEN and M. E. OHAVER.

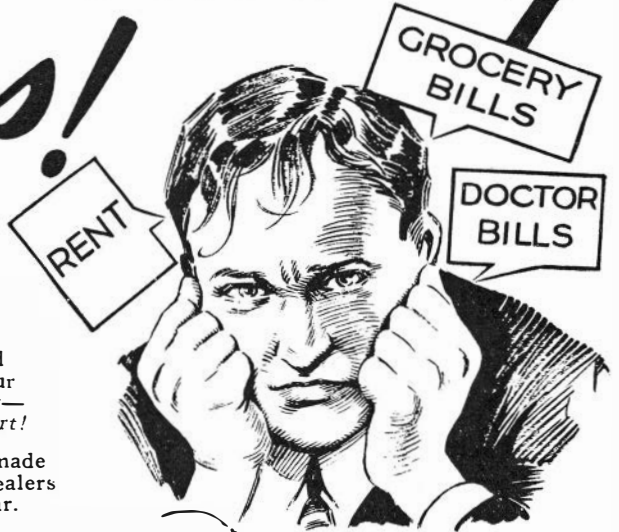
DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

Stop Your Money Worries!

Bills nagging, comforts vanishing, funds slipping, the fingers of want reaching out for what little is left—*what a torture* when jobs are hard to get and a family must be kept alive!

Would you change the picture? Then look at the cheering prospect opened up by my generous offer to help you set up a respectable and profitable business of your own—finance your prosperous growing business on my money—*without you risking a penny of your money to start!*

There's no catch in this. It's an honest offer, made by a responsible manufacturer whose Route Dealers made over one million dollars in profits last year.



I'll Give You This New Chance

I am a manufacturer, nationally known, with a million-dollar plant. I need more Dealers at once to work in their own home territories. I offer this liberal money-making chance to earnest men and women who will set up Routes in familiar neighborhoods. When you become a Dealer, you are like an Independent Merchant. Other Dealers now making up to \$60 and more in one week. You handle quality products in everyday use by all the family—a brand well-known the country over, but never sold in stores. You take orders at your convenience; light work; no experience necessary; no bulky equipment to carry; no store competition. *You begin earning at once—your first hour—no waiting, no delay!* Send for full details—**ABSOLUTELY FREE.**

What a delicious sense of security when you have your family provided for, money in hand and your future rosy. Not so much to ask, perhaps, but all too often denied.

It may seem "too good to be true" when I say my proposition has brought *prosperity* to many Dealers who work with me, but it is a *fact*. The chance I give those who cooperate and who pursue their opportunity faithfully, makes the way clear for *big cash returns for honest effort!*

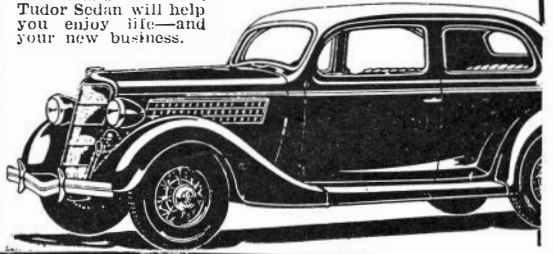
You work for yourself. You have your own business, are your own boss, work as you like. Results are up to you.

It is into this prosperous family I invite the willing and ambitious. You, too, will have the most glorious opportunity of your life to make good. Find out more about my proposition. Lose no time. Mail the coupon right now—**TODAY!** All the facts are Free!

ALBERT MILLS, President,
8749 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio

Use a car like this

My free gift to Dealers as a bonus for making the grade! Given in addition to your weekly cash earnings. This brand new Ford Tudor Sedan will help you enjoy life—and your new business.



Rush Coupon—Send No Money

ALBERT MILLS, President
8749 Monmouth Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio

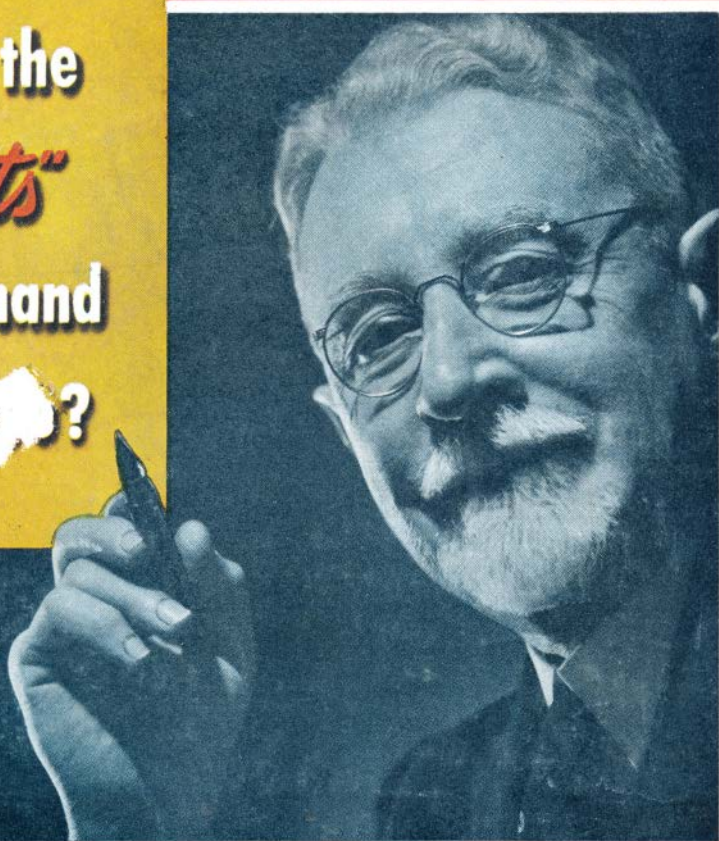
Without obligation to me, please send me FREE FACTS about money-making plan with which you help establish me in business for myself.

NAME

ADDRESS

(Print or Write Plainly)

What are the
8 "musts"
doctors demand
of a Laxative?



YOUR doctor's deepest concern is your health. And any medicinal product even remotely connected with your health assumes great importance in his mind.

You will discover, for instance, that physicians have a definite standard of requirements for a laxative before giving it their approval. Read these 8 points carefully. They are very important.

WHAT DOCTORS REQUIRE OF A LAXATIVE:

- It should be dependable.
- It should be mild and gentle.
- It should be thorough.
- Its merit should be proven by the test of time.
- It should *not* form a habit.
- It should *not* over-act.
- It should *not* cause stomach pains.
- It should *not* nauseate, or upset digestion.

EX-LAX CHECKS ON EVERY POINT

Ex-Lax checks on every point the doctor looks for in a laxative. Not merely on one or two. But on *all* the points that the medical profession includes in its code.

For over 30 years mothers and grandmothers have given Ex-Lax to their children. Why? Because the very qualities that make Ex-Lax an

ideal laxative for you are *doubly* important to a child's welfare. Ex-Lax has proved so satisfactory in millions of cases that it has become the largest-selling laxative in the whole world.

A REAL PLEASURE TO TAKE

Try Ex-Lax the next time you need a laxative. You will find its action mild and gentle. It works thoroughly, but without the slightest discomfort. You'll experience no upset, no nausea, no weak "dragged down" feeling. And Ex-Lax will *not* form a habit—you don't have to keep on increasing the dose to get results.

Ex-Lax tastes just like pure, delicious chocolate. It's the perfect laxative for all—children and grown-ups alike. At all drug stores in 10c* and 25c* sizes. Or write for free sample to Ex-Lax, Dept. Y116, P. O. Box 170, Times-Plaza Station, Brooklyn, N. Y.

*In Canada 15c and 35c

When Nature forgets — remember

EX-LAX

THE ORIGINAL CHOCOLATED LAXATIVE