

COMPLETE *Short Novel by* **C. J. DALY**

DETECTIVE

FICTION

WEEKLY



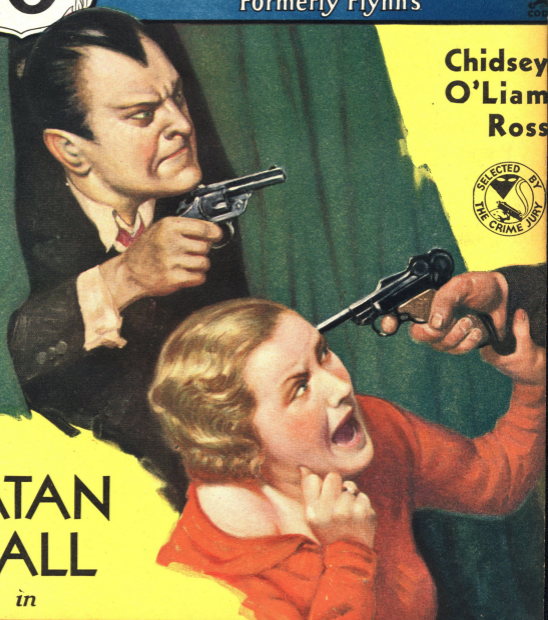
Formerly Flynn's

**Chidsey
O'Liam
Ross**



**SATAN
HALL**

in





NOAH WEBSTER

thought that COLDS were caused by COMETS

Master scholar, compiler of the great dictionary, Webster was among the first to inquire into the baffling causes of that private and public menace—the common cold.

His conclusion that colds were due to the fearful plunge of meteors through the sky was far from the truth, but no less distant than that of other savants who assigned colds to the bite of bedbugs, and to "sitting in cold, damp churches." (Dr. Thomas Haynes, 1789.)

For centuries, hundreds of absurd theories as to the cause of colds were advanced only to be sharply exploded. But now one has been presented that Science has generally accepted. This is the filtrable virus theory.

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At the first sign of a cold

Granting that colds are due to a virus that enters the mouth, nose and throat, is it not a wise precautionary measure to use a good antiseptic to fight such bacteria? Is it not wisdom to keep the oral cavity clean and healthy? Noted physicians tell us that it is. Millions of people find that it is.

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DETECTIVE

FICTION WEEKLY



TITLE REGISTERED U. S. PATENT OFFICE

"The Magazine Selected by The Crime Jury"

VOLUME XCI

Saturday, February 16, 1935

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WILLIAM T. DEWART, President THEODORE PROEHL, Treasurer RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

MESSAGERIES HACHETTE

PARIS: HACHETTE & C^{IE}.

3, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4

111 Rue Réaumur

Published weekly and copyright, 1935, by The Red Star News Company. By the year, \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico, and Cuba; in Canada, \$7.00; \$7.00 to other Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order, or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered. Entered as Second Class Matter September 4, 1924, at the post office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Title Registered in U. S. Patent Office. Copyright in Great Britain.

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*Through the Sinister Byways of the City Rushes
a Green-Eyed Killer—Satan Hall, Hunting the
Cold-Blooded King of Gangleland*

CHAPTER I

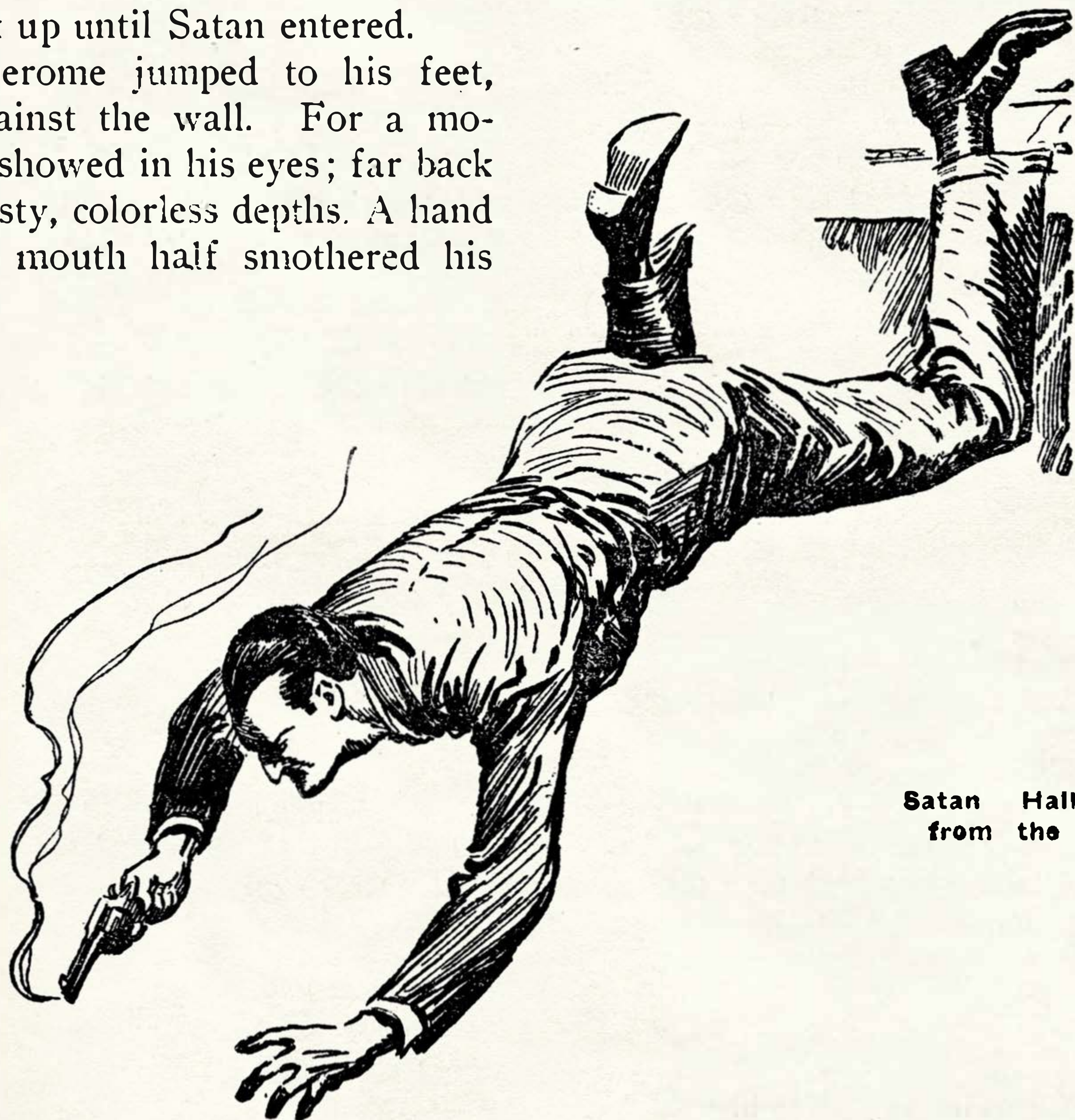
Waiting for Death

DETEKTIVE SATAN HALL nodded to the man at the heavy iron gate, passed along the stone corridor of the cell block, and finally paused before the long bars of a cell. He stood looking in at the figure crouched on the iron cot. The man didn't look up until Satan entered.

Eddie Jerome jumped to his feet, backed against the wall. For a moment fear showed in his eyes; far back in their misty, colorless depths. A hand across his mouth half smothered his words.

"What do you want now?" he said. "My lawyer, Aaron Whitlock, visits me every day. No rough stuff, Satan. No—no—I won't talk!"

Satan grinned evilly. Narrow eyes slanted until the green irises were oblong slits; thin lips parted. He shook his head with its V-shaped features.



Satan Hall hurtled
from the balcony



Hollis Daggett had fired

Jerome saw first one pointed ear, and then the other. Finally Satan spoke.

"I don't like you, Jerome. You tried to kill me—and an innocent girl got the lead from your tommy gun. She didn't die over pleasantly. I'd rather have killed you, of course, instead of beating you unconscious and dragging you in. But they said I couldn't get a man convicted." Satan paused. "Clarence Floyd Duncan, the broker, has identified you," he added. "Two other witnesses; witnesses will testify to seeing you in the death car, your fingers on the gun—just before I fired and shot your companion, Chopper Hays."

"I can prove I didn't do it," Jerome spoke quickly, emphatically—as if he wished to impress upon himself the

truth of his lie. "Guys will alibi me; big guys a jury will have to believe. It's a frame—these witnesses of yours!"

"Remember I saw you, too. I will stand up in court and put the finger on you."

"You! Yes, after swearing to get me—frame me." Jerome sneered now, but his lips quivered at the corners. "They've traced that gun to Chopper Hays. I wasn't even in the death car. There's no mouthpiece better than Aaron Whitlock!"

"Your finger-prints were on that Tommy gun," Satan said steadily, "smeared in the blood of the dead Hays. You can't bribe or intimidate finger-prints."

"Experts will swear they aren't mine."

Satan shook his head. "You know better, Eddie. It's the most complete case the D. A. ever had—and I gave it to him. They're betting ten to one along the Avenue that you fry."

Eddie's eyes shot furtively about

that cell as if seeking escape in its dark corners. At length he spoke:

"Hollis Daggett, the big-shot, will take care of me. I'm his friend. He said I won't burn."

"And I'll say you won't burn—if you talk. Just the name of the man who sent you to kill me. We want you as a witness for the State against Hollis Daggett."

"You'd rather have Daggett than me! You want me to live so that Daggett will die! That's it, eh?"

"No," Satan said very quietly, "that's not it—not with me. I want to see you burn, Eddie. I'm just doing my duty now. The district attorney will take a second degree plea if you talk enough to fry Hollis Daggett. Twenty years to life, Jerome. Lots of the boys have been pardoned. Lots of the boys have just walked out."

EDDIE'S mouth twisted. He said, and he purposely put conviction into his words.

"Hollis Daggett is a big man; an honest man. I couldn't say nothing against him." And after a moment, added:

"And if I could—well, he's given me his word I'll never reach the hot seat. What do you think of that, Mr. Satan Hall?"

Satan nodded very slowly.

"Maybe he's right, Jerome; maybe he's worse than I pictured him. Maybe you'll never reach the chair."

There was such an ominous warning in Satan's words that Eddie straightened, put the question without realizing he had spoken it.

"What do you mean?" was all he said.

"Nothing—nothing much." Satan spoke slowly. "You have all your meals sent in from outside, Eddie.

Daggett arranges that for you, doesn't he? Of course you know that food is examined carefully for saws, weapons—such things."

"Yeah?"

"And you know that your dinner was delayed yesterday, and not exactly what you ordered. We changed the order, after your dinner came."

"You found something, eh?"

"That's right," said Satan. "We found something. We found a white powder, Eddie. Just the mistake of too much white powder. One third the quantity would have done the trick and maybe have passed through. It was arsenic."

Eddie straightened, jarred back against the wall.

"No?" he whispered. "No! Who'd do that?"

"You guess!" Satan's shoulders moved. "Who'd least like you to talk? Who's the habit of putting people where they can't talk? You guess, Eddie. My guess is—Hollis Daggett."

"No," said Eddie. "No!" His eyes raised as a man entered with a tray. "I don't believe you."

"Maybe not." Satan motioned for the waiter to set the tray down in the cell. "There's your dinner, Eddie. I didn't know if you'd believe me or not. That's your dinner from outside. I personally arranged things so it would come straight to you, unexamined. There it is. Want to eat it?"

Eddie looked at the tray; looked at Satan. He was not the same man he had been a few months before; a swaggering, blustering killer. The terrible beating he had taken from Satan the night he was arrested; the daily visits of Satan since, had put their mark on him. Just a rat who had been masquerading as a man, Satan thought. But Eddie said:

"I ain't a guy who'd roast alone. Daggett knows that; Whitlock knows that. He's got to get me free, or else—"

"If the verdict is guilty, you'll talk, eh? That will be too late for you; much too late."

Eddie Jerome tried to smile.

"If I get the seat, I'll squawk." He moved forward now, closer to Satan.



EDDIE JEROME

"That's right; squawk all over my face." His voice grew slightly louder; almost shrill. "They can't burn me; they wouldn't dare! You think I'm yellow. You think I'm a rat. Maybe I am. But I'm a guy who knows how to take care of himself—in stir or out of stir. And Daggett. He'd be the same. I won't burn alone; he won't burn alone!"

"There's your dinner." Satan pointed. And when Eddie just looked at it and said something about not being hungry, added:

"Everything's going against you, Eddie. Daggett is just easing you into the chair."

"Yeah? Yeah?" Eddie Jerome shot his head forward now. "Well—come around after the trial. I'll give you the horse laugh, or—an earful."

Satan shook his head.

"That won't do you any good, then. It isn't pleasant to burn, Eddie, even if friends burn with you. Sometimes things don't work right. Straps loosen or wires get crossed. There was a lad who was slowly—"

Satan steadied Eddie as he swayed forward.

"Better talk now. Your number's up," Satan continued. "It's the only thing that will save you. They haven't raised a hand to help you. Every witness is ready; every—"

Eddie clutched Satan by the arm. He had hard work talking.

"I—I—you're sure the D. A. would take a plea?" Eddie's eyes rolled frantically. "You—he wouldn't use it against me?"

Satan's green eyes flashed. The man was breaking! This was what he had waited for, hoped for—if never actually expected. But the idea of the poisoned food must have done the trick! Satan pushed the man from him, backed toward the door, and said:

"It's your chance, Jerome. Take it or leave it. Personally, I hope you leave it, but I've done my duty."

"You—you fiend, you!" Jerome straightened, staggered slightly, leaned against the wall. "You'd rather burn me!" He rushed forward and clutched Satan at the iron door, "Wait! Come back tomorrow. Tomorrow I'll—yes, I'll make a decision."

Satan shook his head.

"It's your last chance now." His eyes went to the untouched food on the tray; stayed there until Jerome's glance followed. Without looking up Satan said, "You got a fondness for apple pie with powdered sugar on it. Last time the sugar wasn't—well, goodby!"

Jerome held Satan.

"Not yet," he pleaded. "Tonight. An hour even. I'm—I'm waiting for

a message—a message that will tell me if—if—for God's sake! Satan, I'll—I'll talk. Talk now!"

SATAN turned. He was about to call the stenographer he had waiting. Then he stiffened. Aaron Whitlock was coming down the corridor.

Aaron Whitlock was a shrewd, clever man. He took in the situation; spoke quickly, before Satan could thrust him back. He knew his rights, knew that Satan had no authority to keep him from that cell, knew that he could make plenty of trouble for Satan if he did keep him from his client. But he knew something else; knew it all in a split second; knew that, rights or no rights, Satan was going to keep him from Jerome—and knew the reason; or at least guessed it.

Though he was physically powerless against the detective, he was mentally alert. His words were not of reprimand nor of personal indignation. Though they were spoken apparently to Satan, they were meant for Eddie Jerome—and reached him, too.

"The broker, Clarence Floyd Duncan, was found dead a few minutes ago," Whitlock said quickly; almost in a single breath. And added in a slower but just as loud a voice, "Almost seems a punishment for perjuring himself against an innocent man."

Satan's hands fell to his sides. He turned and looked at Eddie Jerome. The cringing fear was gone. His lips had ceased to quiver, his fingers had relaxed slightly.

Aaron Whitlock had delivered his message and was the lawyer again; the lawyer who knew his rights and knew the people who would see that he got his rights. He stopped, smiled, took his glasses from his nose and wiped

them carefully as he watched Satan tramp back down that corridor toward the iron door at the end. Then he turned and faced his client. His smile was pleasant, genial; his voice hearty; his greeting one of assurance, perfect confidence.

At the end of the corridor Satan fairly snarled at the guard:

"I told you not to let anyone down to Jerome."

"Yeah, you did." The guard raised mild blue eyes. He had been on duty there for many years, and wasn't easily excited. "But Aaron Whitlock knows his rights. He wanted in; he had a right in; he got in."

"A minute, a few minutes more, and the greatest scoundrel in the city would have faced the electric chair."

"Says you!" The guard shrugged his shoulders, and when the green eyes of Satan Hall became glaring balls, added:

"How long do you think it would take Aaron Whitlock to get my job? Just as long as it would take him to slip a nickel in a phone and talk to the right party."

Satan shook his head. It was the rotten system again. He said, but without much feeling:

"Yet, the greatest menace in the city would have died, and his death would have blasted the whole system—the whole damnable system."

"Sure!" The guard nodded placidly. "And in that blast my wife and three kids would have starved. The trouble with you, Satan, is that you ain't human."

Satan looked at him a long time; or rather, through and beyond him. He was thinking of something else; of some *one* else. Of Clarence Floyd Duncan, the sturdy little broker who also knew his rights; who wouldn't go

in hiding until the trial; who wouldn't have a detective following him about. He had been touted by the papers as the star witness for the state! Satan frowned. Even though his death would not make much difference to Eddie Jerome, about to be tried for murder.

CHAPTER II

The Dead Broker

SATAN stood looking down at the dead body of Clarence Floyd Duncan. He had been shot once, directly between the eyes. He still sat in his office chair, his head and shoulders down upon his desk. There were powder burns about the wound, where the gun had been held close to his forehead. The crime was simple and effective, as most professionally planned and executed murders are in these modern times. The private secretary of the broker told the facts; two clerks agreed with her in almost every detail.

A customer had come into the office. From his card, the girl recognized him as a client from Cleveland who had done business with Duncan for over six years, but had never visited the office before. He was a big man; ruddy of complexion. Yes, she would know him again, anywhere.

"He wasn't in Mr. Duncan's private office for more than three minutes when the shot came," the girl said in a tired, weary voice, as she repeated the story for the tenth time. "I think, for a moment we were all shocked to—to—well, stiffness. Then we could not do anything. The hall door opened and two men stepped in. One had a revolver; the other had a big gun. I was told afterwards it was a machine gun. The man with the revolver stepped over and cut the wire to the switchboard. They didn't speak, they

just stood there; and the man who said he was from Cleveland opened the door and came out of Mr. Duncan's office.

"All right, boys, let's get going," he said to the other two men.

"Then to me—to us, just before he closed the outer door—' If you want



SATAN HALL

it in the belly, step out in the hall and squawk."

The girl colored slightly; the red stood out vividly on pale cheeks. "Those were his words—exactly."

"And you didn't squawk, eh?" Lieutenant Schmit said.

"I don't know." The girl started to cry. "It was like a dream; more like a talking picture."

"Sure—except you didn't talk, eh?"

"Mr. Kohn picked up a ledger and tossed it through the window facing Broadway."

"That," said Schmit, with exaggerated seriousness, "was using his brains. We'll probably be giving him a medal. Mr. Duncan sure knew how to pick 'em. No wonder brokers are starving."

"Mr. Duncan was a brave man," the girl snapped, her chin up. "Every paper has his picture; every paper said so."

"He was a fool," Schmit snapped. "If he'd let the police guard—"

The commissioner of police interrupted the lieutenant by a whistling sound with his lips. He led Satan back to the private office where the body was. "Hollis Daggett, I suppose. At least, he's behind it," he said.

"Sure!" Satan looked at the dead man. "He was confident and important, and I didn't like his line. Doing his simple duty; no need for protection! No one could bribe him nor intimidate him! A cocky little runt; but he had guts."

"Or didn't understand." The commissioner only half agreed. "I've wired Cleveland, but of course the murderer didn't come on to the city. And it isn't like Daggett." He laid an arm about Satan's shoulders. "You've built up a case, Satan; a real one—no holes in it. You have two witnesses hidden in Jersey. Even I don't know where they are. But the fingerprints are conclusive evidence. The killing of Duncan will prejudice the papers, the people, the jury. There wasn't any sense in Daggett's having him killed. I can't understand it."

Satan still looked at the body; it was some time before he spoke.

"Daggett's not a fool. I think I understand." And he told the commissioner of his talk with Jerome.

"But there was no poison in the food?"

Satan smiled.

"Jerome believed there was. And I had him ready to talk. He was waiting for a message; something that would tell him things were breaking his way. Daggett had to do something

quickly, to convince Jerome he was with him—working for him. Something big; something desperate; something that a mind like Jerome's would understand and appreciate. Murder! Yep, he killed Duncan for one reason only. His death would let Jerome know Daggett was working for him. You see. The great Daggett was on the job!"

"But it won't help Jerome's case; it will hurt it."

"Jerome doesn't know that, and Jerome counts with Daggett right now. Daggett acted just in time."

"These witnesses, Satan—Jerome's alibi. They'll be big men."

"They'll blow up on the stand." Satan nodded confidentially. "That is, if they ever take the stand. I'll put the finger on them before they get a chance to talk. I'll have each one's movements the night of the alibi traced, and—"

"Yes! yes!" the commissioner said. "But they'll be surprise witnesses. If you only knew who they were—"

Satan's grin was evil.

"Me! So I've got to do that, too. Maybe I'll have to turn the switch up in the Big House. Maybe you'll expect me to cart the body out."

Lieutenant Schmit tossed open the door and pounded across the floor. Satan stopped, hesitated, said:

"I'll put on the feedbag, Commissioner. If you want me I'll be in the same old place."

SCHMIT was talking, but Satan didn't hear him as he passed slowly from the office and to the street. He was still thinking ten minutes later when he entered the little restaurant. He turned to his favorite booth and stood looking down at the girl. He knew her, of course. It was Nina Radcliff.

"How did you get here?" he demanded, but followed her pointing finger and sat down on the bench opposite her.

"I knew you ate here," she nodded. "And I just came. Glad to see me?"

Satan lit a cigarette, started to put the pack back in his pocket, then tossed it across to the girl, and waited until she had lighted one.

"I don't know, Nina, and that's a fact. I never did know much about women; least, about you. You're seen quite often with Hollis Daggett, ever since you left home."

"Left home!" She jarred erect; brown eyes flashed. "Thrown out, you mean. Father wanted to send me out of the country, and would have, if Hollis Daggett hadn't interfered." She smiled as she recalled the threats to ship her away. "There! Don't lecture, Satan. You saved my life; I saved yours. We're even. I'm going my way."

"You're running with a bad crowd, Nina. I have seen your father. Your home's open to you again; and you're free to come and go."

"That freedom comes too late," she said slowly. "You're right, of course, Satan, and I was wrong. I thought I could play in the gutter and remain clean. I thought I could avenge the death of my friend, Mercy Oakes. And they played with me, Satan. Despite what you told me, I believed that Hollis Daggett was my friend; that he tried to prevent crime, not control it for his own ends. He helped me when I needed help; he treated me as if I were his own daughter until—Satan, Satan! I'm into it now. Nothing can save me!"

"Nonsense! You can still take that trip around the world. Daggett or his crowd can't harm you then. Besides, he has other things to think about."

"It's not Daggett I'm afraid of now; it's the disgrace. You were right, Satan; so terribly right. Don't you see? I telephoned you the whereabouts of Walsh, and so led you into the trap when your life was attempted and that innocent girl was killed. I know, I know! I did-it all for the good of the law; for your good. I thought I was clever enough to hear things I should not hear. But it wasn't that. Jerome and Daggett planned that I should hear things, so that unknowingly I'd trap you to your death. That I didn't was just luck—and your quick shooting. I—I—Satan, I don't know what to do, where to turn."

"You think of things rather late." Satan looked at her coldly. "Who else knows that about you? I won't talk."

A little hand crept across the table, fastened on his wrist. Soft brown eyes looked up into hard green ones; green ones that remained hard.

"You won't, Satan, I know that. No matter what I've said; what I've done, you'll protect me. But—why?"

Satan straightened, let out a long breath.

"It's the system, I guess," he said. "Your father's a friend of the commissioner, for one thing. For another—"

"For another?" She leaned forward.

"It wouldn't do anyone any good for me not to. Besides, you're in a position where you might really help—if you ever make up your mind just which side of the fence you're on."

"I thought maybe you were thinking just a little bit of me. I'd do anything for you, Satan. Anything; good or bad, system or no system, law or no law."

"You've done enough," he said. He was thinking of the trap that nearly

cost his life, then he thought of the gun she had shoved into his hands when he was surrounded in Daggett's headquarters. She had saved his life. He jerked his hand free, and said brusquely:

"I won't lie about it. You saved my life! If you ever need me, I'll come." And with his mouth curving slightly, "That'll be on my own time, of course." And changing the subject quickly, "Only Jerome and Daggett know anything about your activities. They've got other things to bother them now. They can't talk without involving themselves."

"That's right." The girl nodded. "They can't. But Jerome's involved already. Despite what Daggett says, I know he thinks they'll convict Jerome. Then Jerome will talk about Daggett; talk about me, and Daggett will, too."

"He's threatened you?"

"No." She shook her head. "He's warned me; nothing more. He says that we must see that Jerome is not convicted."

"Yeah? Just how?"

"WELL—" she looked around the room—"I don't know if I'm watched or not, but he sent me to you. He thinks you—you like me, Satan."

"So what?"

"So—" she straightened herself now—"there will be no more lies between us. He wanted me to find out the names and addresses of those witnesses you have hidden away."

"So he could kill them, eh?"

"No." She shook her head. "So he could buy them off; send them out of the country."

"That's what he says!" Satan's smile was not pleasant. "But he'd kill

them, of course, just as he killed Duncan. How did he expect you to influence me?"

"Well—" she turned up her head slightly—"Daggett likes me, Satan. And he said I was a woman who could get anything she wanted; from him or from you."

"So you want me to rat-out on the citizens that pay me. Is that it?"

"No." She shook her head. "That's not it. Of course, I'd like you to say that you would. Any woman would want to feel that a man—a man thought of her like that. But I—I wouldn't let you do it."

"Then don't worry. I won't be doing it. Anything else you came for?"

"Yes. Daggett has let me see that his protection must be paid for. As you say, I'm very close to him." She set her lips tightly. "Nothing can save me. I'm going down. I'd like to take Daggett down with me."

"You would!" Satan leaned forward. His hand gripped her wrist now, his words were eager; quick. He didn't see a beautiful woman who was in love with him. He didn't feel any thrill in that hand beneath his. He felt—thought—just one thing. Here, perhaps, was the weak link in the chain; the chain that might snap and leave Hollis Daggett dangling at the end of it. He said hoarsely:

"What do you know? Let me have it."

The girl looked at him a long moment. Her eyes closed slightly as if in understanding.

"There's nothing for you but your work, Satan. You haven't room in your life for anything else. I guess you're just not big enough."

"Never mind me. What can you do for the state?"

"I don't know. Tell me what you

want me to do; I'll do it." And quickly she added, "Not for the state. For you."

Satan ignored the directness of her attack. He said:

"There's something you might do. I'd like to know the names of the surprise witnesses for Jerome."

"How do you know there are any?"

Satan's shoulders shrugged.

"It's in the air; in the papers, even."

"And if you had that knowledge, how could you use it? You couldn't change their testimony, could you?"

"Yes." Satan was emphatic. "I think I could. If these men are big enough to convince a jury and considered honest by the world, Daggett must have something on them; something that will make them lie."

"And what good would that do you?"

"If Daggett can use it to make them lie, I could use it to make them tell the truth. Do you know them?"

"No." She seemed to think. "But there are such men; I know that."

"And these men must have been threatened with evidence; written evidence against them; tangible things that will be returned to them after they testify. Now—if I could lay my hands on that evidence, I could—"

"Yes, yes!" she said eagerly. "It must be that! I heard Daggett talking to Whitlock. I know he gave him something to keep, and that Whitlock's old clerk is taking care of it. They thought you'd suspect them, but would never think of Whitlock's clerk having it. So it's safe."

"Is it?" Satan's lips set grimly as he came to his feet. "Don't worry about yourself, or threats of jail. You've given valuable information to the state, Nina. The D. A. will take care of you."

It was her eyes that flashed now. She came slowly to her feet.

"I'm glad to hear," she said stiffly, "that the state pays its debts. And it used to be hard for me to understand why you didn't have any friends."

"Friends," said Satan, "are worse than enemies. Enemies can never shoot you in the back, because you don't turn your back to them. Enemies can never break a confidence, because you don't trust them with any. So you aren't my friend any more."

She looked at him a long time. He couldn't read all that was in her eyes but he saw enough. The same old feeling that, despite all her actions, she was good and clean and decent, returned. She nodded as if she read his thoughts.

"No, I'm not your friend," she said. "I haven't been your friend for a long time. God help me! I've fallen in love with a machine; a human guillotine!"

Satan half came from the bench as she swung past the table, but he dropped back again. For some time he looked at the paneled back of the bench across from him. Then he lifted his cup of coffee, tasted it once, set it down, and ordered a fresh cup. When the hot coffee came he drank it very slowly. He was not thinking of the girl. He was thinking of the head law clerk who had been with Aaron Whitlock for so many years.

CHAPTER III

Stratagems

AARON WHITLOCK sat straight and stiff on the edge of his chair.

Hollis Daggett turned and faced him; stood so, his feet far apart. For a full ten seconds that large oval face, with all its tiny features placed in the center, was expressionless. Then the

small mouth opened and Daggett spoke; soft, low, like a woman.

"Finger-print, bullets from the killer's gun, witnesses that no one ever heard of, will all blow to pieces before my two surprise witnesses for Eddie Jerome. Prominent men, both of them. One is a jurist of outstanding position and honesty whose life is an open book. Both these men will go on that stand and swear that Eddie Jerome was with them at the time of the shooting." He poured a drink, offered it to Whitlock, threw back his head and laughed lightly.

"I've got a good memory. My mind went back and I recalled the one thing that would make these men take the stand. I simply gathered the evidence together, went to see them and laid my proposition on the line. It wasn't air castles that I'd send tumbling from them, but real castles they'd built and enjoyed over the years." He grinned, snapped his lips. "They saw it my way, and they'll go on the stand and alibi Jerome."

"Humph!" Aaron Whitlock looked at the man. He had to admire him; that is, admire him for a scoundrel. It was said along the Avenue that Hollis Daggett never knew when he was licked.

"We've got to get Eddie Jerome free. Hollis Daggett always sticks to his friends."

"Friend! From what you said about Jerome when he first threatened to squeal, I'd hardly think—"

Daggett cut in, and his voice was even softer than usual.

"Friend, yes. The boys will understand that, after all the money I spent to free Jerome, it will be only fitting that—when he is free—I give him a good funeral. One must take care of his *friends*—alive and dead."

Aaron Whitlock looked into that repulsive yet placid, undisturbed face and shuddered slightly. There was nothing of anger or hatred or even passion in Daggett's face, yet he shuddered. Daggett was simply a cold, cruel, calculating man. Simple trickery, perjury, or even murder were just equal parts of a plan with him. Whitlock said, and his words popped out like individual sentences rather than one single thought:

"You're getting Jerome out to—"

"Yes," Hollis Daggett said very gently, "I'm getting him out to have him killed."

He stopped and turned to the ringing phone. A moment later he said to Aaron Whitlock:

"It's for you; your head clerk."

It was five minutes before Aaron Whitlock put the phone down. Then his face was white, and although the room was cool he wiped the sweat from his forehead with a huge silk handkerchief.

"That evidence against our prominent alibi-witnesses has been stolen," he said finally. "We can't use it to force them to lie now, but someone can use it to force them to tell the truth if we call them as witnesses."

"Taken—stolen!" Daggett seemed surprised more than shocked, and not quite aware of the full significance of the blow. "Why—it couldn't have been! You said this clerk had a hiding place that ripping the house apart wouldn't discover. Then how was it found?"

"My clerk," said Aaron Whitlock slowly, "told the thief where the two envelopes were hidden. Oh, don't rave, Daggett! It's done now. He told him because he had to tell him; he told him because the man was—Satan Hall."

"Easy does it, Aaron," Daggett

said after a bit. "Just what does that mean?"

"It means," said Aaron Whitlock, "that a woman has made a fool of you. Nina was in this room when you said the old clerk had the evidence. She told Satan and he guessed the truth."

"I'm not interested in your views on the girl; my feeling toward her," Daggett said. "I want to know how does this affect Jerome's case?"

Aaron Whitlock looked directly at him.

"It means that it blows our case up, if we ever had a case. I wouldn't dare put our witnesses on the stand with that evidence against them in the hands of the prosecution to show why they are committing perjury. Besides, they wouldn't take the stand after Satan spoke to them. So—we simply won't use them."

"Then—what?"

"IT'S an open and shut case. Jerome will talk immediately after the jury convicts him—just as soon as he reaches his cell and can send for Satan. You've spent enough money on him to let me know how you feel about his talking." Whitlock's hands came far apart. "I'm your lawyer, Hollis. The case goes on Wednesday. My advice is—to get what money you can together and skip the country."

"Leave all this behind me? Money, power?" Hollis Daggett said, half to himself.

"Well—" Whitlock looked at his watch—"you know best what Jerome can say. As for me, I get sick Wednesday, and one of my partners will take over the case."

"I see." Daggett stepped between Whitlock and the door. "And how do you think Jerome will like that?"

"I won't be interested in Jerome's feeling toward me. He knows nothing about me. It's you who has to get from under."

"And I'll burn, eh? And you don't like to represent; even associate with lads who burn. Listen, Aaron! Burning won't be pleasant for me, either; and I'll talk, too." He raised a finger,



HOLLIS DAGGETT

pounded it against Whitlock's chest. "Jerome knows nothing about you, but I do. Think; just think! We'll travel the last mile together!"

There was no doubt that Aaron Whitlock was thinking and that his thoughts were not pleasant. The cane fell from his hand, the briefcase also. He sank rather than dropped into the low, soft chair. His face was deadly white; he had hard work getting his words out.

"You—you'd do that to me; your friend over the years?"

"Just like *that*." Daggett snapped his fingers. "If you miss a day, an hour, a minute even in that court room—I'll put the finger on you."

"But my dear fellow; my dear boy!" Aaron Whitlock's words were as false as the painted smile on his

face. "If you left, I'd be here in the country to protect you; fight for you; use every bit of influence that I—"

Hollis Daggett interrupted, and his words were sharp.

"I have faced crises before and I'll face this one. I never took a run-out powder, yet. There! don't argue! We'll beat the chair yet." And after a long pause, "Beat it together."

"But he's sure of conviction, and he's sure to talk."

Daggett nodded; his little mouth was set tightly.

"Sure of conviction—yes. But he won't talk. I'll arrange that."

"But appeals won't interest him."

"Tut, tut. There'll be no appeal. He'll be free."

"You mean—he'll escape?"

Hollis Daggett's little mouth opened; shoe button eyes sparkled. It was as if he enjoyed a joke.

"Yes," he said, "that's it. Eddie Jerome will escape." He bent his huge body and picked up the lawyer's cane and briefcase. "We understand each other, Aaron. A fine fight, a fine appearance in court, not a word to Jerome about his escape. Tell him an acquittal is sure, that the jury is fixed; anything to keep him pepped up until the trial is over. You'll stick, of course, Aaron."

"Yes, yes. Certainly! Whatever you say."

The little lawyer walked uncertainly toward the door.

"And, Aaron, I'll want to see Jacob—Jacob Paul," said Daggett.

"The man who—who killed the broker, Duncan?"

"That's right. The man who killed Duncan. Get in touch with him in the regular way. He'll do anything for money. And, Aaron—that place of yours in the suburbs! You told me of

it once. The place that even your servants don't know about."

"Why—good God! Hollis, it's not that damned girl again! You're not—"

"The keys to that place!" Hollis said. There was a sharpness in his voice. "And it is that damned girl. She'll be out of the way."

"I see, I see." Aaron stroked his chin, hesitated, started to say the keys were at home, thought better of it, and taking out a leather folder, removed a couple of keys from it and gave them to Daggett. "She's not—she's not going to die, is she?"

Daggett smiled, looked toward the ceiling. The apartment of Nina Radcliff was on the floor above.

"She's not going to die if she wants to live," he said. There was no sharpness in Daggett's voice now; and when Aaron Whitlock would have spoken, he added: "No—no more now."

He closed the door after the lawyer, locked it carefully, then looked again at the ceiling, to a door behind long curtains. He would tell her to come down those little private stairs. But he didn't. He juggled the keys in his hand a moment, shoved them into his pocket, and walking to that door, pulled it open and went slowly up the narrow stairs.

CHAPTER IV

Satan's Mark

HOLLIS DAGGETT'S feet made no sound as he reached the door above, clutched the knob, turned it, frowned; then knocked lightly. There was a moment's wait; quick feet crossing the floor inside; quick feet that went back and forth, back and forth. Daggett nodded. He thought he knew what that pacing meant. Very carefully he took a key from his vest pocket, silently placed it in the lock and

turned it sharply, with a dull click. Then he pushed the door quickly open and stepped into the room.

Nina Radcliff turned from the door to the hall, pushed the door closed and faced him. Yes, faced him. Her hands, behind her back, clasped the thick curtains that gave on the small entrance hall. The thing she thought she had seen occasionally; the flash of something that made her know fear, was there in his beady eyes. Then it wasn't there; as if it had never been there. She said now, pulling her coat tightly about her:

"I—I didn't hear you knock. It's very late; I was about to retire."

Daggett smiled, nodded, walked across the room close to the curtains, stretched a hand toward her wrist. He took in the little hat; the smart tailored coat; the tan gloves. She moved quickly from his grasp, as if she didn't purposely avoid it.

"Retire!" Daggett said. He put his back to the curtains and the door beyond that led to the elevators—and freedom. "Not with your hat and coat, I'm sure."

"I just came in," she said awkwardly, as she walked toward the window.

"I've been talking to Aaron Whitlock," Daggett said slowly. "You were with us the other night; in the next room. I spoke to him about some papers; where he was to put them."

There was nothing in the man's voice to alarm the girl; nothing now in those little, beady eyes. Yet she was alarmed. But she didn't drop her eyes from his; she couldn't. She just pulled her coat about her. The room was hot, even close; yet she pulled her coat tighter.

"Do you remember what I said; where I told him to put them?" Daggett moved toward her. "They were

important papers in the Jerome case."

"I don't know." Her voice was no more than a whisper, a husky gasp in her throat. "I was in the next room; I didn't hear anything about papers."

"No, no." Daggett was very close to her now, standing almost above her; just the flat table between them—not even the whole table, simply the edge of it as she moved; slid along it. "Aaron told me something else. Jerome blames you for his trouble. He's going to talk now. I've got to take you away—tonight." Daggett moved quickly to the closet, tossed wider the partly open door, raised a fat hand, pointed one of those long, peculiar fingers at the closet. "There's your bag, packed; ready to leave. You expected me to take you, then?"

"I—I—" she stammered. Then: "Yes, I was going to leave. I was afraid of something like that—since you warned me, you know."

"That's right. And I promised you protection. I'm going to keep that promise. I'm taking you where no one can find you." He moved toward her again. "You're going with me—now."

She couldn't move; couldn't dash by him and get to the hall door she had left open. She was backed into the alcove by the window. He was very close to her; his huge head was bending over her. Each tiny feature seemed more pronounced. The beady eyes, the little flat nose, the small, puffy mouth—all in the center of that large, flabby face.

Nina Radcliff spoke, though she did not recognize the voice as hers.

"I'm going back to my father. He wants me now."

"You won't be safe there," Daggett said. "Don't you understand? It's Jerome. You telephoned Satan. A girl was killed. Your call was a trap. You

helped lay it, spring it. They may hold you for murder. You're going to hide away while I try to keep Jerome from talking. Murder! Nina, and—"

"No, no!" She raised her hand across her mouth. "They can't; they won't. Satan said they couldn't—that the district attorney will help me be—be—"

She stopped dead; her eyes were wide, staring.

"Go on." Daggett spoke very low. "The D. A. will help you because you gave valuable information to the state. You told Satan where that evidence was. I helped you, I saved you. You two-timed me." His hands stretched out, rested on her shoulders. "Do you know what happens to women who two-time Hollis Daggett?"

"Yes, yes!" she cried out. "I did. I did! I've been a fool. I learned the truth. My friend, Mercy Oakes! You—you had her killed, and that other poor unfortunate girl, too. And now the innocent man; the witness—Duncan, the broker." Her voice was shrill. "Yes, I know, and I don't care. I'm rotten clean through. You're going to kill me; going to kill me as you killed those others. I knew it tonight; knew it when I—I—"

Great hands closed upon her shoulders, pulled her toward him.

"YOU'RE not going to die," Daggett told her. "Yes, I know.

You told Satan, and you put the gun in his hand downstairs that night in my headquarters. But you're beautiful, Nina; very beautiful. Maybe not to other men, who can't see through my eyes!" He ran his hands through her hair, pushed back her head so that she was forced to look into his repulsive face. "It's not your fault. I was a fool to trust you. All women

are false. You're not going to die for me. You're going to live for me."

"Where are you taking me?"

"A place in the suburbs for the present. A little place of Aaron Whitlock's. Just the two of us." Unconsciously Daggett straightened slightly. "I'll be running this great city some day. You'll be safe when Jerome's case is straightened out. No one would dare touch Hollis Daggett's woman. Come!"

He held her in his arms for a brief instant. She fought, she scratched at his face, feet pounded against his legs. She wasn't afraid anymore; she wasn't hysterical, though her voice was shrill and her words sharp, staccato sounds.

"Your woman! Are you mad?" She shuddered. "It's like something filthy crawling over me." She beat at his chest now as his great hands came out again and rested on her shoulders. "And it wasn't the law I did it for. It was for Satan Hall. I did it for him; everything for him. And now they'll burn you, too. Satan said so. Satan said so! Don't you understand? I love him. I love him! I—"

Nina Radcliff never finished her sudden outburst. Daggett gave ground a little. His huge right hand moved out and in again. It was a sharp, snapping blow delivered from the elbow. The back of Daggett's hand caught the girl across the mouth, knocking her off balance, sending her back and onto the window seat.

Daggett didn't move. He stood there looking at her; the tiny drop of blood forming on her lower lip; the hand she dazedly ran across her bleeding mouth.

"You might remember, too," Daggett said slowly and without anger; at least, visible anger, "that Hollis Daggett beats his women when he doesn't fancy how they act. Remember that!

I give everything, and demand everything in return. It is quiet in the country. I used to keep a dog and a whip—a dog whip. Come!" He leaned forward, jerked her to her feet.

"I won't! I won't!" She cried out now. "Satan will know; Satan will find out, and he'll kill you!"

"Will he?" Daggett said very quietly. "And not so loud, my dear, unless you wish to be carried from the building." His hand gripped her shoulder again. She would have been surprised at his great strength if she had even thought of it. The long fingers hurt, and she felt the blood drain from her face.

The girl knew fear now. Her eyes darted frantically about the room; to the little door by which Daggett had entered. Her mind pieced together things she had heard—that Daggett owned the hotel.

And her glance went to the hall door; that is, to the curtains before it. Went to it and stayed riveted there just as Daggett swung around and faced those curtains also; faced them and faced the figure that stood squarely between the figure.

"Satan! Satan!" The girl cried out again. This time there was nothing of fear or even hope in her voice. There was an assurance; a certainty, and a sob, too, as her words choked off.

Satan Hall didn't speak; he just stood there between the curtains. His face was hard and cold, each feature immobile, evil. Green eyes were slanting and steady; hard, cold and cruel—the red mouth a single long gash below that tapering, satanic face.

It was Hollis Daggett who spoke first. Despite his reputation for never losing his head, he said now, without much sense:

"Satan, what are you doing here?"

Satan took one step forward. "I knew you'd know about the evidence and I knew you'd guess the truth. And I found the door unlocked," he said.

Hollis Daggett's tongue licked at his lips. He said:

"How long have you been by the curtains?"

Satan's lips curved slightly; at least, at the ends the single gash became, for a moment, two lines of red as he spoke.

"Long enough to see you strike the girl." And after a pause, in which Hollis Daggett's glance dropped from Satan's face to his hands—his empty hands. "And long enough for *this*." Satan moved slowly forward.

For *this*. For *this*! The words echoed over and over in Daggett's brain. Not because he didn't know the meaning of those words; he did know it—knew it well; far too well. It meant the mark of Satan; the slapping down of lawlessness; the physical violence that—that was reserved for common hoods; not for men like Daggett, not for big-shots like Daggett, not—

"God! Satan, you can't! Not me! Not me!" Daggett cried out the words as Satan moved closer to him.

"Yes, you!" said Satan. "Just like any common hood. You can use your friends afterwards; your power afterwards, if you want it known along the Avenue."

QUICK, chaotic thought flashed through Daggett's mind; jumbled truths that piled one upon the other. Satan's hands were empty, and before his rise to power Hollis Daggett had been a fast man with a gun; few faster. He had had practice since, too; practiced day after day in the shooting gallery in the basement.

Other thoughts, too. The public

knowledge that Satan often slapped men down he hated; murderers, thieves, common gunmen that the law could not put the finger on. If he should kill Satan now; if he simply jerked the gun out from beneath his left armpit and fired, it would be self-defense. He'd have a witness, too. The girl wouldn't dare turn against him once Satan was dead.

Daggett, the great Daggett, the feared and powerful Daggett, reasoned as others had reasoned. Satan's hands were empty; Satan would reach for a gun; reach for it too late, and—and—

Daggett waited. His little eyes brightened; his lips puckered slightly. Satan was very close to him; very close indeed. He could see—yes, *feel*—those green, malignant eyes boring—boring—

Daggett smiled; smiled as Satan stood directly before him and slowly raised his open left hand. Daggett's right hand moved up and across; beneath his jacket, close to the gun. And Satan spoke:

"Here's your chance, Daggett, if you've got the stomach for it. Just a single draw and a single shot."

Satan's left hand moved quickly. A huge palm smacked against Daggett's cheek. It was a short blow; a quick slap. Yet Daggett rocked sideways. He pushed his hand further beneath his armpit, then saw the thing in Satan's eyes; saw it as others must have seen it; those who had been slapped down by Satan. Fast-shooting men, quick-drawing killers who had stood still and taken it.

It wasn't terror, exactly; it wasn't fear. Or at least Hollis Daggett didn't recognize or admit it as such. It was something else that made him stand there; made his fingers hesitate, just touching his gun. He knew the truth!

Satan wanted him to draw a gun, wanted him to—because Satan wanted to kill him; wanted him to be found dead with a gun in his hand.

Daggett was rocked back again by Satan's right hand. It came—and Daggett stood there like any common thug and took it; took it with his fingers already touching the cold steel of his own gun; took it until Satan's right hand turned into a fist, shot upward with terrific force, and collided with his jaw.

Daggett's eyes rolled slightly, took on a dull, stupid stare. Mechanically he reached out a hand toward the desk; the desk that wasn't there. And Daggett, the great and powerful Daggett, simply folded up and sank slowly to the floor.

The girl rushed to Satan, threw her arms about his neck, burst into sobs.

"He'll kill you for that. He'll kill you for that!" she cried. Satan held her off. "I never saw Daggett like that before," she said. "Indecisive, uncertain, not knowing exactly what to do."

Satan's lips twisted slightly, but his green eyes remained the same; hard, cold and cruel. He said:

"He knew exactly what to do, and did the only thing that would have saved his life."

"But, Satan"—this as they reached the door, the girl with the bag in her hand, Satan making no effort to relieve her of it—"you never could have reached a gun and shot him before he—he shot you."

Satan held open the door, looked up and down the deserted hall.

"But he never could have killed me before I got in one shot," he said. "The breaks were his, Nina; but not the sort of breaks Hollis Daggett wants. When he shoots it out, he

wants to be sure only one man dies; and that one man is not Hollis Daggett."

"But you—you offered your life for me tonight!"

She swayed very close to him, her head touching his shoulder. Satan looked down at her.

"The sooner you get such ideas out of your head, Nina, the better," he said. "I came because the information you gave me put you in this spot. I could have stuck a gun in his chest or beaten him unconscious with a single blow. But it struck my fancy to do it that way."

"Then, why? I don't understand. He's a big man, he has powerful political influence. He'll—he'll—"

"He'll do nothing," Satan told her flatly. "That's why I slapped him down. It isn't a story he'll want to go the rounds. There is nothing that will 'get' any man quicker than ridicule. I won't talk and make trouble for myself, and bring you into it. He won't talk because it's not a pretty story nor a flattering one. Besides, he has trouble enough now without bothering over that."

The girl stopped, laid down the bag, "I can't; can't carry it another step," she said.

"You'll have to leave it behind, then. I want both hands free; both hands, understand."

"Oh!" She lifted the bag again, staggered along at his side, squeezed into the automatic lift at the end of the corridor ahead of him. "We're going out the front way?"

"Yes," said Satan, "the front way. After all, it's a public hotel, no matter if Daggett owns it or not." And as they reached the lobby, he added:

"They may have ways of keeping guests here who try to leave, but I

don't think they'll interfere with one willing to blast his way to the street."

THE house detective spotted Satan. Finding that he could not draw him aside, he whispered:

"Don't want to see you get in any trouble here again, Satan." His sly wink was quite evidently meant to convey a friendly warning. "That's Daggett's girl-friend you have with you."

"That's what you think," Satan nodded. "And what Daggett thought up until a few minutes ago."

"Where's Daggett now?" The house detective laid a hand on Satan's arm, but lifted it almost immediately when those green eyes turned.

"He's lying down for a bit." Satan wasn't often given to humor, and the house dick couldn't tell from his granite-like face if he was wise-cracking then. "Good night!" Satan finished abruptly, and he passed out the door with the girl.

In the cab the girl said, "Where are you taking me?"

"Home!" Satan answered abruptly. But he was relieved when she offered no objection, and partly to forestall one, said:

"Where was Daggett taking you?"

"I don't know." She tried to look at him in the flashing lights. "Some place out of town. I think he said the place belonged to Aaron Whitlock."

Satan's hand moved forward on his chest.

"You may be sure, if it was Aaron Whitlock's, no one would find you there. But that doesn't matter now. You're to stay at home, Nina. You're to believe for a time that I know more about crime and the doings of criminals than you do. I don't think Daggett will bother you; he will be thinking too much of his own hide. He has

never let any woman interfere with his rise, and he won't let one be his fall."

"No." The girl's voice was very low. "He wanted me; would have taken me away despite all the things I've done against him. Satan"—a hand stretched out, rested almost timidly on his arm—"Satan," she said again, "I've done a lot of things to hurt you, and—and—"

"Forget it!" he said gruffly. "You did more for me; for the state, tonight, than any wrong you unknowingly did before. That evidence! It clinches Jerome's conviction beyond a possible doubt."

"Yes. But how did you find it?"

"The old clerk told me where it was."

"He did!" She was surprised. In the past few weeks she had wondered at the closeness of Daggett's organization. "How? Why?"

"I beat it out of him," Satan said, simply. And then, almost in the same breath, "Here's your father's house."

CHAPTER V

In the Hall of Justice

THE court room was crowded, but not unusually so. The morbidly curious seek all murder trials. But the trial of Eddie Jerome, which had just ended and was now in the hands of the jury, was not a particularly juicy morsel for the avid thrill-seeker.

Jerome was a common killer, who had shot at a detective, missed him, and killed a young girl. But the young girl was not well known, and Jerome was rated by the public as an ordinary murderer. Only the reporters sensed the importance of the trial; the sensation that might follow immediately upon the conviction of Jerome, and even they

were uncertain of that importance. A whisper here and there; a whisper that Eddie Jerome, found guilty of murder in the first degree, would shout information that would blow the roof clean off the City Hall.

That he would be convicted there was no doubt. The underworld grapevine, which had sent out the information that Eddie would have an alibi that would free him, had proved a myth. The consensus of opinion was that although Aaron Whitlock had made a beautiful speech to the jury, he had in fact thrown his client to the wolves—the wolves in this case being the men who adjust the cap and slit the trouser leg and see that the wires leading to the chair are in perfect condition for the final burn-up.

Eddie Jerome had seen his defense crumble; witnesses fearlessly point him out in court, finger-print experts swear to the smears in the dried blood upon the machine gun, ballistic authorities point out the curious marks and indentations on a great enlarged plate as they swore under oath that the bullet in the girl's stomach had come from the same machine gun that bore Eddie Jerome's finger-prints.

It was a cinch that Eddie Jerome, as well as the others, knew that his entire case had collapsed. He must have known that there could be only one verdict. He stared long and steadily at his defense counsel, Aaron Whitlock, and there was haste as well as fear in his eyes.

Outside that court room, circling the square hall, was a balcony. Satan Hall and the commissioner of police draped themselves against the marble balustrade of that balcony. Below and directly before them swing doors with small round glass windows gave entrance to the court room. To the right

and plainly in view from the balcony, the great wide staircase led down to the main floor.

"You were right, Satan," the commissioner said. "Daggett's here. Detective Mallory is following your instructions; he's had his orders. But why that boy? He's young—new."

"I wanted him because he's young; little known and hardly out of harness. Daggett won't recognize him. I want him to watch Daggett's every move here today. Don't ask me why; I don't know why. But then, I don't know why Daggett's here, either."

"It doesn't matter, does it?" the commissioner said abstractly. "The jury have already reached their verdict. It will be 'Guilty,' of course. But we'll hear soon now. You see, I was right and you were wrong. You don't have to shoot men to death to get justice. Jerome will talk—talk Hollis Daggett right into the electric chair. But it's queer, Satan. Daggett here at the court . . . I saw him on the stairs only a few minutes ago." The commissioner paused, dug Satan in the ribs with his elbow, jerked his head down the narrow balcony with its rows of doors. "There's Daggett now, and your detective, Vincent Mallory, not far behind him. Now, why did Daggett come up here?"

Satan didn't have time to answer that question if he wished to. Daggett was already upon them. He paused, nodded at Satan, tapped the commissioner on the shoulder, said:

"Is this trial so important, Commissioner, that you come down?"

The commissioner turned his head slowly, looked straight at Daggett.

"Yes, I believe it's that important." And after a moment's hesitation, "Jerome is going to talk if he's convicted; going to name the man who

hired him for the job, and for other jobs—murder jobs. Jerome worked for you once. It was rumored; more than rumored, Daggett, that you were paying for his trial."

"Oh! not that; not exactly that," Daggett said easily. "But he did work for me. Rough and ready, but a good honest boy; at least I thought so."

Satan remained silent. Though he didn't miss a word, he was wondering why Daggett was there. Was it to see Jerome from that balcony; give him assurance, a new confidence? But that was ridiculous. Satan had been in that court-room. He had seen the hate in Jerome's eyes. And he knew that Jerome was ripe; ripe for the big squawk just as soon as the verdict—the assured death verdict—came in.

The commissioner was saying:

"So you think Jerome innocent, eh, Daggett?"

Daggett shook his head.

"No," he said, "I don't. It's one thing to help those who work for you; serve you. But Jerome lied to me. I believed in him; believed the police wanted to—well, in plain words, frame him. I did you an injustice, Commissioner. I discovered Jerome's lies; I've washed my hands of him. I've had a hard blow. I wouldn't raise a finger to save Jerome. They'll bring him out this way, I suppose; not through the judge's chambers again."

BOTH Satan and the commissioner stared at Daggett. Not that they believed him, but they didn't understand; didn't understand at all. Within the next hour both men expected to hold Hollis Daggett for murder.

"They'll bring him out this way, all right." The commissioner's head bobbed up and down. "You'll get a

last look at him, and he at you. The judge barred the photographers from the court room, but they'll get their pictures right after the verdict." He waved his hand in acknowledgment of a court attendant's gesture. "They're sending for the judge now. I'll be going along down. Coming, Satan?"

"Not just yet," Satan said. He had decided to remain close to Hollis Daggett. But he couldn't do that. For, as the commissioner rounded the rear of the balcony toward the stairs, Daggett turned quickly and entered one of the doors behind him. It was the office of a city official; it was marked *Private*.

Daggett had never mentioned being slapped down a few days before. He treated Satan as he had always treated him; but then, Daggett seldom showed his hate or his fear of men. That hate or fear was seldom realized by the man who had earned it; it was only recognized by his friends and relatives after he was dead.

Yes, Daggett was a big man; an influential man; a powerful man, and would be for another hour—maybe less. Then they might have to widen the chair up at Sing Sing to fit his huge bulk. But the state could afford that expense.

Still, why was Daggett there? It took nerve, perhaps. Daggett had that, Satan admitted grudgingly. It took acting. Well, Daggett was a showman; there was no doubt of that. But one thing Daggett wasn't. He wasn't a fool, and only a fool would come there knowing what the verdict would be—must be.

The girl broke in upon Satan's thoughts. He was first conscious of trim gray-clad legs; the soft tread of feet. He looked up just as she reached him. **Nina Radcliff!**

"Why did you come here?" Satan snapped.

There was nothing of pleasure in his greeting. He told himself that he wasn't glad to see her and was surprised when he discovered that he was. She seemed different now; more like the child he had first thought her. She didn't pout, nor talk that nonsense about being in love with him. She said simply:

"I'm getting used to being a pest to you. I don't mind any more. I've come for advice and protection. I got a telephone call to come down here to the court house today, or else—"

"Or else—what?"

"Or else Jerome would drag me into the thing. It was Hollis Daggett who telephoned me, of course."

"You are going to see him?"

"I don't know." She jerked up her head. "I think I would like to see him. I would like to see how he took that slapping down. He can't harm me here in this crowded building."

"No, maybe not. What then?"

"Well—what am I to do?"

"Go home, as I told you. Even a man condemned to die can be granted certain privileges. Things can be made easier for him. Perhaps Jerome won't care to bring you into it at all. It's only Daggett he'll want to bring down, or bring up with him."

"You'd do that for me, Satan! Why?"

"The state," Satan said, "takes care of those who aid it. Stay home." And suddenly he added:

"Listen! There's the verdict now."

Satan's low voice sounded strangely loud in the sudden silence. It was as if a hand had suddenly come down and covered the mouth of everyone present on that floor below, in the court room beyond, even on the little balcony.

Clearly through the open doors to that court room could be heard the rap of the judge's gavel on wood; clearly, too, the tread of men's feet; the feet of the twelve men who had decided the fate of Eddie Jerome. Feet of death, to him. Feet that scraped and pounded or trod lightly on rubber soles across that floor. Then silence.

"Gentlemen of the Jury, have you—"

A break in that voice for a few seconds, as a camera man below climbed noisily upon a high window sill that others had forsaken to be near the door. Voices hissed, "Sh—s" in an angry murmur. It was the moment all had waited for.

Then the cough of the foreman of the jury; followed by a nervous clearing of his throat. And when the people thought the man had lost his voice, suddenly it boomed forth.

"Guilty!"

There was more speech, but no one heard it. At least, no one in that great crowd now close to the door. A hum, a buzz, a rumbling roar went up. The people had heard what they came to hear. The death sentence.

Satan looked up. Nina was gone. He saw her once in the large hall below the balcony. Not in the crowd, but behind the crowd as she sought the stairs that led to the main floor and so to the street.

SATAN, too, had heard twelve men pronounce a death that he could have pronounced—yes, delivered in self-defense—several months before. But he was glad. Not glad that he had heard Eddie Jerome condemned to die, for that wasn't what he had heard. No. To Satan Hall, who waited so many months, it was the doom of Hollis Daggett that he heard.

The death of the city's greatest menace; the man who, directly and indirectly, was making a cesspool of corruption and crime out of the world's greatest city. Perhaps not the end of the alliance between politics and crime, but certainly the beginning of that end. Satan nodded. The girl had disappeared without once looking back; lost in the crowd.

Uniformed men were coming from the court room now; pushing, thrusting the crowd back. Ordinary citizens gave way. Cameras were held waist high, cameras were held above heads; one or two, set firmly on tripods, were pushed across the stone floor.

Satan turned slightly. Hollis Daggett was on the balcony, just to the right and behind him. He was standing in a doorway talking in a loud voice to an assistant D. A.

But Satan was not listening; he was watching below. More cops now; a few plainclothes men. And then came Eddie Jerome, his right hand manacled to a burly policeman's left wrist. Satan's eyes widened. Eddie Jerome had not broken under the verdict; Eddie was not a cringing, frightened man. He was bitter, defiant vengeful.

Satan nodded in satisfaction. Eddie Jerome was a man who would talk; be willing, anxious, even eager to talk. He was ripe now to say things he might regret later; he was ripe now to disclose everything black in his life—no matter how black, if it would drag Daggett down with him. No third degree for this statement; just an extra fast stenographer to take it down as it spouted in hatred and vicious passion from Jerome's lips.

Cameras clicked, an occasional bulb flashed, men called out. They were crowding close to Jerome now. Held by two officers, the murderer turned

sullen, twisted his lips slightly, half bent his head.

Crowds mulled around the photographers, close to the stairs where Jerome must pass. Satan still leaned upon the balcony rail and stared down at the scene below; the face of Jerome, the eager camera men getting closer and closer, and—

IT happened, just like *that*. One, two, three sharp reports. A stunned silence as human brains refused for a moment to realize that sudden and violent death that had been inflicted right in the huge hall of that court house; right before the eyes of dozens of policemen and detectives. Eddie Jerome's head rolled sideways. He tried vainly to raise a cuffed hand to a white shirt; a white shirt that was turning red. His knees gave, his mouth hung open, he half fell, half hung from the wrist of the officer beside him.

Plenty of excitement after that. But Satan knew what had happened. He didn't actually see the man shoot Jerome, but he knew who did it; knew it as he saw the tiny wisps of smoke suddenly rise from a square, old-fashioned, box-like camera; saw the side of the man's face; saw the camera crash to the floor and the man turn—and look straight up at the balcony; straight up at Satan Hall.

Satan's gun was out the moment the first shot echoed; out even before Jerome had caved at the knees. Satan could have killed the man; at least for a split second he could have put a bullet directly into the killer's skull. But he didn't. The whole thing had been a terrible blow to him; a blow that he realized with the sudden sinking of Jerome's body.

Hollis Daggett had been directly behind Satan, in that doorway. Hollis

Daggett had been talking to an assistant D. A. Hollis Daggett had an alibi that was perfect. And Hollis Daggett had come to the court, gone on record as glad that Jerome was convicted, had—

Satan's chance was gone to get the man who killed Jerome. Gone just as the young D. A. cried out something unintelligible except for the one word, "Murder!" Then went clattering along the balcony toward the stairs. Yes, Satan's chance was gone. Not gone because he had lost his head in a sudden emergency; not gone because he was afraid of hitting some innocent person with a stray bullet. There would have been no stray bullet. Just the single shot from Satan's gun and a hole almost directly in the base of the killer's skull; a hole that would have killed him instantly—and set Daggett free. For Satan hoped that this man, if captured alive, might take the place of Eddie Jerome, and talk. And it would be difficult for the man to escape with so many cops around him.

Yet he might escape. It was that crowd, the confusion that were going to help. Let the killer escape. What a blow for the police department; what a ragging from the news-sheets! Satan saw the killer again. Saw him on the stairs; passing down them between the rows of frightened people. He saw the man raise his gun; saw him first as he fired and shot to death a uniformed policeman who was awkwardly trying to loosen and draw his own gun.

Satan's eyes narrowed, Satan's lips set, Satan's finger half closed upon the trigger. He was about to shoot to kill then; kill the man who had shot down the cop; shot him to death as the valiant officer tried desperately to block his escape. Satan's finger didn't close; he lowered his gun slightly.

There was a chance the man might talk. Satan was above the killer; could see him plainly, where the other detectives on the floor below the balcony, fighting desperately with the cursing men, the hysterical and fainting women, could not tell just which wildly dashing figure was the murderer. Yes, Satan lowered his gun; waited for a chance to topple the man over with a bullet in his hip. He couldn't miss. He hit what he shot at—always.

Something round and hard pounded into Satan's back, up between his shoulder blades. A voice spoke; low and soft, like a woman's. It said:

"I'm holding it under my coat, Satan. Press that trigger and you take lead right through the spine."

Satan's finger loosened. The voice was familiar, but he wasn't sure, not absolutely certain. He thought that it was Hollis Daggett. If he couldn't actually swear to the voice, he could swear to the menace in it; the certainty of death in it. He'd be a fool to die like that, and set Daggett free. For he knew that Daggett—if the man behind him were Daggett—knew that their shots would ring out together; that people would only know that Satan had fired and not realize that he had been shot—killed, until the medical examiner pulled the bullet out of his spine. Yes, he'd be a fool to shoot. Daggett wouldn't dare to, if Satan didn't fire and cover his shot.

Satan straightened as the gun bore deeper into his back. In that split second of indecision, or perhaps decision, the picture had changed below. Nina Radcliff appeared, directly before the escaping murderer, blocking his passage. And then not blocking it. Not blocking it because the murderer's gun came up and—with a vivid memory of the dead policeman, Satan jerked up his

gun a fraction of an inch, pressed the trigger, and shot the murderer straight through the back of the skull.

No time to wound him then. Just the closing of the man's finger on the trigger would have killed the girl. Wounded men can close fingers, dead men can't.

Nina shrieked as she looked up at Satan, saw his body jar, pitch forward and hurtle over the balcony.

Satan thought he felt the pounding lead as he hurled himself forward, hurtling over and over to the hard stone floor below. He didn't hit those hard stones directly. Three cameras were broken beyond repair; three camera men struck the floor. Satan crashed on top of them, rolled off the human, involuntary life-net, and struck his head on the floor.

CHAPTER VI

Death in the City

SATAN was the first to come to his feet. He looked up toward the balcony. Every available foot there was crowded. Satan ran misty green eyes along the row of white, frightened faces, spread his feet far apart, and backed against a pillar to keep himself erect. He shook his head, found that it hurt and ceased trying to clear it that way. He was surprised to find that he still held his gun in his right hand. He looked at it stupidly.

God! he was able to think clearly a few minutes ago; quick thoughts in split seconds. Now he just couldn't get a constructive thought.

Someone cursed and said something about a camera—plates. A woman shouted shrilly; something about fainting.

If she fainted or not Satan didn't know. He spread his feet further

apart to keep his balance, or did he spread them; weren't they spreading themselves? Someone spoke to him. It was a little man; a very small man. Three little men who looked a lot like each other; like the commissioner. It was the commissioner; all three of them. They spoke. Their mouths moved together, but there was just one voice. It said:

"Nice shooting, Satan. He's dead. But what made you fall over the balcony?"

Satan's eyes widened.

"Fall," he said. "Fall?" He repeated the word again and again. Things seemed clearer. The commissioner was there, and there was only one of him. Satan pronounced each word very slowly, for he wasn't quite sure if he was actually talking, but he said:

"Hollis Daggett shot me in the back and I—I—damn my soul, I won't go down now." But Satan did. He sank slowly to the floor.

He opened his eyes to find himself on a leather couch. The commissioner and the doctor were standing near, but were not looking at him. The doctor said, and with an authority that Satan did not like:

"No bullet wound of any kind, Commissioner. Oh! I'm not saying that he wasn't struck before he toppled over, though the talk is that he pitched himself forward as he shot. It jarred him up inside, of course; twisted his neck a bit and would have cracked a more—er—"

He turned and saw Satan staring at him. "A few days on your back, Detective Hall, will make you as good as ever."

"That's what you think." Despite the pain in his head; the sudden dizziness, Satan sat straight on the couch,

swung himself around and placed both his feet on the floor. And suddenly he added:

"So you make a liar out of me. I wasn't shot, eh?"

The doctor, who had no time for levity and was known for his dignity, replied stiffly:

"I'd place my professional standing on it."

The commissioner took the doctor quickly from the room; returned to Satan.

"What made you think you were shot?"

"Think it!" Satan lowered his voice. His head throbbed. "Well—I did lean forward to shoot. Yes, he might have butted me over. But the girl, Nina Radcliff! What of her?"

"You don't mean she was there at the court today?"

"I mean just that." Satan didn't like the doubtful sort of solicitous note in the commissioner's voice. "And I mean that Daggett held a gun against my back; at least, I'm almost sure it was Daggett."

The commissioner laughed, but without much mirth.

"'Almost sure!' and you a detective," he said. "That's fine evidence. 'Almost sure!' But he couldn't have, Satan. There were too many people on the balcony; all crowded together there after Jerome was killed."

"And that," Satan was emphatic, "was the very reason he could get away with it. The gun beneath his jacket; his body close to mine, shielding it. Confusion; fear; almost panic! People had no eyes for him then. Maybe he didn't shoot, maybe I jarred back too suddenly. Maybe I was helped over that railing by Daggett. Maybe—" Satan paused, pushed a hand across his forehead. "I did throw my-

self forward though. I—" Suddenly he came to his feet. Half staggering across the room, he gripped at the commissioner's arm. The motion was not to steady himself. He said hoarsely:

"Nina! She looked up and *saw* Daggett! God! Commissioner, find out if she's home yet!"

The commissioner waited until Satan sat down again, then turned to the phone, lifted it, said: "Get me Chester Radcliff. Yes, yes. Anyone will do; his daughter particularly. Hello. Yes. Chester? Is Nina home?"

It was several minutes later that the commissioner laid the phone back in its cradle.

"**Y**OU'RE right, Satan," he said. "She isn't home. Her father didn't know she came to the trial." He looked at his watch. "After all, a very few minutes have passed. I had you carried right here. I dare say she'll turn up later. Nothing could have happened to her."

"No? No?" Satan stroked a pointed chin. "She looked right up at me and saw Hollis Daggett. He had men waiting to take her away, so that—"

"So that—what?" the commissioner cut in. "There was nothing for her to see, for Daggett didn't shoot you, because you're not wounded. I think you're wrong about the balcony."

"Maybe! Maybe! But it's funny about Vincent Mallory. I had him there watching Hollis Daggett; watching his every move."

"Yes, yes. But Daggett has his alibi. I've sent for Mallory. I came right here with you; I'm not much more informed than—"

A tap. The commissioner crossed the room, opened the door, smiled at the serious, sober-faced man who stood

there. "This will be word about Mallory."

It was.

The sober, serious man said, without changing expression and without showing emotion:

"Detective Vincent Mallory was shot right through the mouth up on the balcony. No one seems to have heard the shot or seen him fall, and he died without uttering one word or even regaining consciousness. There doesn't seem to be any reason for his death."

"No? No!" Satan staggered to his feet; swayed there, his green eyes wide. "Well—there *is* a reason. He saw the picture, sensed my danger, and that's why Daggett shot him; not me. And that's why the girl is not home!"

"Nonsense!" the commissioner said; but thinking suddenly of the dead detective, added:

"I mean—about the girl, of course. She couldn't have reached home yet . . . and Daggett liked the girl, and all that . . . but to have her taken away at such a time . . ."

The commissioner paused. "Yet there is no way to prove that Daggett had anything to do with the death of Jerome, though we know it to be true; and there is no way to prove that he shot Mallory on that balcony. No witnesses!"

Satan shook his head.

"I think," he said, "there is a witness. And I don't think the girl will ever return home. Don't you see, Commissioner? In all that confused crowd one pair of eyes looked straight up and perhaps—just perhaps—saw Hollis Daggett shoot Mallory."

The commissioner thought a moment. When he spoke the confidence had gone out of his voice.

"We'll see if she returns home later, Satan," he said. "But where are you

going? There's nothing to do until then."

Satan stood flat footed before the commissioner. His eyes were very narrow. He didn't even see the officer who was still in the doorway. Though his eyes were directly on the commissioner, it is doubtful if he saw him; he just looked through and beyond him. He said finally:

"Nothing to do until then, eh? She saw me; saw me hurtle from that balcony, then ran away!" Satan looked toward the ceiling. He thought of what the girl had told him, knew that she wouldn't have deserted him then. No, she wasn't built that way. She was straight and clean and—

Satan steadied himself, walked like a man in a trance toward the door. The commissioner stepped before him.

"I've given that girl a rotten deal," Satan said. "Perhaps I've even driven her out to her death in her anxiety to show me she could help—could help me." He pounded a finger against his own chest, almost as if he were another person. "Not help the state, not the city, just me. You see," Satan went on, "I was never used to having anyone think of me like that. I didn't understand it; I didn't believe it, I guess. Yet I looked right at her and knew it was true. Well—I'll be going along."

"But you can't. You're not fit for it. What are thinking of, Satan?" the commissioner protested.

"Not of the state, not of you. Peculiar, isn't it? I'm thinking of the girl, Commissioner; just of the girl."

"But there's nothing you can do for her—now." The commissioner followed him to the door.

Satan swung around. There was a nothing dreamy in those green eyes now; nothing soft either. They were burning, hateful balls; cruel, malig-

nant—and something else; a thing that made the commissioner's hand drop from Satan's arm. The eyes of a killer!

"Nothing to do for her, eh? I might go out and shoot Hollis Daggett."

The commissioner moved aside. Satan's footsteps echoed down the hall.

The commissioner didn't speak. He felt that death had been let loose in the city.

CHAPTER VII

No Tomorrow

IT wasn't much later that others thought the same thing. The manager of Daggett's hotel was about to stand on his rights and demand a search warrant, but somehow and for some reason he never could explain he let Satan search Daggett's rooms.

As for the house detective! He was having a bite to eat and didn't know that Satan had gone through Nina Radcliff's rooms, as well as Daggett's, until he met the detective just outside the hotel entrance. Daggett had spoken to him in no uncertain terms the other night when the house detective burst in and found Daggett just rising from the floor. He didn't forget that now, when he spoke his piece to Satan. Still, the real reason was not his absence of fear of Satan. It was because it was dark on the street, and he did not get a good look at Satan's face. He let his own recollection of Daggett's call-down influence him in his choice of words.

"So you've been to the hotel looking for Daggett. Well—he's gone hunting, I guess." He dug a finger sharply into Satan's ribs. "And taken his own game with him. You know—Nina Radcliff."

It was then that the house detective saw Satan's eyes, but he saw them just

as he glimpsed a moving fist. He was only aware that he crashed back against the building, that his mouth was bleeding, and that Satan was turning the corner.

But if the house detective was slow to understand, the underworld wasn't. The news spread quickly that Satan was loose again; that the feared and dreaded Satan Hall was on the kill.

They didn't know why, didn't even bother to find out why. From his questions they knew that Hollis Daggett was somehow connected with those green burning eyes, that cruel mouth.

Satan went brutally about his hunt for anyone who would know where Daggett had gone. Terror reigned in the underworld.

Cops, lieutenants, inspectors heard of it. But they had no authority to call Satan off. Satan, despite his cry about the system, against the system, was not of that system. He worked alone, worked directly from the commissioner of police.

Ward captains began to hear things; bigger politicians were appealed to, and finally, the complaints came home to the commissioner of police himself. Not from a crooked politician, but from an honest one. It wasn't the influence behind that complaint that could not be ignored.

It was the justice, the truth of the complaint itself.

A bad precedent was being set. A man hired by the city to protect the citizens was breaking the very laws he was paid to preserve; breaking them openly while searching the city for Hollis Daggett.

The commissioner sent for Lieutenant George Morrisey, Satan's closest friend.

"You've got to catch up with him, George, and bring him to me," the

commissioner said. "By God! if he finds Daggett he'll shoot him to death. A good thing for the city maybe, but a better thing for him if he doesn't. It'll be murder."

"But," said Morrisey, "if Daggett kidnaped the girl; if Daggett shot young Vincent Mallory to death, and she knows it, why—"

"Daggett has shot others," the commissioner said abruptly, "and no one could ever prove it on him. Nina Radcliff has been a fool. She's over twenty-one. There is no way to prove the kidnaping. She went to live in Hollis Daggett's hotel of her own free will. Daggett has an alibi, be sure of that—and one Satan won't break, this time.

"Nina Radcliff is the only one who can stand up in court and accuse Daggett of kidnaping. She is the only one who can stand up in court and accuse Daggett of murder. Satan's evidence is just guess work, useless without her. Get Satan; I must see him. If Daggett has the girl, and hears of Satan's search, he will undoubtedly kill her at once."

"I guess I can find him, but what can I tell him?" Morrisey asked.

"Tell him that the girl is clever enough to keep the information that she saw Daggett kill Mallory a secret."

"Hell!" Morrisey blurted. "Why, that's the first thing she'd threaten Daggett with, and you know it."

"Yes," the commissioner agreed as he paced the room. "But Satan won't know it. I tell you it's his head. He's not fit to be loose."

"His head, eh?" Morrisey smiled slightly. "I was wondering if it could be his heart."

"His heart!" The commissioner looked at Morrisey. "Why, Satan hasn't got a heart."

"You and me both know better than

that, Commissioner." Morrisey's voice was slightly condemning. "He never did like women, but he didn't used to need to tell us about it. He's been talking about it since he met this girl, as if he was trying to talk himself into or out of not liking them." Morrisey came to his feet. "I'll get along and catch up with him."

SATAN was not hard to find. He had left a trail of curses behind him that Morrisey had little difficulty in following. But it was close to one o'clock before he caught up with him. An excited owner of a cheap Greek restaurant pointed out the booth to Morrisey.

The Greek's English was not over good; Satan's appearance in his place hadn't helped it any. "He's mad, I tell you. It's all over his face. It's Meester Daggett he wants to know about. The big feller—Meester Hollis Daggett. He would come here? Never! Now it's Joe Skelly he's asking. Yes. Sure! Satan Hall! He's in that booth right over there."

Lieutenant George Morrisey took one look at Satan's face; then at the twitching face of the little, emaciated man across from him. At last Morrisey spoke to Joe Skelly.

"Beat it, bum," was all he said.

Satan started to his feet; then moved his shoulders and dropped back again.

Joe Skelly disappeared quickly. George Morrisey watched him go, then dropped into the seat opposite Satan. He said slowly:

"The fall on your head may account for a lot of it. But this dump! That dope, Skelly! God in heaven! Satan, you're talking yourself right out of the department tonight. You'll be the laughing stock of the Avenue by breakfast."

Satan set his elbows on the table, and placed his pointed chin in his hands.

"But I'm not tonight." And when Morrisey started to cut in, Satan added, "I'm not a fool, Morrisey. I just haven't had the breaks, that's all. But when I catch up with a man who knows, he'll have heard I'm looking for him."

George Morrisey looked puzzled.

"And you expect to find Daggett here, in this dump?"

"No!" Satan snapped. "But Louie Spitzen, Daggett's ace bodyguard, has a yen for Greek food. He used to come here before he picked up in the world. He does once in a while yet. Joe Skelly knows his way about town down here."

"Oh!" Morrisey nodded, and lit a cigar. Satan's head was still working, then. Well, he'd try to show him the danger to the girl. "If Daggett took the girl, Satan, he wouldn't be apt to let anyone in on it. There's the danger to the girl in this questioning of yours. A little undercover work; a little secret investigation, would do the trick more effectively."

"There are no investigations kept secret from Hollis Daggett. So I holler it all over the Avenue that I'm looking for him, and—"

"But you can't holler it after tonight, Satan. It won't be the system, it won't be politics, it'll be just common sense. The commissioner will have to call you off tomorrow."

"By tomorrow," said Satan, "the girl will be dead. She saw Hollis Daggett kill a man. He's taken her. By tomorrow she'll be dead. I've got to get Daggett tonight. Good God! Morrisey, you're not putting my job against her life?" Satan came to his feet, started out of the booth.

"Let me come with you, Satan," Morrisey insisted. And when Satan shook his head, he added: "Well, then just let us reason a few minutes. Where would Daggett take her? Not to a dive like this; not to his house; not any place anyone you could reach would know about." His hand fell on Satan's shoulder. Morrisey stiffened as Satan's closed fist came slowly up. "You know what I mean, Satan. You said he was taking her away once before; that time you . . . you . . . why, what's the matter?"

Green eyes widened, white teeth showed. The fist turned into a hand again and rested on Morrisey's shoulder.

"Morrisey! Morrisey!" Satan's words fairly shot through his teeth. "You've done it. Come! I know, now!"

And as they passed the surprised, bowing, puzzled but grateful Greek and reached the street, Morrisey said:

"You know where Daggett is? Where he has the girl? What have I done? I don't get it."

"No, no!" Satan had grabbed Morrisey by the arm and was running with him toward the corner. "But I know who knows where she is. I know who furnished the place for Daggett to take her. It was Aaron Whitlock!"

THE next moment the first and little fingers of Satan's right hand shot between his teeth. The sharp whistle was followed by the squeak of taxi brakes.

"Where are we going?" Morrisey asked when he got his breath and tried to settle comfortably in the speeding cab.

"Down town. Aaron Whitlock has an old house down in Greenwich Village." Satan thought a moment. "I

believe he lives there with just one servant."

"You don't mean the girl is there?"

"No, no! Whitlock wouldn't be such a fool as to permit that. But he knows where she is. I'm going to ask him to tell me."

"By God!" said Morrisey, "you must be mad. Whitlock tell you? Hell! man, he may know! but he certainly won't talk."

"No?" Satan said very slowly. "I think he will. I think, like his clerk uptown, he'll be glad to."

"But Whitlock's a big man. You can't treat him like a common hood."

"So!" Green eyes sought out and rested on Morrisey's white face in the flash of a street light. "Like the rest of them in the system, Morrisey, you are class-conscious. One law for the rich and influential, another law for the poor and the friendless. It's rooted right in you; rooted right in Aaron Whitlock. But the poor and the rich feel the same physical pain; the same mental fear."

Morrisey didn't like that kind of talk. It made him fear something he didn't exactly understand, as if Satan was excusing himself in advance for— for what? Besides, Satan never excused himself.

Morrisey tried again.

"You mustn't forget tomorrow, Satan."

"I'm burning my bridges tonight," Satan said. "If I don't find the girl now, there will be no tomorrow for me."

"But there will be a tomorrow for Aaron Whitlock."

Satan shook his head.

"There will be no tomorrow for Aaron Whitlock either if he doesn't talk. Only a tonight."

The taxi pulled up by the corner of

the block below Aaron Whitlock's residence.

CHAPTER VIII

An Objection to Murder

SATAN and Morrissey had reached the little stone-paved yard in the rear of Whitlock's house before they saw the light shining dimly through a shade in a second story window. A figure passed back and forth behind that shade. Satan said:

"You're to wait here. Whitlock or his servant is still up. I'll play that window by the back porch steps. If the light goes out or if the figure leaves the room, give a low whistle. Then watch the front. I'll cover the back here. And, George! Don't have any false ideas that you're helping me by letting Aaron Whitlock get away. I wouldn't understand your reasoning; at least, not tonight."

Satan Hall didn't waste time playing the silent, professional burglar. He simply leaned over and knocked a hole in the glass just above the catch with his gun.

Within thirty seconds Satan was through the window and stepping from the old-fashioned, metal-lined sink to the kitchen floor. A pencil of light sought and found the swing door. Satan passed from kitchen to pantry and from pantry to dining room.

He stood still a long moment and listened. He heard the moving feet on the floor above and used them as a guide as he found the front stairs and climbed slowly but without hesitancy. He wasn't using the flash now; he did not need it. A dim light burned in the hall.

Satan thought his feet made no sound along that hall. Certainly he didn't hear any noise. But someone

else did, for a voice spoke almost the moment Satan reached the door of the room in the rear. The voice said:

"Not gone yet, Vail? I thought I told you—hello!" The final "hello" was not in way of greeting, but in surprise. For Aaron Whitlock looked straight in to the face of Satan Hall, who followed him into the room. Followed him? That was right. For Aaron Whitlock began walking backward without realizing it.

Satan let his green eyes wander from the suitcase upon the bed to the one on the floor; from the empty closet to the open bureau drawers.

"So you're taking a run-out powder, eh, Whitlock?" Satan indicated the preparation for departure with a swing of his gun in his right hand.

Whitlock saw the gun, frowned, and ran a hand across his forehead. Few people had ever seen a gun in Satan's hand. Anyway, few living people—none, as far as Aaron Whitlock could remember. He gulped, cleared his throat, prepared a dignified statement, couldn't get it through suddenly drying lips.

"What do you want?" he said.

"I want Hollis Daggett. There! Don't smile and shake your head. You're a bright man, Aaron; got a brilliant brain, they say. And I'm going to talk to you just like that; just like you had a brilliant brain—not just a criminal one. You're slippery; you're crooked; there is blood on your hands. But you're clever, and I haven't got the time to be clever tonight. You know what happened, or you can guess." Satan jerked his head at the filled suitcases. "And you're right. Hollis Daggett missed killing me at the court today. He murdered Vincent Mallory and has kidnaped the one witness—Nina Radcliff—who saw him do it."

"Now—" Satan sucked in a deep breath, for he didn't feel like talking this way—"Jerome would have talked and roasted Daggett; Daggett would have talked and roasted you and perhaps a dozen others. You tell me where the girl is, go on with your packing, and have as long to make a getaway as it takes Daggett to squawk on you, if he lives to squawk. In plain words, Whitlock, I'm offering you a ten to one shot for freedom. Now, where is the girl?"

Aaron Whitlock looked at Satan standing quietly before him. He had made no threats. There was no sign of the awe-inspiring terror others had seen in that face. As a matter of fact, Whitlock had never seen Satan's features quite so placid and free from hatred. It put him at his ease.

"My dear boy," he said patronizingly, "I could have you broke for bursting in here tonight, but I do admire your nerve. And I don't know where the girl is nor what she saw, nor where Daggett is. I'm taking a little holiday."

"The girl is in a house you have used, in the suburbs, for quiet affairs," Satan broke in very quietly. "Don't lie about that; I know."

Aaron Whitlock pulled his small figure erect. There was nothing threatening; nothing at all threatening in Satan's manner. It was apologetic.

"Get out!" Whitlock said. "I don't know anything, and if I did I wouldn't tell you a word. You must be a fool to come here like this!" Suddenly Aaron laughed. "By God! Satan, it's the girl! You've gone soft. Blustering, threatening, striking terror to all the common crooks in the underworld! Now it's a girl, and you come pleading and begging."

"Yes," Satan nodded, "it's the girl,

Aaron. I want to save her life; that's why I've come to you. There isn't much time. Where is the house?"

Aaron Whitlock was still laughing.

"A WOMAN, eh? Well, let me tell you this: the girl loves you.

She told Daggett that, threw it right in his face. If she's with him tonight she'll die, and perhaps death will not be easy. She made a fool out of Daggett and now she's making one out of you. Satan—man of terror! Pleading now; pleading because of a woman!"

"That's right." Satan's green eyes were very steady; very clear and bright, but there was nothing hateful in them. "I wanted to let you know how I felt about her; wanted you to understand. Don't you know why? Can't you guess why? You see, you're the only one who can tell me where she is; the only one who can help me save her. I'm a little afraid of myself tonight."

"Afraid, eh? Afraid! The great Satan! Well, from what you tell me she's paying the price tonight; dying as only a man like Daggett could kill a woman." Aaron Whitlock saw Satan's face turn pale white, to go quickly yellow; saw his lips twitch spasmodically before the face became white again; a dull white this time. But he misunderstood, and went on.

Aaron Whitlock, who had looked into men's faces and read the truth there, went on!

"Nina Radcliff! The cause of all the trouble. Get down on your knees and beg, Satan; beg for the life of a woman; beg for the life of a woman who, because of her love for you, kept at a—a—"

Aaron Whitlock shrieked; shrieked right in the middle of a word; shrieked

even before Satan's hand moved; shrieked as he read the truth in Satan's eyes. It was a cry of sudden terror; sudden realization that he hadn't understood. Then the gun came down, turning as it fell, the sight tearing down Whitlock's forehead.

Whitlock went slowly to his knees. He reached out, clutched at the table, started to his feet, and the gun came again; quick, chopping, turning as it struck. Blood ran down his face, got into his eyes. He tried to jump to his feet and dash to the door, but the gun came down again.

This time Whitlock crashed to his knees and he couldn't rise. He couldn't see, he couldn't talk. He shrieked again; shrieked as he realized the terrible truth. He'd never tell where Daggett was now; he wouldn't get the chance. Satan was going to beat him to death.

No begging for mercy; no chance to. Just the flaying gun. But—and it did not strike again. Someone was in the room. Aaron Whitlock raised his arm to protect his head. Now he brushed the blood from his eyes. At first he didn't recognize the man who dashed into the room and grabbed Satan's upstretched arm.

Then for a moment Whitlock knew hope. It was Lieutenant Morrisey. He was safe now.

He heard Morrisey cry out:

"Satan, it's murder!"

Aaron Whitlock blinked his eyes and gave up hope. Morrisey was a big man, a strong man, with great broad shoulders and powerful arms that supported ham-like hands. Yet he crashed back against the wall as Satan struck. Satan struck again. Morrisey's huge body hurtled into the hall.

The door closed, a key snapped in the lock. Satan turned.

This time Aaron saw his face and his eyes and the thing back of those eyes. He saw his body too, his moving body, and his raising gun. Twice Aaron opened his mouth before words came.

"I'll tell. I'll tell!" he cried out wildly.

Satan heard the words, but didn't quite understand. He ran a hand over his forehead; looked at his gun in a dazed way—and snapped out of it.

"Where?" he demanded. He grasped Aaron Whitlock by the throat. "Where?" he said again, and suddenly realizing that his fingers were cutting off the lawyer's words, loosened them.

Five minutes later Satan opened the door and confronted Morrisey. He said simply:

"Thanks, Morrisey. I might have killed him. He told me."

"Huh!" Morrisey felt of his sore jaw. "Well, I'm glad you appreciated my efforts and showed that appreciation. You think you would have—have killed him?"

"That's why I talked to him as I did. I had a feeling before I entered the house that I was going to kill him."

"Then what did you go in for?"

Satan's shoulders moved as the two men went down the stairs.

"I had to chance it," he said. "I wonder if he told me the truth?"

George Morrisey laughed.

"You needn't wonder about that. I never saw such abject terror on a man's face before. So—what?" And sensing Satan's thought, he added, "I'm with you, Satan. Don't drop me out of it now. If it wasn't for me he wouldn't have talked; wouldn't ever have talked. I'm going with you."

It was some time before Satan spoke.

"I guess you are, George. Yes, I

guess you are." He laid a hand upon Morrisey's shoulder. "Where do you keep that car of yours? We'll use no taxi tonight."

They spoke only once on that dash up Broadway toward Yonkers.

"No interference, George," Satan said. "I have a feeling I'm going to kill tonight."

This time Morrisey shrugged his shoulders.

"You know I never objected to a bit of killing, Satan. It's murder I object to." He gripped Satan's wrist. "That you and I both object to."

CHAPTER IX

A Second Too Late

NINA RADCLIFF sat very stiff and straight on the edge of her chair. Occasionally her eyes wandered from the door to the tall French windows directly before her. Hollis Daggett smiled, moved his huge bulk slowly across the room and pulled the curtains tighter before the windows.

"There's no use, my dear." He shook his head. "It's quite a drop to the ground, and a scream would not be heard, as we haven't any close neighbors. Aaron Whitlock was always a careful man, and I imagine some of his lady-friends were surprised when he brought them here. Like you, eh?" His little mouth opened; he smiled. "And there is a man beneath the windows, and another at the door to this room."

"I looked straight up," Nina said, "I saw your face plainly, and the gun in your hand. I saw the man rush in and saw you shoot him to death just before Satan pitched over the balcony—before your shoulders sent him pitching over that balcony. If you so

much as touch me I'll tell. I'll tell Satan."

"Satan," said Daggett very slowly, "is dead. The fall from the balcony killed him."

"He isn't! He isn't!" She dug her left fist into first one eye and then the other. They were wet; they hurt from crying. "I know he isn't, or you wouldn't try to have me write that note."

"Whether he's dead or alive doesn't matter. You write as I dictate."

He pushed the chair she was in roughly to the long, flat desk; thrust the pen into her hand. "Satan must realize clearly that the only way to save your life is for him to keep silent, follow the instructions in your letter, and meet the man I send to that little rendezvous."

The girl's eyes brightened for a moment.

"You're afraid of him. You're just like the others. You're afraid he'll kill you. You want me to trap him to his death; a death he'll accept because—because—" a little hand clutched at her breast—"because he loves me."

"Write!" Daggett knocked her hand down.

The girl's hand hit the desk. Ink splashed upon her dress. She thrust herself suddenly to her feet and threw the pen across the room, then sat down again.

"I love him—and you think I'd write a letter bringing him to his death!" She turned, looked straight at Daggett, and laughed. But she made a mistake there. Her laugh was hysterical, with a touch of fear in it. Hollis Daggett's face was cruel, merciless, yet calm and placid in cruelty. "I'll never send for Satan." Her eyes avoided those beady, malignant ones before her, "I'd rather—just die."

"Just die!" Hollis Daggett nodded down at her. "Yes, I'm sure you'd rather 'just die.' But there are many ways of dying; and love, my dear, is very close to hate. Just die!" He seemed to think a moment, then he thrust that huge head with its tiny features close down to the girl.

"Yes, you've got to die that I may live. I might find pleasure in killing you; killing you very slowly and rather horribly. But business interests will prevent that if you write at once, but write you must. Satan must die before you die, for you are the magnet that must attract him. Understand?"

"Yes," she said, "I understand. If he lives and I die, he'll kill you. You know that and you fear him."

Daggett's little mouth puckered into a smile; a cynical, grotesque smile. He said:

"That is right. I fear him. But I eliminate those I fear. I might promise you life and love and luxury; but you betrayed me once, and you would do it again. It would be a pleasure to make you write that letter. Do you understand? Haven't you read in the papers how some have died? You pampered, protected, blue-blooded doll of wealth! Don't you know that iron burns; that steel pierces, and that bones snap with an agonizing crunch? Write that note!"

"I don't care what you do! I'll never write it!"

Hollis Daggett's hand moved in that same snapping motion she had seen and felt once before.

"Write!"

"No!" the girl cried out. She swung out the chair, slipped to the other side of it. She knew that Daggett followed her. The chair crashed to the floor as she ran to the windows and grabbed at the curtains. Then she heard the

whistling sound. She turned, shielded her face as the whip came lashing across her shoulders. She ran, hunching her shoulders, instinctively stretching her arms across her face. Yes, she had seen that whip before, curled there on the mantel above the fireplace.

SHE had meant to stand and face him. She had meant to show him how a Radcliff could die; what her name meant; what her blood meant—yes, and what her love meant! But she was not prepared for such viciousness. She had started to turn when the whip first struck. Now a frightened, terror-stricken girl, she fled back and forth across that room.

Daggett didn't rage, or even speak. He just followed her, striking, flaying, ripping the dress upon her back into shreds. Desperately she tried to avoid that whip; desperately she tried to stay upon her feet. But she didn't; she couldn't. She pitched against the wall, tried to clutch at its smoothness, and finally sank slowly to the floor.

The whip fell once, twice . . . she screamed:

"I'll write! I'll write!"

Daggett laughed. His voice was calm. No anger in it; just a labored breathing from his exertion.

"Of course you will, my dear. Torture is for men. Women! You just beat what you want out of them. Get up there!" He dragged her roughly to her feet, half thrust her, half threw her into a chair. "The pen. Now—"

Only the girl's sobs broke the dull monotone of Daggett's voice as she wrote the words he dictated. She understood few. Single words, and once, a sentence stood out. But she knew she was bringing Satan to his death. She tried to tell herself that he wouldn't come; that he would know both of

them must die; that he'd wait. But he *would* come. He had said he would come. He had told her—

She grabbed at the paper, knocking over the bottle of ink. Letters, words, whole sentences ran together. The paper was just a blur of wet ink as she clutched it in both her hands, rolled it into a ball, and held it tightly.

She met those shoe-button eyes steadily. There was nothing melodramatic in her words.

"I won't do it," she said.

She didn't raise her hands this time when Daggett's whip moved. She was afraid, yes. But there was nothing of panic inside of her. She knew she was going to die, but it didn't matter.

She moved, of course, winced and cried out when the whip struck. It hurt, too; cut viciously into the tender skin of her throat as she unconsciously threw her head back when the blow came. But she smiled, too. She knew then that she wasn't going to write; wasn't going to bring Satan to his death. She said, and her words sounded strangely calm:

"It's no use, Daggett. It just isn't in me to do it. I'm afraid; terribly afraid, but even if I wanted to I couldn't do it."

Daggett nodded, raised his hand again.

"I had a dog once. He wouldn't obey," he said. "I beat him to death. Some of it was rather horrible. I'm not very adroit with a whip, and the dog forgot to close his eyes."

The girl understood; shuddered. But she sat there looking straight at him. She was going to die; she knew that. But she wouldn't die dashing frantically about that room, like an animal; at least, she hoped she wouldn't. She couldn't save her life but she could save Satan's.

Daggett's hand went up; the whip flew back. She thought of the dog; her body trembled; her hands clenched. Then her eyes closed, and—

The whip didn't come. The door had burst open; a man was there. She knew him. It was Daggett's trusted bodyguard, Louie Spitzen. He was talking, his voice high-pitched.

"It's Gus, boss. You know Gus—you had him outside. He didn't come to the front door and give the knock after his rounds, and—"

"And what?" Daggett still held the whip.

"I stuck my head out of the window in the next room—and Gus is lying out there in the moonlight. Lying on his face, and—"

Daggett started at the bodyguard. Then his hand stretched out and gripped the girl's throat; gripped it as she tried to slide from the chair. "What's the matter with you, Louie? Can't you talk straight? You're white as a ghost, as if you'd seen a devil."

"I did! I did!" The man fairly shrieked the words. "He was standing there in the moonlight looking right at this window. It was—Satan Hall!"

Daggett cursed. The whip fell from his hand. He jerked a gun from beneath his left armpit, looked at the windows, at the door. Unconsciously he dragged the girl to her feet, his fingers tightening about her throat.

"All right, all right," he said. "We will get out the back way. The girl! She'll—she'll have to die."

He stuck the gun against her head. He was tightening a finger on the trigger when Louie Spitzen shrieked out his warning.

SATAN HALL was pounding at the door downstairs!

Hollis Daggett hesitated. The stor-

ies of Satan storming into place after place looking for him, the warnings everyone had given him that Satan was on the kill, came to his mind in quick flashes.

Nina could stand up in court and put the finger on him, there was no doubt of that. His finger loosened, tightened. But keeping the girl alive was the only thing that could save him from Satan. It wasn't the law that he feared; it was hate—Satan's hate.

GLASS crashed and flew into the room, wood cracked and splintered. Hollis Daggett turned toward the French windows. He saw the figure there; saw the figure even before the great curtain pole came loose and the drapes thudded to the floor. Yes, Satan was there, standing directly in the light. And the gun; the black nose of it! The eyes, the green eyes!

Hollis Daggett wasn't looking at the girl when shock and fear spasmodically closed his finger on the trigger. He felt the girl go limp just before he dropped her, turned and fired at Satan Hall.

Daggett fired at Satan once—just once before he clutched at his chest. After that he did try to fire again; did half raise his gun, but he never got it up. His great body twisted and turned. His eyes stared and popped. Satan never moved; never stepped further into the room; never even looked at the bodyguard, who now ran from the room without firing a shot, without even taking his gun from its holster.

Daggett was dead before he fell. Dead even as he kept staggering backward; dead before his feet struck the tongs by the fire and his huge body toppled heavily to the floor.

Satan was still standing in the same

spot when George Morrisey came into the room, dragging Louie Spitzen with him, a whining, whimpering bodyguard who tried to crouch behind the police lieutenant.

"She's dead!" Satan said. "I saw the gun against her head. But Daggett was too far to one side for me to kill him. I had to crash in." He raised a hand mechanically, and flicked bits of glass from his scarred face.

Morrisey tossed his prisoner across the room. He went to Satan, took his arm.

"She was young to die! You got Daggett right in the act of murder!" Morrisey crossed the room, and knelt beside the girl. "You say he shot her in the head?" he asked.

Satan nodded.

"Yes. Through the side of the head. I was a second too late. Think of that, Morrisey! He held her by the throat, and—I wasn't quick enough."

"In the head, eh?" Morrisey lifted Nina Radcliff's head, turned it slightly. But Satan wasn't listening, and he wasn't looking at the girl, either. For a full minute he stared down at the cringing form of Louie Spitzen. But Louie didn't have to tremble and whimper in fear. It was doubtful if Satan even saw him.

At length Satan walked to the body of Hollis Daggett, the dead, quiet hulk. He half raised his foot above that huge white face; looked furtively at Morrisey, saw that he was watching, and lowered his foot again. Morrisey just looked at him. Satan had to say something. He said:

"Daggett's dead! That cleans up things pretty well in the city." He paused, said listlessly and without much interest, "All but who killed Duncan, the broker."

Morrisey laughed, and the laugh

grated on Satan's nerves. Satan said he didn't have any nerves. But a laugh, there in the room of death—her death!

"Too many things were happening to tell you," Morrissey said. "But Duncan's murderer has been caught. You killed him, Satan, in the court house this afternoon. Duncan's secretary and clerks identified the body. Jacob Paul, from Chicago. You've cleaned everything up fine, and no comeback on you."

"No comeback on me, eh? Cleaned things up fine! What does it matter, with Nina dead."

Morrissey rose and led Satan over to the girl who lay so still, so white, on the floor.

"I remember when Mercy Oakes died, Satan," Morrissey said. "Nina Radcliff was her friend. I fought with the commissioner to bring you back from retirement. Nina was threatened at the time. I said you were the only one who could save her life. She would have died for you. Louie Spitzen told me Daggett was trying to force her to write a letter that would mean your death, and she wouldn't."

"I never thought of her in that way," Satan said slowly. "She was good and clean and decent. Yes, she said she'd die for me and I guess she did." Green eyes widened. Satan dropped to one knee and stared wide-eyed at the girl. The left side of her face had been toward him while he peered through the window; it was toward him now. There wasn't any bullet scar.

He bent closer. Tried to jerk back; but it was too late.

Nina Radcliff opened her eyes, threw both arms about his neck, held him tight. She was laughing and crying, but holding him.

"Neither you nor Daggett were looking at Nina when Daggett fired his first shot," Morrissey said. "But Nina was looking; looking at Daggett's gun. She swung her head away, and the bullet never touched her. That's my guess!"

Satan didn't say anything. He couldn't. Lips closed his mouth. He didn't quite understand. He knew only that he was glad; very glad that Nina was alive.

THE END

**UH-OH! CATCHING
COLD! . . .
TIME TO
USE VICKS
VA-TRO-NOL**
• JUST A FEW DROPS
UP EACH NOSTRIL •



**I'VE ALREADY GOT
A COLD
. . . VICKS
VAPORUB
TONIGHT!**
• JUST RUB ON
THROAT & CHEST •

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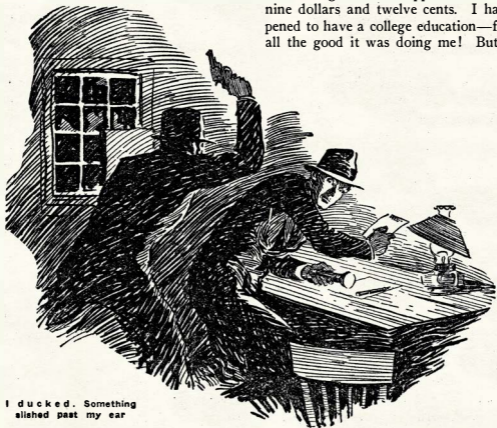
MURDER

*Where Was This Weird
Adventure Taking Him?—
Hollister Couldn't Guess as
He Drove Through the
Night with a Nameless
Murdered Man Slumped
Beside Him*

A Novelette

By Donald Barr Chidsey

USUALLY I don't pick up hitch-hikers after dark. But this kid looked harmless; and after all, I wasn't much more than a hitch-hiker myself—except that I happened to have a car. If you could call it a car. I happened to have also an old suitcase containing three shirts, two changes of underwear, a toothbrush, shaving materials, two pairs of socks, three books, and a magazine. I happened to have nine dollars and twelve cents. I happened to have a college education—for all the good it was doing me! But I



I ducked. Something
sliced past my ear

didn't happen to have anything else—any friends or relations, or job, or prospect of getting a job. So what was I but a bum on wheels? And who was I to breeze past this tired-looking youngster who jerked his thumb eastward? Anyway, I stopped.

"Thanks," he said. "Going to Wellington?"

"Just. Understand it's about twenty-two miles?"

We were on the outskirts of a dump called Brompton. My road map didn't show even a cross-roads between Brompton and Wellington.

"I wouldn't know. Never been around here before."

"Down on your luck?"

"Oh, I'll be all right when I get to Wellington. My sister lives there. She would have sent me money to come by train, only I wouldn't let her."

I said: "I wish I had a sister. What's yours do?"

He didn't answer. I glanced at him, braked the car.

"Look," I said, "you're out of the picture, just sitting there. Why not crawl into the back and lie down? I'll wake you when we get to Wellington."

"You—you don't think I'd get your upholstery dirty?"

"Thanks for calling it upholstery! But it's softer than it looks, at that. I ought to know."

He lurched into the back seat, and he and Morpheus were pals, I think, before the kid even got horizontal. I drove on, wondering about things. I was planning to spend a whole dollar on a hotel room. I'd slept out three nights, and now I figured I had to do something rash to retain my self-respect. I was wondering if some junk dealer in Wellington, or the next town along the line, would give me maybe fifteen dollars for Aggie. After all,

Aggie would *go!* At least, she would if you knew how to make her.

There was an obstruction, and a sign: "Detour to Wellington." That was discouraging. Aggie was wonderful, but she couldn't work on just promises, and I knew that right now she had barely enough gasoline to keep the bottom of the tank wet. I had to figure those things mighty close.

There was no house, nobody to tell me how long a detour this was. If it turned out to be eight or ten miles longer than the main highway, or even four or five miles longer, Aggie might refuse to do it. It was a lousy dirt road. Bumps and turns. Twists and holes. Aggie didn't like that road at all. Neither did I, for that matter. The kid in back, however, slumbered on and on.

THE road was not only bad, it was dangerous. On the left was a skimpy, straggly wood; and on the right the ground fell away bitterly, all rocks, to a rock-strewn stream—not actually a cliff, but near enough like one to cause me to drive with care.

We'd had perhaps eight miles of this when I saw the light. The slope was gentler here, and the light was in some sort of building down by the stream. I rounded a curve, and stopped when I figured I was about opposite it. I couldn't see it from there. Pine and sumac hid it. But when I got out of the car I was able to see, in the reluctant starshine, wan outlines of a path.

The kid in back snored on. I was worried about Aggie's fuel, and anxious to learn the length of this detour.

When I rounded a clump of sumac I saw the lighted window again. But the light went out almost as soon as I saw it.

That gave me a sort of creepy feeling. The little shack, nestling under some pines, leered mysteriously at me, making me feel very uncomfortable indeed. But I shrugged again and walked on. I had a flashlight.

The door was ajar. The place looked deserted; but it didn't *feel* that way. Standing there in front of the door, I had a conviction that I was being watched.

I called "Hull-o!" and my voice sounded funny.

There was no answer.

I called again, a little louder. Still no answer. I glanced back up the path; you couldn't see Aggie from here, because of the sumac. I pushed open the door and went inside.

"Anybody home?"

Silence, except for malicious little echoes. But I still had that creepy feeling. I flashed my light around. The shack was a disheartening place. Most of the window panes were broken, and the floor was thick with dust. In a corner was a pile of ancient burlap sacking. There was a table, and there were three chairs. It struck me that the table was uncommonly clean, under the circumstances. On it was an oil lamp. I touched this. Warm.

I felt the bottom of the nearest chair. It, too, was warm.

On the table also was a gold fountain pen and three or four sheets of paper. Nice clean paper. Like the fountain pen—which was a nice clean fountain pen—it seemed singularly out of place. I walked over to the table, picked up one sheet, and saw that this was a man's personal stationery. On top was engraved a name and address. I was lifting it closer, in order to read, when something—I don't know what—told me to duck.

I ducked.

The blunt instrument that newspaper reporters are always writing about sliced in peevish disappointment past my right ear.

I twisted, stepped back, and swung a punch. I'd snapped out the flash—possibly an instinctive contraction of my muscles—so that I swung blindly. Even so, my knuckles contacted something which might have been a neck. There was a soft, startled grunt. I swung again, and missed.

Off balance, I clutched wildly in the darkness. My left hand fell upon something cold and hard. There was a stinging pain in the flesh between my thumb and forefinger, and I realized in that awful instant that I was holding onto the wrong end of a revolver! My hand had come down on it just as the trigger was being pulled. The hammer had chucked into my skin—which was the reason why my intestinal organs were still in place.

II

OF course, all this happened faster than I can tell it. I didn't feel the thing, or stop and think. I just knew that it was a gun. I wrenched it loose, threw it from me. Then I sprinted.

Them as knows him will tell you that George Hollister likes a good fight as well as the next man, but playing around with cannons in the dark is something else again. I was running back up that path almost before the revolver hit the floor. I ran low, half expecting to have the old torso hotted up by lead. But nothing happened.

Somewhere on the way I found myself still clutching the sheet of paper. I crumpled it, threw it away. I don't know why.

It amazed me, when I came in sight of Aggie, to see the kid sitting in the

front seat. Why should he have moved? His head was bowed, and he seemed limp, as though he were still sleeping.

"I don't like this place," I gasped. "We're getting out!"

I swung open the door, on the driver's side, and the kid fell sideways.



GEORGE HOLLISTER

He hit me with a dull, wet, squonchy sound.

"What's the trouble? Are you so sleepy you can't—"

Then I saw that this wasn't my hitch-hiker at all. It was a man of about forty, a well-dressed, well-fed, firm-looking man. His green felt hat had fallen off when he toppled, and I saw that his hair was dark brown, touched with gray—and blotched with blood. There was blood all over the front of his head.

I straightened him, shook him a little.

Now I'm no doctor. It seemed to me that I could feel a heartbeat—that the man was alive—though with not much to spare. And naturally my first

thought was to get him back there to civilization.

There wouldn't be a telephone in that shack. Besides, a place where somebody is roaming around with a pistol isn't the best place to take a wounded man. I couldn't see the hitch-hiker. He was not in the back seat, and he didn't appear to be anywhere around.

I scrambled inside, turned Aggie, and sped for Brompton.

Why did I turn? Because, excited though I was, I wasn't altogether dumb about this business. According to the road map there were twenty-two miles between Brompton and Wellington, and Aggie's speedometer said that we had come thirteen. But we were on a detour. That made all the difference in the world. How could I know the distance to Wellington?

So off we went, me occasionally propping up what might or might not have been a corpse, and Aggie moving like the hammers of hell.

We didn't go far. We swung around a curve, more or less on two wheels, and there right in the middle of the road was a huge branch. It was more like a small tree. I knew that I could go around the thing, on the cliff side, but it would require the most ticklish sort of driving, and I had to put Aggie into second.

Somebody jumped on the running-board. Something struck me on the side of the head, causing little yellow comets to chase one another through a bright pink sky. A hand jerked down the throttle, then gave the wheel a twist.

Aggie and I and the man-who-was-all-over-blood screeched into a fast, irresponsible tailspin. It was like going down a roller coaster that had no bottom. I think we turned over twice. At least twice.

Well, I found myself walking around and around something. I think it was a tree. My eyes were open, but I couldn't seem to see. And there was so much noise that it was like a deep, deep silence.

Somebody grabbed both my shoulders. I swung my right fist. I landed on my hands and knees. I got up, bumped into somebody, swung right and left.

III

A PAIR of enormous eyes. Deep brown eyes, with suggestions of violet in them. Soft eyes. The loveliest I ever had seen.

Not for an instant did I fool myself. I didn't suppose that I was dead and had been wafted to a Mohammedan paradise, and that this was one of the houris promised by the Prophet. I knew that houris are not supposed to wear starched linen dresses. In fact, they're not supposed to wear anything worth mentioning.

Just the same, the old Prophet himself couldn't have envisioned anything lovelier than those eyes. They looked down at me with vast sympathy, and it was so easy to look back into them, seeing a tiny brown-purple George Hollister in each, that for some time I didn't notice that the nose was lovely too, and so were the lips, and the chin, and the neck, and . . .

I said "Hi, honey." Or at any rate, I *tried* to say that.

She said "Sh-sh-sh!" and put her finger over her lips. It was a lovely finger. I passed out again.

She was still there when I came to. She even smiled a little, this time. I muttered "Good old Aggie . . ." She shushed me again, and then over a lovely shoulder she called: "He's recovering consciousness, Doctor."

A man in white appeared. Then a man in blue, with brass buttons.

"What about it, Doc? Shall I call them?"

"He seems to be coming around all right . . ."

"I'll call them then, huh?"

"Well, if they agree that it must stop the minute I say."

The man in blue disappeared. The man in white fussed with something on my head. I didn't pay any attention. I was looking at the nurse.

But pretty soon I began to wish I was unconscious again. Two more cops, a skinny man with pad and pencil, and a bald-headed little cuss with nose glasses, barged in. The bald-headed one wore the persistent, indefatigable smile of a Japanese statesman. He was all cheeriness and light; you expected him to suggest at any moment that we now stand and sing Hymn Number 132.

"Coming around, eh? Fine! Fine! Oh, you'll be up soon! Just a concussion is all. Isn't that right, Doctor? Just a concussion?"

The doctor said yes, only you couldn't ever be sure about these cases, and it would be better if they didn't ask me too much just now.

"Oh, naturally! We just want to get a few little matters straightened out; then we'll leave the poor lad alone."

He had a squeaky voice which somehow managed to be gooey too.

NOW! As we understand it, young man, your name is George Hollister and you come from Sacramento?"

I nodded. I felt as though I'd gulped three gallons of brandy, beer and Chateau Y'Quiem and then had had only four hours of sleep.

"Whereabouts in Sacramento, if I may ask?"

This time I didn't nod. I knew better.

"No address," I blubbered. "Just used to live there, that's all. I was there when I bought the car and took out my driver's license."

"Ah, yes. I see. And where do your people live?"

"Haven't any. Orphan. No near relations either."

"And—uh—what do you do for a living, Mr. Hollister?"

"I'd do any work I could get, I guess."

"You're out of a job then!"

He beamed, nodded, seemed to consider this very significant.

"Now—uh—at the time of this automobile accident—"

I said: "Was that what it was?"

This didn't strike me as much of a wisecrack, myself, but the bald-headed man practically screamed with laughter. He shook all over. His glasses got moist from the tears that came to his eyes, and he took the glasses off and wiped them.

"Now—uh—who was with you at the time?"

"I don't know who he was. A kid I'd picked up."

"A hitch-hiker, you mean?"

"Yes. *No*, wait a minute!" The memory was beginning to unwind. "No, he disappeared. The one with me was the man who'd got into the car while I was down below. I think he was dead."

One of the cops snapped: "He was dead when he got into the car? Is that it?"

From back of me a sharp, worried, medical voice warned: "Remember what I told you, now!"

"I think he's a little confused," syruiped Brightness-and-Light. "Sup-

pose we just let him tell the story in his own fashion, eh?"

He was urging me, coaxing me, as though I was a boy of nine bashful about reciting "The Spell of the Yukon" in front of company.

Well, I permitted everything to get straight in my head again—I was feeling better all the time—then, as carefully as I could, I told them the whole story. The skinny man wrote it all down.

IV

WHEN I was finished I suddenly realized how bughouse it must have sounded. But at the foot of the bed I saw the nurse, and I grinned.

"You believe me, at least, don't you?"

"You're not supposed to talk to the nurse!"

"Well, it's a lot nicer than talking to you. Incidentally, who are you anyway?"

"Never mind who we are!"

Bald-head volunteered: "These gentlemen are from the Wellington police, and I am Oliver T. Townsend, the public prosecutor here."

It sounded ominous. I remembered something.

"What happened to the man in my car. Is he dead?"

"Yes, he's dead. Now suppose you tell us again, Mr. Hollister, about this hitch-hiker. What did he look like?"

I described the kid as best I could. I remembered that he was fifteen or sixteen, thin, blond, well spoken, and had exceptionally dark blue eyes. They asked me about the man in the shack, and I had to tell them that I hadn't seen that man at all, didn't know whether he was young or old, or tall or short, or what. They asked me about the man

who had jumped on my running-board; again I had to admit that I couldn't give any description. I hadn't really seen that man either. Only his arm.

They asked me a lot of other questions, and I answered them as best I could. Finally I yelled:

"Say, what's all this about, anyway?"

The bigger of the two cops—he had gold buttons, a gold badge—told me that what it was all about was that I was the damnedest liar he'd ever listened to. And he said he'd listened to a lot of them.

"You didn't get time to make up a decent story, huh?"

"I'm not making up any story, good or bad! All I'm doing—"

The cop interrupted me by waving in front of my face a big black automatic pistol.

"You ever see this before?"

"Why, not that I know of."

"I asked you: *did you ever see this before?* Yes or no?"

"Well then, no."

The skinny man was writing. Prosecutor Townsend was listening with a fatherly smile, as though he were proud of me. The nurse at the end of the bed looked worried about something.

"Well, did you ever see *this* before, then?"

Now he was waving a leather holster, and a strap.

I said no, I had never seen that before, either.

"Why should I?"

"We just thought you might have, since they were found in your car."

"In my car?" I thought this over.

"Then the man who jumped on the running-board must have thrown them there."

"Oh, that's right! I'd forgotten about that man."

I SUPPOSE I shouldn't have blamed them. But I was too sore to figure it their way. I was so sore that nothing hurt me. I used to get that way in football sometimes. You get so mad that you don't even know you ought to be on a stretcher. It isn't until afterward that the pain comes.

"One thing you might tell me," I said bitterly, "and that is: Why is it any concern of the Wellington police if I have an accident a dozen miles away?"

"Because we figure that the murder occurred inside the city limits."

"The murder?" I tried to sit up, but the doctor or somebody pulled me back. "You mean to tell me—"

"Here's what I'll tell you, guy! I'll tell you the whole thing how it happened, see?"

"Yes, do that."

The doctor said: "Now remember what I said about—"

"Harry A. Zander, who used to be public prosecutor here before Mr. Townsend, and who incidentally was as fine a guy as you'd ever want to meet—he starts for Brompton on some business last night. He gets out near the city line, where there are no houses around, and no street lights, and somebody holds him up and then shoots him. Then this guy leaves Harry Zander's car there, where we found it this morning, and drives Harry out toward Brompton, looking for a quiet side road where he can dump the body, see? So he turns into that dirt road—"

"But you've got to turn there! It says it's a detour!"

"Nobody minds that," Townsend explained good-naturedly. "The pavement's only torn up for a few hundred yards, and everybody goes around the sign, each way, and goes

along the dirt on the side to where the pavement is all right again."

"How was I to know that?"

The cop continued: "But he slips off the road and gets pretty well cut up, see? Or else maybe he thinks it would be a good idea to make the whole thing look like an accident, only he doesn't jump out fast enough himself.

"Or maybe he figures on setting fire to the car down there. All right. He gets hurt, and when a deputy sheriff happens to come along a little while later this guy is trying to stagger off. When the deputy takes hold of him, to ask him what's happened, this guy starts to fight, and tries to get away."

"I don't remember that."

"No?"

"I told you about that branch—"

"Yeah, sure! You told us a lot of stuff like that. Well, we couldn't find any big branch. We couldn't find this hitch-hiker, and we couldn't find this man in the shack, or this paper and fountain pen you told us about. And also we couldn't find this man you say jumped on your running-board either."

"You couldn't find much, could you? Maybe that's because you're such lousy cops."

The doctor said: "Now, now!"

"But what we *did* find, brother, and what's going to send you right to the old torrid armchair, is *this!*" He was waving the gun again. "We found it in your car, and we found Harry Zander there, with a bullet in his head, and when we took the bullet out we found that it came from this very same gun. So you see? We did find something, after all."

"Listen! If I'm being charged with murder, I want a lawyer!"

Again the doctor was pulling me

back. The doctor was rattled. I figured that this case must be getting a lot of publicity, and the doctor was afraid of losing his patient, and catching a public razz, but at the same time he was afraid to boss around a man like Oliver T. Townsend. He begged them to depart.

I said: "I want a lawyer!"

They went out. Townsend had never stopped smiling.

V

FOR some time after that I just lay there being sore. I was so sore that I didn't even wriggle around to find out how much I was hurt and where. But when the nurse came back, eyes and all, I got over it.

"Listen, Miss Forbes," I said. I'd heard the doctor call her that. "You mustn't get so worried about this business. I'll be all right." Because I could see she was troubled about something.

From the end of the bed: "You can't talk to her."

I raised my head, which didn't hurt so much now, and saw a cop.

"Must you be here?"

"Sure I must be here! Whether you like it or not!"

"I don't like it, no. What's the idea? Am I under arrest?"

"Under arrest? Hell, you're probably indicted by this time!"

"Brother Townsend's a fast worker. What's he got against me?"

"Same thing I have. Harry Zander was a swell guy."

I said: "Too bad he was killed then. But I didn't do it. Anyway, I want a lawyer. Get me a lawyer."

The cop turned, looked out the window.

"I'm not supposed to talk to you either," he growled.

"Well, that's some help," I said. I told Miss Forbes: "There must be an awful lot of story-tellers in this town. Nobody here ever seems to believe anybody else."

She said: "Sh-sh! You must be quiet. You mustn't talk."

The cop's voice came: "You can't talk to her!"

"Is it to be an unceasing vigil?" I asked. "Don't you have such things as bedtime, for instance?"

Miss Forbes went out, and a little while later the inquisition boys returned with a couple of extra cops and some more questions.

IT was late in the afternoon, or else early in the evening. I could tell that from the window. I was feeling better all the time, but I decided to play sick. I was afraid the doctor would decide I was well enough to be discharged, and I didn't care to think about the way these babies would handle me once they'd got me in police headquarters.

Well, they didn't learn anything more because I didn't have anything more to tell them. Whenever I demanded a lawyer they simply pretended they hadn't heard. It was the same way when I demanded to be taken before a magistrate. Finally the doctor shooed them off.

"Are you going to stick around?" I asked Miss Forbes, after they'd gone.

"Sh-sh! You mustn't talk!"

"Well, are you?"

"No, I'm off now. Miss Paterson will take care of you tonight."

Miss Paterson was a pain. She was tall and thin and chirpy. She fluttered. She twittered. She just knew that I was going to have a nice comfy night and that I was going to wake up in the morning feeling just fine and

dandy! She took off her dark gray cape, which was the only good-looking thing about her, and hung it behind the door.

"I'm going to stay right here with you," she cooed.

I didn't say anything. I couldn't think of anything to say.

The cop, who seemed to trust Miss Paterson, got up, and yawned, and strolled out to the corridor, saying he'd be back in a few minutes. Miss Paterson told him to take his time, and I felt like telling him the same thing in a different tone of voice, but I didn't.

A few minutes later Miss Paterson herself got up and went to the door. Somebody had knocked timidly. That somebody and Miss Paterson whispered for a while, and then she glanced at me. I had my eyes closed, apparently. She seemed to think it safe, and she stepped out.

I got right up. Now don't ask me why! I know it was the worst thing I could have done I figure, now, that I must have been even more sore than I'd realized, and possibly a little nuts as well, what with that concussion. Anyway, the thought of spending a night with an orangoutang and a pie-faced angel who twittered, was just too much. And in the morning they'd take me to the station and wallop hell out of me trying to get a confession—oh, yes, they would not!

I didn't make a sound. I grabbed Miss Paterson's cape, wrapped it around me, and then I went out the window.

VI

THERE was a fire escape. I had been able to see that from the bed, and I'd wondered about it. Now I understood. It was nothing but a platform. There was no stairway, no

ladder. All that, apparently, had been torn away. I couldn't go up or down. I might as well have been on a balcony, there four or five stories above the paved court. About six feet away, on a level with me, was the roof of another part of the building; but I couldn't risk the jump.

I started back—and found Miss Paterson staring at me.

She didn't stare long. She opened her mouth and let out a scream which caused the electric light bulbs to rattle in their sockets; and then she fainted.

I went back on the platform. I stepped up on the rail. I jumped.

It wasn't so much of a jump, really. But it seemed big because of the fact that if I'd missed I would have been killed surer than hell.

But I didn't miss. I landed full and fair, the gravel stinging my feet. And I started to run.

The cape was no hindrance: it ballooned behind me like a punctured parachute. But the pajamas were terrible! It's always been a mystery where hospitals get their pajamas; and is still is, to me. The coat of this suit had a sort of bolero effect, pulling jauntily under the armpits. Starched, it would have made a tolerable mess jacket, except that the sleeves only came to a little below my elbows. And the trousers! I'm sure that Primo Carnera had been a patient in this hospital, and he'd left these behind. I mean, I had to hold them up—'way up. I ran like a woman in 1910 chasing after a street car.

There were two crashes, smothering a shout, behind me. Gravel, not satisfied with cutting my bare feet, started to jump at my knees. I went over, still holding up these pants, and ran hell.

I had seen another fire escape. And

thank God! this one was equipped with means of descent. As I started down I heard another crash, and got a faceful of gravel. The railing went "bong!" near my left hand.

Three windows I passed. At the lowest a man stuck his head out and yelled "Hey!" I said "Hiyah, pal!" and kept right on going down.

A larger, outside court, a driveway and parking space, a lot of cars. And believe it or not, directly in front of a side entrance, not fifteen feet from the fire escape, was a roadster with nobody in it and the engine running! The door was even open! You would have thought that I'd planned this escape for weeks, with outside confederates. I jumped into that roadster, and boy did I depart!

BUT when I got around the first corner I took it easy. I coasted up one street and down another, keeping away from the bright lights. In the middle of a quiet residential block I stopped. I began to search. From sidepockets I took a flashlight, a .32 caliber revolver which wasn't loaded, some rags, a pair of gloves, and a driver's license and ownership card which told me that the roadster belonged to J. C. Mooney, occupation, physician. There was a newspaper on the seat, but I let that go for the present, and got out and examined the rumble. It wasn't locked. It contained a few wrenches and tire irons, a jack, and a golf bag. The golf bag was one of these big, new, fancy ones built to hold practically everything but a fur coat. I found in one compartment sixteen balls, a roll of adhesive tape, a pair of gloves, a box of tees, a package of cigarettes and a pad of matches. I took only the matches and cigarettes. Then from the other compartment,

which was likewise unlocked—Doc Mooney surely was careless about things—a sweater, four sizes too large for me; a cap, which I put on instantly; and a pair of shoes—still soggy with sweat but they fitted.

You must admit that I needed clothes; but I simply couldn't think of any use for that sweater, so I put it back.

Then I got behind the wheel and by the dashboard light I read all about myself in the five-star final. Yes, I was already indicted. Public Prosecutor Oliver T. Townsend, in an exclusive statement to the *Times-Eagle*, had declared that it was his belief that I worked alone. He likewise believed, and so did Captain of Detectives August Schultz and other members of the police department who had assisted Mr. Townsend in questioning the prisoner, that I was responsible for many if not all of the hold-ups which had been so common in this vicinity of late. But they were going to go into this angle of the case later, when the prisoner was sufficiently recovered for a more thorough examination.

I could picture that "more thorough examination"!

Prosecutor Townsend paid high tribute to the memory of Harry A. Zander. A profound loss to Wellington, he said. To the city, the county, the entire State. He refused, however, to comment upon a report that Zander had been killed because he "knew too much" about certain persons in the Wellington underworld. It was possible, he admitted. Harry A. Zander had always been in the vanguard of reform in Wellington, and had been an implacable foe of all criminals and crooked politicians; but the prosecutor didn't care to go any further than that, at present.

There was a biography of Zander, the crusader. There were interviews with the widow, with Emil Furst, the dead man's secretary, who lived with the Zanders, and with the Governor, who happened to be visiting friends in Brompton. There was also an interview which interested me much more—with the sheriff of Wellington County.

It seems that the sheriff was angry because the prosecutor's office and the city police had taken over this case, which he believed to be in his own jurisdiction. I could read between the lines that the sheriff was sore at the prosecutor and police for other reasons, too. He accused Townsend of seeking publicity on the eve of an election. He was very bitter about it, and tossed dark hints hither and yon. He didn't actually call Townsend a crook, but he might just as well have.

"Nice night."

I turned to find a patrolman leaning against the door. The top was up, and behind the wheel I was in shadow; but I'm sure that this cop was wondering about the nurse's cape and the Primo Carnera pants: he was squinting hard at me.

I tried to yawn. I agreed that it was a swell night.

"Have you got a—"

"Say, how do I get on that highway to Brompton?"

"Brompton Avenue? You go back just the opposite way to the way you're facing now, to the first car tracks, and then right till you strike a silent policeman and that's it."

"Thanks," I said, and put Doc Mooney's car into gear.

"Could I see your—"

I pointed ahead.

"Your signal light's blinking, officer."

This was the greatest break of all. I'm perfectly sure that the cop was suspicious, and that he was just about to ask for my driver's license. Maybe he knew Dr. J. C. Mooney. Anyway, he'd stall me until he had a better look—and that would have been fatal. But sure enough! the police telephone standard at the end of the block, just ahead of us, was blinking green. The cop hurried toward it. I swung Doc Mooney's car around. I could guess what the cop was going to hear when he reported over the phone.

VII

THERE wasn't much traffic in Brompton Avenue. At first I told myself that I'd been a fool to ask for this road, because the patrolman, when he got the message of the hospital escape, would put two and two together and get something resembling four—which would mean patrol cars dashing back and forth along this highway looking for the Mooney roadster. But later I reasoned that just the opposite would be true. After all, when I'd been arrested I was wearing a clean shirt, and when I'd been questioned I didn't once say "ain't." Consequently I would be listed as a smooth criminal, a cross between Dillinger and Dapper Don Collins with the emphasis on the Collins. In fact, the *Wellington Times-Eagle* already had referred to me as a "gentleman bandit." Well, wouldn't such a master-mind be expected to lay a false scent? So that the cops, trying to be one thought ahead, probably would patrol every outlet to the city *except* Brompton Avenue.

At least, it made me feel better to figure it that way.

Out beyond the city limits, when the mirror showed me a car with a nerv-

ous searchlight, I simply darkened the roadster and turned into a private driveway. It led to a farmhouse, but I didn't go that far. A dog barked wearily, as though it considered barking a bothersome duty; but nobody emerged. The car with the searchlight went past. And after a time I lighted up again, backed out of the drive, and trundled on.

I hadn't the slightest doubt that they would catch me sooner or later, but I wished to have a better look around at that shack first. What I planned to do when caught was fake nuttiness. After all, I'd had a concussion. I could be goofy. A weak defense, but it was the only one I could think of.

The trouble was, they might open up without stopping to ask questions. They seemed convinced that here was a desperate gunman. Take no chances! Give him lead, right away! It wasn't a comforting thought.

When I came to the detour, I could see that, as Townsend had said, it was merely nominal. Cars could go around it. In fact, I'd been going seven or eight miles out of my way when I took to that detour.

Just the same, I took to it again. And fifteen minutes later I was approaching the little shack by the stream.

I'D left the car by the side of the road, some distance back, pulled up under a willow tree, and dark; and I went toward the shack on foot. My stalking attire wasn't quite what they're wearing this season. The cap was a little large, but it was dark; and the shoes were all right; but those pants! I'm not trying to be funny when I say that if the strings hadn't been too short, I would have tied the top of those pants around my neck,

making a sort of overall, or monkey suit. As it was, I was obliged to hold the damned things up as I walked. I had the flashlight in one hand, the empty revolver in the other.

When I came in sight of the shack I saw that somebody was moving around in there with a light. It startled me so that I stepped on a fallen branch, which cracked gleefully. The light in the shack went out.

For a long, long time I squatted, not eager to make myself a silhouette on the horizon. I never took my gaze from the shack.

My legs began to ache. In fact, I started to ache all over; and now, for the first time, I came to be aware of my wounds. Around my head, concealed by the cap, was a white bandage. The head hurt, but not seriously: just a dull, dogged throb. There was tape over two cuts on the left side of my face—the side, fortunately, which the patrolman hadn't seen. They stung when I touched them. There was a bandage around my right arm, high. There it made a sort of slow-burning pain. But I got a much sharper sensation in the lower part of my chest, on the right side, whenever I drew a deep breath. A rib. The *Times-Eagle* had listed a broken rib among my injuries, and I was beginning to believe it.

But I just squatted there and waited. Like the Indians used to squat and wait for hours and hours, watching a water hole or something. Only the Indians didn't have to wear pajamas.

At last I began to crawl toward the shack. Nothing happened. There wasn't a sound, from the shack or from me. I reached the door, which was open. I paused a moment. Then I slid in sideways. I was holding the

revolver at my right hip, and holding the flashlight high for possible use as a club.

Inside I stopped. I waited. It seemed like hours. I couldn't hear a thing or see a thing, but I knew that somebody was in that room with me. Very carefully I began to move around.

I touched somebody, and a hand clutched my shoulder. I sidestepped, and brought down the flashlight hard. Somebody thumped to the floor. All in a single motion I went to one knee, snapped on the flash, leveled the gun.

"Move and you're dead, brother!"

Then I swallowed a couple of cubic yards of air in one swift gulp, and became paralyzed.

VIII

I GUESS she was practically paralyzed, too. She hadn't fainted. At least, her eyes were open—those eyes! But she didn't seem to be really conscious as she lay there staring up at my light.

"Good God! I—I'm terribly sorry. Did I hurt you?"

She couldn't see me back of the glare, but I suppose she recognized my voice. Her lips moved a little, but there was no sound.

I said: "Here, wait till I get us a better light."

The oil lamp was still there, and I'd tucked Doc Mooney's cigarettes and matchbox into the pocket of that fetching little chemise which was supposed to be a sleeping coat. Pretty soon there was no need for the flash, and I was bending over Miss Forbes.

"What in the world are you doing here?" I gasped.

"What are *you* doing here?"

"But what are *you* doing here?" I waved my arms. "Wait a minute.

This isn't getting us anywhere. All right. I'll start. I know I'm supposed to be in the hospital; but I didn't like your friend Miss Paterson, who isn't nearly as nice as you. Besides, the cops wouldn't believe a word I said; so I went down a fire escape, and swiped somebody's car, and came out here to do a little detective work of my own accord. All right, now it's your turn."

She said: "I came out to look for my brother."

"Your brother?"

"I knew he was coming from the Coast, hitch-hiking, and I was expecting him any day now. When I heard you tell your story to the policemen, and you described him so well and all, I knew that it must be Arthur. But I was afraid to say anything to the police, because I was afraid Arthur would get mixed up in it somehow. I knew you were telling the truth, but what if they caught him and they wouldn't believe him any more than they did you?"

"Yes. They're in a big rush to clean this case up, aren't they?"

"So as soon as I was off duty, I got into my car and drove out here. I thought maybe Arthur might be hanging around somewhere, hiding, afraid to go into the city. I was going to call out to him—walk around calling his name."

First she had entered the shack, meaning to have a quick look-around. She'd heard me coming, and had snapped off her flash. Then she had stood in the center of that little place, too frightened to move, even when she saw me sneak in against the light of the doorway and sniffed the liniment of which I reeked. When I had bumped her, in prowling, she grabbed at me convulsively, unthinkingly. And

me, the Galahad! had patted her one in the left ear!

"Do you— Do you think they could have hurt Arthur?"

I shrugged. Which made the rib hurt.

"It doesn't look like it. I don't believe he could have had anything to do with it. When I told the cops I was anxious to have them locate him, it wasn't because I thought he was involved in the murder, but only because I wanted him to bear out my story. But, of course, the cops didn't even believe that such a person existed.

"He must have seen the body left in my car. Maybe he ran off, in a panic. If the men who left it there had seen him, and thought he'd seen them, I'd have found two corpses instead of one."

She shuddered. She had a lovely shudder.

"I'm still wondering about that gold fountain pen and the sheets of paper," I said. "It doesn't seem to fit, somehow. I want to go out and scout around for that sheet I threw away. It shouldn't take me long. Think you could stay in here and wait for me?"

"Yes . . . Yes, I'll wait."

"Here, take this gun. It might make you feel safer."

THE crumpled paper wasn't hard to find. The cops couldn't have searched very carefully. I was just picking it up when I heard a car coming from the direction of Wellington. I snapped out my flash, slipped into the sumac.

The car stopped. Somebody got out, came down the path, passed within a few feet of where I crouched.

Rounding the clump of sumac, the man stopped short. The light in the

shack seemed to dumfound him. After a little while he quitted the path and began to approach the shack cautiously from the side. He moved very slowly, and to save time I turned my back, unfolded the paper close to me, and sneaked a brief look.

The engraving at the top of this piece of private stationery read: "Harry A. Zander, 1149 Lafayette Boulevard."

For the first time I began to get an idea of what it was all about.

The man who had come from the road was near one of the windows, peering in very cautiously. I could see him now, and it didn't cause my jaw to fall when I saw that he was none other but that high-minded slave of duty, the Hon. Oliver T. Townsend. He had a small revolver in his right fist, and he didn't seem to know what to make of the fact that Nurse Forbes was among those present.

Very slowly, without making a sound, I encircled him, came up behind him. I jammed the end of the flashlight into his back.

"Don't jump," I whispered, "and don't yell, and don't do anything except open your hand. Otherwise it goes bang-bang, see?"

He was abruptly drenched with sweat. But he dropped the gun. I made him step two steps away from it, and I picked it up.

"All right. Now go inside for explanations."

The girl, when she saw him, was almost as flabbergasted as he had been when he saw her through the window.

"Wha— What are you doing here?"

Townsend snapped: "What are you doing here?"

I said: "Now let's not start that routine all over again. Before we do

anything else I want Mr. Townsend to tell me what it was Harry Zander had that he wanted to get from him."

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"You wouldn't care to have me shoot holes in your legs and arms, would you, Mr. Townsend? Because that's just what I am going to do if you don't start explaining. But first of all," I said, "we'll cut off a little of this light, so that we can't be seen by anybody passing along the road."

IX

I HAD already observed that the lighted door of the shack was not visible from the road. Only one window was visible, on the east side. That was the light I'd seen the previous evening. So I picked up some of the burlap, raising a lot of dust, and draped it over the east window.

"Stand right where you are and don't move that gun!"

I turned, grinning. I had heard the faint scuffle, and had guessed what happened. Oliver T. Townsend was pointing a revolver at me.

"No, no, Mr. Townsend! That's my stuff, not yours. Not tonight."

I started to walk toward him. His fingers tightened on the gun.

"One step nearer and I'll kill you!"

I said: "Goodness gracious."

He pulled the trigger three times—and got three clicks. I'd known that there wasn't a cartridge in that gun. Good old Doc Mooney certainly was one careless man.

Townsend, frantic, his face glittering with sweat, raised the gun. I hit his wrist with his own gun, and Doc Mooney's revolver went clattering to the floor. It all made me look like a great big hero, I didn't mind at all in the presence of the Eyes.

"Now let's get back to business. You really should have recovered that piece of paper last night after you tried to kill me, Townsend. I suppose you couldn't today, with everybody around here. I suppose that's what you came out for tonight, eh? Let's see your fountain pen." I snicked the pen from his vest pocket. "Yes, I thought so. You're not so terribly smart, really. Zander himself might have recognized a pen like that. Or were you going to take the chance and brazen it out right in front of him, while the boys tortured him?"

The girl said: "What is it? What's it mean?"

"I'm not sure of the details, but it went something like this: Zander had documentary evidence that this jellyfish was a crook. He couldn't lay this before the public prosecutor, naturally, because Townsend *was* the public prosecutor. He distrusted the police heads, who seem to have had some sort of working arrangement with Brother Townsend. So the logical thing to do was go to the Governor, who happens to be in Brompton right now. So Zander started for there.

"Townsend knew all this, somehow. And he knew that unless he got hold of those letters or checks or whatever they are, he was sunk. So he enlisted a couple of high-powered hoodlums. He was in a nice position to do that. He could promise to *nolle prosequi* the indictments standing against them if they'd do this one job. I don't know how many of them there were. I'm guessing two, but it might have—"

Somebody in the doorway said: "Two is right, mister."

And as I started to turn, somebody said: "Don't do that. Don't move anything at all, except you open your hand and let that gun drop."

I did move, but only my eyes. And what I saw was two disagreeable giants who wore caps and who carried enormous automatics. One of them, in fact, had two automatics.

"DIDN'T you hear me?" this one asked softly.

I opened my hand, and listened to the gun drop. I realized in that moment how Townsend must have felt just outside the window.

But Oliver T. Townsend felt swell right now. He recovered his gun with a scurrying, crab-like motion. He punched me in the mouth.

"Don't get too close to him," the two-gat man begged. "If he should get ideas I wouldn't want to have to kill you too."

Townsend backed away. But you couldn't keep him quiet. His smile was working again now, and he was purring.

"Glad to see you, boys! I was getting worried about you."

"Well, we didn't come to get you out of any jam. We came for the jack, sweetheart. The dough-ray-me. It's lam time for these kids."

The other man, who had lowered his gun and was looking with a perfectly frank leer at Nurse Forbes, said out of a corner of his mouth, without turning his head: "You told us if the job held slaughter we catch-'em-up a half grand extra. Yes-no?"

"I know, but you didn't get—"

Townsend hesitated.

I asked: "What didn't you get? Is it in Zander's safe, at his home? And he didn't take it with him last night? Is that it?"

Two-Gun said: "I don't know who you are, guy."

"I'm the man you wrecked last night. One of you. What was the

matter? You get rattled when you saw the light here, and my car up there, and decide to get rid of the body as fast as possible? Was that the way it was?"

"I don't know who you are, guy, but anyway, we're not doing business with you. We're doing business with Baldy here."

"I don't know why he should pay you. You were supposed to bring in Zander alive, weren't you, if he didn't have the papers? You were supposed to bring him here and do a little torture act until he consented to write a note to his secretary or somebody, authorizing him to hand them over to bearer. Isn't that right?"

"It must be wonderful to be smart like you."

"But you're out of practice, I guess. Too long behind the bars. You lost your head, one of you, and let fly. And then you were going to bring in the body, at least, to prove that you'd been working. But you didn't like the looks of my car, and the light. So you dumped the body on me, and missed entirely the kid sleeping in the back seat."

"What do you mean? What kid?"

I knew then that they hadn't seen Arthur Forbes. And his sister knew it, too. She was staring at me all this time, and the second gunman was staring at her with eyes like French postcards.

"You didn't see him, but he was there. He ran away. He's going to testify against you, later."

"Say, listen, guy—"

"Then you got even more panicky when you heard me turn around and start for Brompton instead of going on toward Wellington. You couldn't figure who I was, or what I had to do with it, but you decided not to take any

chances. So you wrecked me, for which many thanks."

"I'll wreck you more than that!"

X

TOWNSEND said hastily: "I'll give you the money I promised. I'll double it if you'll help me out of this predicament."

"That means jam," I explained. "Predicament."

"I know what it means," said Two-Gun. "I ain't dumb."

Townsend hurried on: "These people—they know about me. They— Well, they must be—"

"You want more killing, huh?"

"It'd be a shame to bump this fluff," said One-Gun. "At least, right away."

"I don't like it so much," said Two-Gun. "I don't like this business about some kid. What's he talking about, anyway?"

Townsend said: "There isn't any kid. He's making that up. Just trying to talk himself out of something, that's all. There isn't any kid."

"It would mean lamming with our seats on fire, instead of like gentlemen. I don't like it."

"A whole thousand dollars apiece," Townsend offered eagerly. "And you wouldn't be involved in any way. Nobody even suspects your existence. This fellow told about you, but nobody believes a word he said. He's under arrest right now for the murder of Harry Zander, and he's escaped from the hospital. And this girl is the nurse who was assigned to take care of him today."

One-Gun said: "Nurse, huh?"

"Don't you get it?" Townsend hurried. "Your gun for her, and then leave it here in his hand. My own gun for him. I'm the public prosecutor and

I'm out here checking up on clues, in case I overlooked something this afternoon. The conscientious public servant, see? On the job even at night. I hear a shot, rush in, find this man just after he's killed the girl. She had helped him to escape from the hospital, and they were to meet here afterward, see? A lovers' quarrel. This man turns his gun against me, but I get mine out first. Then I'm the public hero, see? And you boys aren't involved at all."

I said: "Nice for tomorrow's papers. But what's going to happen when Zander's executor opens that safe?"

"Never you mind about that! I'll fix that, somehow!"

"And what happens when the kid shows up one of these days and babbles out his story, and picks out the pictures of these two apes, and it turns out that it was your influence that set them free?"

Two-Gun said angrily: "What is all this about a kid, anyway?"

"Absolutely nothing to it," lied Townsend. "I tell you this man is just trying to talk you out of some easy dough. Listen, didn't I tell you yesterday that—"

OF course my two arms were in the air, but nobody was paying much attention to me, and nobody seemed to have noticed that I was still holding a flashlight in my left hand. Townsend and Two-Gun were snarling at one another, and Two-Gun's two guns were pointed at the floor. One-Gun wasn't interested in anything but the nurse. And Oliver T. Townsend probably had forgotten that he had a gun in his own hand.

I figured I was as good as dead anyway. Townsend himself would kill me if he couldn't get these professionals

to do it. Townsend couldn't afford to have me live! So I figured I might as well go crazy.

Townsend was the nearest. I took one step, and brought the flash down on his head. He fell against the girl, thank God! and knocked her backward. I dived for the table.

I had the table up and in front of me before either of the hoods could shoot. And I rushed Two-Gun, hoping to shove him against his pal.

The whole place seemed to explode. Three forty-fives going at once make a lot of noise. The table bucked furiously in my hands, and it would have slammed me backward if I hadn't thrown myself into what practically amounted to a football dive.

A spray of splinters, a whole shower of them, flew into my face. It was like sticking your face into a fire.

The table hit something, and I pushed with all my strength. Two-Gun hadn't had a chance to jump aside. He stumbled against One-Gun, yelled something. The table started bucking again, and I felt more flames licking me. The table was twisted out of my hands. I grabbed a gun arm, pushed up. The thing exploded almost at my nose. One-Gun, abruptly, didn't have a face any more.

I tried to swing One-Gun around in front of me, but it was no soap. Too heavy. Besides, the other gorilla would only have shot me right through his partner's body. If I ever saw murder in a man's face it was in his, and I stood there without a thing to do but be killed.

"Here it comes," I thought to myself. If I jumped I couldn't save myself, now. It would only mean that the girl might stop a stray pellet.

Then again the whole place appeared to blow up, and I slid to the floor.

Nothing hurt me. I supposed that I was dying, but I couldn't feel a thing. I only knew that I was sitting on the floor, with my back against a wall, and watching Two-Gun do a whirling dervish act clear across the room. Two-Gun struck a wall, bounced back, was slammed against the wall again by some force I couldn't understand, and finally dropped to his knees, facing a corner, like a little boy who is being punished in school.

It seemed like a long time before I realized that three men in the doorway had been shooting at Two-Gun with automatic rifles. We learned later that they'd put twenty-one bullets into him. Which is a lot, even for a man as tough as he was.

One of these men said: "You Holister?"

I wetted my lips, but I was afraid to try to talk. I was afraid nothing would happen. So I nodded. I crawled on my hands and knees to where Miss Forbes was lying.

Her eyes were open, and she was conscious; but she'd been stunned. I started to caress her, in a kind of awkward way. Then I found that somebody else was doing the same thing, on the other side. He was all burbles about his sister.

"I was scared. I didn't know what was up, after these men came along and dumped the body into your car. I didn't know whether you were in on it or not. The minute they went away I ran."

"Been hiding, eh?"

"I've been watching policemen and sheriffs and everything, tramping all over this neighborhood. I was scared to death! Then tonight I saw my sister come here, and I was just starting after her when I saw you come along. I waited. I was afraid of you."

"I don't blame you, the way I'm dressed!"

"I started to run toward the road, to signal a car I heard coming. But when I saw these men getting out of the car I recognized them. I ran across country to the main highway, where it's under repair, and I came to a car with these three deputy sheriffs. They said they were out looking for you."

Anyway, this was roughly what he told me. It didn't sound nice and clear like that to me. It sounded all fuzzy. The last thing I can remember was him talking all blurred and jumpy, and staring at me with those dark blue eyes. They tell me I passed out as quietly as though I was just falling into a doze.

EYES was leaning over me, and she had her starched linen cap on. Houris don't wear starched linen caps. They don't wear anything but beautiful smiles. But not as beautiful as Miss Forbes' smile.

"Now this time you really mustn't talk," she told me, smiling. "I mean it! You're in bad shape, and they think they're going to have to operate to get one of the bullets out."

Somebody crisp I couldn't see, behind her, contributed: "We're going to get Dr. Mooney for you. He's a fine surgeon."

I wasn't as out as they thought I was. I said: "My God! don't get him! He'll go away afterward and forget to sew me up again!"

"Now you absolutely *mustn't* talk!"

"May I listen?"

That was all right, so she told me things. Nice things. One of them was that Oliver T. Townsend was already in jail. Another was that she thought it was wonderful the way I'd rushed those gunmen. Everybody else

thought it was wonderful, too, including the sheriff, who was going to offer me a deputy's job full-time. Another one was—I had to ask it—that her first name was Harriet. I muttered something about being glad it wasn't Agnes, or Agatha, and when she started to say something I explained:

"But you won't have to be jealous.

It's all over now. Aggie and I have busted up. Or at least, Aggie has."

"Now you simply, absolutely *must not talk!*"

"All right," I said. "You'll be here?"

"I'll be here."

"All right," I said, and went to sleep again.

Thrice-Kidnaped Woman Set Afire

OBSERVING a smoldering bundle in the gutter in front of his house late at night, John White, of 916 Fifty-second Street, Brooklyn, N. Y., went to stamp out the fire. The bundle was Mrs. Bertha Deutsch, of 1254 Forty-second Street. She was bound and gagged, her clothing burning. For the third time in five months she had been kidnaped and thrown from an automobile.

On the first occasion she was seized on the street, thrust into a car, trussed and gagged, and tossed out in Greenwood Cemetery. Three months later she was similarly treated and dropped in a secluded corner of Prospect Park. At that time she caused the arrest of a former boarder in her house, but he was acquitted of her charges.

In her latest misadventure, new touches were added when she was chloroformed and set afire. White's timely discovery saved her from being seriously if not fatally burned. Neither she nor her husband can explain the repeated attempts on her life.

—Emory Black.

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*Behind a Half-Opened
Door Vivian Legrand
Sways in a Siren's Dance
and Tricks Forty Pirates
Out of Liberty and Life*

A True Story
By Eugene Thomas



"I'll kill the first man!"

The Episode of the Forty Murderers

VIVIAN LEGRAND was fully aware of the sinister reputation of the man whose shop she was entering. He had the reputation of having in stock many things difficult to purchase anywhere else. Such things as a knife and a hand to wield it on a dark street.

She knew that he would have at his

finger tips a most intimate knowledge of life in Port Blair, capital of India's Penal Colony in the Andaman Islands. And what he did not know, he would find out for you.

The latter was Vivian's reason for seeking out Wing Li, the Chinese bird-

seller on Port Blair's principal street. She was in Port Blair to kidnap one Ivan Stavinsky from under the noses of his British jailers. Stavinsky, a Russian secret service agent, had been sentenced to a life term in the Andamans for a civil crime committed in Calcutta.

A Chinese sitting cross-legged on a cushion in the rear of the shop rose at her entrance and came forward.

"You wanchee buy?" he inquired in pidgin, the common tongue of the Islands.

Vivian Legrand shook her head and answered in fluent Cantonese.

"I desire to buy," she said, "but I am afraid that you have not the object I wish to purchase."

She seated herself on a stool beside the counter and looked up at him quietly. Her eyes, heavy lidded, and of a greenish color, were baffling. Flaming red hair clouded her face.

"I have many things," the Chinese told her.

"I am seeking a bird. But only one kind will do. And I can pay only one price. Three pounds, sixpence."

Their eyes met and they exchanged one long, calculating glance.

"Is it a native bird?" inquired the Chinese.

"It is a Chinese bird," Vivian Legrand responded. "But now it roosts in Manila."

A swift smile broke the impassive yellow mask. "I am he whom you seek," he said. "What are the instructions of the Mandarin Hoang Fi Tu?"

THE Chinese shopkeeper was one of the agents of the sinister mandarin, whose long-nailed fingers reached through the underworld of the whole Far East. The formula Vivian Legrand had used, simple as it was, had



RED-HEADED Vivian Legrand was a breath-taking siren who blackmailed the rich and powerful. She had no scruples. She knew no fear. She began her career of crime by inspiring the murder of her own father in a gambling hell on Bubbling Well Road, Shanghai.

She won immunity for this deed by recovering a letter which contained a clue to an important state secret, something the British secret service had been unable to accomplish. But Vivian Legrand read the letter before she sold it to the British and now is racing to reach the convict who wrote the letter, in order to kidnap him from a penal colony and sell his secret again before the British can lay hands on him.

identified her as an agent of the mandarin.

"Do you know a prisoner whose name is Ivan Stavinsky?" she asked.

The Chinese reflected a moment, then nodded.

"Can you get a message to him?"

"It will not be difficult. Just now he is a gardener on the grounds of the Chief Commissioner's house."

"I want you," Vivian Legrand said, "to get word to him that he is to be rescued and placed aboard the yacht, Southern Cross, in the harbor. You will know the best hour and the best place for the rescue to be made, and you will have a boat waiting for me somewhere on the water front. It will be impossible for me to use the yacht's launch."

The Chinese raised protesting hands.

"It cannot be done," he expostulated. "There would be no way of getting him aboard the yacht during the day without being seen. And because he is not a ticket-of-leave man, at night he is locked up.

"But even if he were free at night, it could not be done. The water front is well patrolled, and the Indian police are constantly on the alert about the harbor. Besides, this Stavinsky is a dangerous man. He has the instinct of the killer . . . the instinct of the tiger. He would have no gratitude toward you for rescuing him. He would not hesitate to kill you if it would serve his purpose."

Vivian Legrand looked at him with the unreadable, faintly-slant-eyed gaze that, had he known her better, would have told him that trouble was brewing. Her voice was suddenly harsh.

"That is my business. It will be yours to give me the information I want and to carry out my orders."

The Chinese quailed.

"I but meant to be helpful," he murmured.

"I want information, not advice," she said curtly. "When is the best time to free this prisoner?"

The man hesitated. "He is always guarded."

"Police or soldier?" Vivian Legrand queried.

"Neither," the man responded. "A ticket-of-leave man. And him you could not bribe. He knows that for Stavinsky to escape while in his charge would mean life imprisonment without privileges for him."

"A blow on the head?" Vivian Legrand suggested.

The Chinese shook his head. Stavinsky could not pass through the streets, and even if he were to reach the water front he could never leave the dock. No, he must be smuggled aboard. And the Chinese didn't know how.

"I do," Vivian Legrand said suddenly. "I think I see a way to make the prison authorities place him aboard the yacht themselves."

She talked rapidly for a few minutes. The Chinese listened, while a look of admiration spread over his face. And in the end he agreed that, if luck was with her, she might be able to work it. Then he said humbly:

"Is it permitted that this unworthy one advise you that the boats in the harbor, even the yacht of the Rajah of Salingar on which you are a guest, will be searched at once? And if you leave before the search is made, they will send a boat with soldiers after you to search the ship."

"They can search to their heart's content," Vivian Legrand told him. "They will never find him, where he will be hidden. You may tell him that; also that I have already received permission from the High Commissioner to visit a village of the Andamese, the one called Karawas, which is about twenty miles down the coast.

"Immediately after the escape of the prisoner is discovered and the ship searched, we will sail for Karawas, re-

main there one night as a blind, return to Port Blair to pay our respects to the High Commissioner, and then sail again."

Vivian Legrand left the shop of the bird-seller.

Meanwhile, from Calcutta a British gunboat was steaming for Port Blair, her fires roaring under forced draft. There was occasion for hurry. Her commander had been placed under the orders of Colonel Sir Mark Caywood, Chief of the British secret service in the Far East, and Sir Mark had informed him curtly that neither coal nor men were to be spared in reaching the Penal Colony. The sailor was not informed that a certain prisoner there had discovered a hidden pass through the mountains that guard the northern frontier of India. The secret was of immense value to Great Britain—and to Russia.

From Penang a Dutch cargo boat . . . Dutch at least in registry . . . was lumbering southward. She was Russian in crew. Her captain was a commander in the Imperial Russian Navy, although few persons outside of the secret service headquarters in St. Petersburg were aware of that fact. Haste was a part of her program also.

The cablegram in code that her captain had received in Saigon, ostensibly relating to a cargo of jute to be picked up in Bombay, had in reality been orders for him to proceed to the Andaman Islands with all possible speed.

The object of the gunboat, the cargo boat and Vivian Legrand, was the same.

II

THE office of the doctor who administers to the convicts of Port Blair stands on a slight hill from which can be seen the dusty streets of

the little town, the blue water of the bay, and the boats at anchor there.

It was just after the siesta hour that Vivian Legrand rang the doctor's door bell.

The man who admitted her was an orderly. He conducted her into an empty hall and disappeared. In a moment or two he returned, and opening a door on the right, ushered her into a reception room.

The man who rose from behind the desk in the center of the room was tall and broad enough to give the impression of being unusually powerful. There was about him a terrible vitality that battered against the will of the observer. This impression may have been due, in some measure, to the eyes. They were dark, with a peculiar reddish glow like very dark garnets.

Vivian Legrand looked into them as she approached, and saw that their owner had the power to turn off almost at will their curious red gleam, almost as though a camera shutter had clicked shut over them.

"Please be seated, Miss"—he glanced at the card he still held in his hand—"Mrs. Legrand. I am Doctor Ferguson."

"I want to consult you professionally," Vivian Legrand explained.

"I see." The doctor was noncommittal. "You realize, of course, that I am the prison doctor, and that my practice is confined, ordinarily, to convicts?"

"Quite," Vivian Legrand said pleasantly. "But unfortunately we have no doctor on the Rajah of Salingar's yacht, on which I am a guest, and from what I have heard of the half-caste doctor who administers to the civilians in Port Blair, I do not think that I care to place the case in his hands. And on the other hand I would

have no hesitation in leaving it in yours."

"You are most kind." The red flared again, and then the eyes played their camera-shutter trick. "Perhaps you did not realize that I am not supposed to handle outside cases."

"Without special permission," Vivian Legrand amended with her most charming smile. "I have here a note of introduction from the High Commissioner." She extended it. "I realize that you are a busy man. I merely wish a diagnosis and an outline of treatment."

"I see. Just what is your trouble, Mrs. Legrand?"

"Oh, it isn't for myself." Vivian Legrand laughed as if the idea of her needing treatment from a doctor were quite amusing. "But for someone for whom I am in a measure responsible."

"And his trouble?"

"A belief that he is being robbed . . . a temporary belief, of course . . . but one that is becoming increasingly frequent. To explain, he has had this trouble for some time, and I brought him along with us on the yachting trip in the belief that the voyage might aid the condition. But of late it has seemed to increase. A day or two ago he insisted that I had deprived him of a favorite pair of shoes. He would become angry when I insisted that I knew nothing of them. Then, in a day or so, the matter would be completely forgotten."

"Quite a common paranoia, Mrs. Legrand. There is nothing so unusual in that."

"Perhaps not," Vivian Legrand agreed. "But these attacks or whatever they may be are becoming increasingly frequent. Only last night he insisted that I had robbed him of a large sum of money. When, as a matter of

fact, he has no money, and is completely dependent upon me. I was only able to quiet him by telling him that the money would be restored today. On that condition he agreed to meet me here."

"Here?" the thin tone had a note of disapproval.

"Yes. You see, I was quite anxious to have you examine him during one of these attacks."

"There was really no occasion to bring him here," the doctor said. "It would have been quite all right for me to visit him upon the yacht."

"But he wouldn't have seen you, if he had known you were a doctor. It was necessary to trick him into coming here. All that I ask is that you examine him, give me your opinion on whether this condition is likely to increase, and what treatment is best."

"Very well," the doctor said. "When do you expect him?"

"At any moment now," Vivian Legrand answered, glancing at her watch. "I imagine that you are a busy man. If you have work to do, just leave me here in your reception room, and when your patient arrives, the orderly can call you."

She held her breath. On the doctor's reaction to this suggestion hung the success or failure of her plan. If he reacted as she figured that he would, and luck was with her, she would have in her hands the man who held the key to the secret for which two nations would be willing to pay—and pay well.

The doctor nodded. "I am quite busy," he said. "You will find magazines and books there on the table."

WAITING until the door to the ward had closed behind him, Vivian Legrand made a swift examination of the room. There were

two doors, one leading to the hall, the other to the hospital proper. Windows were on only one side, facing the roadway. A large settee was in one corner, a heavy, clumsy article of furniture. She opened the door to the hall a trifle and peered out. No one there.

Picking up a three months' old magazine she crossed to one of the windows, drew aside the curtains a trifle, and leaned against the casement. To a casual observer she would have seemed merely engaged in turning the pages of a magazine in a rather bored manner.

She did not have long to wait. Scarcely ten minutes later she saw two men on foot turn in at the gate beside the road. From the description she knew that one of them was Stavinsky. The other man must be his guard. Instantly she was alert. Crossing swiftly to the door leading to the hospital, she listened. There was no sound there. Then she ran soundlessly into the hall.

Before Stavinsky's guard had time to ring, the door was opened and Vivian Legrand stood on the threshold. Her hat and handbag lay behind a row of books on the table. There was no indication that she was not an occupant of the doctor's quarters.

"The doctor is expecting you," she said quietly. "He is performing an important operation just now, and left word that the two of you were to wait in here."

She indicated the open door of the reception room. The two preceded her into the room. She entered after them and carefully closed the door behind her.

The guard dropped on to the settee, his rifle held between his knees. Stavinsky dropped into a chair near the table. For a few seconds there was silence.

Stavinsky was wide-shouldered, and the chest at his open shirt front was a

mat of curly hair. His head was cropped, and his face was one to remember — big-nosed, square-jawed, with piercing black eyes. Just at the moment there was a look in those eyes of a caged animal who sees the door of his cage slowly opening, and wonders if he can make the dash to liberty before it closes again.

Vivian Legrand picked up her handbag and strolled casually toward the door. She turned, just as she reached the settee, opened her bag, took out a little mirror and inspected her face. The guard glanced at her indifferently, and then his gaze shifted.

He never knew what hit him. The blackjack that Vivian Legrand had in her handbag struck him savagely across the head. He went out like a light.

With a leap like an agile cat Stavinsky caught the rifle before it clattered to the floor.

"Put him behind the settee," Vivian Legrand ordered tensely. If the orderly or the doctor came in just then they were lost. "Put his rifle back there, too."

Together they dropped the unconscious man behind the clumsy article of furniture so that he was completely hidden from sight. Then from beneath her dress Vivian Legrand whipped a white shirt and a pair of flannel trousers.

"Get these on in a hurry," she ordered tensely. "Throw your prison clothes behind there with the guard. You know what you've got to do?"

"Wing Li told me," the other responded in a swift whisper. Already he was ripping off his clothes. "I pretended to be sick . . . a touch of the sun . . . so the guard got permission to bring me up to the hospital."

"Keep your feet out of sight," she ordered. "You're still wearing prison

shoes, remember. I couldn't bring you shoes. Didn't know your size, even if it had been possible."

She crossed the room and tapped upon the door leading to the hospital. A moment later the doctor appeared.

"He's here," she said in a low voice. "And worse than ever. I can't do anything with him."

"I'll talk to him," the doctor said and walked into the room.

STAVINSKY was standing at the far side of the table, leaning on it. He glared at the doctor as he approached and said in a loud voice:

"I want my money."

"Of course, of course," Dr. Ferguson said soothingly. "I'll see that you get your money. But first I want to talk to you."

"I don't want to talk," Stavinsky said furiously. "I want my money. I want my money, and if I don't get it I'll break your neck." He turned toward Vivian Legrand. "You told me if I'd come up here I'd get my money, and I want it."

He picked up a heavy book-end on the table and poised it, as if to throw.

"I want my money."

Attracted by the loud tones an orderly appeared in the doorway behind them. The doctor said something to him rapidly and then turned toward Vivian Legrand.

"Impossible to do anything with him in this condition."

"But I can't leave him like this," Vivian Legrand said hopelessly. "Can't you do something to quiet him?"

"I'm going to give him a hypodermic," the doctor said.

The assistant appeared in the door behind him, and handed the doctor a filled hypodermic, then slowly moved to a position behind Stavinsky, who

still stood behind the table demanding his money.

With a swift gesture the orderly threw his arms about Stavinsky's shoulders and tightened them so that the man gasped for breath. The doctor rolled up the shirt sleeve and pressed the hypodermic home.

"There," he said, stepping back, "he'll be all right now." Then he said to the orderly, "Just hold him for a few minutes."

"I'm so sorry," Vivian Legrand said. "I wouldn't have subjected you to this annoyance for the world. The poor fellow has been getting worse for days, but I had no idea when he left me this morning, that he would be like this."

"It frequently happens," the doctor remarked.

Even as he spoke Stavinsky's struggles became less violent.

"It's a sad case," Vivian Legrand said. "I'm very much afraid that he will have to be sent to an asylum." Then she hesitated. "I hate to ask you, but is there any way you can assist me in getting him back to the ship?"

"Of course," the doctor said. "We'll send him down in the hospital ambulance."

He turned to the orderly.

"Have this man placed in the ambulance and taken aboard Mrs. Legrand's yacht," he said.

And fifteen minutes later, with Vivian Legrand in attendance, Stavinsky was placed aboard the yacht by men whose duty it was to prevent his escape.

III

FIVE hours later the last soldier had departed over the side of the trim white yacht. Every possible hiding place on the ship had been

searched. The coal bunkers had been probed with iron bars, the water tanks opened and examined. But of the missing Stavinsky they had found no trace. He was safely hidden in the opening between the cabin wall and the hull of the ship that Wylie had had made beneath his bunk.

It was a cramped space for a large man, to be sure, and gave him room to only lie flat, like a man in a coffin. But it represented safety and Stavinsky had not demurred.

Within a few minutes after the soldiers had left, the anchor came clanking aboard and the ship's nose was turned toward the point of land around which lay the native village, off which they were to spend the night.

Vivian Legrand breathed a sigh of relief as the roofs of Port Blair fell astern. The one thing that she had feared had been questions concerning the man who had been brought aboard from the hospital. But there had been no visitors from ashore to ask embarrassing questions, and as the rajah had been ashore himself he knew nothing of it. The following afternoon they would return to Port Blair, pay a formal visit of farewell to the High Commissioner—and then Rangoon and the sale of Stavinsky's secret to the highest bidder.

Vivian Legrand always slept like a cat. The normal sounds of her surroundings did not penetrate her slumber, but let any alien sound intrude itself and she was awake. That night she slept even more lightly than usual.

She did not know what had awakened her, later that night, while the yacht lay off the native village, but she suddenly found herself sitting up in her berth listening intently. She reached out for the revolver which she never failed to place beside her bed. With a

little tingling shock her fingers encountered only emptiness where the revolver had been.

Hastily throwing a robe over her nightdress, she flung open the door and stepped into the dining saloon into which her room opened. There she stumbled over a pair of shoes. A slight sound caused her to look up. She saw



DOC WYLIE

a pair of stockinged feet disappearing up the stairs that led to the deck.

She gazed after the disappearing feet in perplexity. If they belonged to Adrian Wylie, what did he intend to do? She wanted to call to him. She did call in a low voice. But there was no answer.

She stood there a moment undecided, listening, watching. Then a hoarse shout broke the silence. Wylie's voice. There was a note of surprise in it, and it was followed by another that was unmistakably one of warning. Other shouts came, and sounds of heavy feet.

She was no longer uncertain as to what was happening. Curses, shouting,

running feet. Clubs striking steel plates—they could only mean a battle, and instinctively she knew that Wylie was attacked.

On the wall at the far end of the dining saloon hung a collection of native weapons—knives, blowguns, bows and arrows. Hastily snatching a slim-bladed kris from the collection she ran up the stairs to the deck.

She was just in time to see a dark figure leap over the rail and run toward the forward deck whence came the sound of battle. She ran to the rail. Below her, down there under the ship's rail, was a rowboat. The faces of half a dozen of them were looking upward in the starlight. Scarcely a dozen feet away another boat, laden with men, was approaching the ship.

Her first thought had been that her plot had been discovered, that soldiers from ashore were boarding the vessel. But a glance told her that these men were not soldiers. And then she knew the truth. These men were escaped convicts seeking to capture the yacht.

At her feet lay a heavy piece of iron. She stooped over and lifted it. With the down roll of the ship. Below was the black shape of the rowboat. She hurled the iron straight down. It went through the shell of the little boat with a rending smash of planking. A swift slash of her knife and the knotted rope up which the man had climbed, dropped into the water. Then she turned and raced toward the forward deck. Harsh voices leaped out to meet her, mingled with the screams and wild cries of the men in the sunken boat.

Forward the rajah, the captain and officers of the ship were already lined up against the further rail. Adrian Wylie was retreating slowly down the center of the deck before the clubs of three men.

Wylie was hard pressed, and as he backed against the open portion of the deck, one man slipped past for a rear attack.

VIVIAN LEGRAND screamed, but too late. The club crashed across Wylie's head and he went down. The three men turned their attention to her. She backed against the rail.

"I'll kill the first man to touch me," she said in a low voice.

But the three men armed with clubs, deploying from the prone figure on the deck, were moving swiftly to the left and right and center. But this remarkable woman was not afraid, even though there seemed no chance for escape. In another moment a club might come crashing across her skull, as it had crashed across Wylie's—but that thought never entered her head.

In later years, when peril loomed in one of the schemes in which Wylie and Vivian Legrand were engaged, the former often wondered whether she were the bravest woman in the world, or merely a fool who did not know the meaning of danger. He says he never found out.

She seemed to explode in flaming movement.

The slimmer of the three men, whose name was Morgan, fell back before the sweep of her knife. She whirled in mid-air and launched herself at Stavinsky. He was caught unawares, too slow in his movements. The blade ripped down the length of his right forearm.

The others retreated hastily before that whirlwind of fury, but almost beside her a dripping figure arose—one of the men from the sunken boat. His arm shot out and wrenched hers viciously. The knife clattered to the floor.

"The little hellcat!" Stavinsky snarled. "Tap her on the head. Lock her up. Anything, so that you can take care of this arm."

Blood was spurting from the wound. He was trying to stop it with the other hand.

"I wish it had been your heart," Vivian Legrand said with deliberate venom.

The convicts were undisputed masters of the ship. Even in the short space of time since she had been disarmed the rope had again been fastened to the railing and men were swarming up. The deck was alive with them. Having the ship, what were they going to do with it? And, more specifically, what were they going to do with the passengers, with her, with Wylie, lying there on the deck, with the rajah? In addition to escaping prison, they had committed piracy. Facing death for that, they were not likely to stop at anything further. The punishment for additional crime could be no worse.

As if to place a period to her thoughts, Vivian Legrand heard Stavinsky speak, as he lifted the arm of a lascar sailor, the man who had been on watch, and let it drop to the deck with a sodden thump.

"Getting stiff already," he grunted. "Throw him overboard. He's no good to anybody any more."

Three men sprang to obey his orders. Without expression on their faces they lifted the body and carried it to the rail.

IV

GRAY dawn had already crept into the sky as Vivian Legrand watched the body slide over the side. Her mind was working desperately. Even in times of greatest peril, she never lost an opportunity to take a trick—never passed up an opportunity,

however small, to turn a seemingly hopeless situation to her own advantage. But she could see no loophole here.

Then, as the body disappeared beneath the water, Stavinsky turned to the little group of prisoners.

"We're masters of the ship," he began abruptly. "Unfortunately, none of us know how to navigate." He thrust his face out toward the captain. "That's where you come in. Navigate the ship to the point I indicate, and you won't be harmed. Try any tricks and you'll feed the fishes."

The captain, a lean-faced, bronzed Scotchman, swore deeply.

"I'll see you in hell first," he said roundly.

Stavinsky moved so swiftly that the deed was done almost before the words were out of the captain's mouth. The knife went into the captain's throat as though the flesh were soft butter. A dark knife handle jutted out from the captain's throat. The blade was buried deeply in the flesh.

For a split second the captain stood as though carved from stone. He raised groping hands to his throat. Gurgled chokingly, and slumped to the deck, a bright stream of crimson trickling from beneath his chin.

All that had happened in a brace of seconds. There had been no other sound. Almost before Vivian Legrand realized what had happened, Stavinsky had whirled and was facing the mate of the yacht.

"Are you willing to navigate us wherever I say?" he asked silkily, his hands slipping slowly toward the belt where a second knife rested.

The man raised eyes that were sick pools of horror and stared at Stavinsky. Words refused to come from his choked throat, but he nodded assent.

"You are a wise man," Stavinsky said evenly. "Don't make the mistake of thinking we are not serious. We are." He glanced around at the little knot of engineers and deck officers. "Any objections to getting the ship under way?"

There was no answer. Stavinsky spoke again.

"Very well. Get steam up and get the ship out to sea as fast as you can. When we're out of sight of land I'll give you our destination. Now get this: the crew will not be permitted on deck, except such men as are needed for the running of the ship, and then only under guard. The officers will be locked in their cabins except when they are actually on duty. Engineers will remain below decks at all times. All right, boys, take 'em below."

"What will we do with this one?" queried one of the men, indicating Wylie.

"Throw him in his cabin and lock the door. If he lives, all right. If he doesn't, that's just his hard luck."

Vivian Legrand watched without a word as the escaped convicts herded the rajah and the officers below, two of them bearing Wylie. Meanwhile, Morgan walked across to Stavinsky.

In the early sunlight she had her first good look at Morgan and she studied him with calculating eyes. He was smaller than Stavinsky, wiry of build, with a lean face under a soft, silky beard, thin nostrils, and thin lips.

His speech was quick, jerky; his movement nervous. And it was evident from his manner, from his speech, that while Stavinsky might be the guiding spirit in this affair, that here was a man who would not be content to accept orders placidly.

"That was useless, Ivan," he said curtly, indicating the body of the slain

captain. "No sense in killing unless you have to."

"I'm the best judge of that," Stavinsky said angrily. "I engineered *your* escape, as well as that of the others, and I'm handling this affair."

Morgan flushed resentfully.

"The captain could have been shown that it was better to navigate the ship, rather than die," he said. "He would have given in. You gave him no chance."

Stavinsky glared at him.

"I told you," he said between tight lips, "that I'm running this affair. You're forgetting that, aren't you? And I'll run it the way that seems best to me. If you're getting chicken-hearted at the sight of a little blood, then you'd better jump overboard and swim back to prison."

Morgan did not answer, but Vivian Legrand could see the effort he was making to keep his temper. Stavinsky went on.

"All right, if you've come to your senses, we'll straighten things out. One of us must be on guard on the bridge all the time. We should have steam up and be ready to sail by eight o'clock. I'll stand guard on the bridge for six hours, and then you can relieve me."

Then for the first time Stavinsky noticed that Vivian Legrand was still on deck.

"What are you doing here, you hell-cat?" he demanded. "I thought you went below with the others."

"Why, you don't intend to lock *me* in my cabin, do you?" she queried innocently. "You're not afraid of me, are you?"

STAVINSKY exploded in a bellow of laughter. "I ought to wing your neck for what you did to me," he said, indicating the blood-

stained strip from his shirt about the arm. "But I won't. It's too pretty. I won't lock you in your cabin after we get out of sight of land. But until then you'll be locked in. And just to make sure, I'll lock you in myself."

Taking her arm he led her below.

"If you're wise you'll stay out of sight as much as possible," he told her. "There are forty men on this ship—escaped prisoners—murderers—all sentenced to the Andaman Islands for life. This is their chance at a getaway and if you think they'll let a little thing like a woman stand in their way, you don't know them."

They halted at the door of her cabin.

"We'll be neighbors," he said with a grin. "The captain won't need his cabin any more, so I'll just move in there, since I'm the captain now."

Vivian Legrand's eyes flickered the merest trifle. The captain's cabin was two doors past hers down the corridor. To get to the deck, Stavinsky would have to pass her cabin. In that moment was born a plan, desperate, hare-brained, and presenting the only opportunity of escape she had seen.

All that day she deliberately kept away from Stavinsky. Now and then she permitted him a brief glimpse of her, cool and distant in her white clothes, as she sat in a chair on the after deck. When Stavinsky was off duty, she was locked in her cabin. Until night. Then she waited in her chair until he was beside her, then rose.

"Oh, I didn't see you," she lied.

"I suppose if you had, you'd be gone," he said grimly. "You needn't be afraid. I won't eat you."

She hesitated prettily, consummate actress that she was, before speaking.

"I wasn't sure how you'd feel about that," she said, and indicated his bandaged arm.

Stavinsky exploded in a bellow of laughter—and over her shoulder Vivian Legrand saw Morgan peering down at them from the bridge.

"That pin-prick," he said. "That's nothing."

"I'm glad," Vivian Legrand said softly, "that it wasn't worse. But you couldn't expect me to do anything . . . then."

The next morning she was up early. A trip to the cook furnished her with several bottles of ammonia, which she was going to need. Then she found the frightened Malay cabin boy. To him she gave a folded slip of paper, with instructions that it be delivered at once.

Then she waited until she heard one of the convicts call Stavinsky to go on watch on the bridge. Waited until she heard the sound of his door opening.

Then Vivian Legrand, a Delilah with flaming red hair, began spinning her web.

She stood before the long glass in her cabin. In it she could see the entire length of her body, in her long, straight cobweb-thin gown; a tube of sheerest black. The weblike embroidery over her breasts rose and fell with her breathing.

A queer, cold expression had settled upon her face. Only her eyes were warm. She smiled, a rather terrible smile, as she stood there, every nerve keyed.

There was a sound of a footstep outside. She had purposely left the door ajar—a crack of only an inch or two, but one that it would be almost impossible for a person passing in the corridor to miss seeing.

The footstep halted. Vivian Legrand began to hum a slow, lazy waltz, in her deep contralto. There was a faint creak and she saw the crack in the door open a trifle.

She lifted her bare arms above her head as high as she could, stretching. She locked her pointed fingers. With a slow, stroking movement she slid her hands down, tightening the silk about her body until her hands pressed taut above her hips. As the hands moved downward she breathed slowly, lifting and arching her bosom. She stared at herself—and at the effect the scene was having on the man at the crack in the doorway—peering intently into the mirror, her eyes watching the rise of her high, pointed breasts.

Then she whirled, her arms crossed protectively across her body, her eyes fixed in cleverly simulated fright on the door.

"Who is there?" she called, and no man living could have told that the note of fear in her voice was not genuine.

Years later a famous French theatrical producer who knew Vivian Legend, to his own sorrow, said that if she had not taken up blackmail as a profession, she could have been the greatest actress the world had ever known.

v

THE door opened a little more. Framed in the aperture was the stark and sinister figure of Ivan Stavinsky.

"I thought I heard you call," he said by way of explanation. His eyes fluttered greedily over her silk-clad body.

"No, I didn't call." Her embarrassment was a work of art. Yet she was playing the most terrific gamble in her career. She was banking, betting, coldly and unruffledly on an unpredictable factor—a man's emotions.

Moving to her berth, she threw a mandarin coat over her sheer gown. She shot a glance at the clock. It was

nearly eight. "But I am glad you . . . you thought you heard me call. I am afraid."

He came further into the room. "You need not be afraid. No one will hurt you."

"Perhaps you won't." She dropped her long lashes over her greenish eyes, and then looked up at him again. This man was no fool. He knew the value of the secret of which he was the possessor, and her instinct had already warned her that he was not the type of man from whom a woman could worm a secret easily. "But you aren't the only one on board. There are forty and if you were gone—"

She stopped, letting the sentence die away, leaving the unspoken implication hanging in the air between them.

He crossed the room with swift strides, his easily aroused suspicions flaming; grasped her hands.

"What do you mean—if I were gone?" he demanded.

"Nothing," she protested in distress. "Nothing. I shouldn't have said it. I wouldn't have—but I was so afraid—and you were the only one I thought I could trust to protect me—and when I heard—"

Again she stopped. Again that break, that unspoken implication.

She was playing the most dangerous game in the world, and she was playing it not merely against a criminal, but against a man who held human life as the cheapest thing at his command. Her life would go out like a snuffed candle if her opponent suspected for a single instant the game she was playing.

"Heard what?" Stavinsky demanded.

"Oh, don't make me tell," she moaned.

"What did you hear?" he demanded. "Tell me, or I'll break every bone in your damned body."

Instead of answering, she countered with a question.

"Are you the leader of those men or is someone else?"

"I am, by God," he answered harshly. "What did you hear?"

"I heard someone talking," she said with reluctance, as if the words were being dragged from her against her will. "I couldn't see who it was. They were on deck and I was at the foot of the stairs. It was during the night. I had gone out to get a drink of water . . . and I heard something about taking the leadership away from you—about killing you—"

"Who was it?" he shot at her.

"I don't know," she protested. "I couldn't see them. It was dark. The voice sounded like an Englishman's."

"Morgan! The English swine!" He swore in Russian. "Was that all you heard?"

"Almost. They passed on down the deck and I didn't follow them."

"What else was there?"

"Something about some of the men being loyal to you because you arranged their escape—and something else about trying to win them over. And then someone said something about tonight—about killing you tonight. And that's all."

She came closer to him, looked up at him with eyes wide and trusting. "You won't let them hurt me?"

There was silence in the room for a moment. Vivian Legrand's brain was working coolly, methodically, judicially, but in her eyes was something more remorseless and deadly than any sudden flare of impetuous and unbridled anger. The cold unwinking stare of the snake about to strike.

Stavinsky slipped an arm over her shoulder. Her softness, the sight of her rounded shoulders showing beneath

the thin covering, excited him.

"Don't worry, I won't let them harm you," he swore.

"I knew I could trust you," she said, and her body relaxed in the curve of his arm.

He bent over and kissed her. She strained away from him, and then, as she saw the door of her cabin begin to open, struggled furiously. She got one arm free and slapped him with all her force. He recoiled—and then over her shoulder caught sight of Morgan standing on the threshold, scowling. Stavinsky loosened his hold and whirled on the other.

"What are you doing here?" the Russian demanded savagely.

"HOW about you?" demanded Morgan curtly. He still held in one hand a slip of paper that Vivian Legrand knew must be the note she had sent him. "I thought we'd agreed that for the sake of peace on board, the woman was to be left alone? You know damn well that if the others find you're not playing straight with them about this girl, there'll be hell to pay."

Stavinsky thrust his head forward in a gorilla-like gesture.

"How about yourself?" he asked.

"Don't worry about me. I can handle my own affairs," the Englishman said evenly. "Now, you'd better get out, Ivan."

"Get out!" Stavinsky exploded. His mood was ugly, and for a moment it seemed that the two would come to blows there in her cabin. And that, Vivian Legrand knew, would spoil whatever chances her plan had of being successful. She moved between them.

"Yes, please go," she said to Stavinsky. And then, in the softest of whispers, added for his ears alone:

"You must not make him suspicious."

For a moment anger and craft warred in Stavinsky. The latter won. Without a word he turned on his heel and strode from the cabin. But his eyes as they swept across Morgan, in passing, were venomous.

A little thrill went through Vivian Legrand. She knew the seed she had planted would sprout and blossom. She waited until Stavinsky's footsteps clumped up the companionway stairs, outside. Then she swayed and reached out blindly for support.

"I think . . . I'm . . . going to faint," she murmured.

The Englishman crossed the room swiftly; caught her in his arms. She lay there supine for a moment, her eyes looking up into his, the flame of her hair cascading down across his arms. Then she pushed him away resolutely.

"You mustn't," she whispered tensely. "Oh, you don't know—you don't know—he's going to kill you."

"Not he," the Englishman scoffed. "He values his damned hide too much to try it."

"But he is, I tell you." There was a choked sob in her voice. She caught his hand, held it fiercely. The eyes she raised to his pleaded mutely for belief. "Tonight—he was telling me about it before you came in—I don't know all the details . . . but I know he plans to kill you and some of your men. He said some of the men were loyal to you, and those he couldn't win over to his side, he'd kill—along with you—tonight."

"Why, the damned crook," the Englishman marveled.

Vivian Legrand's brain was working swiftly, yet carefully.

"I didn't know when I wrote you that note. But I was afraid of him,

and I wanted to ask you to protect me . . . and I was waiting here for you when the door opened and he came in . . . and then he told me . . . that he was going to kill you . . . and take the ship—" she paused dramatically—"and me."

"Oh, you won't let him, will you? If he kills you and becomes the undisputed leader, there is no one to protect me. Oh, you won't let him, will you? He can't win—you're the better man."

"Don't worry," the Englishman said grimly, "he won't win."

Vivian Legrand took his hand and moved him gently toward the door. There was a shadow of a smile in her eyes, but he did not see it.

"You must go now. You mustn't stay here. He might become suspicious. Might kill you without warning. If you wait until tonight—when he starts something—then you can be ready for him."

"I'll wait," Morgan said, and his lips were tight. "And I'll be ready."

She closed the door behind him and began hastily to dress. Her plan was under way. But there were many things to do.

VI

SHE was playing a desperate game, one of the most desperate games of her long and varied career. Any little trifle might betray to Stavinsky and Morgan the game she was playing. As the day went on, she knew that storm clouds were gathering about the two men. The forty murderers aboard seemed to be more and more, as hour after hour passed, gathering into two camps. There were glowering looks, muttered words.

Once a squabble between two men turned into a fight. She held her breath lest the moment for which she

was planning come too soon. But the two leaders quelled the fight with a stern hand.

The rajah she had not seen since the night the forty murderers had boarded them. In common with all officers of the ship, he was locked in his cabin, the keys in possession of one of the escaped prisoners who had been appointed jailer. The engine room crew were kept below decks, working under the menace of guns in the hands of their captors, who stood guard upon the engine room grating.

She managed a furtive meeting with Wylie, and outlined her plan to him and the part that he was to play. Unknown to their captors, she had a key to Wylie's cabin. Shortly before eight that night she would unlock his door. They would sneak to the deck and play their respective parts in the drama that was to follow—the drama that would result in freedom for themselves, or, if their plans failed, death at the hands of the infuriated criminals.

Vivian Legrand was reasonably familiar with a ship, as familiar as the average passenger, and she felt certain that she would carry out the plan she had set herself. It was shortly after seven when she softly slipped the key into the lock of Wylie's cabin and opened the door. Beneath her arm she carried a bulky package. Her white clothes had been changed for something dark that merged with the shadows of the night.

Wylie was waiting, tensely alert. She pressed a revolver into his hand, a revolver that she had stolen from one of the escaped convicts that afternoon.

"Everything set?" Wylie asked. She nodded.

"I'll wait," she said, "until I hear the first shot. Then I'll start."

Together they stole quietly to the

deck. The ship was running through a moonless night, and a strange silence hung over her. Protective shadows clung thickly about the deck, cloaking the two masses of men huddling at opposite ends of the ship. Clustered about the bridge, where Vivian Legrand knew that Stavinsky was standing guard over the helmsman and officer on duty, were vague shapes she knew to be the Russian's adherents. Aft, beneath the awning, was the huddled group of Morgan's followers.

Wylie melted noiselessly into a shadow along the railing, vanished into the lee of a cluster of ventilators. Satisfied, Vivian Legrand turned, ran down the stairs, along a passage and turned into a little passage that ended in an open door.

Hot, moist air struck her in the face. She was on a narrow steel grating. Steel steps went down steeply. Below was the top of the engine and the tangle of piping and pumps that filled the cramped confines of the engine room. There was another platform just below the top of the engine. On it lounged the forms of the two convict guards. It was those two men on the platform with whom she was concerned.

Now she made her bid for freedom. Swiftly and noiselessly she undid the package under her arm, waited tensely there in the doorway, out of sight of the men below, for the signal.

It came. The sound of a shot from the deck above, clear above the pounding of the engine, and then a yell:

"Kill Stavinsky!"

Wylie was doing his part. He had fired that shot, just as he had planned, and then yelled that phrase. She knew that it would be confirmation of the tale that she had told Stavinsky. That he would immediately re-

tialiate in kind on Morgan's faction, believing that the shot had come from them.

Instantly she tossed one of the bottles she held onto the platform where the two guards lounged. It shattered with a crash. She threw another and another. The floor of the platform was covered with a fuming liquid. The two figures that had been standing erect were wobbling now. Hands were pawing at blinded eyes, and they were gasping as the fumes of the powerful ammonia choked them.

ABOVE, on the deck were shouts, yells, shots. Vivian Legrand leaned over the edge of the grating and called down to the men in the engine room.

"Come up!" she called. "The guards are blinded, and the men who captured the ship are fighting among themselves. This is our chance to get the ship back again. Hurry and free the rest of the crew!"

Then she raced for the deck. She still had something to do. It was no part of her plan that Stavinsky should be killed. He was too valuable to be wasted.

On the deck turmoil raged. Her plan had worked to perfection. The two rival factions, headed by Stavinsky and Morgan, were at one another's throats. Stavinsky's voice lifted above the turmoil of shouting men. She recognized it at once, among all the others. That voice held a tigerish, inhuman quality, like no other she had ever heard. A man came running past the entrance where she stood, then crashed to the deck and squeaked as he went down from a shot from the bridge.

Knives were flashing in the starlight, shots spat from shadows. The

entrance to the companionway stairs was in the line of fire. Even as she reached it a bullet struck the steel lintel and whined off at a tangent.

Dropping to the deck she crawled along in the lee of the railing, whose canvas windbreak made a ribbon of impenetrable shadow along the lightness of the deck. Up on the bridge was Stavinsky, and she must reach that bridge.

A man lay sprawled on the deck near the railing, the gun he had been clutching when death overtook him lying within a few inches of his hand. She reached out and appropriated it.

She was almost at the foot of the bridge ladder when the first of the crew burst out from below. Shovels, crowbars, slice bars from the engine room formed their weapons. From the hand of one of them a revolver spat venomously toward the yelling, fighting knot of men on the deck, proving that the weapons on the two guards below had not been overlooked.

Their presence gave her the opportunity she was looking for. Stavinsky did not see her figure swing lightly up the ladder. The chief mate did. All during the fight he had been held motionless under the gun of the man on the bridge with Stavinsky. Now he re-deemed himself.

He drove his right foot up from the floor with all the strength he could muster. The hard toe of the shoe slammed powerfully against the wrist of the guard's arm. The gun he held sailed down to the deck below.

Almost at the same instant Vivian Legrand's gun spoke. Stavinsky's companion gave a grunt and sank to the floor, even as the chief mate's fist slammed into Stavinsky's chin, again, and again until the man wilted and

Vivian Legrand turned. Wylie was by her side. Their pistols spat flame and lead at the prisoners on the deck below. The first officer ran down to join in the fracas.

And even as he did so, a pencil of light streaked out—a searchlight stabbing across the water. Unnoticed by Vivian Legrand or the others, a ship had been steadily approaching them. Now she saw that it was a naval vessel.

Swiftly she dropped her gun, and with Wylie's assistance got the unconscious Stavinsky down to the latter's cabin. Then the two ran back to the deck.

The fight was over now. The escaped prisoners, those that were left, were a sorry sight. Bruised, battered and cut they stood disarmed in a ring of glowering men as a boatload of sailors from the British gunboat pulled alongside.

The Rajah of Salangar, released from his cabin by one of the officers, came on deck, exceedingly worried.

The officer who released him had told him of Vivian's courage in routing the forty murderers. The Rajah sought her out, deep gratitude on his lips.

"It was the least I could do," she said softly. "I got you into this mess. All that I ask is that you forgive me, and that you do the suggesting from now on."

The rajah was flattered.

"There is nothing to forgive," he said. "But if I may suggest, I would suggest the Riviera. I am sure you would enjoy it."

"Yes," Vivian said absently, for her

startled eyes had seen Sir Mark Caywood, Chief of the British secret service in the Far East, coming over the rail with sailors from the gunboat. "I'm sure I would." Was this to be the end, after all her trouble?

Then she smiled her most serene smile; she knew that, search as Sir Mark might, he would never find Stavinsky. And she was right. They did not find him.

In the excitement of transferring the escaped convicts to be returned to Port Blair none of them noticed the lights of a Dutch cargo boat, bound to Port Blair on an errand that would never be accomplished.

VII

TWO weeks later, in Rangoon, she faced Sir Mark Caywood again.

Their interview was almost at an end. In Vivian Legrand's handbag was a bundle of Bank of England notes that totaled up more money than she ever knew existed. Two hours after the rajah's yacht sailed from Rangoon, Sir Mark would receive a letter telling him where Stavinsky was being held, safely doped, in the Chinese section of the city.

Sir Mark rose from his desk as she turned to go.

"If ever you are in trouble out here, Mrs. Legrand," he said earnestly, "just manage to get word to me. I might be able to help you."

"Thank you," said Vivian Legrand demurely, "but I am sailing tomorrow for the Riviera. I am negotiating for an interest in a ruby mine—and I expect to acquire it there."

In the next episode Vivian Legrand begins her blackmailing career in Europe.

Coming soon!

Watch for it!

ILLUSTRATED CRIMES

by Paul Berdanier

THE BLOSSOM MARTIN MURDER



It was the night of June 8, 1923. Pretty Helen Martin said good-night to her escort and turned to enter the Manhattan home of Dr. George B. McAuliffe, where she was employed as a trained nurse. Her companion grabbed her arm, pointed to a case—ment window above.

Framed in it was a savage brown face.

The girl who was nicknamed "Blossom" shrugged. "It's Lozado, the butler. He spies on me all the time."

The sloe-eyed Filipino servant, insanely jealous, had brooded over the nurse's fondness for other men.

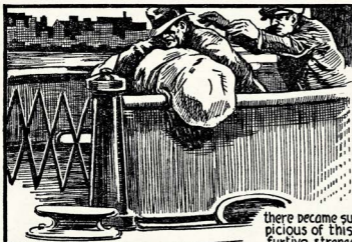
The following night the girl and Lozado were alone in the McAuliffe home. None of the neighbors heard a sound. And no one saw Lozado as he stole into the night, sagging under the weight of a big, unwieldy bundle.



HELEN "BLOSSOM"
MARTIN



COMING NEXT WEEK—



Across the city, over to Staten Island, the butler went, seeking a last hiding place for his burden. He had started to toss it off the Staten Island ferry, but there were too many passengers who might observe him.

Eleven o'clock found him at the Elizabethport ferry at Howland's Hook. The ticket-seller

there became suspicious of this furtive stranger and followed him onto the boat. There he gave a sudden leap, grappled with Lozado, just as the latter had lifted the package to let it slide over the rail, into the Kill van Kull. A pair of deck hands helped subdue the little brown man.

A policeman tore the wrapping away, and drew back. He was looking at the head of Blossom Martin, features contorted in agony. She had been strangled. In a nearby police station the rest of the bundle was unwrapped. The girl's body, fully dressed, was doubled up and trussed inside a green portière covered by Manila paper.

Under a severe grilling, the Filipino broke and re-enacted the crime. Goaded to desperation by the girl's coldness, he said, he had laid in wait for her, sprung at her in the hall and choked her to death. The portière had been ripped from a doorway in the McAuliffe home.

At the trial Lozado claimed self-defense, charging Miss Martin had attacked him with a knife. But the evidence was too strong against that. He was found guilty and executed in the death house at Sing Sing.



EULOGIA LOZADO



THE LOVE SLAYER OF HOVE, ENGLAND

Bring Him Back Alive

*Jack Laurence Is Faced
with the Most Desperate
Situation of His Career
When Sadie the Coochie
Dancer Knocks on His
Door*

By Donald Ross

**DONT MISS THIS STORY—
BEGIN HERE**

WHEN Jack Laurence went to England it was on the strangest assignment of his career as a detective. His orders from Washington were: "Circulate freely. Pose as an American expatriate. And—find the man who calls himself Sir Ronald Enescro. Get him—and bring him back alive!"

Enescro, strongly suspected of having

fomented disastrous Red uprisings in the United States, is a neighbor of Arthur Ainsworth, a former classmate of Laurence, and the latter was only too glad to accept an invitation to visit Oswald Abbey, where Ainsworth lived.

At this point Ray Bronson, an American jewel thief, gave Laurence his first real index of the sinister power of the man he was trailing. Enescro, said Bronson, had stolen from an Indian rajah one of the famous jewels in history—the diamond known as the Moon of Monabar—and the British government would be willing to pay dearly to appease the enraged rajah by putting the culprit in jail. Bronson proposed that he accompany Laurence to Oswald Abbey, posing as his valet. He, Bronson, could get the diamond and sell it back to the rajah. Laurence could turn up Enescro as a bona fide criminal, thus



This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for February 9

making the ticklish business of extradition easier.

At Oswald Abbey tragedy has struck. Upstairs lies the body of the village constable—garrotted with a thin cord. Bronson, apprehensive, pointed out to Laurence that the method of murder is of the East—undoubtedly the trail to the Moon of Monabar is no longer safe.

That evening the unknown assassin struck again. As Laurence, dozing in the terrace, watched Sir Ronald leave the Ainsworth home—a turbaned shape, knife in hand, darted over the wall. Jack shouted, leaped for the knife, and frightened the intruder away. And suddenly the maze of death and intrigue surrounding Oswald Abbey begins to assume a more menacing tone.

CHAPTER VII

In Wrong

THERE was nobody in the breakfast room when I came down at ten o'clock. It is the custom of the British to place upon the buffet a half dozen covered dishes which originally are hot but which cool rapidly. Guests rise and breakfast when they choose, helping themselves to ham, bacon, fried eggs, herring, bloaters, fried potatoes and what not.

The butler was on the watch and brought in rolls and hot coffee and looked astounded when I told him to omit service from the buffet.

"A nice bloater, sir, or a tidy bit of liver?"

"Rolls and coffee," I said firmly. "I want to enjoy them so don't lift any of those covers."

He made a sound like a snort and departed. To my delight, the coffee had no chicory in it. At least Ainsworth hadn't lost his taste for good coffee. A few minutes later I was even more delighted to have Theodora enter alone. She wore a white riding costume with polished tan leather rid-

ing boots. She had a lovely color and her eyes were sparkling.

"Well, well," I said. "I supposed you'd be deep in the downy."

"I've been up since seven. I've been riding with Sir Ronald."

She went over to the buffet and came back with a wedge of ham on a plate and some herring. The butler came in and poured coffee.

"So you turned out to be a hero," she said mockingly.

"I'm the fellow who tripped over a fish line."

She laughed. "Sir Ronald believes that there was an attempt on his life which might have succeeded except for you."

"Between ourselves, I made the whole thing up."

She grinned. "Wanted to see if he'd scare? Sir Ronald is a man, Mr. Laurence."

"A large hunk of masculinity," I said sourly. "You thinking of marrying this bimbo?"

"Is it any of your business?" she retorted sharply.

"Sure. I've the same notion."

Her color heightened.

"Put it out of your mind," she suggested. "I don't like your type."

"You don't? What's my type?"

"England is full of rich young Americans who dawdle over here and sneer at things at home."

"And what makes you think—"

"Sir Ronald says you're an intelligent young man who shares his views of conditions in the United States."

"Well, don't you?"

"Certainly not. I think the New Deal is the greatest thing since the beginning of the Christian Era. It's about time governments took an interest in the poor instead of toadying to the rich."

"Have you told your views to this Roumanian?"

"Certainly. He laughs at me but he can't change my opinion."

"How would you like to have all your money taken from you and handed to the tramps, the worthless and the ignorant?"

"You know perfectly well that there isn't any such idea."

"Who do you suppose is going to pay the National debt—those who are broke?"

"I could get along easily on five thousand a year. Let them have the rest."

"Hah. Five thousand a year is considered plutocracy by the radicals. Do you want rule of the proletariat in the United States?"

"You give me a pain," said Theodora. "I was prepared to like you. You turn out to be as nasty a snob as my brother."

I winced. Every time I opened my mouth I was getting in wrong with Theodora, but she was close to Enescro and my job was to gain the confidence of the brute. The girl was absolutely ravishing and here was my chance to get on the inside track. Instead I had to push myself off on a siding.

"I respect Sir Ronald," she said, "because he is British—anyway, he has lived in this country for many years and made a great success of himself. He's entitled to his views but you're not. You look like a nice boy. When I met you in London I thought you were my kind of person. Maybe you would be if you didn't have too much money."

That was a laugh only I didn't feel like laughing.

"If you marry this egg, you'll be a British subject," I told her. "You'll have to holler 'God Save the King.'

If we go to war with England, you'll have to root for the other side."

"At least I'll be a British subject. Where do you suppose you expatriates will get off in such a contingency?"

I shrugged. "We'll move over to France or Italy."

"Oh," cried Theodora. "Oh, you're impossible!"

With that she pushed back her chair and ran out of the breakfast room. I felt very blue. It was a dirty shame my job, which was tough enough, had to become complicated by the intrusion of a girl like Theodora.

I WENT back to my room, pulled a chair up to the window and gazed mournfully out upon the landscape.

Ray was not visible, but I had assumed that he would be about his private affairs. Having encountered Enescro, I doubted very much whether Mr. Bronson would succeed in robbing him of the Moon of Monabar. It didn't look to me as though anybody could put a thing over on Enescro. It looked particularly bleak for my prospects. The brute overawed me. He was bigger, better looking and very much more intelligent. My successes in America had made me a bit cocky. Enescro's cool, sardonic smile reminded me that I was a green youth and he a master mind. At my age he had been already a millionaire.

However, thanks to Ray, I was aware of a weakness unknown to anybody else. He was vulnerable regarding jewels. And the more I thought about it, the more I became convinced that Ray was my ace.

Land him in jail as a receiver of stolen goods. In jail he would make no more trouble for the United States. As for finger-printing him, fat chance.

There is an entirely wrong notion

that people leave finger-prints on everything they touch and all a sleuth has to do is take them off door knobs, window panes, edges of book or newspaper pages and what not.

It is rare that accidental finger-prints are useful. For positive identification they must be clear and complete, all ten fingers if possible. Such impressions are practically impossible to secure without the knowledge of their owners.

If Enescro were Alvarez the murderer, and Tom Keefe's identification was good enough for me, he knew that in California were the prints of his fingers made at the time of his arrest and he wasn't in the least likely to offer an opportunity to get duplicates of them. If he were careless, it meant that Tom Keefe, for once, was mistaken.

However, I was a soldier under orders and I'd make every human effort to obtain finger-prints of Sir Ronald Enescro.

There was a knock on my door. Arthur entered, accompanied by a stranger in black.

"Deuced shame to bother you, old chap," said my host. "But this is Inspector Good from Scotland Yard, who is investigating the killing of Constable Dobbs. He'd like a few words with you if you don't mind."

"Why not?" I asked cordially. "Sit down, Inspector. Park yourself, Arthur."

"I'd like to talk to this gentleman private," said the inspector.

"So," I said gravely to Arthur, "it appears you're under suspicion."

"That's not funny," he answered tartly.

"I wouldn't dream of suspecting Mr. Ainsworth, sir," said the inspector anxiously. "I assure you, Mr. Ainsworth."

"It's a bad sample of American

humor," he said. "I have things to do, so, Jack, if you'll excuse me—"

CHAPTER VIII

The Scotland Yard Man

THE inspector was a sight to see. He had an unusually long neck, which was so scrawny that it made an indecency of his Adam's apple. He had a prominent nose, very little chin, sandy hair and freckles. His eyes were round, with a wondering look in them. His hands were large and freckled and his fingers twitched. He wore a suit of heavy material, the coat of which was too short. It was cut in at the waist and the shoulders were padded. His feet were large and his boots had very heavy soles. They were black and clean, but had the sort of poor polish one gets from the shoe blacks who collect the shoes from outside the chamber doors of English inns.

Our own detectives are not beautiful to gaze upon, but this chap was ugly in an entirely different way.

"I take it, sir," he said, "that you are recently arrived from America."

"And I reached the manor after this constable's body had been found, so I don't see what you want to talk to me privately for anyway."

"I understand that, sir. It's regarding the incident of the terrace last night, when an attempt was made upon the life of Sir Ronald Enescro."

"Well, fire away."

"What is your purpose, if you please, for visiting England?"

"Oh, I got fed up with things at home," I replied.

"You are, I understand, a gentleman of means?"

"Well, yes."

"And a very old friend of Mr. Ainsworth?"

"Right."

"Well, sir, it looks a little as though Constable Dobbs was strangled in a manner practiced in India. The fact you think it was an East Indian who was lurking in the garden last night—"

"He wore a brown turban, that's all I know."

"Quite so, sir. You think it was Sir Ronald and not Mr. Ainsworth who was the object of the man's evil intention?"

"Sir Ronald was in plain view; Mr. Ainsworth was inside in the hall. I don't know, of course, who he was after."

"Where do you live, sir, in London?"

"At the Savoy."

"Quite so. An excellent hotel, is it not?"

"Confidentially," I said, "there are a lot of things the matter with it. For example, there are no radios in the rooms, and the coffee is bad."

The interview was getting on my nerves because the fellow seemed so aimless.

"You are remaining until Monday?"

"Unless they put me out sooner."

He condescended to grin. Until now he had been solemn as an owl.

"That's most unlikely, I should say, sir. In case we capture the miscreant. My word—"

My valet, Ray, entered the room. The eyes of the inspector sharpened.

"Green," I said, "this is Inspector Good from Scotland Yard."

"Yes, sir," said Ray. He turned his back and went into the bathroom.

"Green," commented the inspector. "Hm. You brought him down with you, no doubt?"

"No doubt."

"I presume he is competent?"

"Best valet I ever had." Which was true enough. He was also the only valet I had ever had.

Mr. Good arose. "Well, sir, I need detain you no longer. I wanted to know where you could be found to testify regarding the incident of the garden. An accident to Sir Ronald would have been lamentable. His death would be a great blow to England."

He bowed formally and departed. And for the first time it occurred to me that the death of Sir Ronald would not have been a blow to America. On the contrary, if I had sat still and the knife had hit its target, my mission would have been ended. The flow of money for sabotage and foment in the United States would have ceased—assuming that Keefe and Cameron knew what they were talking about.

Oh, well, I wasn't hired to be an accessory to a murder.

RAY came out of the bathroom. He looked glum. "I heard his questions. Trouble is he didn't ask enough questions, damn him."

"Are you afraid of that boob?"

Ray grinned. "That boob is one of the best detectives in England. Behind that dead pan is a damn good bean, Jack."

"You know him?"

"I know 'em all. It's my business. I don't think he knows me, but he's going to find out. That fellow never leaves a stone unturned. He's going to think it's queer a friend of a snob like this Ainsworth would hire me for a valet."

"I thought you said that Scotland Yard had nothing on you."

"They haven't, but you bet your life they know a lot about me."

"Well," I said easily, "I put an ad in the *Daily Mail* and you applied for

the job. I hired you because you were an American."

"Yeh, but they'll want to know what Ray Bronson's doing as a valet."

"Which is your funeral. I suppose this winds up your little enterprise?"

"Like hell it does," he said firmly. "I get what I go after."

"Look here," I asked, "what do you know about Enescro?"

"What do you want to know for?"

"Just curiosity."

"Yeh? What are you doing down here anyway?"

"I'm in England on a vacation."

Ray laughed.

"When you agreed to my proposition," he said, "I got onto you. You'd have kicked me out of the hotel if it wasn't Enescro I was after. So Tom Keefe is taking an interest in Sir Ronald. It's about time."

"Why?"

"But imagine sending a kid like you after that bozo," he jeered. "What do you think you're going to do to him, eh?"

"You're crazy, I told you."

Ray shrugged his shoulders.

"This guy ain't no racketeer, or red rioter," he sneered. "This Enescro is the slickest thing on wheels. Well, it's your funeral. Want me for anything?"

"No."

"I got to go places."

My valet left the room and I went back to the window. I saw Inspector Good's angular figure crossing the lawn towards a clump of oak trees. Theodora was accompanying him. Well, I wasn't jealous of him.

After awhile I went downstairs and wandered through the big rooms, which opened one from another. Nobody was around. A feature of English hospitality which Arthur had rightly copied is to pay no attention to

the guests. Having invited them and greeted them and informed them of meal hours, the host and hostess go about their business and let the guests attend to theirs. Something like life in a good hotel, except that people know one another.

After admiring details of the manor



JACK LAURENCE

I went out through a back door and strolled toward the stables. A groom suggested I might like to ride.

"Good idea. I'll change to riding things right away."

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. Shall you wish me to follow you?"

"No. I'll poke round by myself."

In the West, I'd ridden a lot on cow ponies. In prep school I'd learned how to sit in an English saddle. The day was warm, the sun was bright, and it was a chance to get a look at Enescro's stronghold without appearing to be spying.

IN a quarter of an hour I started off. I rode down to the highway and casually asked the lodge keeper what was worth seeing in the neighborhood.

"Most folks ride over to look at Dunhold Castle, sir," he said. "Sir Ronald has rebuilt it so it looks just like it must have in the Middle Ages."

"Which way?"

He pointed and I turned to the right.

I was on a big bay mare with a fine gait. As I rose my spirits went up. Miracles were not expected of me; at all events I was on a good horse on a fine day inspecting an English countryside.

A couple of miles down the paved road—there was a bridle path which ran along beside it—and I rode into an English village as quaint and pretty as it's possible to imagine. There were thatched cottages and cottages with slate roofs. The main street was narrow and winding. There were funny little shops, in the single show windows of which the proprietors seemed to have tucked the entire stock in trade. There was a singularly inviting looking little tavern, outside of which hung a sign on creaking hinges which read, "The Pig and the Cow."

I thought of a tankard of foaming ale—at home I didn't go in for ale—and immediately I became thirsty. There were hitching posts, of course, so I jumped off my horse, made her fast and went into the taproom.

A fat inn-keeper, wearing a white apron tied around his paunch, waddled forward and placed me at a table beside the single window of the bar. In a moment the ale was foaming in front of me according to specifications.

"A guest at the manor, sir?" inquired the inn-keeper.

I nodded.

"A very fine gentleman, Mr. Ainsworth," he informed me. "Most considerate. He owns this village, you know."

"Yes, he told me."

He went back to his bar and I looked out the window.

I could see why Arthur was infatuated with English life. When an American has a large fortune, he finds it's only good to buy things with. People don't make a fuss over him. The government doesn't make a knight or a baron of him. Common folks don't pay particular attention to him.

The average rich American continues to work and the rich idler has nobody to play with. He can't even get respectful servants.

While Ainsworth was an interloper here, and the gentry let him pretty much alone, a snob like Arthur would get a kick when he walked down his village street to have the townsfolk touch their hats. And Arthur knew that a good many Americans had succeeded in buying their way into English society, buying their way into Parliament and finally becoming more or less accepted by the upper class. All he needed was to stick it out long enough.

CHAPTER IX

The Labor Agitator

A MOTOR car swung round a curve in the village street and came to a stop at the gas station opposite. It was an open car, a Rolls, driven by a chauffeur in blue livery. In the back seat sat Ronald Enescro and I stared incredulously at his companion.

The thing just didn't seem possible.

My mind went back a year to San Francisco, to a crowded hall where sat delegates from a score of trade unions. I was one of the delegates—that's the kind of work our Service did, by the way. I was wearing rough clothes and heavy brogans. For a month before

the strike I had been pushing packing cases up and down long piers—a long-shoreman.

A man was making a speech, appealing for a general sympathetic strike. I was interested because he was the cause of my presence. He put over his idea and the strike too place, failed and gave union labor a black eye. Not ten per cent of the union members wanted a strike. Not even the union leaders wanted a strike. The idea was sold to them by Peter Logan. And a few weeks later Peter Logan was put on a steamer and shipped to England, deported, on my evidence that his American papers were forged. I laughed in his face when he swore that he'd kill me if I ever crossed his path again.

Peter Logan was sitting alongside of Sir Ronald Enescro, talking with him earnestly. He was dressed like a person of elegance, but nobody could mistake his big jaw, his bushy eyebrows and the way he beat his big right fist against his left palm to give emphasis to what he was saying.

The tank was filled and the car rolled away. I sat there seething with rage.

Up to the moment I had no real personal animosity against Sir Ronald Enescro whether he was Mexican or Roumanian. It had angered me to see the impression the fellow had made upon Theodora Ainsworth—but, after all, she'd known him some time and I'd only just met her.

But I remembered the general strike in San Francisco. Men had been shot or beaten to death—hundreds of millions of damage had been done to business. I recalled the Toledo strike where a massacre had taken place. I was reminded of a dozen outbreaks of inexplicable ferocity—of misguided workmen rising up and smashing things for no good reason.

No doubt Peter Logan was off for America again. He would sneak in with newly forged passports and the sky would flame red and revolvers would bark, bombs would explode and people would die in some other American city. Enescro's money would pay the bills.

Nothing could be done about his visit to Enescro. In this liberal country a man could entertain whom he pleased. And Enescro's goods would be sold to the Chinese or the Argentine in place of the product of the ruined American factory.

It was a pity I had happened to observe the man with the brown turban last night.

I mounted my mare and rode on. Almost immediately I came upon a wall at the edge of an estate. A mile farther I rounded a bend in the road and saw upon an eminence a gray stone pile which was indeed a medieval castle.

There was a moat around it and a high stone wall, above which rose two tall square towers with parapets, connected by a lower building.

There was a drawbridge, which was down, and a portcullis, which was raised. The stronghold of a world brigand, a glorified robber baron.

I'm afraid I cursed him, after which I rode slowly back.

ARTHUR AINSWORTH was sitting on the terrace when I dismounted. He was nervously whacking his right boot with his riding crop.

"Oh, Laurence, a moment please" he called.

"Certainly, Arthur. I've been over to have a look at Enescro's castle."

"Indeed." I observed for the first time a stiffness in his manner and a hostile gleam in his fishy eyes.

I seated myself nonchalantly on the terrace wall.

"What's on your mind?" I inquired blandly.

"What have you been doing since leaving college?" he inquired.

"Oh, one thing or another."

"It has occurred to me that it was indiscreet of me to invite into the bosom of my family a man of whom I had completely lost track." He said this in a most offensive manner.

"Look here!" I exclaimed, "what the devil do you mean?"

He grew red and looked embarrassed. "Can't we let it go at that? I was in error in inviting you and the only thing you can do is to—er—va—moose—"

"Why, you nasty little bounder," I cried furiously. "You practically dragged me down here."

"Haven't I the privilege of regretting it? How dare you call me a bounder?" He was on his feet. I believe if I hadn't been bigger and stronger that he would have struck at me with his whip.

"Of course I'll leave this place at once. That's the purpose of this interview, isn't it?"

Arthur controlled himself and sat down.

"That's exactly it," he said sullenly.

"Before I go, however, you'll explain this change of attitude," I said savagely.

"I'll explain nothing."

"You'll explain or I'll beat the life out of you."

I was shaking with fury and I moved menacingly upon him.

"If you will have it," he retorted, "you're a fraud and a sham."

"Be specific and quick."

"I have a cable about you," he said, rising and backing away. "Your father

left you nothing. You're no better than an adventurer."

I STARED at him and the thing struck me funny.

"Why, you dirty, prying little sneak!" I cried. "So you send cables to find out how rich people are that you meet and, if they haven't got enough money, you put them out of your house. What's your real name, Arthur? I heard your father's name once. An Armenian, wasn't he? Or a Bulgarian. Something ending in *ski*?"

"I'll call my grooms!" he screamed. "How dare you insult me, you cheap—"

"Upon my word!" exclaimed a woman's voice, coming up from behind us. I whirled, though I knew the voice. I blushed crimson. After all I had been disparaging her father as well as Arthur's. And he must have been all right to produce a daughter like that. Arthur was rotten on his own.

"My father's name," said Theodora coolly, "was Ananian. He changed it to Ainsworth legally, believe."

"I humbly beg your pardon," I said sorrowfully "I was out of my mind for a minute, I guess."

"My mother's name was Flannigan," she said remorselessly. "We are not to be mentioned in the same breath with the Laurences of Revolutionary fame."

"Is that so?" cried Arthur, waving his arms. "Theodora, how dare you say such a thing? This fellow is an impostor, a faker, a fraud. He hasn't got a penny!"

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Did you by any chance tell him this before he broke loose?"

"That's my only excuse, Miss Ainsworth," I said earnestly.

"May I ask, Arthur," she de-

manded, her wrath turned on him, "what it matters whether Mr. Laurence is rich or poor?"

"You butt out of this," he bellowed.

"I'm leaving, Miss Ainsworth, immediately. It seems that Arthur cabled America to learn my financial rating.



THEODORA AINSWORTH

Being informed, erroneously, that I was a pauper, he feared for his silver spoons and requested me to get out."

"Did you cable regarding Mr. Laurence?" she demanded. "Were you contemptible enough to do such a thing?"

"I have to check up—"

"Let me see your cablegram in reply," she demanded.

"I—I—"

"When did it arrive?"

"An hour ago."

"That's not true," she declared.

"The butler told me just now that no cables had arrived today. I was expecting one, you see."

"The reason doesn't matter, Miss Ainsworth," I told her. "I am leaving at once. Arthur ordered me out a few minutes ago."

She moved her hands perplexedly.

"But I don't understand," she pro-

tested. "What is the real reason, Arthur?"

"My cablegram was phoned down from London," he said sullenly. "Anyway, I want Laurence to get out."

"Keep out of my way in London," I threatened. "I'm warning you, you rat!"

I bowed to Miss Ainsworth and went upstairs to my room two steps at a time. Ray wasn't visible. I phoned downstairs to the butler to have him sent up.

"Yes, sir. I haven't seen him, sir, for several hours, but I'll make a search. Mr. Ainsworth says that the car will be ready to take you to London."

"Phone down to the village for any kind of conveyance. I'll go up from the nearest railroad station."

"But the car—"

"I don't want the damn car!"

I hung up and my eyes fell upon an envelope on my dresser with my name upon it in crabbed script. I tore it open.

I've resigned.

GREEN.

That was what I read. With an oath, I set about packing. At the moment I hated and despised the whole tribe of Ainsworth, even Theodora. But after a second I exempted her from the general damnation.

CHAPTER X

Miss Ananian

ARTHUR was a rat, but Theodora was a lovely person. Theodora was a lady. She didn't belong with those people.

She had been beautiful, standing there with flushed cheeks and flashing dark eyes. What a gorgeous combina-

tion of races she was, the Asiatic and the Celt. I forgave her for being an Ainsworth then and there.

Arthur's action was utterly unheard of. Nobody with the slightest sense of decency—by God, it was only an excuse!

She had denied that he had received a cablegram this morning and he offered the lame explanation that it had been phoned to him—a belated explanation.

Was it possible that he had been forced to eject me? Besides, he would not have been told by anybody in America that I was penniless. I had five thousands pounds in a bank in London. And I had gone about in society since my connection with the Security Service and spent money freely. Furthermore, he wouldn't have put me out if he had received such a cablegram. He would have let me stay and snubbed me afterwards.

But something was funny. Was I being ejected at Enescro's request?

I was packed. What in the devil had become of Ray? How had he got away? Well, I understood the reason for his absence. He didn't want to permit Inspector Good to get a good look at him.

I phoned down for the butler—Arthur had installed house phones—something rare in English country houses. A footman came up for my grips, and I followed him downstairs with angry dignity.

To my astonishment a big car stood outside the door. Behind the driving wheel was Theodora, wearing a cute little red hat and a red traveling dress.

"Please let me drive you to town," she said sweetly. "My sister-in-law is ill and keeping to her room, but she sent her regrets that you have to leave unexpectedly."

I grinned and stepped in and sat down beside her.

"This is worth everything that has happened," I said. "You are a darn nice girl, Miss Ainsworth."

"Or Miss Ananian—" she said with a reproachful smile.

"Please—"

"Oh, you had ample excuse." She started the car and we drove rapidly toward the highroad. Presently she said:

"I cornered Arthur. He is an awful fool but he is well bred. If you are penniless, you are still a college classmate of his. He would not have dreamed of humiliating you in this way, though he might not invite you to his home again."

I nodded. "I sort of figured that out. He didn't intend to explain anything, but I scared an explanation out of him. This was the only thing he could think of."

"I quizzed him after you went upstairs. He sent a cable inquiring about you the day he met you in London and received a reply yesterday. It seems that Inspector Good told him that he was certain that your valet was a criminal, and poor Arthur jumped to the conclusion that you, being poor, had also gone in for crime. Weird, isn't it?"

"I wouldn't be surprised if Good was right about my valet," I told her. "I engaged him through a newspaper ad yesterday morning. He looked rather mean, but he was the only American who showed up. I didn't want to be patronized by an English servant."

She laughed merrily. "I know how you feel. I am sure our people are always looking down their noses at us. I've caught the butler doing it."

We laughed together.

"Arthur refused to give me the ben-

eft of the doubt. I suspect him of a reason in back of that one."

"What?"

"I don't know."

WE were whizzing through the lovely English countryside at sixty miles per hour. After a while she said:

"If you're not a rich American, how do you happen to hold the nasty opinions you expressed at breakfast?"

I hesitated. I had an impulse to tell her everything, but I had seen the interest she displayed in Enescro.

"Arthur's informant was mistaken," I replied. "It's true that my father left no estate but I inherited my fortune from a relative."

"Oh!" she exclaimed. It actually seemed as though she were disappointed.

After a time I said, "Could we have the afternoon together and go to tea or something?"

"I'm sorry. I have an appointment for tea with Sir Ronald."

I stiffened. I had been on the point of blurting out the truth about myself and my business in England.

"I'll be in town day after tomorrow," she said. "If you'd like—"

"Lunch or tea?"

"Suppose you take me to lunch at the Carleton—" she smiled, "if you can afford it."

"Your brother—"

She tossed her head. "Arthur has no control over my movements and no regulation of my friends."

"It's a date," I said enthusiastically.

Half an hour later she drove into the yard of the Savoy, shook hands firmly, nodded and deposited me at the entrance. I watched her until the car was out in the Strand and went gloomily to the desk for my key.

It had been a mistake to go to Ainsworth's and a grave error to take Ray with me. My instructions had been to establish myself beyond suspicion as a young man of large means, no purpose, and Tory views. Already I was suspected of not being what I purported to be. And it wasn't Arthur's sneaking cablegram nor the fact that Inspector Good didn't like the looks of my valet. Enescro had put a flea in the ear of the little snob. Enescro, whose life I had saved the previous night and who hadn't even been courteous enough to send me a note of thanks.

I had tried to make a good impression on Enescro, with the result that he had suggested to Ainsworth that he chuck me out of his house.

Why? Had he a line on me, or—that was an idea—had he seen that Theodora didn't dislike me?

I remembered that Tom Keefe had solemnly warned me to keep away from women, even American women. Of course he meant that many women were spies and secret agents. However, if the fact that Enescro was in love with Theodora made him my enemy, then the difficulties of my job had been increased because of a woman.

Good must have recognized Ray—Good grief, did Enescro suspect that I as well as my valet was a jewel thief?

It had been insanity for me to take the man down to Devonshire. For all I knew he had been nosing around the Enescro Castle and had been seen and recognized by one of Sir Ronald's henchmen.

I had to get my mind off my troubles, so fifteen minutes after I entered my room I left it and went into a motion picture house on Piccadilly Circus. The picture was amusing but a news reel, British, then came on. Suddenly

I was gazing at Sir Ronald Enescro in the company of a Royal Prince at the Ascot races.

With a snort of disgust, I left the place, returned to the hotel and went back to the room. And five minutes later there came a knock on the door and I admitted a stranger.

CHAPTER XI

Framed

"I REPRESENT the immigration authorities, sir," he said. "My name is Gaddish. Inspector Caddish, at your service."

"Not having any," I said petulantly. This was a heavily-built man with a face which was red but in other respects suggestive of the British bulldog. He wore a frock coat and carried a top hat and his manner was most polite.

"I shall have to request you to accompany me, sir," said the inspector.

"Where? Why?"

He took from his pocket an envelope, from which he drew a document.

"I have here, sir, an order for your immediate deportation," he stated gravely.

My expression moved him to say, "I'm very sorry, sir."

I sat down because my knees were weak.

"On what grounds?" I demanded. "My passport visé came from the British consul in New York. I was admitted without question by the immigration authorities at Plymouth. There must be some mistake."

"No mistake," he assured me.

"But I'm entitled to a hearing."

"In this case, a hearing is unnecessary. A decision has been reached."

"But I thought this was a free country," I protested furiously. "This is

an outrage. What reason can they possibly have?"

"We reserve the same right you Americans do," he said, "to refuse to admit persons considered undesirable, and if, by error, they have been admitted, to deport them."

"But I can give you references, persons of importance in the United States—I've five thousand pounds on deposit here. I'm not in the least likely to be a public charge."

"Your case has been considered and settled," he told me. "My instructions are to put you on the Berengaria, which leaves Plymouth tomorrow. I hope you won't make it hard for me. I know nothing regarding the circumstances. You must understand, sir, that this is not an accusation of crime, where you're entitled to a trial. It's like a householder who reserves the right to refuse admission to any tenant he doesn't care about. I suggest that you take it calmly, Mr. Laurence."

TAKE it calmly! Entrusted with a mission of tremendous importance and kicked out of England, for no reason, within a week of my arrival.

"There is a nice cabin in the first class reserved for you, sir," he said, cajolingly. "You will receive every consideration, except that you cannot communicate with anybody, not even by radio, after the ship sails. The commander has his instructions."

I glowered at him.

"Suppose I refuse to be shipped back to America like this?"

"I shall be forced to use strong measures, sir."

"Go ahead," I said grimly.

He hesitated. "It will go hard with you, sir, if you resist."

"It will be the only satisfaction I'll

get," I said bitterly. "I'm curious to see how you'll go about it."

He drew a pair of handcuffs from his pocket.

"Stick out your hands," he said sharply. I rose. I hesitated and then I drove a right to his jaw. It was a mighty punch, but Inspector Gaddish had an unusual jaw. He staggered back and then plunged at me. The handcuffs dropped tinkling to the floor and both his big arms were swinging like flails. I ducked a wild right and came up and hooked him, with everything I had, in the pit of the stomach. He went down and bounced up. I slammed a right against his jaw again and it weakened him. Breathing stentoriously, he came back for more. No notion of summoning help, and he didn't have a gun on his person, like American officers.

No doubt it was the first time that Inspector Gaddish had encountered a person who dared to slug it out with a limb of the law. If I hadn't been temporarily insane from chagrin and a sense of outrage I wouldn't have resisted. And if I hadn't, the Lord knows what would have happened to America.

The inspector's stomach was his weak point. I knocked the wind out of him and let him have a terrific right to the heart which sent him down for a very long count.

I stood over him, breathing heavily—fully conscious of the enormity of my offense and wondering what to do. Something had to be done quickly. I rushed to the bed, made ropes of the sheets and proceeded to tie the inspector hand and foot. I then improvised a gag out of two handkerchiefs. By that time he was conscious and lay there staring up at me with more sorrow than anger in his gaze. No doubt the good fellow was thinking of the

long ye'ars I would have to spend in Dartmoor or some other British prison for sloughing the King in the person of his inspector.

I HADN'T opened my grips and I decided to abandon my trunk and the contents of the closet and bureau. I dragged Gaddish to the closet, locked the door on him and, picking up my suitcases, left the room in haste.

With the sublime assurance of British officialdom, Gaddish had come to the hotel alone. The last thing in the world he expected was resistance. Therefore I walked through the lobby unquestioned, went to the desk, paid my bill, turned my bags over to a boy and had them conveyed to a taxi. I told him to take them to Waterloo Station, but did not enter. Another taxi carried me toward Euston. I then walked two miles, through dingy streets and finally rang the bell at the door of a brick house on which a sign was displayed which read "Room and Breakfast."

When the door opened my nostrils were insulted by an aroma of cabbage. The landlady who opened it looked like a Hogarth cartoon.

"I'd like to see the room for rent."

The mottle-face woman eyed me dubiously.

"Yer h'an H'American," she said. "It's not for the likes of you."

"My money is good," I told her.

"H'i means to sy h'its a small, cheap room, sir."

"Maybe it will be satisfactory."

She led the way to a room at the back of the second floor, a room so small there was space for nothing save a bed, a chair and a battered bureau.

"Five shillings a week and not a penny less," she said firmly.

I handed her five shillings and set down my bags. She nodded and waddled out, closing the door after her. No questions asked. That was all the place had to recommend it.

I had an uncomfortable feeling about Inspector Gaddish. He was a good fellow and he wouldn't like it in the closet. However, the hotel, immediately upon the departure of a guest, would make an inspection of his room. By this time Mr. Gaddish must be unbound and breathing fire and smoke. I thought of phoning from a pay station to secure his release in case he hadn't been discovered; but pay stations don't abound in London as they do in New York. Besides, the London police might have some way of tracing calls, since the automatic telephone is not yet produced there.

CHAPTER XII

Nocturnal Visits

ASIDE from twenty pounds in my pocket, I had no funds. It would be impossible to draw on my bank. It was already five o'clock and the police would be waiting for me to turn up when the bank opened in the morning.

I took off my hat to Sir Ronald Enescro. It was evident that he knew all about me—that our Service had a leak in it, that the purpose of my visit to London was known to him. That would account for the sardonic glitter in his eye when he talked to me last night. I amused him.

Probably he thought the incident of the brown turban was a frame to enable me to gain his confidence. Theodora had said that he had no more social standing than her brother; but he certainly had enormous political influence, since he was able to get an order

for my immediate deportation. I understood now why Arthur Ainsworth had insulted me. To get me out of his house as quickly as possible. Enescro had trumped up some tale which made Arthur think me undesirable as a guest.

I laughed bitterly. "Clip his claws," said Calvin Cameron. Enescro had clipped my claws with neatness and dispatch. I was now a fugitive from justice. I wouldn't be deported. I'd spend a year or two in a British jail. Down and out

Enescro would go right on financing revolution in the United States and probably marry Theodora Ainsworth, damn him.

Oh, I suffered plenty during the hour I sat there. The hounds must be out already—and, unlike the fox—I didn't know the country I had to run over.

Yet, I didn't regret what I had done to Gaddish. Getting right down to cases, I'd rather spend a couple of years in a British jail than to face Tom Keefe after being deported from England as an undesirable alien. Tom paid few compliments, but his powers of vituperative were stupendous. He accepted no excuses. You made good or you fell down. And if you failed he kicked you out.

Cameron, too. He had had confidence in me. He had given me unlimited funds. I was expected to deliver the goods for him and for Tom, and the enemy had me down almost as soon as I stepped on British soil.

Down but not out. Somehow, I'd get him. At least, I was not in custody. And I'd learned plenty about Enescro.

Show the British government conclusive proof of his conspiracy to cause sabotage in the United States?

What did the British government care if competitors in America to their own industrialists had their troubles? If this fellow could get me deported without a hearing, he could smother any evidence that I could lay before the politicians, who were his pals, for all I knew.

No, Enescro would have to be squelched by more direct measures. I didn't know how, but I'd find a way. I hadn't fallen down on the job, yet. Most probably I was double-crossed before I crossed the water.

When it became dark I sneaked out and ate cold ham and potato salad in a pub a few blocks away and washed it down with beer. After that I killed time in a neighborhood moving picture theater until eleven and found the door of the lodging house locked upon my return. I rang six times before the landlady appeared in a dirty kimona.

"You had ought to ask for a latch key," she said tartly. "Here, I cawn't be h'expected to think of h'everything."

She handed me a key and I slunk up to my room. I heard loud voices in the next room to mine as I passed the door. A man and woman quarreling. Everybody had their troubles. I wished that pair had a load of mine.

PASS over that night. The bed was bad and I was so nervous that I didn't go to sleep for hours. I was up and out early in the morning. The breakfast served with my room didn't appeal to me and I wanted to get a look at the newspapers.

The *Times* carried a paragraph to the effect that an undesirable alien, John Laurence by name, assumed to be an international crook, had overpowered Inspector Gaddish, who had called upon him in his room at the Savoy with an order of deportation.

The other morning papers had enlarged upon the story and published my passport pictures. The passport had been found among my effects. It was not flattering, that picture, but it looked enough like me to identify me to a sharp-eyed officer. Scotland Yard, it was stated, was engaged in a search for me.

The street was deserted in the early morning hour and I breakfasted at the pub where I had dined the night before. I was served by a heavy-eyed slovenly barmaid. I thought it unlikely that she could read, so she was hardly a menace. Just the same I didn't expect to be at large very long.

With my passport in police possession there was no hope of escaping to France or Holland. They would be watching for me at the ports if I did happen to have the passport. In London, with its seven millions, I had my best chance. But, while I was in hiding, I was making no progress in the matter of Enescro.

I could see Arthur Ainsworth holding forth at breakfast upon his perspicacity in getting onto me and driving me out of his house. And, in the face of this, I assumed that Theodora would be silent. No need to worry about missing the date with her at the Carlton for lunch tomorrow. She wouldn't be there.

A bookstall was opening as I returned toward my lodgings. As the best thing to do was to keep under cover during daylight, I bought several second hand novels and half a dozen British magazines.

By nine I was back in the dingy room, trying to get interested in literature, so to speak, with little success. The hours dragged slowly. That night I dined at an A.B.C. place near Euston Station, risking capture because I

couldn't stomach the pub again. Another film and at eleven I let myself into the house with my latchkey. As I passed the door of the square room beside my hall bedroom, I heard a woman sobbing inside.

None of my business.

I undressed, but I was in no mood for sleep. For two hours I sat under the single bulb of electricity, trying to get interested in a novel about a rector and some curates at Tumbleton-on-Sea, and then, to my horror, there was a tap on my door.

SO they had run me down. I waited until the knock was repeated and most reluctantly opened the door. A girl stood there. My relief was so tremendous that I smiled delightedly at her. As a matter of fact, she was good to look at and most flimsily attired. She had on a short Chinese coolie coat over a white crêpe nightgown which revealed slender limbs. Her eyes were black and beseeching; her lips were full and brightly tinted; her face was round as an apple, and her jet black hair was cut short except for a bang across her forehead.

"Hello," she said wistfully.

Suddenly conscious that I was in pajamas, I stepped back.

"What can I do for you?" I asked, much embarrassed.

She threw me a saucy smile, pushed past me, having pushed the door to behind her, and went over and sat on my single chair.

"I got to talk to somebody, and it might as well be you," she said. "Aw, sit down. Mrs. Lundy sleeps in the basement and the other rooms on this floor are empty. I'll go crazy if I don't talk to somebody."

"Yes, but you're hardly in a costume to go visiting."

She laughed—a hard laugh. "I'm all dressed up compared to my working clothes. Be yer age."

"What are you—an actress?"

"Well, it's like this. I'm a coochie dancer."

"I thought those went out with the old Chicago Fair."

"Not over here they haven't. I saw you when you were taking the room and I knew you were an American. And I just been out to the bathroom and I saw your light under the door. I was about to stick my head out the window and yell, so I came in here."

"Didn't I hear you weeping when I came in a couple of hours ago?"

"Yeh. I cried my eyes out like a sap. Got a drink?"

"No. I'm sorry."

"Fag?"

I offered her a cigarette.

"You're an American girl," I charged.

"Yes, but I ain't been home for four years. Did you hear the riot in my room last night?"

"I heard loud voices."

"That was me and my husband busting up housekeeping. The scut ran out on me."

"If he's a scut, why cry about him?"

"Women are like that—I was used to him. It seemed awful to be alone."

"Are you broke? Maybe I can help—a little." I remembered my own predicament.

"Thanks. I got a job—such as it is. Don't mind me. So long as somebody's round."

"Look here," I said nervously. "I'm not sleepy. If you'll go back and put some clothes on, I'll sit up with you all night."

"And that's the first time I heard anybody make that request," she said, with a laugh. "To tell the truth, I

ain't met your kind of guy for a month of Sundays. Want to hear the story of my life?"

I pulled a sheet off the bed and placed it over her shoulders and around her knees. The crêpe nightgown was transparent.

"Gawd, you're good to me," she



"SADIE"

said, with another laugh. "Boy scout, eh? I'm so used to going round in my skin that I forget it bothers some people. I'll make my yarn short."

"Shoot."

"I CAME over here four years ago on a six months' British government permission card. I was playing a small part in 'Pretty Lady.' It was a Broadway hit, you know. I lost my job after a few weeks; they didn't pay off, and finally, I went into a British chorus. Along come the cops and are going to deport me. And up steps Cecil, who was a chorus man and had been pestering me all through the run and says, if I marry him, I'm a British subject and they can't touch me. Well, I had a job and Lord knows if I'd get one the way things were in New York, so I ups and marries the

guy. He's a good looking kid at that."

"And now he's run out on you?"

"There's a French widow with money that made him an offer. I only got onto it last night. When I was out this afternoon, he packs his duds and scrams."

"Tough luck."

She wiped away two tears. "I'll get over it. I stood plenty from him, but I was used to him. We got pretty low. Do you know what our job is?"

"You said coochie dancer. Does he coochie, too?"

"No," she said quaintly. "He's the African wild man. We keep him in a cage. Go on and laugh."

I took her at her word.

"We get five pounds a week between us at Robbin's Side Show. Cecil emptied my sock in the bureau drawer, the blank blank—we had six pounds saved up. Aw, hell!"

She reached out carelessly and picked up the *Daily Mail*.

"Funny kind of newspapers they have over here," she remarked. "Say!"

Her eyes were glued to my passport picture on the front page. She turned to me. They were sharp eyes. I knew the jig was up.

"Guilty as charged," I said with a shrug.

"International crook," she remarked. "I've been with chisellers all my life. You're out. Why didn't you let them deport you? You get a free trip home. I wish they'd deport me, but I'm a British subject. Cheer up, buddy. I won't give you away."

"You're a pretty decent kid," I said gratefully.

"But they'll nab you in a day or two. They'll make a house to house search and Mother Lundy's will be one of the first they'll head for. Want to tell me your sad story?"

"I'm over here on an important business deal," I said. "The man I'm after has a big pull. He had an order deporting me slipped through. I lost my head and knocked out the inspector, so now I'll get jailed instead of being deported."

CHAPTER XIII

The African Wild Man

"THAT'LL do till you think of a better one," she said shrewdly.

"You ain't got a chance. An American sticks out like a sore toe over here, and a guy with class gets talked about all over a neighborhood like this."

My spirits sank as she continued to speak. What she said, of course, only confirmed my own view of the situation.

"I could make you up a little," she said. "I know some tricks. I could broaden your nose, knock out a tooth, shave your head like a German; you got no idea how that changes the looks of a guy, but you got to have an excuse for being alive. Say—"

"What?"

"How'd you like to be the African wild man? You're blacked up from ten A.M. until ten-thirty at night and you stand in a cage and howl every now and then. You got great big false tusks."

All I could do was stare.

"Cecil skipped to France with this French dame. They took the Calais night boat. You can be Cecil, see?"

"Do I look like him?"

"No, but you and me move out of here tomorrow. We move into a joint near the Bright City as Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Follingsby. I'll tell the dopes at the show that I got me a new Cecil. You see, the cops won't be looking for a married man by the name of Cecil.

When they make inquiries at the place where we live, we're just a theatrical couple. If they come out there, you bite them with the false tusks. Say, it's an idea."

"Are you seriously suggesting that I move in as your husband?"

She blushed. "Oh, we're well-to-do so we take two rooms. Just for a week or so. In a couple of weeks they'll have something on their minds besides looking for you."

"Mrs. Follingsby," I said gratefully, "you're a black-haired angel, but you don't realize possible consequences. You might be jailed as aiding a criminal to escape the police."

"Not a chance. I can lie out of it. Come on in my room. I got a make-up box and a pair of barber's clippers. Let's see what I can do about you."

If it hadn't been absolutely certain that I would be arrested in a day or two, I wouldn't have consented to be an African wild man and to pass as Cecil, the husband of a girl who might have a heart of gold, but had a queer way of earning a living. As it was, I meekly followed her when she tossed away the sheet and moved, with an undulating gait and a striking display of figure, into the next room.

Here she dug out a woolen dressing gown and draped herself in it and immediately set to work on my thick brown hair with dull clippers. My head was so bare it looked obscene when she had finished. After that she thinned out my bushy eyebrows, stuck beads inside my nostrils and stood back to observe the effect. With a grin I removed a one-tooth bridge—the tooth was sacrificed upon a Harvard-Yale football field—and she clapped her hands with delight.

"You ain't the same guy," she declared. "I'd never know you."

"What will Mrs. Lundy say?"

"You get out early in the morning before she's up. I'll meet you at nine in the waiting room at Euston Station and we'll go right out to Bright City. That's near Earl's Court. Say, I'm awful grateful to you, Mr. Laurence."

"The shoe's on the other foot, my dear."

"You took my mind off Cecil. I'll be able to sleep now. Good night."

THE Bright City is a permanent amusement park originally modeled on Luna Park at Coney Island. As time passed, it grew to be a sort of exhibition and fair grounds. There were large white buildings in which were displayed samples of ore from Africa, weapons from China and exhibits of work done in schools in various parts of the Empire.

There were displayed fancy work, laces, Indian silks and such which were for sale. There was a lecture hall, in which educational talks were occasionally given.

These structures gave tone to the place and an excuse to the solemn minded Britishers for paying the small admission fee and then going on the chutes, and the switchback railway and visiting the House of Fun and the various side shows, of which Robbin's was the largest.

Robbin's Show was housed in a large wooden building. The circus posters proclaimed that within there were to be found the Bearded Lady, the Smallest Man in the World, the Two-Headed Child—the latter was dead, by the way, embalmed and kept in a glass case, and like most everything else a fake. There was a picture of a ferocious black, with tusks like a wild boar and preposterous muscles—the African Wild Man, and an atrocious caricature

of Mrs. Follingsby wearing practically nothing, pictured in a contortion, and labeled "Princess Saidee, the Arabian Nautch Queen." My benefactress, whose maiden name by the way was Sadie Grady, and who was clinging to my arm as we approached the side-show, chuckled as she saw the effect upon me of her alleged portrait.

"And to think I was once in the Follies," she remarked. "Oh, well, I'll get home some day somehow."

"Listen, Sadie, don't you know you can go home any time you want to?"

"Oh, yeah? How about the British quota? It's booked years ahead."

"In this country you're a British subject, but under American law you didn't lose your citizenship when you married a foreigner. You go to the American consul and apply for an American passport and you'll get it."

She dropped my arm and stared at me incredulously.

"How can I be two things at once?" she demanded.

I laughed. "Because of conflicting laws. You can get a passport unless the British government wants you for something, in which case it could ignore your passport and refuse to permit you to board a ship for the United States without a British passport. With the British passport the American government wouldn't let you in. But, as you're nobody in particular, I don't think England would stand on her rights."

"Do you suppose Cecil knew that?" she asked sharply.

"From your account of him, I doubt if he knew anything."

"I can go home when I want to," she murmured. "Well, now I got something to save up for. Say, Jack, I'm glad I met you."

"And I'm very grateful to you."

She took me by the arm and led me through the unguarded portal of the side show. As the institution didn't open up until noon, there was nobody visible inside except a porter, who was asleep on a couch on the platform dedicated to the Bearded Lady. At one end of the quadrangular room was a small stage with a red curtain upon which my companion did her stuff. At the other end of the room was a platform upon which stood a large cage. Beneath the cage was a label,

"African Wild Man."

On either side of the room were other platforms. The floor was of earth.

SADIE led me in back of the stage where there was a dressing room of canvas walls. Her sanctum.

"Strip," she said, "and I'll put on the bolami."

"Eh? Strip? What's bolami?"

"You'll find out," she said, grinning. "Take your clothes off. You're Cecil's substitute, you know. I got to have you dolled up before anybody gets a squint at you."

There was nothing for it and the situation didn't bother Sadie, obviously. When I was almost nude, she produced a can of what looked like brown-black paint and began to smear it upon my face, neck and body. I was permitted to keep on short trunks which, after the painting had been done, were covered by a lion skin. As a climax she placed on my bare skull a huge fuzzy black wig, the hair of which was a foot long. Next I had the false tusks slipped over my own teeth and, happening to glance in her mirror, I was terrified at myself.

"How does this black stuff come off?" I demanded.

"Hard," she replied with a laugh.

"It takes me an hour to clean up Cecil. Now go out and get into your cage. I got to put on my costume. Here, when the show goes on, slip this in your mouth. It's your howler. Try it."

She handed me a round tin contraption which, when I blew through it snarled like a ferocious beast.

"You'll do," she declared. "Scram."

"How many shows a day?"

"Ten or twenty. Depends on the crowd. You have a cinch, 'cause you don't do anything. I got to work on the ballyhoo platform and then do my wiggle in here at every show."

CHAPTER XIV

Robbin's Side Show

I LEFT the dressing room and was crossing the building when there entered a man wearing a coster's costume, a check suit cut in at the waist and decorated with innumerable large bone buttons. He had a face the color of old port, a bulbous nose and a pair of small squinting eyes.

He waved his hand at me. "How are yer, Cecil?" he demanded.

"Fine," I said in a husky tone. However he had no suspicion of me and hastened toward Sadie's dressing room. I went up the ladder to the platform, fumbled with the catch of the cage door, crawled in and, as no chair was provided for the African wild man, I lay down in the straw at the bottom of the cage.

Presently other freaks began to appear and take their places on their platforms. They waved greetings to me and I waved back.

For at least an hour and a half nothing happened and I had a chance to consider my situation.

Tom Keefe and Calvin Cameron

knew by this time that I had flopped and was a fugitive from justice and they wouldn't lift a finger to help me. Our Service had no official standing and they had no desire to notify the British of its existence. They would check me out and tackle the Enescro problem from another angle.

I was inclined to agree with Sadie that she took no risk in replacing Cecil with myself. People in this degraded form of entertainment were always doubling up, splitting and making new arrangements.

She'd tell Robbin that she had secured a new Cecil. He would listen to my howls and watch me show my tusks and dismiss me from his thoughts and he wasn't in the least likely to ask her how and where she got me.

As for the police, if they inquired regarding the inmates of a seedy Bloomsbury lodging house, they would find a Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Follingsby, employees of Robbins Side Show at Bright City, residing there, and go about their business.

It looked as though I were safe enough, but while I was caged at Bright City I would be making no progress in the Enescro affair.

Well, Sir Ronald couldn't wreck the United States in a few weeks and maybe—how, I had no notion—I might get on the job again and justify myself to my employers. The thing to do, for the present, was to be a good wild man.

Sadie came out. She wore an Egyptian headdress, a brassière, very brief beaded trunks and high-heeled slippers. She stopped and chatted with the Bearded Woman and the magician—I forgot to mention him, and then went outside. A moment later I heard a high-pitched cockney voice describing the wonders within. Presently a reed

pipe began to play. I laughed at the tune which was "She Never Saw the Streets of Cairo." Here in modern London they were playing a melody from the Chicago Fair of 1893 and my girl friend was, no doubt, giving them an imitation of Little Egypt.

By and by a dozen people sauntered into the building. They were mostly women, children and a few yokels. Hardly worth while performing for such an audience. However, I put my howler in my mouth, blew, shook the bars of my cage, showed my tusks and scared the children. The other freaks got busy—did their wretched tricks, tried half-heartedly and signally failed to sell their photographs and then Sadie did her dance, which I watched with interest.

My alleged wife was extremely supple. It didn't look as if she had a bone in her body and her stomach certainly seemed to be made of elastic.

When the curtain fell she returned to the ballyhoo platform outside and as the first crowd departed a second dribbled in.

Along about one o'clock, the porter thrust an almost bare legbone of cooked lamb into my cage. I growled ferociously and actually had to tear a few flakes of meat from the bone. My work was much appreciated by the small audience, especially the kids.

HALF an hour later the show closed for lunch. We ate in a back room at a long table. The man in the coster uniform turned out to be the great Robbin. I was introduced to all the freaks. The bearded lady removed her whiskers and proved to be a garrulous Whitechapel matron. The magician was a German, and the Lilliputian was a Turk who spoke very bad English.

There was much conversation regarding the elopement of Cecil which was known to all and Sadie was congratulated upon securing a new Cecil so quickly.

"I had my eye on Herbert for months," stated Sadie. "Herbert is a Canadian and he lived in the same boarding house. Herbert is a gent, which is more than Cecil ever was. I've changed his name to Cecil."

"You did wery fine work, this morning, 'Erbert," said Robbin pleasantly. "Honly don't shake them cage bars so 'ard. Hit's weak, yer know."

"I'll remember, Mr. Robbin," I said. I had removed my huge wig and must have presented a queer spectacle with my black face and gleaming white skull.

The food was plain—cold ham, bread and tea—but there was plenty of everything. Sadie, obviously, was the leading woman of the outfit and the only artist in the lot. In private life, the Bearded Lady was Mrs. Robbin, and a very devoted couple they were, too, she assured me.

Business picked up during the afternoon and while growling and shaking the bars, I found it interesting to size up the customers.

They were mostly what the British call trippers; people who had come up from Manchester, Birmingham, Yorkshire, Cornwall, or even from across the Scottish border on Cooks' tickets. They were round-eyed, credulous and unbelievably queer-looking folk. Aside from the Bond Street tailors, who are the best in the world, the British tailors seem to be the worst; they make men's clothing out of material so shoddy that no American would think of wearing such cloth—this in the face of the fact that the British make the best woolsens known.

As for the dressmakers, the Lord forgive them. It's true that the figures of women from the British hinterlands would drive a good dressmaker to despair. Despite my own humiliating situation—a blacked-up fake behind the bars of a cage—I often had to laugh out loud at the appearance of the people who peered through the bars. Select a dozen at random, send them across the stage of a theater and most of the audience would go into convulsions.

WE shut up shop at ten-thirty P.M. After half an hour of scrubbing and scraping by Sadie, my skin assumed its pristine appearance, but was sore in spots. I put on my street clothes and escorted her to the Tube. At her suggestion I took her into one of the many Lyon's lunch rooms—this one on Oxford Street—for supper.

It was rather an attractive place. There was a small dance floor and a small orchestra and the prices were very low.

I was a trifle nervous about showing myself in public in this fashion, but my appearance certainly was considerably changed. The beads in my nose forced me to breathe through my mouth which was a nuisance.

I doubted if Inspector Gaddish would recognize me with my shaven head, the missing tooth and the broad nose, and aside from Inspector Good, I was unknown to the police.

Sadie was full of pep and wanted me to dance, but there was no use in making myself that conspicuous. It was impossible not to like Sadie. Her good humor never failed and she was unusually pretty and she was risking her own freedom in befriending me. She was eager for all the latest news from Forty-second Street and I told

her what I could, though for several years I had spent most of my time in factory towns and Western cities trailing Red agitators.

She stopped in the middle of a remark.

"There's a man who has been staring at you," she said. "Don't look now. He's over at a table near the opposite wall."

"Detective, do you think?"

"No," she said. "He's too small for a bobbie. Oh, he's gone into the men's room."

I swung about, but the door of the men's room had closed.

I called the waitress and demanded the check. It was instantly forthcoming and I took it to the cashier's desk. In a moment we were on the sidewalk. There was a taxi waiting and I pushed her into it and jumped in beside her.

"On what we drag down," she said reproachfully, "we can't afford taxis."

"Most likely that fellow wasn't interested in me but we can't take chances." I gave the driver our Bloomsbury address and we swung around a corner.

"Lost him," I said. "Look here, Sadie, I can't involve you in my troubles. I'll pull my freight."

Sadie began to cry. "Cecil's gone and there ain't anybody I know in London any more except the freaks at

Robbin's. I tell you I ain't running any risk. I can always say I met you at Mrs. Lundy's and took you on without dreaming you were wanted."

"Aw, Sadie, don't cry."

"I like you a lot, Jack," she declared, wiping her eyes. "It's fun being with you like this. Please don't quit on me."

I patted her little hand. "O.K., kid. You can claim I had changed my appearance and that you hadn't seen my picture. Anyway—you don't read newspapers."

She snuggled up to me. I let her do it though it made me nervous. I didn't want any complications with Sadie. I'm not a snob but a cooch dancer—well—you know. Besides, I was in love with Theodora. I'd stand a fine chance with Theodora if she learned that I was supposed to be this little vagabond's husband. Oh, well, as far as Theodora was concerned, I was out of the picture.

The cab pulled up at our lodging house and I helped Sadie out. The house was on Bloomsbury Street, second from a corner. A cab swung round the corner and rolled up and stopped behind ours as I was paying off the taxi man. I turned suspiciously and out stepped Ray Bronson.

He grinned at me triumphantly.

"How are yer, Jack?" he inquired.

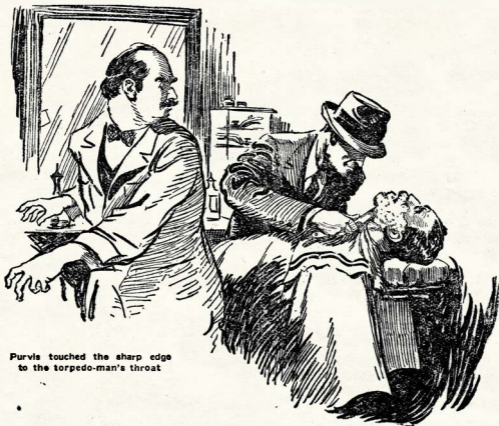
CONTINUE THIS STORY NEXT WEEK.

THE CRIME JURY SAYS—

Be sure to read the Riley Dillon novellette in next week's issue. Watch for—

"THE BRUTE'S EMERALDS"

By H. Bedford-Jones



Purvis touched the sharp edge
to the torpedo-man's throat

Bandit Buster

A True Story

By Dugal O'Liam

The Nerve to Use Cold Steel Has Always Distinguished the Real Fighting Man—and with Cold Steel Melvin Purvis Caught the Most Dreaded Torpedo-Man of the Mid-West

DON'T MISS THIS TRUE STORY—BEGIN HERE

MELVIN PURVIS became the greatest manhunter of the Department of Justice. He was the man who got Dillinger and broke the outlaws of the Middle West.

But he was a little, undersized kid. He was born in the little town of Timmons-

ville, South Carolina. He jerked soda in a country drug store—and he thought a town of fifty thousand was a metropolis.

He became great because he refused to stay in a small town. He was offered 500 acres of rich tobacco land if he would till it, and he refused. He studied law—and

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for February 9

when he was offered the nomination of prosecuting attorney in a small town he refused again. He was determined to make good in a big city. He went to Washington, and by sheer dogged determination got an appointment as agent of the Department of Justice.

He weighed 127 pounds—and he hadn't so much as fired a pistol half a dozen times in his life.

CHAPTER V

A Pistol Shooting G-Man

WHEN grim-faced, shy Melvin Horace Purvis went into the Department of Justice at the age of twenty-three, he was anything but a human bloodhound. He did not look like the relentless, dogged, never-say-die detective one would expect to see in the man destined to become the most famous and the most deadly bandit-hunter in the world—the man who got Dillinger and ended the reign of gunmen in the Mid-West.

He was, in fact, a somewhat startled, curious, nervous young man weighing around 127 pounds. His face was lined from much study over law books, but his cheeks were pink. The two lumps of muscle beneath his ears, where his jaw bone jutted from the skull proper, were a little more pronounced. They had begun to assume the appearance of permanence.

The lips were thinner and the chin more outthrust. The eyes were little more than thin, inscrutable slits now and the hair was thinning a bit above the temples, but a boyish diffidence and an inexhaustible capacity for details were apparent, even then.

It is not often that a youth of twenty-three, who never has had to worry about where his money was coming from, who has had more or less of a silver-platter time of it in school, who

never has known the bitterness of a struggle for the luxuries most boys covet, should have this capacity for application to detail, which is little more than grinding, heartbreaking toil. But Little Mel Purvis had it to a marked degree.

The first requisite of a great sleuth is inexhaustible patience and an inordinate capacity for hard work. Detail, detail and more detail makes for a successful career, and a determination and perseverance that will not be turned from its elected course is of far greater value to the human bloodhound than superficial brilliance.

An analytical mind is, of course, a prime requisite, yet without the talent for pursuing and mastering facts, an analytical mind would have nothing to analyze. Thus Little Mel, with his almost fanatical devotion to detail, was equipped with the foundation for the career that has made his name a household word throughout the United States and has even gained him fame and respect in the almost legendary corridors of England's great Scotland Yard.

Quiet, unobtrusive, devoted to his books and records, Little Mel was almost forgotten in his first months in the department. He went silently and purposefully about his work. He scanned every bit of information that came to his attention and presently he found himself lost, body and soul, in the records of criminology and the deeds of great criminologists of the past.

The heroics of Burns and Pinkerton and Flynn and such men were meat and drink to him. He devoured the histories of these super-sleuths, assimilated the records they had established, respected their methods and began to copy them. And everywhere he turned

he discovered that their greatest successes had been predicated upon a single word, perseverance.

IT soon became known about the department that if there was a particularly hard nut to crack in the way of compiling information, the little fellow from Carolina would be the best man to get the assignment. The more difficult the problem appeared, the more eagerness he threw into its solution. At times he labored until far into the night, although such work was not required, and always he came up with the answers.

Moreover, when he prepared a report for a superior, the superior found no leaks in it. He never had to send it back for additional work. Little Mel never let anything slide past. His keen, eager eyes caught everything, and everything went into his reports. In addition to his amazing capacity for taking pains, he had a genius for assembling material in a direct, useable form. He could shuck off useless information. When he had prepared a record on a case, that case was thorough and simple and clean.

Promotions came fast for Little Mel. He hadn't been long in service until he was sent to Birmingham, Alabama, to take charge of the department's office there. No longer was he merely a law clerk, or an adviser on matters of law. He was a full-fledged agent, a detective on his own right, and despite his shyness and diffidence, he was such a good and thorough and enthusiastic one, that he was in charge of an important unit.

The Department of Justice in those days was not so concerned with vicious crime. That was to come later. Bootlegging occupied most of the time of the federal agents, a circumstance

which made it possible for the fierce, relentless men Purvis was to pursue later to get a foothold in the country.

Little Mel was sent to Birmingham to bring organization out of a near-chaos. His direct mind, his unwavering attention to the little things, his strength of character, his determination and his clarity of thought and action, were made to order for the kind of job he had to do there. He began doing it as soon as he arrived, and presently he was treading on toes that weren't used to being trod upon. But he never wavered. Soon he had a young, eager staff about him.

Now for the first time he began to realize that the time was coming when he no longer would be just a clerk, as most of the federal agents were then, checking up on bootleggers and industrial alcohol diversions and income tax lists and bank accounts and stolen automobiles. Eventually he would be a manhunter, facing desperate criminals in the open. He probably was, with J. Edgar Hoover, soon to be his youthful chief, among the first of the federal men to foresee the reign of terror to be established by the Dillingers and the Floyds and the Van Meters and the Barrows.

Although the federal men were not permitted to carry firearms, except on extraordinary duty, young Purvis prepared for disaster. He knew that it wouldn't be long before firearms would come into play, and come into play heavily. He had been reasonably active out-of-doors as a boy, but he had not been the hunting, trapping type of country boy. His hobbies had been horseback riding, driving automobiles, and eating. He enjoyed good food, for all his wizened size. When he reached Birmingham he had virtually no knowledge of pistol shooting.

He bought his first pistol in a Birmingham store and went to city police headquarters. There he made arrangements to use the department's firing course. He arranged his hours so they would not conflict with his other duties. Each morning he tumbled out of bed an hour earlier than he had before, went to the range, and practiced shooting.

He later expanded his course and found half an hour in mid-day. Then he began watching the expert marksmen in the Birmingham police department. At the end of three months, when the government already had new fields laid out for Little Mel Purvis, he could shoot on even terms with any member of Birmingham's crack department.

He made himself an expert marksman because he was convinced that he had to be. What if he hadn't handled a gun as a kid half a dozen times? The Purvises before him had been marksmen, and what had been done could be done again. In spite of his natural physical nervousness, his was a steady hand. It had to be. There was no other answer, so he conquered his nerves as once he had conquered his treacherous legs.

Birmingham gave him another schooling. Finding the Bertillon and finger-print department in his own office too circumscribed for extensive research, he went to the Birmingham police headquarters daily and studied the systems there. He went over the records time and again. He learned how to read finger-prints himself. He made up his mind that he'd wait for no one to make finger-print reports to him. He'd get them directly, and then there could be no slip-up of any kind.

When he wanted information, he wanted it absolutely accurate, and

there was only one man in the world he was willing to trust for unwavering accuracy—Melvin Horace Purvis, Jr., of Timmonsville, South Carolina.

He began to ask questions of veteran detectives. It became a habit with him. He would ask questions endlessly and when they were answered, he would listen. One could almost see him weed-



MELVIN PURVIS

ing out the chaff and selecting those full grains of information that he could use later. He wasted nothing, but he kept nothing that was repetitive, or superficial or outmoded.

This process of natural selection was the making of Melvin Purvis as a great sleuth.

CHAPTER VI

The Nemesis of Kidnapers

ABOUT the time Melvin Purvis was whipping the Birmingham office into a cohesive and workable unit, a suave, ambitious man who once had been a poor clerk, but who

now controlled millions, began to feel the threat of over-expansion.

The man's name was Samuel Insull. With the millions he had made out of gigantic utility developments, he had endowed art institutes, subsidized opera companies; built and presented to the people of Chicago one of the finest opera houses in all the world. He reveled in the glory of these achievements. He wanted to be known as the greatest patron of arts of his century. He dared business expansion far beyond the limit of his own capacity to administer, and beyond the capacity of his operating companies.

The United States government began to hear rumblings of disaster. There was nothing definite yet, but the handwriting obviously was on the wall. Insull was about to collapse. The great dam of speculation was about to break, and when it broke it would sweep away the life savings of upward of a million small and large investors.

The government had to forestall the catastrophe. The Department of Justice hurried its best men to Chicago. They poured financial experts and the best detectives and operatives in the organization into the Chicago district. It was one of the most intensive silent campaigns the department ever undertook.

Closer and closer to the precipice the structure of Insull's power empire rode. The government was getting nowhere rapidly. There seemed to be no averting the collapse. Then someone thought of Purvis, the methodical, plodding, determined little man down in Birmingham. His genius for detail, for exploring the driest of problems until he had found what he wanted, fitted him ideally for this assignment.

A wire went to Birmingham at once,

ordering him to Chicago. He was to take over the Insull investigation. This boy, less than thirty years old, was commissioned to dig through a maze of figures and papers that veteran agents had failed to understand. The hugeness of the structure Insull had built had been too much for men who had spent their lives in such investigations, but Little Mel wasn't frightened. He wasn't even awed.

He plunged into the almost impossible task without waiting to select a place to live. Friends in the office selected the place for him, and he sent for his negro man in Birmingham to hurry to Chicago. He couldn't get the sort of work done he had to do there without his morning grits and this man Henry was the only cook in the world who knew how to prepare grits as Massa Purvis liked them. He liked them fried, not boiled and served with sugar and cream, and it was Henry's job to fry his grits properly.

Once Henry was esconced in an apartment Purvis shared with the former head of the Chicago bureau, whom he had succeeded without rancor or distrust, Little Mel tore into the Insull business without let-up. He worked all night many and many nights, staying in his office and drinking black coffee, and then going to his apartment for his grits before returning to the drudgery.

Days passed. He hadn't even made an impression on the insurmountable maze of facts and figures. Now he was in Detroit, or Milwaukee, or Peoria, or St. Louis, or Davenport, or Des Moines, or anyone of half a hundred cities, probing into the ramifications of the Insull empire there. Now he was prowling through the vaults of Chicago banks. Now he was in the offices of Insull himself.

Little Mel Purvis, realizing that the last earthly dollar of thousands hung on the celerity with which he cleaned up the problem, drove himself harder and harder at his job. It seemed that if he had two hours' sleep a night he was luxuriating. When he went on a trip he carried reams of data with him and sat in his berth studying it. He dragged crochety and dyspeptic bankers from their beds at all hours of night to question them, and when they raved and threatened to "get him" in Washington, he merely looked at them out of those slits of eyes, set his jaws hard and invited them to do their best.

Worked to a shadow of his ordinarily frail self, he became a very hard young man. He scorned the threats of the mighty. The orders of big business and the schemes to break him rolled off his slim shoulders like water off a duck's back. He went his way, digging, digging; defying wealth and the underworld which had been empowered, by means of heavy remuneration, to drive him out of Chicago.

AS he worked in his apartment one night, a heavy knock came at his door. He opened it and in walked four men, black-eyed, beetling-browed men, flashily dressed, with hats snapped over their eyes. They asked for Melvin Purvis. When Melvin Purvis identified himself, they looked startled. At first they refused to believe him. When he reassured them, they looked at each other. One of them laughed. Then the leader told him he wasn't needed in Chicago and that he might as well clear out before he went out feet first.

"That's the only way I'll leave Chicago before my work's done here, gentlemen," Little Mel told them. The leader started to bully him. Little

Mel put his hand in his pocket. His eyes narrowed. His jaw set. The leader took one more look at Mel, and motioned his men to leave. They never called on Little Mel again. But he had other calls. He had calls from well-dressed, gray-haired, cultured men who were accustomed to affluence and power.

"It is suicide for you to investigate Insull," the men said. "Once it gets out that the government is investigating him his whole bubble will burst. If you can make a good report on him and then withdraw, we can save everything and nobody will lose their money. If you don't withdraw, everybody will lose. And we can make it very, very interesting for you—probably as interesting as a quarter of a million dollars. Cold cash—not Insull stock."

Little Mel shook his head. "I'm going to stick," he said. "Good-day, gentlemen."

He stuck. Then the bubble burst. The billion dollar power empire collapsed. Thousands upon thousands lost their money. Widows, orphans, old men and women, farmers who had scraped together a few dollars or had mortgaged their properties—all were ruined in the smashup. Samuel Insull fled in a peddler's disguise, first to Canada, then to France, finally to Greece.

Out in Chicago Little Mel Purvis directed the pursuit. He directed it until Insull was apprehended in Greece. He got away into the Mediterranean and had to be pursued on into Turkey. Finally he surrendered and started back, beaten by the relentless little bloodhound from Timmons ville, South Carolina.

Purvis's work on the Insull case was not yet done. But something else had happened. Out in Crown Point, In-

diana, a desperate man had been clapped into a small jail with a woman sheriff to guard him. The man's name was John Dillinger. Even in jail he directed his bandit crew and presently one John (Jake the Barber) Factor, an unsavory Chicago character who had come to this country and acquired a fortune through shady, but not unlawful, means was kidnaped.

The kidnaping took place in Little Mel's backyard, so to speak. It was one of a long series of Middle Western kidnapings. A certain mob had been operating the kidnaping game over a number of years, but this was before prohibition. During prohibition, there was far more money to be made in liquor running and machine gunning than in kidnaping. The old mob had turned to alky enterprises and had forgotten their earlier and far more hazardous profession.

But liquor running had ceased to be profitable. Repeal was only a few months off and the dry agents had relaxed their vigilance. Nobody wanted to stop liquor running any more, and as a result it lost its attractiveness as a big money racket.

Sleuths and law enforcement men had forgotten about the old Touhy gang. They had terrorized the West many years before, but they had been overlooked in the rise of the Capones, the Saltises, the O'Bannions, the Dutch Schultzes and the Owney Maddens of the underworld. No one knew what gang had turned to kidnaping.

In the midst of the confusion and horror caused by the abduction of the Lindbergh baby, Little Mel Purvis kept his nose applied to the grindstone of the Insull case. When the Factor kidnaping broke, he still was grinding on that case. Because he had it all at his finger-tips now, he decided to

stay with it, and suggested that other men be sent into the West to trail the kidnapers. But the Washington bureau disagreed with him—for the first time—and ordered Little Mel to clean up the affair and leave the Insull matter, now thoroughly broken and competently organized by him, to other men.

Little Mel hadn't the vaguest idea which way to turn. He knew nothing of the Western badmen, knew nothing of any mob that would turn to kidnaping. But he had recourse to his greatest talent, investigation and study of records.

"Somewhere," he told himself, "at sometime, there was a kidnaping gang. They knocked off when alky running became more profitable and safer. This is a professional job. The old gang has gone back to its first love. All I have to do is find out whom the old gang includes."

He went into the records. He studied them night and day. He came upon the name of Roger Touhy and then upon that of Basil Hugh Banghart. They had been general badmen in the old days. They had worked confidence games over the country. Then they had taken to cracking banks. Finally Touhy had been mixed up in kidnapings.

He got away with it and then turned his hand to the alky racket, working as a torpedo and general hard-guy all over the country, from Higgins-Madden front in New York, through the Purple Gang organization in Detroit, down to Chicago with Capone and his rivals, and as far as St. Louis, where the Egans gave him work and the Cuckoo gang called upon him for the tougher jobs.

Little Mel Purvis studied Roger Tuohy's thick, heavy face, studied his record. He was a hard guy, and he

operated with the shadiest victims he could find. Factor had money, and he also had indictments standing against him in England. He wasn't a man who cared for publicity, just the type Touhy and Banghart would select for a victim.

THE word went out to get Roger Touhy and Basil Hugh Banghart. With them were to be arrested all their known henchmen—Gus Schaefer, Al Kator and Willie the Weeper Sharkey. Touhy was the hard-guy and Banghart was the brains, Little Mel said. The others were messenger boys and rodmen—but they were important.

Touhy heard he was wanted, and laughed when told that Little Mel had announced that he was to be taken. He stood in a South Chicago saloon and announced that he was going out and look for Purvis. "I'll break the little rat's neck and see how he likes it," the burly Touhy announced. He had two more whiskies, felt his shoulder holster to see if his pistol still was in place, hitched up his trousers and strode out to look for Little Mel.

He might have found him, but something he heard stopped him. It all happened rather suddenly. Little Mel had known that a very bad man named Verne Sankey was in the Mid-Western area, plotting a kidnaping and a holdup or two. He had heard that Sankey was making his headquarters in a small town over in the Dakotas, where he had contacts and protection. He discovered that there was no one in the bureau who wasn't busy on something else, so he started for Dakota and Verne Sankey, alone.

He didn't find him immediately, but he got a trace of him. He trailed him until he began to get warm. Everywhere he was told by police and everyone else to go back to Chicago and

send a full grown man with three or four helpers out on that job.

"This fellow's no sidewalk cut-up," they told him. "He's bad. He's fast on the draw, he knows he's licked and he'll stop at nothing. He'd just as soon shoot you as look at you."

Little Mel pressed on. He traced Sankey to a country barber shop. He looked through the window and saw the profile of a familiar face. A barber held a razor poised above the face, was applying a heavy lather. Little Mel entered the door, looked over the situation. Then he summoned the barber who was shaving Verne Sankey.

"I don't want to make a scene here," he said, in a low voice, while Verne Sankey waited, "but I'm a federal operative and when I come over to where you're shaving that man, I want you to let me take that razor without saying anything and step back. Understand?"

The barber looked at Little Mel's badge of office and understood. Sankey looked at him curiously, but thought nothing. Certainly he didn't take the studious, bookish little man talking to the barber for a federal operative.

The barber went back to his work, nervous and excited. He lathered the man's face heavily. Melvin Purvis strolled over toward the chair, casually took the razor from the barber's hand and touched the sharp edge to Verne Sankey's throat.

"Sankey," he said, "I've got you—I'm a federal agent and you're going along—one move and I'll slit your throat from ear to ear."

Sankey tried to answer, but his throat muscles were paralyzed with fear. He moved to rise, but the razor made a tiny cut in his throat and he fell back. Purvis casually took his revolver from his shoulder holster, picked up a towel, wiped the lather

from his prisoner's face, took a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and snapped them on Sankey's wrists and ordered him to get along.

The word that the 127 pound Melvin Purvis had brought in one of the hardest men in the country flew over the telegraph wires. Down in South Chicago Roger Touhy heard it—and caught the first train out of Chicago. He wanted to put as much space as was possible between himself and such a man. Touhy had known Sankey, and he knew that this little fellow must have far more stuff than anyone who'd crossed the path of Roger Touhy with a peace officer's badge pinned to his vest.

Touhy decided that safety, health and liberty lay in flight.

His flight was short-lived. Within a week all the gang was rounded up but Banghart.

Banghart gave Little Mel the slip. Little Mel went back to his office, shut himself in and did some heavy thinking. For the first time in his life, save for the Sankey incident, he was facing genuine badmen. Not only did he stand an excellent chance of losing the game, but also his life.

It can safely be said that the latter thought never bothered Little Mel Purvis. Anyone who ever has known him will readily swear that never has he known real fear. Even though he personally discredits this, and declares openly that he's felt like running many times, the opinion of his associates stands.

BUT courage alone wouldn't get him past this crisis. He was on the verge of a great career or mediocrity. He was the first man to even touch the criminals who had so suddenly taken to kidnaping. The coun-

try had been alive with such cases, and he was bringing in his men. He knew he had the right men in Touhy, Schaefer, et al, and he knew Banghart was guilty. But Banghart had given him the slip. He hadn't the remotest idea of what had become of the cleverest badman of all the Touhy gang.

So Mel Purvis played a hunch—backed up by hard fact. He traced every known move of Banghart in the past, and discovered that he never had been on the Eastern seaboard save in New York. He never had been down along the New Jersey sea towns, along the Delaware shore, or the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where there are innumerable hide-outs for desperate men. He knew the West and the West knew him—all parts of it. He knew New York and Pittsburg and Cleveland and Philadelphia and even some of the New England industrial and shipping towns.

"He'll try to be foxy," Little Mel told himself. "He'll head for a spot where he knows no one, or at least has no police connections, and expect us to look for him in his old haunts. Well, ordinarily we would, but this fellow's smart. I'm glad he is. When they're smart they try to think and when they try to think, they play our game. We're paid to think."

He communicated with Washington, and Washington turned a posse of agents loose along the Eastern Shore. Within forty-eight hours Purvis had a tip that Banghart was fleeing Florida and heading up the East coast. Twenty-four hours later Little Mel touched the shoulder of a mustached, bespectacled and very blond man sitting in an Eastern Shore pullman car. That was strange, because Hugh Banghart had been dark, had worn no mustache, and had perfectly good eyesight.

The man looked up, saw the little operative, and then relaxed in his seat, obviously reassured.

"Come on Banghart, and don't try to make a break," the little man said. Three burly aids surrounded the seat. The man with the spectacles started to get up, thought better of it, sat down and then took off his spectacles and extended his hands for the bracelets.

"Son," he said, "you're too smart for me, and you've got guts."

Then he looked up suddenly. "Who squealed?" he demanded—the old, old cry of the trapped criminal.

"Nobody," he was told. "We use our heads in our business. You might have gotten by us at that if you hadn't smiled with so much satisfaction a while ago when you read in the paper about the hunt for Basil Banghart up in the Wisconsin woods."

Basil Banghart, Roger Touhy, Shafer, Sharkey and Kator went to prison for ninety-nine years for their part in the Factor kidnaping. But Willie the Weeper Sharkey beat the rap. He hanged himself in his cell before he could be taken to the penitentiary.

The others are serving their time, and Little Mel Purvis has sworn, in his quiet, intent way, that so long as he lives and has a government connection, they won't get out.

CHAPTER VII

The Tommy Gunners

THE conviction of the Touhy gang broke the backbone of the kidnaping racket in the Chicago area. It flared up in other parts of the country, and still goes on. There are still twenty thousand kidnapings a year, but the experts, the hard men who had reduced the game to a science, are all gone. The Touhys were the last big mob.

Little Mel Purvis might have gone back to the overpowering figures and mountains of evidence of the Insull case had not another human mad-dog broken loose. Out in the West, beyond the Chicago area, but still within the purlieus of Little Mel's district, a fat-faced, thick-shouldered man with ruddy cheeks and curly black hair had gone berserk.

Once a quiet, industrious farm boy, Pretty Boy Floyd suddenly had been converted almost overnight into the most reckless of criminals. He had joined the notorious Bailey gang and had become one of their most feared killers. He walked boldly into banks in broad daylight, held them up and walked out with their money. No one dared to shoot, he was so cocksure and disdainful.

Now and then he killed a man during one of his holdups, and here and there a rural officer, with more courage than judgment, dropped in a squirming heap beside some dusty road and died there as Charles Arthur Floyd went on to more desperate deeds and mad-dog living.

So successful was this black-haired, bandit that Bailey, never one to face death himself, but ever alert with orders sending his own men into possible destruction, selected Pretty Boy to effect the delivery of Frank Nash, one of the Bailey mob, on his way to Federal prison for a kidnaping job.

Nash was to be taken through the Union Station in Kansas City at a certain hour. Floyd was given half a dozen trusted men, good pistol shots, and unafraid when they had enough dope in their systems, to help him.

He was to take Nash at all costs—because Nash was known to be a man who might talk and he had a very great deal, indeed, on the Bailey gang and

might decide to talk at any minute. Moreover, he had a great deal on a number of men in respectful pursuits who found a contact with Bailey, so long as it was a secret one, very useful and which Bailey found most lucrative. So Nash had to be freed—or else—

It is a known fact that Bailey told Pretty Boy Floyd, before he left the Ozark Mountains in Southern Missouri to go to Kansas City on this assignment, that under no circumstances was Nash to remain in the custody of officers. "If you can't get him away, don't leave him there alive," were his last words to his trigger-man.

Floyd didn't get Nash away, so he left him as he had been ordered—drilled twice through the head and twice through the body with bullets from Floyd's own gun. But Floyd accomplished even more. Three officers were slain, and as they fell, a Federal agent also fell. Their bodies littered the plaza in front of the beautiful Kansas City Union Station, and their blood ran over the black asphalt street. In that blood was written the death warrant of Pretty Boy Floyd.

He escaped after the massacre and made his way into the Oklahoma hills. Then he moved northward and contacted the Dillinger mob, represented on the outside by Homer Van Meter and Baby Face Nelson. Dillinger was still languishing in the Crown Point jail.

Now all the time of Little Mel Purvis was devoted to this happy-looking bandit. For all his pleasant face and his reputed devotion to his family, Floyd was a dangerous and reckless man. Since 1925 he had plied his trade of bank robber, highwayman, torpedo-man for liquor runners, procurer and white slaver. He had operated almost wholly in the Southwest. The Kansas

City job marked his first invasion of the larger cities. From that time forward his steps were marked. The tiny human bloodhound in the Chicago Department of Justice office dogged his trail.

As he dogged the trail of Floyd, so he dogged the trails of the men who had been Dillinger's aids. He followed them all over the West, always just a step behind, and he kept them so busy that they had no time for major crime. But that was while their leader still was in the Crown Point jail. Lacking his leadership, Van Meter and Nelson and Floyd were lost.

Dillinger, more reckless than Floyd, was at the same time cannier. He planned his coups skillfully and executed them daringly, but he ran no risks and he was a master of tactics. He knew just when a job was feasible and how it should be handled. He knew what men to trust and when and how to use them.

The others had no such confidence in themselves as they had in Dillinger, and hence while their chief was incarcerated they devoted their time principally to flight and left the bank robbing and murder strictly alone.

AS a matter of fact, Pretty Boy Floyd quit his haunts down in Oklahoma, shook the red dust of the Ozarks from his thick feet and worked his way eastward into Ohio, where he laid low waiting for the heat to cool down. But he reckoned without Little Mel Purvis and his tenacity. Others might have forgotten Floyd and his crimes in the many months that followed. But not Little Mel. The more Floyd tried to stay out of the limelight and avoid his old haunts and eschew his old deeds, the closer Little Mel Purvis followed on his trail.

Then one day out in Crown Point the most dangerous criminal in the nation broke loose. The country, already sick of Dillinger and his ability to carry on his bloody trade under the very noses of the state and local officers, was shocked beyond anything it had known before.

Dillinger's jailer was a woman. She was the sheriff of Lake County. She had charge of the jail, with a turnkey as her immediate subordinate. The district attorney of the county had taken a hand in the capture, several weeks before, of Dillinger; and he had posed with the notorious bandit with his arm about Dillinger's shoulder. Dillinger smiled blandly and the woman sheriff smiled coquettishly and the district attorney smiled proudly and everybody was having a delightful time—until copies of the photograph flooded the country.

The citizenry as a whole arose to condemn the district attorney. Little Mel Purvis saw the photograph, tightened his jaw and said, bitterly:

"We try to clean up the country and rid it of human mad-dogs like this, and then idiotic public officials make heroes of them."

He made a resolve then, and he has carried it forever in his mind. He resolved that there was but one way to handle the Dillinger, Floyd, and Nelson type of criminal. That was to shoot them at sight, as one would a wild animal bent on destroying life. He thought no more of temporizing or treating. From that hour on Little Mel Purvis was ready to conduct his war on the rats with steel and lead.

Born a country boy, Dillinger's bank holdups were committed chiefly in the country. But when the pinch came and he needed a hide-away most, he was wont to turn to the cities. He

knew Chicago's vicious northwest side almost as well as he knew his native state of Indiana, and it was there that he was expected to go when he bluffed his way out of a woman-run jail with a wooden pistol.

John Dillinger hadn't been out of the Crown Point jail thirty minutes before the word reached Little Mel Purvis. He hadn't had the word fifteen minutes before he had begun plugging up the rat holes where Dillinger would hide, and deploying his trusted men over the area Dillinger would be most likely to frequent.

Purvis didn't know it then, but the Indiana desperado almost wrote finis to his career as a Federal agent. No common bandit was this leering, drooping-eyed son of a peaceful Indiana farmer. There was none of the gang-fed and gang-bred Chicago or New York gunman about him. Take the sidewalk-reared thugs of New York and Chicago and other big cities out of their own districts, rob them of overwhelming numbers, and they are both cowardly and helpless.

NOT so John Dillinger. While no man who shoots in cold blood while engaged in robbery is a truly brave man, and while few of this type are other than the most craven cowards when they face the end, Dillinger did not lack courage.

What he might have lacked in sheer, inherent bravery he more than made up for in daring. It was a daring without recklessness. He planned carefully, and murder entered his plans just as certainly as a train ride, or a meal, or a pullman berth, or a telegram or a long distance telephone call would enter the plans of another man preparing for his business day.

He had an exceptionally agile mind

and he had imagination. He had a talent for leadership and there was something about him that commanded men and caused them to go to the extreme of personal recklessness at his bidding. It wasn't because he was kind to his own, because he was not. Often he left one of his own pals wounded and unable to flee at the mercy of the police, while he saved his own body. Often he beat and even shot at them; and he never allowed the welfare of a pal, so far as anyone ever learned, to stand in the way of his own safety, or his own gain.

Moreover, he was a tyrant with the few things the hunted men treasured. If one of his band had a girl that Dillinger coveted, Dillinger took the girl. If the henchman objected, he was likely to feel the sickly burning of a bullet in his vitals.

No, it couldn't have been because he was beloved of his fellow bandits. Yet Dillinger cowed them and commanded them and now, as he rushed out of Indiana and headed over into Illinois, they raced to join him.

Over into Illinois swooped Dillinger, and close on his trail were the agents of Little Mel Purvis. One little bank Dillinger plundered, and then, with his mob increasing, he headed into Michigan—his funds renewed, his belly full, liquor in his bags and women in plenty waiting to adore and follow him, even to prison or death.

With him rode the big negro he had delivered from the Crown Point jail. It was an odd little conceit of Dillinger's. He took the negro, named Youngblood, with him, because he wanted a man servant. He wanted the giant black to wait on him and to act as his personal bodyguard, and the black man leaped at the chance and was proud.

Up into Michigan they went, stopping now and then at filling stations to demand a filled tank, paying for it with the money they'd gotten from the Illinois banks. Behind him and before him rode others of his gang, and still others were converging in the Wisconsin woods to meet him when he should reach there.

Once or twice he changed cars—a simple measure for one of his unorthodox ideas of trade. He simply drove up to a car parked in a remote place, fitted one of his scores of keys into the ignition switch, changed license plates and drove away, leaving his abandoned car at the scene. Sometimes he didn't even change license plates, although always he contrived to have extras on hand.

It was through these changes of license plates and these stolen cars that Little Mel Purvis was able to follow so closely upon the heels of the bandit chief. Filling stations told him a few things, restaurants a few more, terrified farmers and their wives, suddenly hauled from their beds in the dead of night to supply food to the killer, told him a few more.

These he pieced together. Naturally he couldn't be out in the country on the trail. He had to stay in Chicago and plug up holes as fast as they appeared, so that ultimately Dillinger wouldn't have any place to hide.

Because he was on the job night and day, Little Mel traced John Dillinger up the east shore of Lake Michigan and finally spotted his destination as East Chicago. Quickly he notified the East Chicago police to corner the bandit and not to allow him to go through the town. Past East Chicago, he would have far readier access to the north woods and comparative safety.

Into East Chicago Dillinger and

Youngblood rode. They were hungry and they were daring. They believed they were in the clear, that they had shaken off their pursuers, and especially the clutching arms of the hated and feared Purvis. They went into a garage there, then started for a restaurant. Two policemen walked up, stiff-legged in their eager nervousness. Dillinger didn't see them. Youngblood did. As one of them drew a revolver, Youngblood leaped for him.

The revolver barked. Dillinger leaped into a doorway, whipped out his pistol, firing even as he drew it. The huge negro melted to the ground, sprawling in his own blood. One of the policemen staggered, tripped over the negro and fell on top of him. Dillinger rounded a corner, cursed, threw his pistol at the officer who was running after him, leaped into an automobile and was away, toward the north, leaving death behind him—as he always had left death behind when men attempted to hinder him.

THE other policeman stopped momentarily and bent over his stricken companion. Another officer ran up. The stricken man motioned feebly for his pal to take up the chase. The pal, Sergeant Martin Zarkovich, shouted to the officers running up to take charge of Youngblood, and ran in the direction Dillinger had taken. He was too late, however.

But Dillinger had not gone from the sight of Martin Zarkovich forever. There on that night in the streets of East Chicago he made another bitter personal enemy, as determined and as fierce in his hatred as Little Mel Purvis. Tears ran down Zarkovich's face as his pal died from the wounds Dillinger had given him, but there was

resolution in his heart that was to bear bitter fruit for the man who had caused those tears.

Over in the Chicago office, Little Mel Purvis heard of the Michigan blunder in stunned sorrow. Somehow there was in his character something that tortured him with personal responsibility for all these deaths at the hands of the outlaws he was assigned to subdue.

This last escape of Dillinger's fixed his determination to take up the trail in person. He believed that it was impossible to thwart this most audacious of bandits unless he was personally on the job.

So, knowing he faced the most desperate man alive, a man notorious for his ability with an automatic and his hatred for officers of the law, a man who reveled in the destruction he created and the lives he snuffed out, Little Mel put the affairs of his office in order and prepared to go into the north woods and wait for the face-to-face meeting with this killer.

Tiny, almost insignificant looking, ill-fitted for the hardships of the north woods, never yet tested in a hand-to-hand encounter where quickness on the draw meant the difference between life and a speedy death, he nevertheless turned his face to the north to settle forever, he believed, the issue with the most dangerous man of the century.

His subordinates saw him go. Some of them were sick at the sight, Purvis looked so small and impotent before the vision of the swashbuckling, hard, quick, resourceful outlaw.

But there was one—Billy McSwain—who muttered:

"Doggoned if I don't feel a little sorry for Dillinger—he's in a spot with that little bobcat on his trail."

CONCLUDE THIS TRUE STORY NEXT WEEK.

He draped the
glove on the quiv-
ering knife



The Thing He Stabbed

*A Slashing Knife, a
Slumped Body and How
Perfect Would be Chaney's
Crime — Framed upon a
Murderer Who Didn't
Exist!*

By Ray Cummings

IT was just nine by the jeweler's clock at the corner when Ollie Chaney mounted the front steps of Victorio Roma's home. The long, thin-bladed stiletto was out of its sheath in his jacket pocket. He was gripping its handle with his right hand, which was clad in a black cotton glove. With a little luck this killing of Roma ought not take more than a minute or two. The cleverness of it lay in its daring—to stab a man and then instantly yell for help, claiming that you had found him stabbed by somebody else who had just escaped. How could the police prove anything different from that?

Chaney opened the front door with his key, using his left hand. He knew

exactly what to expect inside the house, because he lived there. He had been out now less than ten minutes, leaving Roma in the ground floor library—alone in the house. Roma would probably still be there. Chaney had gone to the corner store and bought cigarettes. But his real reason for going was because the cigar man knew him—and Chaney would claim that the unknown assassin had stabbed Roma just now, while he was out.

He opened the big front door very quietly. He was tense, breathing fast, but his motions were swift, catlike. This thing would have to be done fast. The library entrance was ten feet away; the yellow glow was just as it had been before. For a moment he stood listening to the silence. From the library came the rustle of Roma's newspaper.

Stiletto in hand, Chaney padded swiftly forward. A full length mirror stood at the far end of the dim hall. He knew perfectly well that it was there, yet now as he caught his advancing reflection in it the sight gave him a start, so that he stopped and stood staring. Extraordinary vision of himself! Amazing, how the intent to kill a man had changed his appearance! Always a classy dresser, but now he looked so different! He was wearing a light tweed suit this summer evening; a white negligee shirt, with four-in-hand flowing necktie, tied in a neat little knot with its ends dangling down his shirt-front. His tweed cap exactly matched his suit. His brown sport shoes were newly shined. His socks were green, to match the green silk of his necktie.

The police would find him a dapper young gentleman—Roma's head salesman of imported Italian food delicacies, Roma's trusted employee and

friend. The last person in the world who would murder Roma.

But if the police could see him now! He had pulled his tweed cap down low on his forehead. His face seemed chalk-white. The hall light gleamed on the naked blue-silver blade of the stiletto. A furtive assassin, lurking here in Roma's hallway!

Then Chaney smiled grimly. He wouldn't look like this for the police! But he wondered suddenly if, after the killing, he would have trouble looking normal! Did guilt hang on one so that you couldn't hide it?

Crazy thoughts! Nobody could see him now. Roma, even, wouldn't see him except possibly for a second or two while the knife plunged . . . And afterward he would be his old dapper, smooth-talking self.

HE reached the library doorway. Roma had been seated with his back to this doorway, reading the evening copy of *Il Progresso Italiano Americano*, New York's Italian newspaper. He was still there. At the doorway Chaney stood for just a moment gathering his courage. And making sure that everything was just as it should be. The library was dim, with only the light from a table electrolier on the big leather chair in which Victorio Roma was sitting. Chaney could see the back of his massive head and one of his thick, fat shoulders. His pudgy hands held the newspaper spread before him. He was squeezed into the chair like a great fat toad . . . Chaney's stiletto had a long blade—it would have to be long to reach down through that fat chest and stab the heart!

Chaney saw that the library windows—two of them, opening onto the backyard—were still open. But the

shades were almost down and this was a long room, with Roma far from the windows. Chaney was sure that from outside no one could see what was happening here now. Besides, this was hardly a residential neighborhood. The backyard was almost enclosed by the huge blank walls of two storage warehouses.

Roma still had not heard him. Chaney slipped like a serpent into the room, circled the big chair, and, with his gloved hand and the knife behind him, came in front of Roma.

Roma gazed over the newspaper. He said, "Oh—it is you, Ollie. Sit down. This talk we will finish now. I have decide that Marguerita, she will stay away until you have left my home. In the business I will let you remain—unless that you should cause me more trouble with my daughter—"

Chaney hardly heard the words. He saw, over the top of the lowering newspaper, Roma's pudgy face, with its rolling, dyed-black mustache, and a wave of almost white hair above. And as the newspaper dropped the broad expanse of Roma's shirt-front was visible—the Mussolini medal gleaming there, pinned as always, on Roma's left side. Even in that whirling second, Chaney was conscious of an inward chuckle. He had never seen Roma without that treasured medal—a disk of bronze with a band of ribbon and a gold pin fastening it to his shirt. A target! Earlier in the evening Chaney had contemplated that to stab into the heart he must strike above and to the right of the medal.

II

THOUGHTS are instant things. In the drone of Roma's words, Chaney was conscious only of the medal. He was within striking distance

now. He bent over Roma as though attracted by a headline of the newspaper. Then his black-gloved hand with the stiletto came with a swift, short-arm jab. Roma probably hardly saw it. The knife struck. Roma's words choked with a gasp. Just a gasp. There was a brief terror in his eyes and a little heave of the fat body.

Chaney's brain was whirling. The sinking knife was like stabbing into a great tub of lard. It was hardly more than that . . . Chaney was conscious that Roma did not scream—just a low gasping rattle in his throat as the knife went in. But he struggled briefly, like a stabbed toad with muscles galvanized. Chaney felt himself being pulled down as he stabbed; and then he realized that one of the fat arms had flailed and half-encircled his shoulder. And then the other arm!

For an instant Chaney struggled to get free. A chaos of horror. Horrible illusion, as though the dead man were holding him! . . . The knife was in, to its hilt. Then Chaney jerked himself loose. He lunged upward and backward, bringing the knife with him; and stood panting, staring at the slumped fat thing in the chair. A toad that had been stabbed! But there was no movement now. The fat arms hung limp. The head dangled with chin pressed against the fat bulge of chest. Horrible, mustached face, with gaping mouth and staring eyes.

The thing was done! Victorio Roma was dead, stabbed in the heart. On the bulging white shirt-front a little crimson stain was spreading. Fear struck into Chaney's triumph. He had been pulled down close to Roma. Was there blood on his own shirt? He examined himself. No! There was no blood on him anywhere. He stood for a brief moment in front of the library mirror.

No blood. Nothing wrong except that his face was white and strained-looking, with beads of cold sweat on it. With his left hand he took off his cap; smoothed his hair. He looked better. Not so guilty. By the time the police arrived he would not look guilty at all—just frightened, as anyone would be, discovering that his employer had been murdered.

CHANEY tossed his cap to a chair in the hall. Hurry now—every moment was important. He hadn't been in the house more than two minutes. He must be out in another minute. He was still carrying the knife in his gloved hand. The knife-blade had a film of drying blood—nothing more than that. In his right jacket pocket he had a small dirty and crumpled square of paper on which he had carefully printed a single penciled word. He laid the knife now on the library table. With his gloved hand he took out the grimy paper. The single word was *Vindicare*.

He tossed the paper to the polished table-top. Picking up the knife, he stabbed it into the paper with a heavy blow, so that the knife buried itself, through the paper, into the wood. And when he released it the knife stood quivering.

Grim, ironic gesture of the unknown murderer! The police would guess that it was some Italian—some enemy of Roma's—murdering him for vengeance. The Latins were always doing that sort of thing . . . Chaney took off the black cotton glove and draped it on the handle of the upstanding knife. Additional ironic touch! It suggested a withered black hand gripping the knife. Black Hand! That was good! That was often associated with Italian murders.

Chaney took a swift last look and ran from the house; through the front door, out to the street. And he shouted wildly to the nearest pedestrian that he had just discovered a murder.

III

THE police captain seemed to be quite convinced that the murderer had escaped out of one of the library windows, probably just a few seconds before Chaney entered the house. Two or three of the other policemen and detectives who were here now went outside and poked around; then came back to say that a get-away in that direction would have been very simple. The library windows were an easy jump above the ground. The secluded back yard had a low fence with an alley beyond it, which led between the dark warehouses to the other street.

"Sure," Chaney agreed. "That was my idea. I guess he heard me comin' in the front door an' beat it quick."

He said it smoothly. He was always a smooth talker.

"Probably a vendetta," one of the policemen remarked. "Black Hand note—you won't get far with this, Cap'n. No finger-prints on the knife, of course—that's why he used the black glove."

It was all going so nicely! Of course they wouldn't get far with this! They wouldn't get anywhere. Chaney stood in the library, an interested spectator, while they poked about trying to uncover clues. But there weren't any clues. The body still sat hunched in the chair—a great fat toad which had been stabbed. Somebody said that the doctor soon would arrive—they were waiting for him to examine the body. Chaney wished that he would hurry up and come, and get this finished.

Chaney was his normal, smooth-talking self now. He answered the captain's questions smoothly. He had told how he had left Roma and gone out to buy cigarettes; had come back, tossed his cap to the hall chair, gone into the library and been stricken by the sight of Roma sitting stabbed.

"Was he dead then?" the captain asked.

Chaney shook his head. "I don't know. I saw the blood on him—an' saw the knife sticking there in the table. I just took a quick look an' ran."

"There's a telephone here. Why didn't you use it?"

Chaney said he didn't know. And this at least was the truth. "I never thought of it, Captain." He smiled. "I guess maybe I was afraid to stay in the house. The murderer might have still been here. Anyway, I just took a look an' ran."

The captain nodded. He was a pleasant fellow. His name was Torvold—a blond giant. But he wasn't young; his hair was graying at the sides. He seemed to like Chaney—the frank way Chaney talked. There was certainly no guilty look about Chaney now.

Torvold said, "You are head salesman for Roma? That's what you said, wasn't it?"

"Sure," Chaney nodded. "We sell Italian grocers. Funny thing, I can't speak hardly a word of Italian, but I sure can talk American to these grocers—an' sell 'em. I been livin' here with Roma—he an' I were the best friends. We got one servant girl—she's away tonight."

NO motive for murder! How could this Captain Torvold possibly guess it? The captain didn't question closely, so Chaney avoided mentioning Marguerita. She

was just eighteen. Roma's daughter. Chaney had made her love him. He was engaged to marry her. But Roma objected, and had sent her away to visit distant relatives in New Jersey.

Roma had to die; Chaney had seen that very clearly. Roma had ordered him from the house; forbidden him to see Marguerita again. But now Roma was dead. Marguerita would never know. She would inherit this house, a bunch of cash, and the business. Very nice for Chaney. He would live here with Marguerita—the business, everything would be his.

Captain Torvold was saying, "You happen to know any Italians who were enemies of Roma? That stabbed piece of paper—"

Chaney shook his head. He was too foxy to go into anything like that. "No, I don't, Captain, for a fact. Roma wasn't a very sociable fellow. He didn't have many friends here—"

Queer how this smiling captain's gaze wouldn't stay in one place! All the time they had been talking that gaze roved Chaney. As though searching. It made him shiver. He recalled the vision he had had of himself in the hall mirror. Did he look guilty now? Was there something of guilt that always clung to a murderer?

Idiotic! Chaney knew it was idiotic, but he was afraid of it just the same. That was his guilty conscience. He knew that, too. You could shake off the outward appearance of guilt—but you couldn't forget you were guilty.

Was Torvold thinking things like this? His roving gaze seemed to say so. He was searching. For what? For something of Chaney's guilt that might suddenly show! But Chaney was too clever. There was nothing guilty about him . . .

Torvold was saying, "When Dr.

Gregg comes and examines the body, we'll be through here. Then we can—"

He checked himself suddenly. For no reason at all it made Chaney's heart pound. Those restless eyes! They swung away from Chaney to the opposite side of the room, where the finger-print man was examining the knife-blade.

IV

WHY was that? What was making the captain suddenly interested in the knife? There wouldn't be any prints found on it, of course.

Somebody said to the finger-print man, "An' take a look at this here medal, Jake."

But there wouldn't be any finger-prints on the medal—unless they were Roma's.

Torvold stood up abruptly. "Here comes Dr. Gregg. You wait out in the hall, Chaney."

Was his voice suddenly grim? Chaney thought so; and it was queer, because he was such a pleasant fellow. And why order Chaney out of the room? Why shouldn't he see the doctor at work?

The doctor came in and went directly to the body. A policeman motioned Chaney to the hall, followed him out and seemed to be standing guard over him. Peculiar. Chaney tried to hear what was going on in the library. They were talking in low undertones. Queer, this secrecy. A growing fear was enveloping Chaney. He fought with it.

THEN Torvold came back into the hall. Torvold said:

"You're caught, Chaney."

As sudden as a bolt of lightning. The world clapped and crashed around Chaney. Caught? He found himself

standing on his feet. In his reeling, blurred vision there was only Torvold's grim face. And Torvold's voice: "Come take a look."

What was this? Take a look at what? . . . Chaney felt himself stumbling forward, with the men crowding him.

He stumbled through the doorway. Somebody was pushing him.

He said, "You let me alone! What is all this? You're liars if you say—"

But he mustn't talk! He saw the doctor bending over the body in the chair. The blood-stained shirt was open. The undershirt was parted to expose the wound. The wound had been pried open by the doctor. Gruesome sight. The medal had been pushed aside when the shirt was opened. Something wrong with the medal?

Vaguely, in the panic of his thoughts, Chaney heard somebody say:

"Stabbed right through it. The underneath flap, an' he never noticed it! No argument on this. Got him—"

Stabbed right through what? The medal? The ribbon. What of it?

But it wasn't the medal. The doctor was holding a pair of forceps; he dangled something in them. The captain said:

"Look, Chaney. I wondered what slashed it." He gave a twitch that pulled Chaney's neck forward. It swept Chaney's memory back . . . The stabbing. Chaney had come in front of Roma. He had bent forward, to be interested in the newspaper. . . .

Horrible mischance! He stood numbly gaping now at the threads which the doctor dangled in his forceps. Only a few frayed strands. He stood wordless with horror while the policeman matched the blood-soaked green-silk threads against the dangling end of his slashed, green-silk necktie!

Thumbkins Says I Dance

By H. H. Matteson

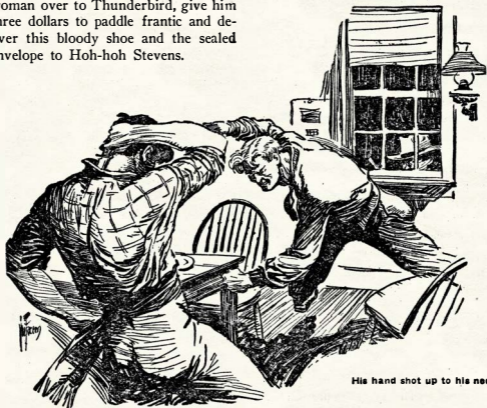
THIS Aleut comes into the office and lays down the little package onto the desk, and alongside of it a sealed envelope addressed to "Mister Hoh-hoh Stevens, United States Deputy Marshal." Joe Albright, the commissioner, he unrolls the bundle and there we both just stare aghast at a little blood-stained shoe, fitten to a child of three-four years old.

But this Aleut, like usual with 'em, he don't know nothing but that the terrible purty Ardie Hennis, a young woman over to Thunderbird, give him three dollars to paddle frantic and deliver this bloody shoe and the sealed envelope to Hoh-hoh Stevens.

A Terrible Sad Message, a Little Bloody Shoe, Send Hoh-hoh Stevens to Thunderbird to Trap an Aleutian Kidnapner

The Aleut says how he don't know of no trouble, no nothing, only he's got his three dollars in his war bag, and with that he goes on out, climbs into his skin boat and paddles away.

For a long time I and Joe just set there staring at that little bloody *muckluck*. It's a store shoe, so I shouldn't ought to call it a *muckluck*, one of them wide-toed ones like little white folks wear, and it's a kind of a cream color leather, and they hain't a doubt the smears acrost the top is blood.



His hand shot up to his neck

"I wisht Hoh-hoh was here," says Joe, worried. "I don't like to open any letter personal to him. But that there shoe, Dode—I just don't like the looks."

Hoh-hoh had been away three days, serving papers and fish trap closing notices amongst the islands beyond us, He'd been at Thunderbird, or should 'a' been, account of serving a paper there.

Well, I and Joe set and stared uncomfortable at that little shoe a while longer.

"If Hoh-hoh hain't here in a hour," said Joe final, "I aim to open that letter."

Joe picked it up, and read the name wrote in the upper left hand corner, "Ardie Hennis."

"She's new at the Thunderbird," said Joe. "She must of came in recent. I wisht Hoh-hoh would come."

BUT before the hour was up, here come Hoh-hoh, paddling lively in a *kiak*, and he beaches his boat and comes capering up, and breaks in exuberant about something. Seeing the elated humor Hoh-hoh is in, and aiming to give him a chance to break out his cargo of glad tidings, before encroaching in with any bad news, Joe slips the little shoe and the envelope off the desk, and into a draw.

"I just tell you-all," booms out this Hoh-hoh, plenty excited, "I been witness, I participated personal in what's all ways the happiest, pleasingest scene I ever observes at. Why, over to the Thunderbird, where I was yesterday morning, there's a terrible purty young woman, which her title is Ardie Hennis, and she's operating a little kindergarten school there, and day-times she takes in the little children the

mothers of who work in the lacquer room of the salmon cannery, and she's got two-three more kids belonging to the superintendent and the engineer.

"Why, you never did see a delightfuller sight than them nine little folks performing in their little school. I was squandering on by and I hears terrible sweet music emanating out of this *barabara*, and me musical crazy, I encroaches on in.

"The shift boss of them kids, this Ardie Hennis, she welcomes me on in, and she draws out one of the ridiculous little chairs, which it was like setting on a tack, and she says to the children, 'Children, we got a new friend visiting us this morning,'—and then all them little kids yelp out cordial for me to set into the circle with 'em, and I done it, and the young lady shift boss she asks me do I know any games they all can play.

"'Sure,' I says, and I jounces down on my hands and knees in the circle, and I announce out how I'm a bear, though no ways a mad one, and all them children jounce down on hands and knees similar, and we growl and woof! woof! very animated at each other, and it's all ways a *hiyu* and exciting game we play together.

"Then us children, we all set back onto the little chairs again, and this Ardie Hennis announces out how she aims to learn us a new song.

"'Little friends, you will all enjoy this new song,' she smiles at her little crew, 'account of we got a little boy amongst us with a nickname title similar to the title of the song.'

"The little sport who's nicknamed Thumbkins, he begins to grin, and the teacher she holds up her thumb, and we all do similar, and she sings the first line of the song, and then all us students sing it on after her."

This Hoh-hoh, relating out his experiences in the kindergarten school at the Thunderbird, why his eyes just glow, and he stands there holding up his thumb which it likely is as thick as the wrist of any one of them children.

"This was the sweetest little song," Hoh-hoh continues on. "Thumbkins says I dance; Thumbkins says I sing; Sing and dance you merry little men; Thumbkins says I dance and sing."

Now you know this Hoh-hoh Stevens is a terrible good singer. All over the Aleutians he's known as a *hiyu* bard and minstrel. In his regular voice, setting onto the steps of the office with his accordion, when Hoh-hoh turns hisself loose in a strong song, you can hear him clean to Broken Wing or the Puffin Bird. Fish hands has told us so.

Now this Hoh-hoh is all ways amazing about his singing. He's got a second voice where he slings his tones up into his throat somehow—falsetto they call it—and in this second voice Hoh-hoh can sing soft and sweet.

It's then, when he gets to this part of his recital, Hoh-hoh holds up that thick thumb of hissen, and jounces it like a child dancing, and he sings us in the high, girl voice, "Thumbkins says I dance."

You'd 'a' thought it was a girl singing, it was so sweet and tender. Well, he'd 'a' went on all day raving about that kindergarten school, and Ardie Hennis, and Thumbkins, only Joe Albright seen he just had to snake him out of his fancies to whatever unpleasant duty might lay ahead.

II

JOE reaches into the draw, and he fetches out the little shoe, and the sealed envelope, and lays 'em onto the desk.

"Hoh-hoh, did you-all ever see that little shoe before?"

Hoh-hoh, his skin tanned deep from wind and weather, he went whiter than ary fish belly you ever seen. He snatches up the little shoe, turned in his hand.

"Why!—My God, Joe!—Where!—He set acrost from me in the circle! It's Thumbkins' shoe!—"

Hoh-hoh tore open the letter, read fast. "I got to have the speed boat, Joe! I got to get to the Thunderbird fast! Thumbkins has got kidnaped! Maybe killed!"

"Kidnaped," says Joe terrible grim. "Killed maybe! Go ahead, Hoh-hoh! Dode will go with you! If—when you overhaul the party that done it, Hoh-hoh—if harm has come to that little sweet singer—don't be technical!"

I and Hoh-hoh tear to the beach fast as we can, and we shove off our speed boat, and away we go. Account of no twilight in the Aleutians, it's dark almost instant; we go ripping along through them narrow, twisting channels at thirty knots an hour, two plumes of red fire laying alongside us from the exhaust, six cylinders sta'board, six to port.

We round into the bay of the Thunderbird, and Hoh-hoh points to a *barabara* atop the hill, the kindergarten school of them little students. A sick moon has split through the fog bank, and we see a young woman standing anxious on the step, looking out when she heard our engine roar.

The speeder don't no more than touch nose to the gravel, when Hoh-hoh swarms over the engine, jumps from the fore deck, and went tearing up the slope.

I makes fast, and follers on up, and I fetches a observation through a side winder into the room. The young

woman is walking the floor, and Hoh-hoh sets beside a little table onto which is spread sewing things, shears and cloth, and one of them portfolios you pack writing paper in.

She's always a purty young woman—nice brown eyes—but they're staring wide now like at terrors, and she twists her hands as she walks and clutches 'em to her frantic.

I goes on in, and set down, and Hoh-hoh says to her how I'm a deputy marshal too, Dode Elkins, and she nods forgetful, and keeps on pacing the floor.

It's final, when she's passing him, Hoh-hoh lays a hand to her arm, and pulls her down gentle into a chair, and shoves over at me a grievous scrawl onto a piece of paper:

"You know what I want. Fetch it. Come alone. The boy haint been hurt much—yet. Fetch it tonight, at eleven o'clock, out to the watch shanty on the Broken Wing trap. No *tseepees* (tricks) Come alone."

"We got to take and consider careful," says Hoh-hoh to the young woman. "You break out all the information now, Ardie, frank and full, all of it. We got time to go slow. It's quite a spell yet till eleven o'clock."

SHE just clutches her hands together down into her lap to hold 'em still, and draws a deep, sighing breath.

"Dave Hennis and I were married up in the Yellow Tail country of Alaska, five years ago," she begun. "Dave had a good sluicing property. He saved up, and cached in a hiding place, close to fifty thousand dust and nuggets. He'd played cards some, Dave had. He'd had trouble with a black jack dealer called Go Bill Belden. He'd had trouble too with a sluice box thief they called Co Lee Dorn—the

'Co Lee,' being Indian lingo for 'the rat.'

"Dave sent me down to Juneau, to the hospital. Baby was born there—my little Thumbkins. I was terrible sick for a month. The doctors didn't tell me. Go Bill Belden had been killed, and his friends had made it out that my man shot him. Dave was in the Federal Penitentiary down in Puget Sound.

"Soon as I was able to travel, I went to Unalaska, these islands where I had a aunt. I wrote to Dave, of course. In time I sent him a picture of Thumbkins. Dave wrote several times how he was terrible worried how he could get word to me without any one else learning the secret, how I could find his cache in the Yellow Tail with fifty thousand dollars in it.

"Another letter said he guessed he would just have to trust someone, and he about decided to tell his cell mate, a short timer. This cell mate was Co Lee Dorn, in for two years for robbing sluices.

"Next letter said Dave had changed his mind. He dassent trust Co Lee. He had told Co Lee about the cache, but not where it was.

"Then I got a letter from the prison doctor. Dave was sick. He had told the prison doctor about the cache, and he had made a map of where to find it, and he tore it into two jagged halves, and the prison doctor mailed one half to me.

"Dave died. The prison doctor wrote they searched the cell, even searched Co Lee Dorn to the skin. They couldn't find the second half of the map. Co Lee Dorn is here, hiding in the watch shanty of the Broken Wing fish trap. Last night, when I was hanging out clothes, Co Lee sneaked here, grabbed Thumbkins, took

him away. Co Lee sent me that note there, by a Aleut. He sent the little bloody shoe too, sign to me he had Thumbkins, and if—if I didn't fetch him the other half of the map—My God! My little Thumbkins!—”

III

“**T**HERE, there,” says this Hoh-hoh foolish, trying to comfort her. “Leave us consider. He's all ways cunning, this Rat is, selecting the watch shanty of the Broken Wing.



HOH-HOH STEVENS

It's over a quarter mile from shore, all surrounded by water. If we go at him by water, he can grab Thumbkins, run along the plank walk top of the trap lead, get to shore.

“If, on the other hand, we try to crawl him by way of the walk on the trap lead, he'll see us, a night like this, and go squandering off in a boat. We can, of course, go at him both ways, Dode in the boat, and me by way of the trap lead walk.”

“No, no,” this Ardie just screams. “I shouldn't ought to have sent for you. I want my baby. If you try to

grab him, he—he'll kill Thumbkins. Oh I know this Rat. He's a bigger man than you, Hoh-hoh, and a killing brute. They do say he killed two Thingklit trailers with his bare hands.”

She just breaks down and moans pitiful.

“I'll go alone—at eleven,” she says, looking at the clock. “All I want is Thumbkins. He can have the cache. I'll take him my half of the map. If—”

She comes to a stop, and just stares terrible onto space. “One thing,” she says. “Just one thing. If, after I been out to the trap a reasonable time—and I don't come back—with Thumbkins—why then—”

“Lookit now, Ardie,” says Hoh-hoh sympathetic. “Don't you fret none. This Rat—if he does you any harm—or Thumbkins—he'll never leave the Thunderbird except in remnants. That's a promise I and Dode here make to you.”

Hoh-hoh he picks up the half of the map, and I see it's cut all into jagged edges, and nicks, fitting, of course, into the other half, which this Rat managed somehow to get hold of in the prison.

“It's likely we better begin to get organized,” says Hoh-hoh, comparing his big silver watch with the mantel clock. He lays the half of the map down onto the table amongst all things and begins to count on his fingers.

“How's this plan strike you, Dode?” he says to me. “You caper down, shove off the speed boat, scull it quiet to Dead Man Point, drop anchor there. I'll be shore side. If you hear me fire a shot from down near the shore end of the trap, and you see this Rat trying to escape off in a boat, you take out after him, and you overhaul him, and you overhaul him in the smoke too,

Dode. You shoot, and shoot to hit, but don't hit Ardie here, or little Thumbkins should they be similar in the boat with him.

"Meantime, I and Ardie here, we'll go crawling along the beach, me keeping cautious out of sight so the Rat don't see me none. I'll quill up beside some beach boulders! and I'll wait there plenty alert while Ardie goes out along the lead alone, and fetches Thumbkins back. I don't see no other way but to swaller shame and humiliation, leave Ardie give up her half of the map. Later then, we just got to organize to overhaul this Rat, and careen and broach him before he can extricate out the gold in that cache. I don't see no other way."

"No, no," shrills the young woman, "they is no other way. Let him have the map. And the gold. I'll have Thumbkins."

"*Hiyu* then Ardie," Hoh-hoh says. "You, Dode," he says to me, "you all better start, and scull the speed boat to the Point. You, Mrs. Hennis, account of the wind is raw, and blowing acrost that trap, you caper into your room, get into more warmer clothes, and fold up a extra blanket for to wrap that Thumbkins in."

SHE jumps up glad, and runs into her room and shuts the door, and I go to the beach like agreed, shove off the speeder, and scull it silent to the Point.

I set there, in the speeder, and I go over the engine and I see everything is all *hiyu*, and ready to go snorting out any instant I jam down the lever.

Well, Hoh-hoh and this Ardie girl, they must 'a' moved plumb crafty and silent. I don't hear not even a pebble turn in that dead still night air, till I do hear a creak of a plank, and I see a

dim splotch of a person running frantic along the walk on the trap lead toward the watch shanty, and skirts whipping. I know it's Ardie.

I'm observing clost at that watch deck, and after what seemed a terrible long time, like Ardie and the Rat was having a confab, a flashlight turns on, in the watch shanty winder, and for a instant I can see Ardie holding up the jagged edged map so this outcast can see it's what he wants.

Then next I see her running back along the lead toward shore, and she'd got something huggid to her clost that I know must be Thumbkins.

Again for a long time after I don't hear nothing, see nothing. It's plain I got no call to take out after the Rat with the speeder, so I sculls it back to where we'd beached it before, and I makes fast, and I gets out, and I walks up toward the *barabara* school house which is all ways dark and silent.

I figure then Hoh-hoh had took Ardie and Thumbkins someplace besides their own *barabara*, when a light flared sudden in the house, and I seen I was wrong.

As I walk slow up the slope, very quiet in my skin *mucklucks*, I can hear Ardie moving around in the *barabara*, and seen her shadder fall athwart the panes.

Still closter I go, and I come to a sudden stop. Sweet and clear I hears Ardie singing this Thumbkins, and whacking her hands, playing patty cake for the little feller she'd just fetched home.

IV

I'M still standing there, wondering if it hain't more tack for me to go squandering back to the boat, and leave this woman alone with her little one, when I hear, in the offing, down

shore, the thud of *mucklucks* hitting heavy on the wet packed sand.

A monster big shadder looms down shore, and it comes plowing on up to the *barabara*, and fifty foot away, comes to a stop while this party also pauses to listen to that sweet singing, and that patty caking inside.

Then the monster jumps up to the door, yanks savage at the catch, and emits out some terrible vile language.

This Thumbkins dance song ceases sudden, like at the interruption of the rattle at the door, then resumes on again.

The party at the door yanks savage again, draws off, slings hisself agin the panels, fetching 'em clean off the hinges. Then he goes crashing on into the house, and I skip up fast as I can and look in at the winder, my right hand loosing the big old six in my holster.

But I seen I wasn't required as yet, me or my old six. And it wasn't this Ardie Hennis singing at all to no little Thumbkins. It was Hoh-hoh Stevens.

There this Hoh-hoh stands, grinning wide at this obnoxious big swearing party that had busted in, and Hoh-hoh, very mocking, he whacks his hands together soft, and patty cakes some more, and sings a line in that high falsetto voice.

But the big encroaching party haint amused none. He's got a countenance all ways viciouser than wolves, and he stands clawing and unclawing his fingers like a eagle on the strike.

"Klahowe, you Rat," says Hoh-hoh, concluding up his song. "What you got in that filthy paw of yourn, Rat? Oh, I see. It's the jagged edged map. Oh, yes, that's the map. And you just discovered that map is plumb worthless, and a snide and a fake. Set down, Rat, we'll talk it over. Or don't rats set? Well, then back up into a corner

like it was your hole, and you observing out at the bait dangled so cunning for you."

Hoh-hoh, still grinning very amiable, he advances a step up toward the Rat. The Rat, his throat working like he'd strangled, his arms drawn up, steps back.

"That there no good map there, Rat," says Hoh-hoh, "which I whittled it out careful with shears myself," it's no manner of use to no one. Fact is, the good half of the map Ardie has got all intact, it hain't no good neither without that good half you got. So you all deliver up your half of the good map, Rat, and do it prompt."

With a terrible oath and a snarl, this Rat jumps clean back agin the wall, and he shoots a hand up to the back of his neck, and he's got a ten inch knife halfway out when this Hoh-hoh alights onto him all sprawled out and decisive.

We hain't got so terrible many knife toters up here in the Aleutians; but what we got, like this outcast of a Rat, they lug their steel hanging Chinese style betwixt their shoulders, wrapped in a silk handkerchief pinned inside their shirt.

The Rat has this blade halfway out, when Hoh-hoh releases out his initial offering, and same is a larrup that takes this Rat onto the jaw, knocks him almost loose from his keel. He goes weaving across the room, but he don't go down, and when he comes to a pause, he's got the knife clean out, and he whirls and comes plowing at Hoh-hoh vicious.

THE only thing I ever observes at that Hoh-hoh is anyway timid of is the flash of a knife, Hoh-hoh will caper into gunfire blithe as may be, but a steel flash gets him.

It's account of nervous that when

Hoh-hoh grabs into the Rat's shoulder, and swings the free hand, he misses the Rat complete.

Hoh-hoh still hangs to that shoulder; and the Rat he twists and levels the blade, point at Hoh-hoh; and he surges forward, aiming to bury same in Hoh-hoh's chest.

But this Hoh-hoh is elsewhere and none too soon. The next *chukkin*, Hoh-hoh, he lands that one, and the Rat spins again. Hoh-hoh, he makes a dive, and he plucks that knife hand in the air, by the wrist, and he starts to grind it loose. But this Rat, prodigious strong, he maneuvers that blade point at Hoh-hoh, and lunges with his body again.

Hoh-hoh, very ordinary he don't get organized and going good in a fight till sometimes he's practically licked. It's similar this time. Hoh-hoh emits out a laugh, which is all ways a danger signal, and he sidesteps away from the Rat's rush, and when the Rat went surging by, this Hoh-hoh he measures, and he estimates, and he releases out what's all ways the outstanding larrup of the evening.

Very plain I seen Hoh-hoh's fist sink into the Rat's side, and I hear bones shatter and fetch away. This Rat goes careening crazy across the room, and he bounces back violent off the wall, and the knife jolts out of his hand, and he lays there huddled, and the fight is over, and the Rat is Hoh-hoh's meat, and they hain't a doubt.

Hoh-hoh he picks up this knife, and hands same to me, seeing how I'd capered into the back door. Then Hoh-hoh steps into the next room, and returns back with one of them little kindergarten chairs and he sets down onto it, and begins shucking off the Rat's shoes.

The Rat he returns back conscious

while Hoh-hoh is exploring them *mucklucks*, and Hoh-hoh menaces at him, and tells him how if he don't lay still and serene he gets a eye gouged out or a car whacked off.

Hoh-hoh he examines them shoes critical, even running his knife into the counter, and between sole layers, but he don't find nothing; he goes on then and deliberate shucks every stitch of clothes off the Rat, leaving him as bare as a pickle on a plate.

But Hoh-hoh don't find the missing half of the map, so he says to the Rat to come on and produce up the missing part of the plat or he'll wish he had.

Thereupon this Rat very earnest tells how he did have a half of the map after Dave Hennis was took to the prison hospital, but fearing reprisals from the jail doctor, he just committed the map to memory, that half, and then tore it up, and slung its bits away.

"Oh, so," Hoh-hoh explodes out. "Then you'll just draw us that missing hunk of map here and now."

With that Hoh-hoh signs up to me and I pull a piece of paper, and a pencil similar out of Ardie's writing kit, and we set the Rat up to the table, and he begins to draw aimless and kind of scrawl, and all the time Hoh-hoh is observing at him keen and searching, and finally the Rat hands Hoh-hoh the map he'd drawn.

Hoh-hoh he just slings his head back, and laughs hearty, and hauls off, and give the Rat a terrible slap on the chest.

"Dode," Hoh-hoh sings out to me, "you just take and examine the chest of this caitiff searching, and if you don't find onto his chest the map we're seeking I'm a Zulu belle with a bustle."

Well, I look at this party's chest and there are a lot of bluish marks scattered

around, and I see if a line was drawn from one blue pin point mark to another, likely it would make a map.

THE Rat he seen then he'd been ketched at his trickery, and he admits reluctant how he had stood in front of a mirror, and laid the half of the map onto his breast, and had pricked through his skin important points, using a pin dipped into ink, which same will leave a bluish deposit in the skin that will last for years.

We searched out the thinnest piece of paper Ardie has got in her kit, and we trace them blue skin marks, and then Hoh-hoh joins 'em with lines, and there's the missing half of the map, and they hain't a doubt.

Oh, this Hoh-hoh Stevens at times is capable of a terrible low cunning. While Ardie had been dressing, Hoh-hoh had grabbed the shears, and cut out a fake map, with a jagged outline identical like the good map, figuring the Rat would make Ardie hold up the plat for him to see. So Ardie wouldn't be conscious and nervous, according over working a ranikaboo onto this Rat, Hoh-hoh hadn't told her of the substitution, but had shoved the good map into his pocket, which he now pro-

duced. It joined and fitted exact with the map we'd drawn off that outlaw's chest.

But cunninger than that was Hoh-hoh singing high and girl sweet that Thumbkins song for to lure the Rat inside, when the latter, as Hoh-hoh figured, would come stampeding in very annoyed when he discovered he'd been handed a counterfeit map.

Hoh-hoh he goes down the beach a ways, and he fetches back Ardie and Thumbkins from a *barabara* where he planted 'em for safety; and Hoh-hoh gives Ardie the two parts of the good map, and says how a good staunch hand will be appointed to go with her to the Yellow Tail and recover back her gold dust.

Then Hoh-hoh and Thumbkins kind of whisper and laugh together, and they promise how they'll sing together frequent and play bear; and then Hoh-hoh holds up that big hand of hissen when Ardie tries to thank him. Final, we go down to the boat with our prisoner, and we shove off, and away we go; and Hoh-hoh splits and shatters the still night air singing this Thumbkins song in his strong, regular voice, which you could 'a' heard him twenty miles around.

"THE CRIMINOLOGIST SAYS—"

Major C. E. Russell, nationally known private investigator and consulting criminologist for three States, offers a valuable and important new service to readers, beginning this week.

Be sure to read this great new feature. You'll find it on page 137 of the present issue.

The Criminologist Says

By Major C. E. Russell



Consulting Criminologist for the States of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut; former Provost Marshal on the confidential staff of General Pershing for special investigating—he will help you with your problems.

Case No. 1

"In the small New England town where I reside there is a pool room of a gang of young hoodlums, the rough element of our village. Here they plan their devilments and carry them out. My boy, sixteen, is a frequenter of the place and I fear he will get in trouble. When I object to his going there, he just laughs at me and says I am old-fashioned. Our club has discussed this situation several times, and we have appealed to the local authorities—but they refuse to act. We all feel that something should be done to close up this pool room. However, we are at a loss how to proceed since the local police have refused to do anything about it. Will you please aid us?"

Without a doubt this pool room is a regularly licensed place, and even if it is the hangout of a gang it can only be closed by having its license revoked for violation of law or local ordinance. First familiarize yourself with the laws covering such places. I recommend that you consult a reputable lawyer of some *other* town or city. Be guided by what he tells you. As soon as you have learned the law, you can check up to see if the pool room is violating it. Do this by having some man you can trust frequent the place, or by hiring an investigator to secure evidence for you. Once you've got the evidence take it up with your district attorney. If he refuses to act, go to the Governor, who has the authority to conduct an investigation and close up the place or suspend the *local police* and substitute others.

Case No. 2

"I am the owner of a small garage in the town where I live. For sometime, now, I have been subject to threats of blackmail by the head of the local gang. This man has demanded fifty dollars a month protection to allow me to continue to operate. Fifty dollars a month means that I cannot operate without losing money. I have tried

to prove this, but have been told I must come up with the money or else my business will be ruined. I have taken it up with the local police chief, and was told he could do nothing—that until I had paid no crime had been committed. I feel that the local chief is in league with the gang and even if I do pay he will not act. Unless I comply I will be forced out of business. What can I do?"

In the first place your Chief of Police *did not* tell you the truth in saying no crime has been committed. Even an attempt at blackmailing you into paying for protection is a crime punishable by a long term in prison. If some member of the local police is in league with this gangster, go to the head of the State police and place all the facts before him, ask him to aid you in trapping the crooks and proving their connection with the member of the local police. You have an efficient State police force in your State. They will help you in trapping not only the gangster but the local policeman as well!

YOU MAY WRITE US YOUR PROBLEMS. Letters will be answered at the discretion of Major Russell. If you so designate, your letter will not be reprinted here. In any case your letter will be held in strict confidence and no initials or identification will appear in this column. You must attach the coupon underneath, signed, and enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

I want guidance in the matter I have outlined in the attached letter. This is not to be regarded as legal service or investigation service and I will not hold DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY or Major C. E. Russell responsible in any way.

Name.....

Address.....



Flashes From Readers

Where Readers and Editors Get Together to Gossip and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind

DO you read the back of the book? Do you look for your favorite feature there, week after week? If not, you're passing up many hours of real entertainment.

Mr. Ohaver's cipher page, for instance, has become so popular that several clerks spend a good share of the week taking care of his mail. Have you tried to solve his hidden messages? The night you start set the alarm clock for bedtime—or you'll miss some sleep.

There's William E. Benton's character analysis page. Read his scientific and penetrating estimate of a nation-

ally known — or notorious — person each week. He can tell you things about yourself, too. Why not let him?

And of course the new department by Major C. E. Russell, who has just joined our staff! It begins in this week's issue. You can have a nationally known criminologist sit down with you and help iron out problems of your business or personal life. Major Russell, consulting criminologist for the State of New Jersey, successful and active private detective, will give advice to you—without charge. Turn to page 137 of this issue.

WHAT is *your* idea of the best story (fiction or true story, regardless of length) published in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY since Jan. 1, 1934? For the twelve letters from readers which, in the opinion of THE CRIME JURY, give the best reasons why this or that story stands out above all others, we will award twelve full yearly subscriptions. We don't want mere praise; we are interested in finding out exactly what stories you liked best. We don't care about your literary style.

Was there some story printed in this magazine which stood out in your memory above all others? Write and tell us about that story. Tell us why you liked it, what there was about it which made it stick in your mind. It isn't necessary for you to have read every story in every issue. You will have just as good a chance to win one of those twelve subscriptions as someone who has read all the issues from cover to cover. But we must know *why* you liked your favorite story.

Letters selected by the editors will be published from week to week, but not all letters published will receive subscriptions.

Make your comments as brief or as lengthy as you wish. But put down all your reasons. Address your letter to THE CRIME JURY, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York City, so that it will reach us not later than March 9th, 1935.



DEAR SIR:

Maybe I'm wrong, but your regular characters have made different impressions on me than those drawn by your artists. Probably they're right and I'm wrong, but I've sketched my impressions of a few of my favorites.

How do they compare with your ideas?

I've been reading your book for about eight years. I don't believe I've missed a week. I have only one criticism, or, rather, question.

Why must nine out of ten stories deal with murder? Couldn't your detectives show equal brilliancy in ferreting out a major robbery, conspiracy or kidnaping? An occasional murder is all right, but a murder in each story gets sort of monotonous.

Sincerely,

R. R. KAY,
Newark, N. J.

EVEN SHOOT THE POOR

SIRS:

A river overflowed in Eushopia making swamps which bred mosquitoes. The wise men of the country advised that the policemen be given fly swats to kill them. The pests increased. The wise fellows suggested an extra swat for each policeman so he could use both hands. The river overflowed more, the pests increased.

Then writer Tracy French, who could produce a darn good detective story, wrote an article named "The Police Have Failed." It was largely bologna, but made quite a hit in some quarters.

The clowns of the country suggested that the best way to rid the domains of mosquitoes was to dam back the water that fed the swamps, thus destroying the breeding place of the voracious insects. Tracy thought the police should be "pepped" up some way so they could not fail.

Great depression, many out of work and poverty, crime and insanity on the increase. Is it possible that your Mr. Tracy French can see no relation between these awful conditions and the crime of kidnaping? If I get him, he would have the number or the efficiency of the police augmented until they could force those who have been

dispossessed to tamely submit. Instead of condemning the police would it not be far more wisdom to condemn a social order that does not do its damndest to eradicate poverty, even if it has to take Shaw's advice and shoot the poor?

Truly,

W. M. RIEDER,
Niles, Mich.

A BRASS POUNDER RECALLS

DEAR EDITOR:

I'm seldom disappointed in any yarn in your weekly book of thrills. I look back over the years and recall the hundreds of exciting stories which have given me pleasure. Most vivid in my memory are those grand Lester Leith stories of Erle Stanley Gardner.

I make my living pounding brass; a deep sea wireless operator. Can't always buy D. F. W. in Shanghai, Bangkok or Cairo, so I have a special newsdealer in San Francisco, my home port, save them for me.

I'm with you until the Griffin gets me.

Cordially yours,

ANTHONY MARCH,
San Francisco, Calif.

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

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.

AN important note is sounded by L. W. Minehart in this week's puzzle No. 39, and this department would appreciate your reaction to it. So after solving the cryptogram, please let us know if you are "for" or "against" Mr. Minehart's suggestion. The results of this vote will be announced in an early issue, and this department will abide by your wishes in the matter.

In last week's numerical cryptogram, Bluebonnet's No. X-10, the groups 4-3-16-4 and 4-3-8 could be tried as *that* and *the*, with 16-7-11 and 16-7 similarly answering for *and* and *an*. Using these letters, 17-7-4-8-10-8-21-4-17-7-20 (*-ntec-t-n-*), noting the final '-21 as probably '-s, would follow as *interesting*, with *10-8-16-11-8-10-21 (*Readers*) serving as a check. Here is the full translation.

X-10—"Flashes from Readers" furnishes an interesting expression of personal opinion, —neutral, pro, and con,—editorially proving that "Variety's the very spice of life"!

The twice-used ending -PST provided an entering wedge to last week's Inner Circle cipher No. 36, by Romeo. With the antepenultimate use (3 times) of P indicating *i*, and S suggesting *n* by its occurrence in the next-to-final position (4 times), and noting also the low-frequency of symbol T, the ending -PST readily identified itself as -ing.

Upon substituting these letters, VETSPHPLDSB (*-gni-i-n-*) followed as *magnificent*, deciphering EB (*at*) and leading at once to HRNSBEPS (*f-mtain*), evidently *fountain*. And so to BFESVUNLDSB (*t-an-uent*) and LRURFV (*co-o-*), *translucent and colors*; *LEGPBRU (*Ca-itol*), *Capitol*; etc. The translation in full is given elsewhere in the department.

In this week's division puzzle by Gunga Din,

the multiplication $T \times C = T$, duly considered with other clues, will lead to the values of T and C. The ten-letter key word is numbered from 0 up to 9. In R. Hufschmid's cryptogram compare -DAN (used after a double) and F with *DATDF and *OKATKA. Next, try for KB and KBBDJDFO.

Compare FGZ, OF, and ZG with OF- and -ZOGF in L. W. Minehart's cryptogram. The last three words will then drop into place, leading to OLLXT, ZIOL, and XL; etc. The affixes VH-, -VHC, and -VHCJ provide adequate clues in Bluebonnet's cryptogram, unlocking XGJK-VHCJ and the attendant short words XVQK, QXL, and QL; etc.

Observe that ABH- (used four times) will supply all of the letters for AHHB in Hugh B. Rossell's alliterative message, with the second word next in line. A solution of Tarzan's Inner Circle cipher and the answers to all of this week's puzzles will be given next week. The asterisks in Nos. 38, 39, and 42 are used to indicate capitalized words.

No. 37—Cryptic Division. By Gunga Din.

HUT)CHHEM(DSC
CAOC

UCOE
UOHU

TTCM
TSTT

OOC

No. 38—Whereabouts Unknown. By R. Hufschmid.

F *OKATKA AXYZRFRXH SXFTODAX HXFT, “*DATDF:
*UHDEDZS KBBDJXH PGZEXHDKVZOG PDZZDAN; HVP-
KHXT LDJEDP KB EXHHKHDZEZ; KBBJDFO ZDOXAJX.”

No. 39—For a Fortnight. By L. W. Minehart.

BIN FGZ HXWSOLI ZIT LGSXZOGF GY ZIT *OFFTK
*EOKEST EOHITK OF ZBG BTTAL OFLZTQR GY OF ZIT
FTVZ OLLXT? ZIOL BGXSR UOCT XL QF TVZKQ BTTA ZG
LGSCT ZIT ZGXUI GFT!

No. 40—Prompt Action. By Bluebonnet.

EWBCS LOBSOJ RGUZ KWJMGHB QL TOLFVBS XVIS XVQK
COSGQSO ALHQKRZ VHPLAS. RLFVHC AGQS LMSBVS-
HQZR JSPWOSJ QXL SYQOG XGJKVHCJ TSO XSSN.

No. 41—Cause for Anxiety. By Hugh B. Rossell.

ABCDD AFBEFBEAG ABHKNEOPD: “AEDR AHHB ABHSTK-
ROHU ACBOHSD ABHSTKCS AOKVNC AETKORX. AEKVCBD
AHUSCB ABHYNCP; ABCSOKR ABCPOTP ABOKCD.”

No. 42—Arrows Astray. By Tarzan.

CTRLJZJBNGOZ HJCOUGYE JMRYU HNSOZ CJKYHU
COHNROZ MNOEGJE! LYOST LYOHRE DYXONZ ZJSYZT
*SYUVE TJPYK XNRL MNYHT *SVZGOU; ZNPYXNEY
CJUERHJVE *RNRTVE DYENKY GLOERY *ZORJUO.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

31—Key: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
 C U L B E R T S O N

scheme. Impending jail break thwarted.
Warden congratulates guard.

32—Having contributed cryptic division puzzles, I feel that I should also try my hand at cryptograms. So this is my first!

35—Impish, innocuous, impecunious itinerant irks irascible Iowan. Incensed individual incites inquiry. Inquisitor inflicts incarceration.

33—Red glare of giant neon bulletin, illuminated for first time on foggy night, addles lad, who sounds fire alarm. Restaurant proprietor admits advantages of additional ado.

36—Capitol plaza at Washington. Crystal fountain gushing, displaying translucent colors, variegated, beautiful, magnificent, sublime.

34—Lifer zealously plans escape. Turnkey, suspecting hoax, questions convict, learns

Answers to this week's puzzles will be credited in our February Cipher Solvers' Club. A single solution will enroll you! Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

How Faces Reveal Character

By WILLIAM E. BENTON



RIGHT
or Conscious Side

FLOYD
HAMILTON

This is the same man!

To see the actual face, fold the page and bring the right and left sides together



LEFT
or Subconscious Side

FLOYD HAMILTON is a gunman and one of a family of gunmen. He reveals in a marked degree the signs of a violent, dangerous man. Note first his unbalanced face. This means that whatever character his face reveals will be in a superlative degree. Second, observe how the left eye slopes upward in a furtive, catlike manner. The left ear stands well out with no lobe at the bottom, and a pointed top. These are the two important signs of cruelty and an abrupt, violent nature.

The nose is keen and sharp, with the dilated nostrils of the man who loves excitement. The mouth is large, coarse-lipped, and passionate. The right side of the mouth and eye turn down. Therefore

to most people this man would not seem as cocksure of himself as he really feels. It is the left side that shows this inner feeling of his own cleverness and self-sufficiency and strength.

The deep lantern jaw is found often on men of the strongly individualistic personality, the people who achieve through their own individual efforts, be these efforts good or bad; social or criminal.

When people with this type of chin have as many other anti-social facial traits as our subject, you can be sure they are actual or potential criminals. When encountered they should be considered dangerous men—and obeyed absolutely until you can call for the police.

Next Week—Raymond Hamilton

Let William E. Benton Analyze Your Face

FILL out the coupon at the bottom of the page, and mail it to Mr. Benton. Enclose a photograph of yourself and ten cents.

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Name.....

Address.....

2-16-25

Next Week the Crime Jury Selects—!

KILLER'S LAST STAND

A Hunt Club Novelette by Judson P. Philips

THE voice on the telephone was hoarse, weighted with deadly fear. "Major Saville!" it gasped. "Don't come, for the love of God. I'm not afraid of this devil that's got me. But he means to kill . . ." There was the sound of blows, and another voice took the trailing sentence. It was a taunting, cruel voice—the voice of Salvatore, the last of the mad Dzambas, who had sworn to wipe out the Park Avenue Hunt Club. "Well, Major," it gloated, "I have your friend, you see. Are you going to come—to your death—to save him?"

Saville's face was the color of old parchment, but his voice was steady. "I'll be there," he said, "within an hour."

And so Geoffrey Saville went alone to meet the man the Hunt Club had trailed—Salvatore, the butcher. But this time he, Saville, was the hunted, going to a death trap in the sinister, dark house . . .

Read this astounding sequel to "The Assassins" and "Men About to Die." It's the most thrill-packed, danger-studded yarn of the series.

THE BRUTE'S EMERALDS

A Novelette by H. Bedford-Jones

RILEY DILLON, suave and daring collector of other men's jewels, bent over an opened trunk and his flashlight gleamed on a fortune in stolen stones. But that was not what made Riley Dillon stare. In that trunk was a mystery—the grim and terrible secret of the Van Martyn emeralds. Here is a story of a desperate, flashing struggle, of quick wits and nerve. Robbery, burglary, a mysterious getaway, and death occur while detectives walk the corridors of the luxurious Waldorf unaware. It is Riley Dillon at his best.

MOTHER MOLLS

By Howard McLellan

A MOTHER decided to rob a bank. She took her nineteen-year-old daughter with her, and the two women did a job a yegg might envy. A grandmother and granddaughter turned to the stickup—and robbed so many men they opened stores in three cities to dispose of the loot! Some of the most bizarre and amazing cases in the annals of crime, told in the eighth article of the great series, Killers' Molls!

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 - Aviation Engines
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- Sheet Metal Worker
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FSP/H

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