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# DETECTIVE

FICTION

# WEEKLY

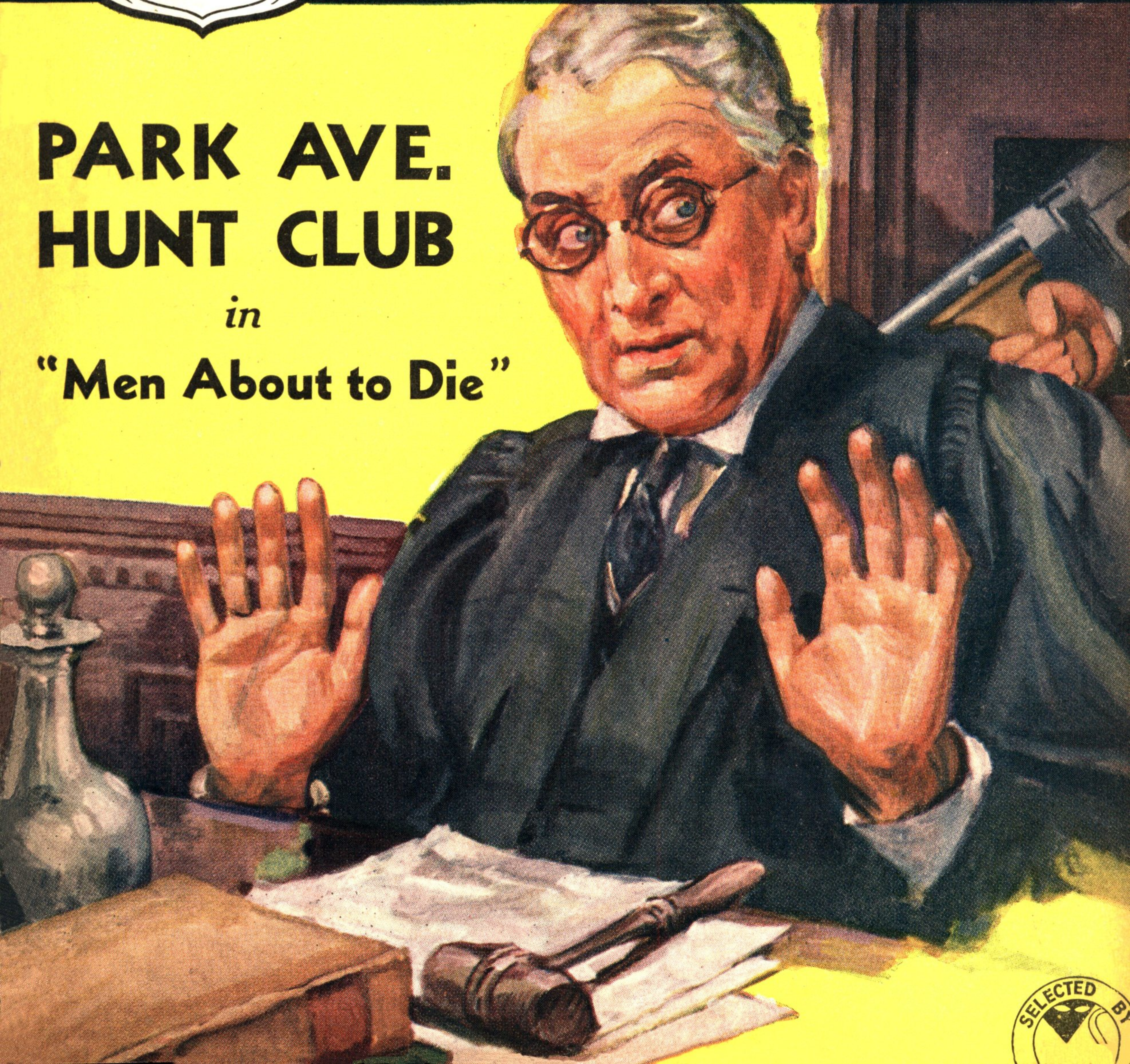
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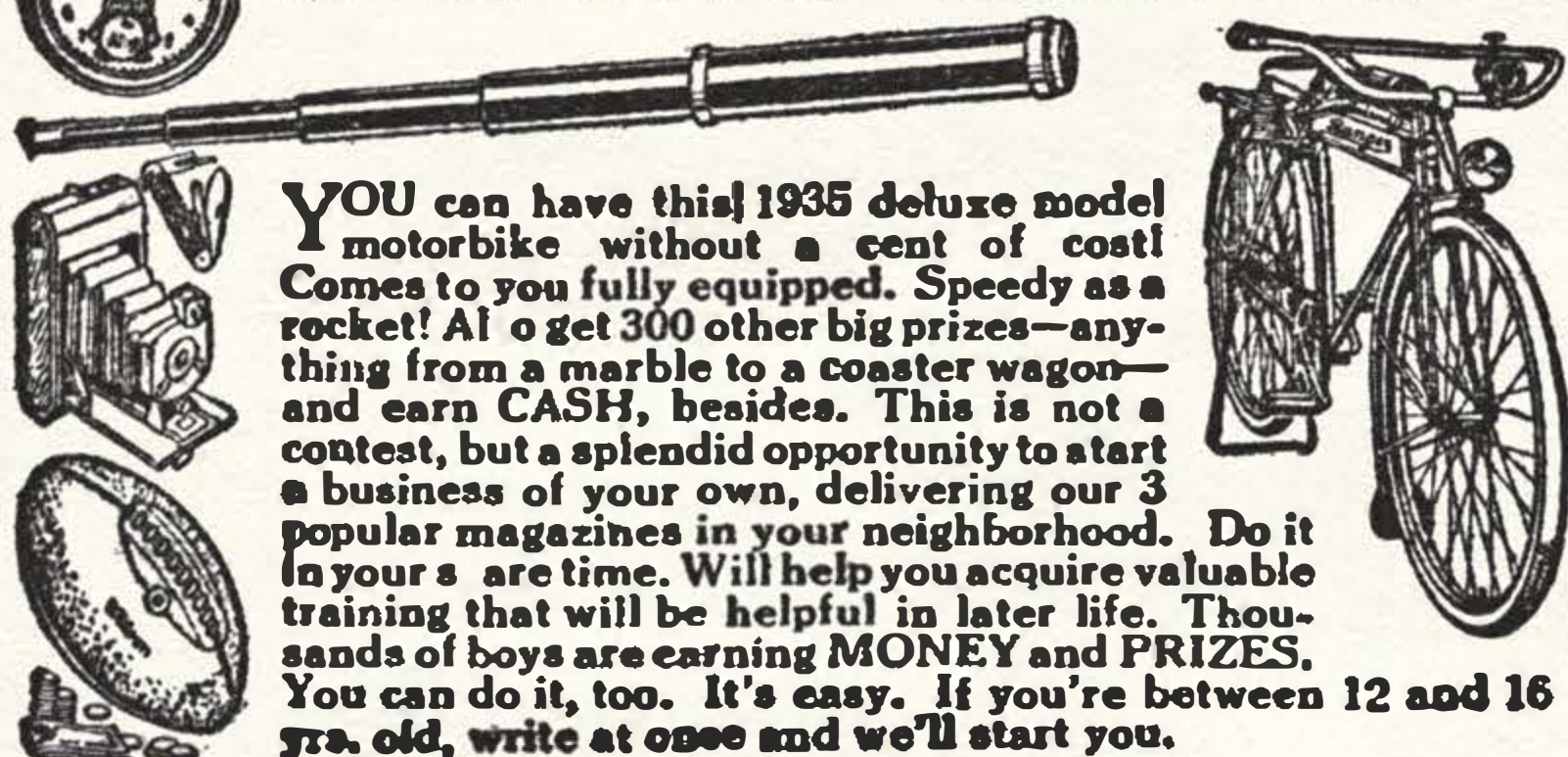
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# DETECTIVE

## FICTION WEEKLY



TITLE REGISTERED U. S. PATENT OFFICE

"The Magazine Selected by The Crime Jury"

VOLUME XCI

Saturday, February 2, 1935

NUMBER 1

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*The Magazine with the Detective Shield on the Cover is on sale every Wednesday*

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111 Rue Réaumur

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*Do you have to keep on increas-  
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Challenge of All*

A Novelette

By Judson P. Philips

"You see," said Salvatore. "A  
rough imitation of the electric  
chair"





## CHAPTER I

## There Is No Danger!

THE man shook John Crowther's shoulder gently.

"Six o'clock, sir."

Crowther turned over in bed and looked up sleepily at Betts, his man servant. Early morning sunlight was streaming through the French windows that opened out onto the bedroom balcony. From an adjoining room the sound of water running in a tub came to him. Crowther stretched luxuriously for a moment and then sat up, a wry smile twisting his lips.

"God, Betts, sometimes I wonder if it's worth it," he said, "this six o'clock rising!"

A shave, a cold bath, and the fragrant odor of fresh coffee will do a lot for a reluctant riser, however. John Crowther had been going through this routine for nearly two years, and actually he knew it *was* worth it. Real country—dogs—horses—and Mimi's complete happiness. That was worth getting up in the middle of the night for if necessary. Just a tough break that he wasn't a writer, or an artist, instead of a brilliant lawyer who had to be in his New York office at nine every morning, and that to make it he had to catch a seven o'clock ferry across the river in order to board the seven-twenty express at Highcliffe.

Governor Giffard's voice cracked



Since he had given up his private practice to take over the office of District Attorney the strain had been a little greater—but still it was worth it.

"There's one thing about it," he had told Mimi, laughingly, "if I ever get to be Governor it'll be just as easy to commute to Albany!"

Two ecstatic cocker spaniels greeted Crowther effusively as he came down the main stairway of the beautiful Georgian house. He stooped down to give them each an affectionate pat.

"Keep quiet, you mugs," he admonished, "or you'll wake Mimi."

"Not this morning," said a quiet voice behind him, and Crowther turned to see his wife coming down the stairs.

MIMI CROWTHER was a beautiful woman. Even the rough tweed clothes she wore this morning could not conceal her lithe, well-rounded figure. Mimi was a horse-woman of the first rank, yet a vigorous outdoor life had not taken from her any of the feminine graces or charm that were her natural inheritance. Soft red mouth, rich auburn hair, and a natural color that made her seem almost like a schoolgirl. Crowther found that even after five years of marriage he caught his breath sharply when she came upon him suddenly this way.

"Darling!" He took her tenderly in his arms. Then a faint frown penciled his forehead. "But why this early rising, sweet? You look tired—as if you hadn't slept well."

"Not a wink," she said gravely. She slipped her arm through his and led him toward the dining room where his breakfast waited. A tender little smile moved Crowther's lips.

"You're not worrying about this business today, darling?"

Mimi sat opposite him. She leaned

suddenly back in her chair, her eyes closed, and he saw that her hands were clenching the arms of the chair till the knuckles showed white.

"I know I'm a fool," she said, in a tight voice.

Crowther glanced almost angrily at his wrist watch. He must leave in ten minutes—and with Mimi in this frame of mind!

"Look here, darling," he said, "you've got to get the right slant on these men. There is no question of their guilt. The trial is a mere formality. And when it is over the three notorious Dzamba brothers will be electrocuted. And that will be that. There's no danger."

"No danger!" she remonstrated. "No danger from men who hold life so cheaply?"

"Look here, Mimi, what possible danger can there be? These men are under arrest. Heavily guarded."

"They may have friends—relatives," said Mimi, her eyes still closed.

"They worked alone as far as we know," Crowther said.

"But in open court, John! One of them might have a weapon—"

He laughed lightly. "My dear, charming little idiot! Do you suppose that three desperate madmen like Salvatore Dzamba and his brothers are not under the closest sort of guard? I give you my word, darling, *there is no danger!*"

She opened her eyes, and they were suspiciously bright.

"I suppose I've got to take your word for it," she said. "But oh, God, take care of yourself."

He pushed back his chair, got up, and took her in his arms. There was a little catch in his voice when he finally spoke. "You see why I don't like you to come down to breakfast, Mimi? It

makes it so damned hard to go off and leave you. I must fly! I'm late now."

The car, with Giles the chauffeur behind the wheel, was waiting. Nathaniel and Daniel, the spaniels, went racing out, tumbling over each other, and hurtled into the back seat. Crowther got in beside the chauffeur and the car started.

"I'm afraid we're late," said Crowther grimly. "This of all mornings!"

"Old Garfield will hold the ferry a minute or two, sir," Giles reassured him. "He knows you've got to make it."

The little ferry was still in the slip when they arrived. Old man Garfield, who with his son operated the little boat, was looking anxiously at his watch as they drove up.

"I was afeard you wasn't goin' to make it, Mr. Crowther," he said.

Crowther hurried on board and the gangway was pulled up. Nathaniel and Daniel barked furiously as the boat chugged out into the river. Crowther stood by old man Garfield in the pilot house—a daily custom.

"No chance of them Dzambas slip-pin' through yer fingers, is there, Mr. Crowther?" the old man asked.

"Not a chance in the world," said Crowther grimly.

They just caught the train on the other side. As Crowther made his way into the club car there was no way he could possibly guess that this was the last time he would ever take the sevententy

## CHAPTER II

### A Warning

INSPECTOR JAMES EMORY DOANE, chief of the Homicide Squad, was whistling. It was slightly off key to be sure, but it was a

symptom of the utmost good spirits on the part of the gray-haired, somewhat dour detective. He was about to set out for a certain court room where he fully expected to hear the death sentence pronounced over three men before nightfall. And it pleased the inspector mightily.

He had spent several days going over the case with John Crowther, the prosecutor, and he was satisfied that there wasn't a loophole. The very fact that the Dzamba brothers had engaged Lippy Bernstein to defend them showed they knew they hadn't a chance, for Bernstein was a little shyster of no reputation whatever.

In the ordinary course of events Inspector Doane had steeled himself against any emotional reaction in the criminal cases he handled, but in the case of the Dzamba brothers he felt a grim satisfaction . . . an almost primitive lust to see them get the works. There were new lines in the inspector's face, put there by the Dzambas. And there were the memories of horrors that assailed him still, night and day, which he could not shake off. And he had been so close to a terrible death himself that he could still feel the cold chill of fear sweep over him.

He was gathering up some papers to take to court with him when Moran, the uniformed cop who held sway outside his office, came in.

"There's a doll out here wants to see you, inspector," he said.

"Not a chance," said Doane grimly. "I'm on my way."

"That's what I told her," Moran said, "but she says she's gotta see you before you go to court. She says—"

And then a girl swept into the office, past Moran, and red lacquered fingernails clutched at the inspector's coat lapels. She was a blonde, rather smart-

ly dressed in a Broadway fashion. The inspector had seen the type often—scarlet lips, weary, almost colorless face. Her eyes met his as he looked down at her, and he was struck by the look of stark terror he saw there.

"I'm sorry," he said, "I can't see anyone this morning."

"I've got to see you," she said, in a harsh, ragged voice.

"I'm on my way to court," he said gently. "If you're in trouble there are others who can look out for you, Miss—er—"

"My name is Adrienne Terry," she said quickly.

"I'm sorry, Miss Terry, but I—"

"Doesn't my name mean anything to you?" she demanded almost fiercely.

"No. But you must excuse me now, I—"

"I—I was Angelo Dzamba's girl!" Her voice cracked, as though her nerves were strung to the breaking point.

Doane's eyes were suddenly cold, hard. Angelo Dzamba, the Tenth Avenue butcher's assistant who had cold-bloodedly mutilated the bodies of ten policemen. It was difficult to associate him with romance, even with this bitter, hard-faced girl.

"There's nothing I can do for you," he said grimly. "You must excuse me—"

"My God, I don't want you to do anything for me! I want to do something for you. If you don't give me five minutes of your time you will regret it as long as you live!"

**S**USPICION flashed across the inspector's mind. This might be some sort of desperate attempt to keep him from testifying against the murderers. He suddenly snatched the

girl's handbag away from her and opened it. A concealed weapon—a moment alone with him—but the bag contained nothing suspicious.

The girl stamped her foot impatiently.

"This is no trick," she cried. "I tell you my life, and perhaps yours, depends on your listening to me!"

"I'll give you five minutes," said Doane sharply.

As she sat down beside the inspector's desk Adrienne Terry's scarlet lips were caught between her teeth. Then she leaned forward, the knuckles of her hands showed white as she gripped the edge of his desk.

"Inspector," she said hoarsely, "the Dzamba brothers are ready to slip through your fingers this morning. I was Angelo's girl—as I told you. But Angelo is dead, and if his brothers go free my life won't be worth a nickel!"

Doane laughed grimly. "You think there is some flaw in the case against them? But then you must, or you wouldn't make this suggestion."

The girl pounded impatiently on the desk with her clenched fists. "I'm not talking about the case against them, inspector! I'm trying to tell you that they are planning a spectacular escape—that before the day is out they will be free. And then you, and I, and Crowther, and everybody else who has worked against them will be on the spot."

Doane smiled tolerantly. "You mean to say you think they can escape from the court room? But then you must, or—"

"*They will escape unless you stop it!*" the girl cried.

"How?" Doane rapped.

"God only knows. But their plans are made—and unless you find out what they are—"

"Why are you telling me this?" Doane asked, his eyes narrowed.

"Listen," she said desperately, "I was Angelo's girl—but I didn't know about them then. I'm a dance hall hostess. I met him there—didn't know much about him. Then these policemen began to be murdered and the papers hinted at the Dzambas. Then that girl was killed—the one who had been Salvatore's fiancée. I was scared. I didn't dare give Angelo the air. If he thought I'd turned against him he'd have killed me—like that!"

"Well?" Doane's voice was hard.

"Well, one night I was sleeping in my apartment. I woke up and three men were in my room—three men in black masks. They wanted to know where Angelo was. I wouldn't tell. They said if Angelo was not caught in twelve hours they would come back and *make* me talk."

"And who were these men?" Doane demanded.

The girl lowered her voice. "They called themselves the Park Avenue Hunt Club."

"Ah," said Doane, softly. "And did they come back?"

"No. You see Angelo was dead before noon the next day—and the other three were caught. But somehow they found out that I'd been visited by the Hunt Club. They think I squealed. And if they go free—well, they'll murder me."

"My dear Miss Terry—" Doane began.

"I know what you're going to say," she cut in despairingly. "You're going to say escape from the court room is impossible! You're going to say they're under close guard! Well, all I can say, inspector, is that you don't know Salvatore Dzamba. He's a madman, with all the cunning and cleverness you can

imagine. They stand to lose nothing in the attempt—and *the attempt will be made!* I've come to you to try to save my own life. But yours and dozens of others may also be at stake."

Doane's lips wore a grim smile.

"Escape is impossible," he assured her. "But I believe your story, Miss Terry. They may even try it. You can be certain that I shall see that every precaution is taken. I don't think you need worry."

She looked at him out of hopeless eyes. "You don't know Salvatore Dzamba," was all she said.

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### CHAPTER III

#### Gathered for Death

ALMOST anyone who read the newspapers of the time would have felt a faint thrill of excitement at Adrienne Terry's mention of the Park Avenue Hunt Club. Product of a lawless age, this secret organization had sprung up suddenly to stand squarely across the path of the criminal. Gangsters and racketeers found themselves confronted by a foe who dealt out death for death, brutality for brutality. The underworld, heretofore fearing only the police, who were unable to mask their movements, found themselves prey to the Hunt Club, which moved swiftly, secretly, and relentlessly. One after another of the underworld's leaders met with destruction, carefully planned crimes were thwarted, killers were killed. The criminals found themselves in the position of blind men, fighting an unknown adversary of unknown strength.

A few editorial writers of strictly idealistic principles, a few squeamish citizens who disapproved of violence, even though it be directed against violent men, called for an unmasking of

the Hunt Club and a curtailing of their activities. But the public as a whole saw in them a modern prototype of the old vigilantes, grimly bent upon restoring law and order to a community rotten with corruption.

There was just one man who knew the identity of the Hunt Club's members, and that man was Inspector James Emory Doane. On more than one occasion his life had been saved by these fearless men, and in return he had helped them when they had been skating on thin ice. Doane was a big enough man to know that by coöperating with them he could accomplish more at his own job, and as a man he was in thorough sympathy with their activities—a little regretful at times that the law did not permit him to deal as summarily with criminals as did this vigorous organization.

"You don't know Salvatore Dzamba," Adrienne Terry had said.

But Inspector Doane *did* know him. He had been held prisoner once by him, had been within an ace of having his throat cut by this leering, hate-crazed murderer. And he was taking no chances that the girl's story was pure hysteria. He barked a dozen orders into his telephone, and then, seeing that it would be nearly an hour before court convened, he decided upon another phone call, which he made from an outside pay station.

"I'd like to speak with Major Saville," he said, when he was connected.

After a moment a cheery voice came over the wire, "Hello, you old buzzard. I thought you'd be in court this morning."

"Not for an hour," said Doane. "Listen. I had a lady visitor this morning who claims you paid her a visit while she was in bed. Was that nice?"

"Who was it?"

"Miss Adrienne Terry."

"Ah," said Major Saville softly. "What's her complaint?"

Doane related the girl's story. "Thought you might like to come along to the court room in case there was any excitement."

"What do you expect?" Saville asked.

"Well, I don't expect anything," said Doane. "I'm having everyone searched before they're admitted to court. I've changed guards over the prisoners. I don't see what can happen. But our friend Dzamba is goofy enough to try something. Anyhow, I thought you might like to see the show? I bought a new necktie, especially to wear on the witness stand. If you want to come I'll leave word for you to be admitted without the indignity of a search."

"You can count on us," said Saville. "By the by, what about a time bomb?"

"These guys want to escape, not commit suicide," said Doane dryly.

**I**N a house on Park Avenue Geoffrey Saville, who bore a rather striking resemblance to Ronald Colman, the actor, hung up the receiver and went back into the dining room where his friends, John Jericho and Arthur Hallam, were finishing breakfast, waited on by the impassive-faced little Chinese servant, Wu. Certainly no one seeing them here would have guessed that these men, one a former secret service man, one a big game hunter, and the other an ex-medical student, master chess player, and gourmet of the first order, were the sole members of the Park Avenue Hunt Club, nemesis of the underworld.

"We're going to court," said Sa-

ville, resuming his place at the table. And he told them what Doane had said.

John Jericho, with the physique of a giant, a mass of red hair, and fists like hams, smiled grimly. Jericho had given up hunting big game for the more exciting game of man hunting.

"I wish to God they *would* try something," he said. "I've always regretted missing the opportunity I had to finish off our friend Salvatore!"

Arthur Hallam's eyes twinkled behind his steel-rimmed spectacles. He was very round, very plump, and very mild looking. Yet this little man who seemed to enjoy nothing so much as eating, was a master of intrigue and had nerves of ice.

"Don't be so bloodthirsty at breakfast," he said to Jericho. "It upsets my digestion."

"I'm afraid you won't have a chance to swing into action," Saville grinned at the big man. "Doane seems to be very much on the job. Still, you might get a sadistic thrill out of hearing Judge Malvern pronounce the death sentence over our fine friends."

"I wouldn't miss it for a million," said Jericho. "If ever three men deserved to be drawn and quartered, boiled in oil, stretched on the rack—"

"The electric chair, my dear John," said Hallam, carefully dissecting a lamb chop, "does an awfully thorough job, you know."

**C**COURT. Morbidly staring crowds, made doubly excited by the search they had been subjected to before being permitted to take their places in the room. Crowther and his assistants grouped around the counsel table. Bernstein, lawyer for the defense, unperturbed, smiling at friends. His job was just a formality; the

Dzambas were already as good as in the electric chair. Saville and his friends, sitting halfway back, watching the three prisoners who sat, heavily guarded, inside the rail.

Saville felt a strange chill at the base of his spine as he saw these men once again. Vincente and Leonardo, the two younger brothers, sat quietly, with downcast eyes. There was nothing in their manner to suggest anything but utter dejection and resignation to their fate. But Salvatore, the eldest, the leader, whose crooked brain had hatched the plot of a dozen diabolical murders, was staring at John Crowther, the prosecutor, with those burning, mad eyes of his. Staring and smiling, a twisted, cruel smile.

Then the clerk of the court announced the coming of the judge and everyone rose—everyone but Salvatore Dzamba, who had to be yanked to his feet by one of the plain-clothes men. For just a second Salvatore glanced at this man, and Saville, watching, moistened his suddenly dry lips. There was murder in that glance of Salvatore's.

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## CHAPTER IV

### Killer's Mark

**J**UDGE MALVERN, fearless jurist, took his place and the court sat once more. The jury had been impaneled the day before and the main business of the trial was ready to start. Geoffrey Saville twisted restlessly in his seat. A strange sixth sense, a sort of psychic intuition that danger threatened, oppressed him. A hundred times this intuitive warning had saved Saville at critical moments and he had come to trust it. Vainly he groped about in his mind for some possible cause for it. Yet the more he studied

the court room, the more he considered the wildest possibilities, the less chance of an escape being made seemed possible. Doane, sitting grimly inside the rail, had taken every human precaution.

And yet Salvatore Dzamba kept on



GEOFFREY SAVILLE

*smiling—smiling and looking at his watch!* As if he were waiting for an appointed moment—

Judge Malvern spoke in a cold, hard voice.

"There have been rumors," he said, "of a possible disturbance at this trial. I want to warn you that if there is the slightest occurrence of this nature, I shall clear the court and hold everyone here in contempt!" He looked around the room with glittering eyes as if to let his words sink in. Then he leaned back. "You may proceed with the case for the prosecution, Mr. Crowther."

Crowther rose and walked slowly over toward the jury box. All the time Salvatore Dzamba's blazing eyes never left the prosecutor's pale face.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,"

Crowther began, in a clear, dramatic voice, "I am here to present to you the case against three men, three brothers, in fact—Salvatore, Leonardo and Vincente Dzamba. I am here to bring a charge of murder against them—of murder so brutal, so horrible, that in the whole history of violent crime in this country there has never been anything to equal it. Ten men are dead, their bodies mutilated. An aged mother and father have seen their young daughter slashed to death by a murderer's knife. The law, ladies and gentlemen, demands that these men be given a trial—the right to defend themselves. But there can be no defense for these three men, for their crime is so horrible, so cold-blooded, so without reason, that nothing can be said in extenuation."

Saville found himself unable to watch the prosecutor. Instead his eyes remained on Salvatore, fascinated. The man's utter calm, his air of assurance, was strangely sinister. What in God's name could he have up his sleeve?

"Not long ago," Crowther was saying, "there were five brothers in the Dzamba family. Last May Pietro, the second eldest, stood in this court charged with murder. He had desired a girl—a girl who did not care for him. She was in love with a fine, upstanding member of our city police force. Pietro Dzamba tracked them down one night, killed them both, cut their bodies to pieces. For this crime he was arrested, convicted and electrocuted at the State penitentiary about a month ago. Never was a man more justly punished for a brutal crime."

The smile was frozen on Salvatore's lips as Crowther detailed this bit of history. His dark face was twisted into a look of such malignant hatred,



such fierce animosity, that if Crowther had seen it he must have quailed a little beneath its white-hot intensity. But Crowther was talking to the jury. Only Saville saw Salvatore's face, and his hands were clenched tightly in the pockets of his tweed coat.

"That was just the beginning, ladies and gentlemen of the jury," Crowther continued. "The four remaining brothers, headed by Salvatore, the eldest, embarked on a plan of revenge. Revenge against the forces of the law which had brought Pietro Dzamba to justice. There followed eleven brutal crimes, each one more terrible than the one before. Finally they were trapped. Angelo, one of the brothers, was killed by the police, but the others have been brought here to stand trial for their atrocities."

John Jericho smiled faintly as he listened. It had not been the police who killed Angelo Dzamba, known as the Tenth Avenue Butcher. It had been Jericho himself, fighting for his life in a pitch-black room, who had finally managed to twist the murderous knife from Angelo's hand; smash a pile-driving blow to the jaw that had snapped his neck.

"There will be no need for me," Crowther was saying, "to persuade you to render a verdict of guilty against these men. The evidence I have to present is quite conclusive. If it please the court, I will now—"

Judge Malvern's gavel rapped suddenly, sharply, unexpectedly. Saville glanced quickly at him. Was it imagination, or had Malvern's face turned the color of ashes?

"MR. CROWTHER," said the judge, his voice slightly unsteady, "I'm sorry to interrupt you, but certain facts have just

been laid before me as you were talking—" His voice seemed to strangle in his throat, and he reached out a shaking hand for the glass of water in front of him. He gulped some of the water and put the glass down. "I am going to adjourn, temporarily, and I want the prisoners and their attorney brought to my chambers."

"But your honor—!"

"At once!" cried Judge Malvern. There was a strange note of despair in his voice.

Saville had risen from his chair. Something wrong here! Something devilish wrong. He saw Doane spring forward, only to be waved away by Malvern. He saw the plain-clothes men glance at the inspector for instructions, and saw Doane shrug helplessly. And Salvatore was laughing!

The three men, their three guards, and Bernstein walked around to the little door leading into the judge's chambers, directly behind the court room itself. A hum of excited voices filled the room as they disappeared. Doane and Crowther were conferring. What possible new evidence—

Then came a sound that caused Saville's heart to almost stop beating. The sound of a rapid fire gun in action—the scream of a man in mortal agony—from the judge's chambers! Doane sprang like a tiger for the door. Locked! He began pounding on it with clenched fists.

Pandemonium in the court room! Saville, Jericho and Hallam charged down the aisle toward the railing. A snarling plain-clothes man barred their way with a drawn gun.

"Get back!"

"We're friends of Inspector Doane," Saville rapped.

"I don't care who the hell you are, stand back!"

John Jericho was grinning as his big hand went out, twisted the man's wrist sharply so that the gun dropped out of nerveless fingers. He picked the policeman up as though he were a child and moved him aside.

"Doane!" Jericho bellowed.

The inspector turned a haggard face, saw them, and shouted orders to let them through.

"Sorry, sweetheart," Jericho grinned at the scarlet-faced cop.

The three members of the Hunt Club were at the door with the inspector. Doane looked like a man on the rack.

"Hell's broken loose in there," he said, in a taut voice.

"Let's go in," said Jericho softly.

He drew his huge frame together and suddenly hurtled himself against the door. It was the charge of a battering ram and he went hurtling through the splintered barrier into a smoke-filled room—gunpowder smoke!

"God!" Doane's voice was horror-struck.

They were in the midst of a scene of dreadful carnage. The bodies of five men lay on the floor. The three plain-clothes men, Bernstein and Judge Malvern. Their bodies were torn to shreds by bullets. Old Malvern was trying to speak, but each time he opened his mouth blood welled from between his lips and his attempt ended in a gurgling horror. Saville knelt beside him, trying to stem the flow with his handkerchief, striving to catch what he said. Bernstein and the detectives were dead. Saville glanced at one of them—the man who had yanked Salvatore to his feet when court had convened. His belly had been blown away by a hail of gunfire. He lay on his back, and squarely in the middle of his face was the crushing imprint of a hobnailed boot.

Salvatore Dzamba had stopped long enough to leave his mark.

## CHAPTER V

### Renegade's Wages

REPORTERS, photographers, and a howling, screaming mob of hysterical spectators were all trying to storm the door into the judge's chambers at once. Doane was beside himself with horror and chagrin. Two plain-clothes men, under orders from him, managed to keep the crowd back, to close the shattered door against their morbid peepings. Doane, Inspector Kent, his assistant, and the three members of the Hunt Club were alone for a moment. Doane held his hands to his head like a man close to demented.

"How is it possible? *How is it possible?*" he kept repeating.

"Unless you get a doctor damn quick for this man," said Saville in a cold voice, looking up from the gasping jurist, "you may never know."

The hard, emotionless voice of the head of the Hunt Club seemed to bring Doane back to his senses. Kent was dispatched for a doctor, but scarcely got to the door before a police surgeon, who had been a spectator at the trial, came in.

"Judge Malvern is the only one alive," said Saville sharply. "He's trying to talk. It's vital that he should be able to communicate with us. Do everything you can."

The doctor's breath hissed between his teeth as he knelt beside Malvern.

"Looks like machine gun fire," he muttered. "Poor fellow, he's shot to pieces. Not a chance."

Malvern opened his eyes as though he had heard. He tried to speak again and once more choked helplessly. Sa-

ville had an inspiration. From a pocket he took an envelope and a silver pencil. He pressed them into Malvern's hands, lifting him slightly up with an arm under his shoulders. Fumbling fingers held the pencil—tried to write—and were suddenly lifeless. Judge Malvern was gone without explaining his extraordinary action in removing the prisoners from the court room, an action which had resulted so tragically.

It seemed an interminable length of time, but actually was probably not more than five minutes, before the police machinery began to work. The Dzambas had got clear of the building; that much an immediate search revealed. A general alarm was spread—every radio car, every precinct station, every cop on his beat knew what had happened and was on the lookout. Emergency squads were rushed to railroad stations, to docks, to ferries.

**A**FTER a while Doane, the three members of the Hunt Club, Kent and another detective were left in the chambers. The bodies of the murdered men had been taken away in the morgue wagon. Doane, his face looking like a death's head, sat in an arm chair looking at the others.

"Well, gentlemen," he said hoarsely, "somehow we've bungled. The most colossal piece of bungling in the history of the police. But how in God's name could I know the judge would act as he did? Why did he bring them out here? Where did the rapid fire gun come from that was used and how did the Dzambas get hold of it? Those poor devils that were guarding them never even had a chance to draw their guns! I had men guarding every entrance of this building, searching everyone as they came in. I tell you

it was impossible for anyone to get in here with a Thompson gun—yet somebody did. By God, if any of my men have been guilty of treachery—!"

"I don't think you need worry about that, inspector," said Arthur



ARTHUR HALLAM

Hallam in a quiet voice. He looked at the other detectives with a rather deprecating smile. "Of course I don't know anything about crime—but just a matter of observation, you know. This room backs up directly on the court room, yet I notice the partition is almost four feet thick."

"There's an air shaft running from the cellar to the roof, sir."

"Quite so," said Hallam. "Of course it's only conjecture—" Again the deprecating smile. "But haven't any of you noticed that a piece of the paneling has been cut out about six feet up the wall? The man with the machine gun was hidden in the shaft. He opened fire the minute the prisoners were brought out here. They knew what was coming—probably ducked to

the floor. But the others were slaughtered before they could lift a finger." He fumbled for one of the thick Turkish cigarettes he smoked. "There's probably another opening on the other side of the shaft. It's pure conjecture, of course, but I suggest the judge felt a machine gun pressed against the back of his neck. He was probably ordered to bring the prisoners back here."

"Malvern wouldn't knuckle under even with a gun at his head," said Doane grimly.

"I'm only guessing, of course," said Hallam mildly, "but the man in the shaft probably threatened to slaughter everyone in the court room if he refused. He could have done it, you know, with a rapid fire gun. The judge chose the lesser of two evils. He chose to sacrifice five lives as opposed to five hundred. Not exactly knuckling under, if you see what I mean. I suggest you have a look at the shaft to test out my theory."

Ten minutes later Hallam's theory was proved. They even found the rapid fire gun in the shaft, still warm. A few empty food cans indicated that the man who had worked the gun had been hidden in the shaft for several days, waiting his opportunity.

"There's just one man," said Geoffrey Saville to his friends as they were heading for home half an hour later, "who would have helped the Dzambas."

"Our old friend Slug Mandell," said Jericho grimly. "He helped them before."

Saville nodded. "We've got to find him."

**I**N a back hall bedroom of a dilapidated brownstone house near Tenth Avenue Slug Mandell, renegade cop, discharged from the force after

charges of taking graft had been proved against him by Inspector Doane, lay on a little iron frame bed and stared with red eyes up at the ceiling. He hadn't shaved for several days and a black bristle of beard covered his sunken cheeks. Every now and then he seemed to be seized with a terrible retching nausea which sent him staggering into the bathroom. Presently he would return and fling himself on the bed. He would lie still as a corpse for a while, and then suddenly he would write, as if tortured by some inner agony.

Hour after hour this went on. Late afternoon passed into early evening. A flickering electric sign across the street lighted and darkened the room like a regularly beating pulse. Once or twice footsteps sounded outside in the hall, and each time Mandell sat up, shaking, straining to hear.

Ten o'clock at night. Mandell had heard newsboys shouting the story of the horror in the court room, but he had not bothered to buy a paper. He knew what the story told—and more! Then suddenly footsteps in the hall once more—and a sharp rap at the door.

Mandell sprang off the bed almost into the middle of the room. The knock came again, three long—three short. Feverishly Mandell unbolted and unlocked the door, and into the room came a man, dark felt hat pulled down over his face. Glowing, feverish eyes studied Mandell's face for a moment, and then white teeth flashed in a brilliant but unpleasant smile. Salvatore Dzamba closed the door and locked it once more.

"What's the matter, Slug? Got the jitters?" There was an ironic note in Salvatore's voice.

"God!" said Mandell hoarsely. He

sat down on the edge of the bed because his knees were weak.

"Maybe you haven't got a strong enough stomach for this kind of work," said Salvatore.

Mandell seemed to choke.

"I knew two of those guys," he said. "Two of the cops that was guarding you. I worked on a case with 'em once. When I see the blood spoutin' out of 'em—" He couldn't go on.

"You did a good job," said Salvatore. "They're all dead, and without talking. You got the stuff I want?"

"In the closet," said Slug Mandell. "Have you the dough?"

Salvatore crossed over and opened the door to a closet. A little exclamation of satisfaction came from him. In an old ginger ale carton were a half a dozen automatics and perhaps a hundred rounds of ammunition.

"The bullet-proof vests is in that brown paper bundle," said Mandell.

SALVATORE nodded. He took one of the automatics from the carton and examined it lovingly. It was loaded. He came over toward Mandell, still fondling the gun.

"Too bad we had to do for Bernstein," he said. "But we can't have anyone around who knows too much. He might have got scared and squealed on you, Slug."

Mandell shuddered.

"And it wouldn't save your neck," Salvatore continued in a soft, purring voice, "to tell the cops that you had to handle that gun, or I'd have given you away on the Rentner kidnaping—they'd burn you just the same."

"Lay off, will yuh?" begged Mandell. He didn't look up, and so he failed to notice the maniacal gleam in Salvatore's eyes.

"But you haven't got very much of

what it takes, Slug," said Salvatore. "If they should find you, how do I know you wouldn't tell 'em all you know about us? How do I know you wouldn't tell 'em what our next move is?"

"God, Salvatore, you know I would not squeal." Mandell looked up. The sight of his visitor's face struck him to sudden frozen horror. "Salvatore! What's eating you? What's up?"

Salvatore fondled the gun. "It would be terrible for us, Slug, if you was to do any talking. Terrible. It's a risk I don't like to run."

MANDELL sprang to his feet. Lazily the barrel of the revolver swung in a line with his stomach. "For God's sake, Salvatore! What are you talkin' about?" Mandell's eyes were staring out of his head. "Haven't I proved where I stand with you guys? Didn't I hide in that damn air shaft for nearly a week, waitin' to get you out? Didn't I work it for you? Didn't I kill five guys for you, just so you could get away?"

"I'm afraid you haven't got what it takes, Slug," Salvatore repeated softly. "It's got you all nervous, killing those two old pals of yours. Suppose you got a streak of conscience and told the cops where we were heading for? Say, I feel terrible about it, Slug, but I can't risk it—any more than I could risk having Bernstein remember too much. You see, you haven't got what it takes." The barrel of the gun was raised a little higher—on a level with Mandell's eyes.

"Salvatore! For God's sake, listen! Listen! *Wait!*"

Salvatore Dzamba's finger pressed the trigger gently. The sharp report of the gun was smothered by the roar of a passing truck on Tenth Avenue.

Slug Mandell fell back across the bed, and then slipped off onto the floor with a dull thud.

Salvatore, his dark eyes burning like coals, slipped the gun into the pocket of his coat. Then he went over to the closet, picked up the carton containing the other guns and the package of vests and calmly walked out of the room, closing the door behind him. The light across the street still pulsed regularly, leaving the room first light, then dark. A little trickle of crimson ran down Mandell's forehead onto the dusty rug.

**F**IFTEEN minutes later there were gentle footsteps outside Mandell's door. Very slowly, tentatively, the door knob turned. Then suddenly the door was thrown open and three men with drawn guns sprang into the room. Three men with black silk masks covering their faces. They stopped abruptly at the sight of Mandell's body on the floor. Then the leader knelt down beside him for a minute and his fingers fumbled at Mandell's wrist. At last he stood up and very slowly took the mask from his face.

"Too late," said Geoffrey Saville bitterly.

## CHAPTER VI

### Sailing with Death

**P**OLICE hunt was redoubled a few minutes later. Saville reported to Doane the finding of Mandell's body, which indicated that one or more of the Dzambas had been in the neighborhood only a few minutes before.

It was nearly four in the morning when Doane, close to exhaustion, was shown into the cozy library of Saville's house, where the three members of the Hunt Club were sitting before a fire.

The inspector sank into a comfortable arm chair and took the highball which Jericho fixed for him without a word.

"You used some underworld contacts of yours to find Mandell?" he asked finally. "But then you must have, else you couldn't have reached him." He looked almost pleadingly at Saville. "I know you have secret sources of information, Major Saville. If you know anything about this business you haven't told me, for God's sake—"

"Nothing," Saville cut in, his lips set in a tight line. "Mandell was the only link with them besides the Terry girl we had. You're having her guarded?"

Doane nodded. "She's being voluntarily held at headquarters. I'm not going to have any more bloodshed. Salvatore Dzamba will stop at nothing, I know. My God, he kills his own lawyer, and the man who set him free! He doesn't leave any loose ends, that murdering devil!"

Arthur Hallam's eyes were grave behind his steel-rimmed spectacles. "And it isn't the end, inspector, I'm afraid. Everyone connected with this case is in danger as long as they're free. I've been worried about John Crowther. He's being watched, I hope?"

"Crowther's all right," said Doane. "He went home."

"Home?"

"He lives up the Hudson. Some place across the river from Highcliffe. There was nothing more he could do here in town until the Dzambas are apprehended. Frankly, I felt safer about his getting clean away from things."

"But he's under guard, even there, isn't he?" Hallam asked sharply.

"Well," said Doane slowly, "he

has several men who work about the place for him. A chauffeur, a gardener, a stable man. They'll be on the job."

"I don't like it," said Hallam anxiously. "I don't like it a damn bit, inspector. You're dealing with a madman who'll stop at nothing. Do you think he'd hesitate to shoot down those men in cold blood to get at Crowther? I don't. *And he wants Crowther badly!* It was Crowther who sent Pietro to the chair—and was about to do the same for them."

"Look here, inspector," said Saville. "You know your own business better than I do, but I'd feel a lot better if you'd get Crowther on the long distance phone and impress on him the real danger he's in. As long as the Dzambas are free he's a damn poor life insurance risk."

DOANE got up from his arm chair, his face more haggard and pinched than before. He went out to the telephone in the hall, and the three members of the Hunt Club sat in silence waiting for him to return. He was gone for quite a while and when he came back he looked crushed.

"Crowther's telephone is out of order," he said slowly. "The manager of the telephone company assured me that it is a perfectly normal interruption of service. A tree fallen across wires—blown down in a storm up there. It's probably just a coincidence at this time, but I don't like Crowther's being out of touch. I got hold of the local sheriff and told him to hotfoot it over to Crowther's house and make certain everything's all right. He's to phone me back here as soon as he has anything to report."

Saville began to pace the floor.

"Just as surely as God made green

apples," he said, "the Dzambas are going to head for Crowther. There are too many amateurs mixed up in this, Doane. What can a hick sheriff and chauffeurs and gardeners do against a man like Salvatore Dzamba? If Crowther isn't any more convinced of danger than to trust his life to men of



wu

that type he should be warned." He crushed out his cigarette in an ash tray and lit a fresh one. "Look here, Doane, Crowther knows I'm a friend of yours. He doesn't know the truth about us, but he knows I've been a secret service man—that I'm interested in crime. If I went up there and had a chat with him, impressed on him his real danger, and sort of hung around—"

"I'd feel fifteen years younger," said Doane fervently. He glanced at his watch. "Crowther takes a seven-twenty train from Highcliff every morning. You could just about make it before then if you started now. Persuade him to stay out of town for a couple of days. You can make him understand."

Saville was already ringing a bell at the end of the room. A moment later Wu, the Chinese servant, came into the room.

"Get the touring car, Wu," Saville rapped. "We're going on a trip. You'll have to drive because I doubt if any of the rest of us could stay awake after the day we've put in. John, you'd better collect any sort of arms you think we may need."

Ten minutes later they were ready to start. Just as they were going out the front door the phone rang. It was the sheriff calling Doane back.

"Thank God Crowther's all right," Doane told Saville. "Sheriff said he was rather annoyed at being disturbed. Doesn't think there's any danger and is mad because his wife has been upset."

"Perhaps we can make him see the gravity of the situation," said Saville. "Make yourself at home, inspector. I'll get in touch with you as soon as I've seen Crowther."

IT was after five when they got under way, leaving something just over two hours for them to make Highcliffe, nearly a hundred miles away. Wu, his impassive face almost hidden by a huge pair of goggles, drove with Saville beside him in the front seat. Jericho and Hallam, in the rear, both slept as the big car tore through the wet, misty dawn. These two, the one a hunter, the other a student, had learned to take rest whenever an opportunity occurred. Saville, on the other hand, was strangely disturbed, and there was no sleep for him. The mist and the fog were so thick that driving was highly dangerous, particularly at the break neck speed Wu sent the touring car ahead. Only the absence of traffic at that hour of

the morning kept it from being suicidal.

The more he thought of it, the more imperative it seemed to Saville that Crowther should be kept out of the city. On his country place, guarded by competent police officers, there'd be little chance of Salvatore getting at him. But in the city, with a hundred avenues of escape for a murderer, the chances of a successful attack were much greater.

Through slumbering towns they raced, the big car swaying from side to side. Once a milk wagon loomed up before them and only the most skillfully managed skid kept them from a shattering collision. Saville cast a quick tight-lipped glance at the little Chinese. Not a muscle of Wu's face had moved.

"If it is fated that we die," he said softly, "we die. Even if we must ignominiously slip on soap in bath tub."

Saville smiled, and then his face hardened. What did Fate have in store for John Crowther? It was not till he saw a sign post and glanced at his watch to assure himself that they would reach their destination with a few minutes to spare that he relaxed.

The little railroad station at Highcliffe with the ferry house adjoining was deserted except for the ticket agent when they arrived. Fog hung so thickly over the river that you could see scarcely twenty yards ahead.

"The ferry that connects with the seven-twenty isn't in yet?" Saville asked.

"Not yet. She's due at seven-twelve," said the agent.

"Mr. John Crowther, the District Attorney, usually comes over on it?"

The agent gave Saville a curious look, saw Jericho and Hallam looming up behind him in the mist, saw the Chinese sitting imperturbably at the wheel



of the car. Suspicion crept into his eyes. Saville saw it, and from the pocket of his coat he pulled a police badge. It had helped him out of spots before. At sight of it the man grinned with relief.

"Gee, you had me worried for a minute," he said. "There's a lot of ugly talk about these Dzamba brothers. Three of 'em—just like there's three of you. Sure. Mr. Crowther always takes this ferry. It ought to be here any second now." Then he frowned. "Funny I ain't heard her fog horn. It's thick as pea soup out there."

THEY waited. Minutes clicked on. Far up the railroad tracks they heard the warning whistle of a locomotive.

"Gee, the ferry's late," said the agent. "Old Garfield ain't missed a train in forty years." He peered anxiously out into the fog, but there was no sign of the boat. And then the seven-twenty came rushing into the station. The agent rushed up to the conductor.

"Ferry's late," he said. "Can you hold her a minute on account of Mr. Crowther?"

"I'll risk it a minute or two," he said.

After two minutes, no ferry. The conductor went up the tracks, and spoke to the engineer who was leaning out of his cab, wiping his goggles. The big engine's whistle tooted four or five impatient blasts. They all listened. They had all of them expected an answering signal from the late ferry boat. Nothing.

The conductor shook his head. "Sorry. We'll have to get under way. We're behind schedule as it is."

The train pulled out, leaving the

members of the Hunt Club and the agent standing on the platform in the drizzle. A chill of apprehension was slowly stealing over Saville.

"Can we get in touch with the ferry station on the other side?" he asked the agent.

"Ain't no one there. But there's a store nearby."

"Call them," said Saville sharply. "Find out if the ferry has left. They may have decided the fog was too thick."

"Garfield hasn't missed a run in forty years," said the agent. He went off to telephone and Saville followed. Presently he was connected with the store on the other side of the river. He inquired about the ferry. The answer made him turn to Saville, wide-eyed.

"Gee," he said. "She left exactly on time. Now what the hell—"

"Ask your man if he knows whether Crowther was on board," Saville said sharply.

The agent did as he was told. "Mr. Crowther was on her, all right," he said presently. "His chauffeur's in the store there now, buyin' supplies."

Saville felt suddenly sick at the pit of his stomach. He went out onto the platform and told the others.

"Maybe the boat's lost in the fog," said Jericho, half-heartedly.

"My dear John," Saville said grimly, "a man who hasn't missed a run in forty years doesn't get lost. He could make this run blindfolded or in his sleep."

"What do you think then?"

Saville's lips were set in a tight line, and his voice was harsh.

"I hope to God I'm wrong," he said, "but I think we're *too late!*" He swung around on the agent:

"Where can we get a launch? We've

got to find out what's happened to that boat at once."

## CHAPTER VII

### The Brand of the Butcher

SAVILLE and Hallam sat in the back of the launch, their coat collars turned up against the penetrating cold and dampness of the fog. Jericho was in the bow, trying to see through the impenetrable blanket of fog. The owner of the launch, an old river man, piloted the boat assuredly toward the opposite shore. Wu had been given orders to drive the car to Poughkeepsie, cross the Mid-Hudson bridge, and join them on the other side.

Saville was chewing on the stem of his unlit pipe, his face drawn in a bitter mask. "In our whole career, Arthur, we've never been so slow, so consistently 'just too late' as we have in dealing with these Dzambas."

"Madness is unpredictable," said Hallam quietly.

"But it *isn't!*" Saville's voice was harsh. "Why, damn it, man, we've outguessed every move they've made—but always too late!"

"No point in giving up on Crowther till we're sure," said Hallam. But there was little hope in his voice. Nearly an hour ago Crowther had left the other shore in a ferry that took only twelve minutes to cross the river. "There may have been an accident on the river—a collision of some sort," Hallam finished weakly.

"And no whistles? No alarms?"

Suddenly the shore loomed up ahead of them. The launch pulled into a little wharf next the empty ferry slip. Half a dozen men were waiting on the dock, one of them dressed in a chauffeur's uniform. Excited queries were leveled at all of them as they climbed out.

"The ferry not on the other side?" "Old Garfield knew this run backwards—" "—haven't heard any whistles of any other boats."

The chauffeur was white to the lips. He cornered Saville. "There's no explanation of this, sir? I'm Giles, Mr. Crowther's chauffeur."

Saville eyed him keenly. "You saw Mr. Crowther get on the ferry yourself, Giles?"

"Yes, sir."

"And the boat pulled out on time?"

"Prompt as usual, sir."

"Did you notice any other passengers on the boat?"

"No, sir, I didn't," said Giles. "Of course the fog was pretty thick, and I didn't get out of the car. Besides that, I couldn't have seen anyone up in the bow. But I did notice, sir, that old Garfield had a new man."

"New man?"

"Yes, sir. Either Garfield or his son always unties the lines and hooks the chain across the end of the ferry. This time there was a stranger on the job. I figured either the old man or his kid was sick and they'd taken on someone temporarily."

"Can we find out about that definitely?"

"I'll ask in the lunch wagon, sir," said Giles. "The ferry docks on this side after the last trip at night. Old Garfield and his kid always have breakfast in the wagon before the first trip." He went off. Presently he came back, and his teeth were chattering.

"There was nothing the matter with either of the Garfields," he said.

"Is this trip over at seven o'clock the first one of the day?"

"Yes, sir. This time of year," Giles gripped Saville's arm tightly. "You think something's happened, sir. I mean, the Dzambas—"

"What else is there to think?" asked Saville grimly.

Giles spoke bitterly.

"I begged him to let me go over with him, sir," he said. "We stood guard all night at the house, the other men and me. Especially after the police phoned about five in the morning and sent the sheriff over. Mr. Crowther laughed at the idea of danger. He said the danger was in New York and he'd be guarded there. By God, if there's anything I can do—"

"You can keep the news from Mrs. Crowther till we're absolutely sure," said Saville. "But, frankly, I'm afraid there's very little hope."

HE held a consultation with his friends and the boatman who'd brought them over. The latter, whose name was Little, still was under the impression that Saville and the others were of the police. The agent on the other side had told him of Saville's badge.

"Frankly, from what Giles has told me," said Saville, "I think the Dzambas had control of the boat when Crowther went aboard. That means they may have done for Garfield and his son too." He turned to Little. "If you wanted to get rid of a ferry boat, what would you do?"

Little shifted his quid and spat.

"I'd take her out in the middle and scuttle her," he said.

"Not if you wanted to get away in a hurry," said Hallam. "You'd put in some place close to shore, so you could get off quickly. It's my opinion they'd head downstream, put in somewhere on this side of the river and make tracks. Mind you, Geoffrey, they don't care much whether anyone finds the boat or not. They just wanted to kill a man—" His voice was hard.

"It's worth trying," said Saville. "Let's head downstream on this side. It's the best we can do. If she was sunk out in the middle we haven't a ghost of a chance of finding anything till the fog's lifted."

It was perhaps half an hour later that Jericho let out a shout from the bow of the launch. They had been crawling along, close to shore.

"There she is!" the big redhead cried.

Garfield's old ferry was right against the bank, nose in. She had apparently been run aground, for she listed slightly to one side. As fast as they could they pulled alongside and the three members of the Hunt Club piled aboard. The first thing they saw was the body of a man lying on the upper deck beside the wheelhouse. It was old man Garfield, his head crushed in like an egg shell. At the head of the engine room stairs was his son. He too had received a terrible blow on the head, but he was still breathing.

In the enclosed runway for automobiles they found the body of John Crowther. He had been stabbed in half a dozen places. His handsome face was smeared with blood. Saville saw something on the deck beside the body and turned away, sick at the sight of it. Salvatore Dzamba had settled accounts with the man who had meant to trap him with words. Crowther's tongue had been cut out.

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Switch of Death

"DELAY! Delay!" Saville was raging as he paced restlessly up and down the rain soaked pathway of a farmhouse located near the place where the ferry boat had been grounded with its gruesome car-

go. They had brought the younger Garfield here, sent for a doctor, notified the police, and gotten in touch with Wu to have him bring the car. Young Garfield had a badly fractured skull with only the barest chance of life, in Hallam's opinion.

"While we stand here twiddling our thumbs those devils are on their way to something else! But where?" Saville, usually cold as ice in the face of horror, seemed to be badly shaken. "Like a bunch of half-witted children we sit comfortably before our fire in New York while they set the trap for Crowther! By God, the law breaks down when it comes to dealing with men like the Dzambas. Trial! A chance to prove their innocence! They should have been shot down like mad dogs instead of being pampered in a jail and given a chance to scheme their way to freedom."

Jericho, sitting slumped on a stone wall, nodded grimly. "Now we sit here and wait till they butcher someone else before we can pick up the trail again."

They had tracked the three escaping brothers through the woods to a cement highway where all possibility of guessing the direction they had taken vanished.

Saville pounded his clenched fist into the palm of his other hand.

"We're not," he said desperately. "We've got to figure this thing out! Who will be next on their slate? Will it be indiscriminate killing of the forces of the law, or have they other definite individuals on their list?"

"They want Doane badly enough," said Jericho.

"I'm not afraid for Doane," said Saville. "He's ready. Every cop in New York is on the lookout for them."

Arthur Hallam, sitting on the edge

of the porch, was staring with unblinking eyes out toward the road.

"Do you believe in signs, Geoffrey?" he asked in his dry voice.

Saville looked at him impatiently. "What the devil do you mean?"

Hallam pointed a pudgy finger toward a road marker on which was painted in large black letters: ALBANY, 76 mi.

"I seem to remember," said Arthur Hallam, "that the governor refused to stay Pietro Dzamba's execution. Do you suppose—"

"Great God!" Saville's voice cracked sharply. "And they've got three hours' start on us!"

A STUDIOUS looking young man with horn-rimmed spectacles was sitting at a telephone in the state house in Albany.

"What name did you say?" he asked politely. "Cabell? Nevel? Would you mind spelling it?"

"Listen, you thick-headed idiot," came the voice over the wire, "I'm trying to tell you that Governor Clifford's life is in danger! What the hell difference does it make what my name is? I've got to get in touch with the Governor at once. It's a matter of life and death—his life and death!"

The young man was flustered.

"The Governor isn't here," he said. "Besides, I can't tell you where he is unless I know your business with him. People are always giving us some sort of cock and bull stories, and I—"

"I want to save Governor Clifford's life! Is that business enough?" Saville's voice, harsh with impotent fury, made the young man move the receiver a little further away from his ear. He squirmed uneasily in his chair. If this was some crank—on the other hand—

"Every minute is precious," Saville shouted. "If you don't tell me where Clifford is his murder will be on your hands, and I'll see that you pay for it! Have you ever heard of the Dzambas brothers, you half-wit?"

The young man squirmed some more.

"Well," he said, "I may be doing the wrong thing—it'll probably cost me my job—but the Governor is at his fishing camp in Bellegrave. He and his brother and Mr. —"

"Phone him at once that the Dzambas are headed his way. Notify your local police. Get in touch with the nearest State Troopers' barracks."

"But there's no phone at the camp," said the young man, "and I have no authority to—"

"God help you if I ever get my hands on you," Saville cried.

The young man stared thoughtfully at the phone, wondering why the man at the other end had hung up.

DOWN the hills in back of the town of Bellegrave flows a frothing mountain stream, tumbling madly over rocks in a race against itself, toward a little lake. This lake is about a mile long, and at its outlet the water rushes over a fall about fifty feet high and goes plunging on through a rock ravine, eventually to empty itself into the Hudson.

At the very edge of this fall, so that one side of it is actually flush with the cliff, stood Governor Cyrus Clifford's fishing camp. "Camp" was a rather modest term for the rustic house, for while it had the appearance of great simplicity from the outside, inside it was equipped with every modern device—electric light, electric ice box, electric stove, oil burning heater. Governor Clifford liked to fish—but he

also liked comfort, and but for the absence of a telephone, this "camp" of his lacked nothing.

On this particular day Governor Clifford, his brother, Redmond Clifford, and a Mr. Pettibone, upstate banker, was seated in a rowboat out in the middle of the lake pulling in striped bass with pleasant regularity. It was raining gently; they were quite wet and quite happy. They were not within view of the camp, or they might have had some inkling of the terrible experience that lay ahead of them. But ignorance is bliss, and with the bass biting these three men were happily unaware of what was in store for them.

For through the woods came three dark men; men with blood on their hands, wolves fresh from the kill. And their leader had the eyes of a maniac. One of them carried a black bag in his left hand, and all three carried guns quite openly in their right hands. The Dzambas, a score of murders to their credit, were coming to settle an account with Cyrus Clifford.

They approached the house without any particular caution. It was Salvatore who kicked open the front door and led the way in, his eyes burning like hot coals, his white teeth bared. A quick search of the house showed it was empty.

"They fish," said Salvatore. He laughed. He turned to Vincente Dzamba, sleek, narrow-eyed, who carried the little black bag. "There will be time for you to prepare your little game unhampered, my brother." His white teeth flashed. "And you, Leonardo, stand watch at the window. If any but the Governor and his party approach, shoot and shoot to kill."

Leonardo nodded grimly and squatted on the window seat, waiting. Vincente Dzamba opened his little

black bag. Coils and wires were produced, and a small square box that looked something like the transformer for a child's electric train. He worked with sure fingers, rapidly. Salvatore searched the house, returning after a bit with four shot guns and dozens of rounds of ammunition.

"The Governor is a big hunter," said Salvatore, laughing. "Rabbits and little birds."

Leonardo suddenly cried out from his place on the window seat—Leonardo with the long arms and the stooped shoulders of a gorilla—"They are coming in from the lake, Salvatore."

Governor Clifford, his brother Redmond, and Mr. Pettibone moored their boat at the edge of the shore and came toward the house, carrying their tackle, their creels bursting with fish. Governor Clifford and Mr. Pettibone were arguing the merits of broiled bass as opposed to bass sautéed in butter as they opened the front door and stepped into the house. Across the threshold the Governor stopped short, eyeing with astonishment the coils of wire, the little black transformer box and the bag.

"What the devil—?" he began.

"You will all three raise your hands very high above your heads unless you wish to die instantly," said Salvatore Dzamba in a quiet but menacing voice.

**G**OVERNOR CLIFFORD swung around as the door was closed behind him, and stared into the muzzle of Salvatore's gun. For a second he seemed frozen where he stood. He had never seen Salvatore in the flesh, but he recognized him instantly from pictures he had seen. The color drained from his face as he slowly raised his hands. Redmond Clifford and Mr. Pettibone were already reach-

ing for the ceiling. Salvatore came forward, a grim, mocking master of ceremonies. Vincente and Leonardo came out of the next room, where they had momentarily concealed themselves.

"Brother Leonardo, you will secure the prisoners," said Salvatore. As Leonardo began binding the three unhappy men with a coil of rope Salvatore went on talking in an oily, conversational tone. "The pleasure of meeting you has been too long deferred, Governor Clifford. One night I sat and thought about you for twelve hours—the night my brother Pietro was electrocuted. We had asked for a stay of execution and we waited all afternoon and all night for your answer. And then Pietro died. You will forgive us," and his voice was heavy with sarcasm, "if I tell you that my brothers and I have no love for you, Governor Clifford."

Cyrus Clifford took a deep breath. He was not without courage.

"What do you propose to do?" he asked calmly.

Salvatore's eyebrows went up.

"You are men about to die," he said.

"Can you have doubted that?"

Something like a sob escaped the terrified Mr. Pettibone. "I've never done anything to you, Dzamba. For God's sake—I have a wife—children—"

"I had a brother!" Salvatore's eyes were suddenly hot with passion. He turned toward Redmond Clifford. "And this, Governor, is *your* brother, eh?"

Cyrus Clifford's voice was harsh.

"You've got the upper hand here, Dzamba," he said. "But neither my brother nor Mr. Pettibone has done anything to arouse your enmity. Do what you want to me, but let them go. Of course you know," he added, "that you will burn for this."

"An empty threat, Governor, for if we do not burn for this we will burn for something else. No, my friend, this is the supreme moment we have waited for. We planned it before we were caught. We have clung to the hope that it might be accomplished even when we were in jail. And now the Fates have played perfectly into our hands." He smiled. "I have noticed your glances at this little apparatus which brother Vincente has set up here. Have you guessed its purpose? No? Then I will make it clear. Leonardo, place Mr. Redmond Clifford in that armchair. Be sure that he is tied securely."

The man with the shape of a gorilla pushed Redmond Clifford into the big armchair and tied his arms and legs roughly to the arms and legs of the chair.

"Now, Vincente!" Salvatore's voice was hard. He moistened his already wet lips.

Sleek, dark, narrow-eyed Vincente moved noiselessly across to his coils and wires. As he worked a look of horror crept over Cyrus Clifford's face. Vincente carefully attached a piece of wire to each of Redmond Clifford's wrists, and another to his ankle.

"You see," said Salvatore softly. "A rough imitation of the electric chair itself."

"For God's sake, Dzamba—" Governor Clifford's voice cracked.

"Vincente is something of an electrical genius," said Salvatore. "He prepared this little device especially for your entertainment. A little machine for stepping up the household current—a little box to control just how much juice shall be sent through the victim. You notice there are six notches on the little transformer box. The first notch produces only a faint tingling in the

fingers and toes; the second sends it all through the body; the third is more painful; the fourth agonizing; and the fifth brings death unless the man has extraordinary vitality. But the sixth, Governor Clifford, could not fail to kill an ox! A pleasant little toy, eh?"

SWEAT was running off Redmond Clifford's face, but he kept silent.

He looked appealingly at his brother, the Governor. Cyrus Clifford was white to the lips.

"I am ready to die, Dzamba," he said. "Take my brother out of there and get it over with quickly. God knows why you've gone to these elaborate pains. Why not a knife?"

Salvatore looked at him with an expression of mock astonishment. "My dear Governor, surely you have not missed the point. We want you to experience what we have experienced. You see the parallel? Your brother—our brother. The electric chair! The only difference is that at Sing Sing a man dies quickly. But the suspense for his friends has been hours long. So that you may feel some of that suspense we have arranged that *your* brother shall die slowly. It seems quite fair, don't you think?"

Something cracked inside Cyrus Clifford. Despite his bonds he hurled his body at Salvatore. "You dirty, murdering dog!" A flood of terrible profanity burst from him, silenced only when Salvatore struck him fiercely across the mouth. Cyrus Clifford fell hard, unable to break the fall because of his trussed arms. Salvatore looked down at him with blazing eyes.

"There was nothing we could do to save Pietro," he snarled. He reached down and yanked the Governor to his feet. "Now you can feel what we felt. Vincente! The first notch!"

Vincente knelt beside the little transformer box without a word. He moved the switch up. Redmond Clifford must have had nerves of iron, for he made not a sound.

The Governor shouted hysterically: "They can't do this to you, Red! They can't! By God, I'll—"

Salvatore struck him again. Knocked him helplessly into a chair, where he lay, breathing hard.

"The second notch, Vincente," said Salvatore implacably.

Redmond Clifford caught his lower lip between his teeth and a little trickle of blood ran down his chin.

"I compliment you on your brother, Governor," said Salvatore sardonically. "Pietro was a braye man, too. The third notch, Vincente!"

Redmond Clifford stiffened as Vincente moved up the switch. He seemed to gasp for breath and then held himself rigid, his eyes closed. Cyrus Clifford began to scream like a maniac. And then there came a sudden interruption to this horrible drama. Leonardo at the window shouted tensely:

"Salvatore! Men are coming! *Men with guns!*"

Salvatore sprang to the window. What he saw made him swear softly under his breath. He drew his gun and rested it carefully on the window ledge. Then he pulled the trigger. Almost instantly a literal hail of lead came smashing through the glass. But Salvatore and Leonardo dropped to the floor. And one of the attackers staggered and fell. Salvatore's eyes were blazing.

"Quick! Each of you to a different window. Take those shotguns. If they come closer we can kill them like knocking over ninepins!"

Cyrus Clifford began to laugh, horribly, hysterically. There was foam

flecking his blue lips. As Salvatore crossed to a far window he struck Clifford viciously with the butt of his pistol, and the laughter was stilled. And Redmond Clifford writhed and struggled in his bonds, for Vincente had left the power switch where it was.

## CHAPTER IX

### The Hunt Club Strikes

GOFFREY SAVILLE, white-faced, leaned over the prostrate form of Arthur Hallam. The little fat man smiled up at him through twisted lips.

"It's nothing," he said. "Just got me in the leg."

They had dragged him around behind a huge rock, out of danger. Jericho, his face looking as though it were carved out of granite, was watching the house, a repeating rifle in his hand. Wu came running through the woods from where they had parked their car.

"Lucky thing they were firing with revolvers," said Hallam, still smiling. "If they had rifles and a better aim, I might at this moment be sampling nectar and ambrosia." He gripped Saville's arm tightly. "Just put a tourniquet on it to stop the bleeding and leave me here. You can't waste time or opportunity now that you've got them cornered."

"Fat chance," said Saville. "We're getting you out of this, old boy."

"Clifford may still be alive," said Hallam, coolly. "Every minute you waste here with me may be the difference between life and death for him."

Saville shook his head.

"We can't cross that opening to the house," he said. "They'd shoot us down like rats. Only thing to do is send Wu for help."



"And by the time it arrives," said Hallam, his voice harsh, "the Governor of New York will be a grade A sample of hamburger—if I know my Dzambas! Geoffrey, you're not going to let them beat us again, are you?"

Saville shrugged impatiently. "There's no way to get at 'em without committing suicide."

Jericho, standing behind the big rock with his rifle ready to swing into action if he saw any movement at the camp, spoke without looking around.

"If we attack from two sides," he said, "it might be done."

"How the devil can you attack from two sides?" Saville demanded. "If you try to come up the lake in a boat you'll simply be making a target of yourself."

"I was just thinking," said Jericho softly, "that if you kept them busy on this side—"

"Well?"

"I could swim it," said Jericho. "Keep pretty well under water most of the time—"

"And then attack the Dzambas, who are armed with knives and guns, with your bare hands," said Saville, dryly. "You forget, my dear John, that you can't carry a gun under water."

Jericho turned, grinning, and pulled an oilskin tobacco pouch from his pocket. He emptied the tobacco on the grass.

"This will keep the revolver dry," he said, eagerly. "Listen, Geoffrey, this is how I see it. Get Wu to bring the car in here. Then you open fire on the house and I slip down to the lake and swim for it. We take a chance on the fact that the Dzambas will concentrate on you and Wu. The moment I get to the shore next the house, you and Wu hop into the car and tear along that open space to the cabin. That bul-

let-proof glass in the car will make it safe enough. The Dzambas will be focussed on you, and I'll let 'em have the business from one of the back windows."

"But suppose they spot you swimming?" Saville objected.

"Then you can drag the lake for me after the party's over. I'll donate my body to science," Jericho laughed. His eyes shone like two bright stars. This man who had faced man-eating tigers in the African jungles, who had matched himself against the most dangerous killers in the underworld, was never so happy as when an opportunity came for action. He was already stripping off his coat and shirt.

"The main thing," he said, as he carefully wrapped his revolver in the oilskin pouch and slipped it into one of his trouser pockets, "is to keep their attention on you, Geoffrey. It'll take me about five minutes to make the swim. You and Wu wait that long and then set sail in the car—and give 'em hell! Hurry, Wu! Get the car here." He turned to Saville. "And listen, mug. Salvatore Dzamba is *my* meat!"

A moment later Wu reappeared with the car.

"Leave the motor running," said Jericho. "And remember—in exactly five minutes—"

Saville gripped his hand tightly. "I don't like it, John. For God's sake, be careful."

"Duck soup," Jericho grinned. "Nothing to it. See you at the execution, my fine friend." And swiftly he made his way to the water's edge and slipped in.

SAVILLE took up his station behind the rock and swung a rifle up to his shoulders. The cabin was too far away for him to make anything

out at the windows, but he began to fire at them, his lips set tightly together. A glance at the lake showed a few faint ripples to mark Jericho's progress. He had emptied his gun and was about to reload it when he heard Hallam's voice.

"Here's another one," said the fat



JOHN JERICO

man coolly. "Hand that over. The least I can do is act as powder boy!" He was propped against the rock, smoking one of his thick Turkish cigarettes, calmly holding out another rifle to Saville.

The leader of the Hunt Club glanced at his wrist watch. "Better get in the car, Wu. We've got to be ready to start on the dot."

Meanwhile Jericho swam toward the cabin, under water all the time except for a few breathing spells, when he managed to flop over on his back and just stick his face out of the water. The sharp rattle of Saville's fire and return salvos from the cottage told him

that the ruse was working. He was fifteen yards from the shore now, and he caught a glimpse of figures moving rapidly about inside the house. In a minute or two he would reach the rocky ledge at the back of the house. And then the fun would begin. If only they were in time to save Clifford the thing would be a complete success. Ten yards—five yards—and still he was unnoticed.

On shore Saville glanced at his wrist watch. One minute to go. He turned to Hallam.

"Keep that extra rifle," he said. "If anything happens to us they'll try to make their getaway past you. You can finish 'em off if we fail."

"Or suffer a fate worse than death," Hallam chuckled. "You won't fail, Geoffrey. It's a habit of yours. By the way, if the Governor has any brandy you might bring me a good stiff jolt of it when the party's over. This damn leg is raising hell with me."

Saville's face softened for a moment. "And a ham sandwich, if there are any around—you damned idiot!" Then he looked at his watch and his lips tightened. "Here goes the charge of the Light Brigade."

He climbed into the car beside Wu, rifle across his knees.

"Okay, little fella," he said, grimly.

Away the car roared toward the house over rocks and stumps, swaying perilously, bouncing Wu and Saville up and down, endangering their necks against the top. The little Chinese clung to the wheel like grim death, keeping the bucking machine on its course. Saville poured a hail of lead from his side towards the cabin, but it was impossible to shoot with any accuracy. However, the main purpose was to keep attention on the car and in this they were succeeding. Bullets

spattered against the windshield, but the bullet-proof glass was effective.

It was perhaps two hundred yards to the cabin, and before they'd covered fifty of them two tires were gone and they clattered forward on iron rims.

**M**EANWHILE, Jericho had reached the shore. He clung for a moment to the slippery rocks, getting his breath. He saw Saville and Wu coming hurtling across the open space like a runaway locomotive. There was no time to lose.

Clambering up the rocks, he made for one of the rear windows, unwrapping his gun from the oilskin as he moved. Presently he was at the back window. From there he saw for a minute the panorama of action inside—the three prisoners, and the three Dzambas, their backs to him, firing at the oncoming motor.

With the butt of his gun Jericho smashed a pane of glass in the window. For weeks he had been on the trail of Salvatore Dzamba and now the moment had come for him to settle that mad murderer's hash forever. But the sound of smashing glass made Salvatore swing around. For a second Jericho saw the startled look in his smouldering black eyes, and then he fired.

John Jericho was perhaps the best revolver shot in the world. At fifteen feet it was impossible for him to miss a fifty cent piece, and twice his gun blazed, aimed directly at Salvatore Dzamba's heart. Then the sweat stood out on Jericho's forehead, for Salvatore only smiled—a white-toothed, flashing smile—as he raised his own gun and fired.

A cry of pain escaped Jericho's lips as he was knocked flat on the rocks outside the window, his shoulder

smashed to bits by an expanding bullet. He lay for a moment where he was, dazed, cursing himself for a fool. Dzamba must have been wearing a bullet-proof vest, and he, like an idiot, had missed his chance. A failure that would probably cost him his life, for Salvatore would now come to the window and kill him. Jericho had dropped his own revolver in his fall. In an agony of pain he slithered down the rocks toward the water. It was the only chance of escape.

But Salvatore Dzamba did not come to the window because there was greater danger from the other side, and no doubt he imagined his one shot had done for the big redhead. Saville's car was within ten yards of the house, and the little Chinese was not slackening his mad pace. Leonardo Dzamba, blood trickling from a scalp wound above his left eye, screamed as he pulled futilely at the trigger of an empty gun. Vincente sprang away from the door, jamming a new cartridge clip into his gun. Salvatore, his eyes burning like hot coals, looked around him like a trapped animal, seeking an avenue of escape.

And then there was a thundering crash like an earthquake as Wu jammed the car squarely against the door of the house. It smashed through, into the room in a shower of plaster and splintered boards, and came to an abrupt halt. Wu was flattened over the wheel, his wind gone, gasping for breath. Saville, battered and dazed, managed to keep his head long enough to fire straight at Vincente as he raised his newly loaded revolver—and the sallow-faced electrician plunged head first into the stone fireplace.

Leonardo, with a cry of rage, sprang unarmed onto the running-board and wrenched at Saville's gun barrel. Sa-

ville drove his right fist straight at the bloodstained face — Leonardo staggered back and once again Saville's gun spoke. He saw Leonardo throw up his hands, a gaping wound in his throat.

Then he turned to face Salvatore, leader of those murderous brothers. For a fleeting second he saw the older brother, pulling at the trigger of a gun that was empty. Then, before Saville could swing his own gun into line, around the windshield of the car, Salvatore Dzamba sprang head first at the nearest window.

Saville sank back in the seat, exhausted, panting for breath. There was no noise now, but the sound of combat still rang deafeningly in his ears. Then a feeble voice reached him. It was Mr. Pettibone, the upstate banker, twisting in his bonds.

"For God's sake turn off that switch!" he screamed. "Redmond's being electrocuted!"

"CERTAINLY was lucky you gentlemen were up here on a hunting trip," the local sheriff said to Saville. He stood by the leader

of the Hunt Club in the wrecked cabin. Saville smiled grimly. That was the story he had told. The Park Avenue Hunt Club wanted no publicity.

"I guess there's no doubt you got all three of them," the sheriff continued, jovially. They were standing by the window through which Salvatore had jumped. It looked down over the fifty foot cliff to the stony rapids beyond. "No one could make that jump and live."

"But you haven't found the body," said Saville, grimly.

"Well—no. But it was probably washed downstream."

Saville's lips were tight set. He looked at the two Cliffords, still unconscious, being worked over by a doctor. Jericho and Hallam had been taken to a hospital for treatment of serious wounds. He shuddered slightly.

"I hope to God you're right," he said to the sheriff.

But he knew that until he saw Salvatore Dzamba's dead body with his own eyes he would never be sure—never be sure that that mad murderer would not strike again.

*Watch for*

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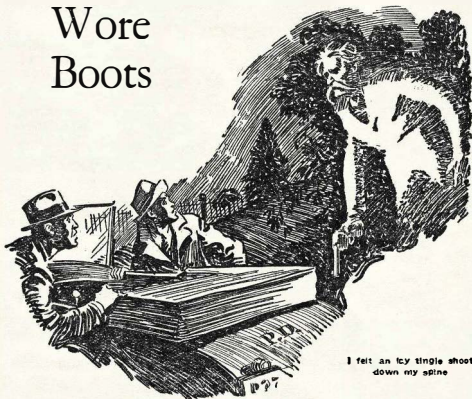
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# The Ghost Wore Boots

By Richard B. Sale



I felt an icy tingle shoot  
down my spine

*Real Lead Bullets Came Out of the Gun of the Ghost That  
Forced Daffy Dill to Aid Its Supernatural Crime*

WHEN I eased into the Old Man's office he tipped back his green eyeshade and asked, "Daffy, did you ever hear of Wilson Quayne?"

I sighed. "Did I ever hear of Abraham Lincoln? Of course I have. Quayne's the steel magnate. You're Satan himself. And I'm Daffy Dill, who's had a hard day and is going home to date Dinah Mason. What is this, chief, a game?"

"You're going," said the Old Man, "out to Spuyten Duyvil to Wilson Quayne's castle after a story."

"You're going," I said, "to the bug-house."

The Old Man grinned. "I mean it, Daffy."

"What's the yarn about?" I groaned.

"A ghost."

"Ha-ha," I said sorrowfully. "What kind of a ghost?"

"A special kind. He was wearing boots and carrying an old Colt six-gun. You know — one of those grave-scratchers that Wild Bill used to make Injuns bite dust with."

"Who called in?"

"Now there," said the Old Man, "is the story! Van Lamont called."

"I know only one Van Lamont," I said, "and he tries to act, outside of being a first-class skunk and thinking he's Hollywood's gift to Woman."

"One and the same," nodded the Old Man. "He's one of Quayne's guests. And the others are Majorie Culpepper and Ian Norman. Names, Daffy, all names!—And names make newspapers!"

"Just what happened?"

The Old Man shrugged. "Don't know. Inspector Halloran tipped me off that Lamont had called from Quayne's to say that they had all seen a ghost and that the shade was none other than old Major Culpepper himself. Halloran's sending Bill Hanley out to check."

"Listen, chief," I said, "Dinah's a swell girl and besides Shakespeare used the last shade when he struck Banquo in 'Macbeth.'"

"Don't you get the setup, Daffy?" The Old Man was in earnest. "Here's a famous steel man—Quayne. A notorious actor—Lamont. Here's Majorie Culpepper, who heads her father's munitions company with Ian Norman managing president. They all say they've seen Majorie's dead poppa! Is that a yarn?"

I got up. "Okay," I said.

I went back to my desk in the city room. I picked up the telephone and called Dinah Mason—who is bad for my bloodstream. Dinah is a sort of receptionist on the *Chronicle*. She's got platinum blond hair and starry eyes and every time I see her, I go Spanish and I hear the tinkle of wedding bells.

She opened up with: "Your nickel. Broadcast!"

"The date is off, my hourglass," I

said sadly. "The Old Man is sending me out to No Man's Land to cover a story. So I'll see you tomorrow, my little cupcake, and no two-timing."

"Veddy well," she said, just like that, and hung up.

I sighed disconsolately and trudged down the stair of the *Chronicle* building to West Street where I hailed an ambitious hack-driver. "Head north up the Drive," I told him, "and don't stop until we hit Alaska."

WE'D been riding about an hour when the driver turned around and tapped on the dividing window.

"Are yuh sure this is right?" he asked hollowly.

"Sure I'm sure."

"Well," he said, "I guess you know."

"Why the question?"

"Nothin'," he answered. "Only—this is the loneliest damn country I ever been in. Spooky as hell!" He shivered. "Where are we, anyhow? Up near Bear Mountain?"

"Be yourself," I said. "You're still on the twenty-four buck isle of Manhattan. And there's my stop down the block where those big stone cairns are sticking out."

"Thank God," he said, and slued into the curb.

I opened the door and got out. Then I walked up the long circular drive to Quayne's castle. The grounds were dark. There weren't any shadows because there wasn't any moon. I shivered at the bite of the sharp river wind and trotted up the stone staircase which fronted the drive. After banging the big brass knocker a couple of times, I waited, listening to the low whine of the wind as it came around the corner of the house.

The door opened. A little major-domo stood there, looking a trifle startled.

"Yes?" he asked.

"Holmes," I said, "is the name. Sherlock Holmes of the homicide bureau. Inspector Halloran sent me."

"A-about the ghost?" he faltered.

"About the ghost," I nodded.

"Come in," he said. "Mr. Quayne is in the library. I'll tell—"

A voice broke out irascibly from a pair of double doors to the left of the hall:

"Boggs! Boggs! Who the devil is it?"

A tall, thin man stepped through the doors. He was in a tux and he looked immaculate. His hair was absolutely white. He wore a monocle in his left eye. He stared at me. Behind him I saw Bill Hanley's good-natured pan come into focus and grin at me.

"Who is it?" Wilson Quayne repeated sharply. "Don't stand there shaking, Boggs!"

"It's—a—Mr. Holmes, sir," said Boggs. "Mr. Sherlock Holmes from headquarters."

"Don't be an ass," Quayne said. He turned to me. "What nonsense is this? Who are you and what's your business here?"

"Dill's my handle," I replied. "Daffy Dill."

"A detective?"

"A reporter."

"My God!" he exclaimed. "Get out of here! I'll not be made a fool of by any—"

"Take it easy," I said. "I'm not making a fool out of anyone. The yarn is public now. You called the cops."

"But it sounds crazy," said Quayne, horrified. "People will think that we were all drunk, or—"

"I know this guy," Hanley told him. "He ain't a bad egg, Mr. Quayne. Play square with him and he'll handle that yarn right."

"Sure," I said. "Hell, Mr. Quayne, I'm no sensationalist. All I want is the story—if there is one."

He considered this and then nodded.



DAFFY DILL

"Come inside. I was just explaining it to Sergeant Hanley here. And Boggs—in the future remember that Sherlock Holmes is a character—not an entity!"

We went into the library and I said, "Let's have it from the beginning."

"Very well," Quayne clipped in that precise style of his. "We were sitting here after dinner at about seven-thirty. I was right where I am. Majorie was in the center there and Van Lamont was on the other side of her."

"Majorie Culpepper, that is?"

"Yes. Ian Norman had been drinking before dinner. He felt tipsy. I suggested that he lie down on that sofa over there. He did so, and fell asleep. The rest of us were sitting here, talking. The lights were all down and

only this fire illumined the room. At about a quarter of eight, I saw something whitish out of the corner of my eye. I turned—

"Yeah?" I asked eagerly.

"Right over there," Quayne said, "directly in front of the tapestry, I saw him."

"Who?"

"Major Culpepper," Quayne said. "I'm as sure as death. He was right there—white and hazy and nebulous. As I stared at him—in some horror I must confess—he walked across the room towards the sofa where Norman was asleep. He was dressed in that riding habit of his and he had on his boots—"

"Halloran mentioned a gun," I said.

"Yes." Quayne nodded; he paled too. "In his right hand, he held that famous single action Colt of his. It was a .31, a relic of the boom days of the West. He carried it with him always. Eccentric on the point."

"I know," I said. "I had to interview him once when Culpepper Munitions was up before the Senate for inquiry. I remember him twirling the grave-scratcher around his finger. I was scared it'd go off."

"Well," said Quayne, "the last thing he did was aim that gun at Norman. Then he disappeared just like a flash! That's my story and I'll swear to it!"

"Did Majorie Culpepper see him?" I asked.

## II

"YES. Naturally when I saw the thing, I gasped. It really was a terrible sight, gentlemen. She and Lamont saw it, too. She screamed and Lamont leaped to his feet. Then it vanished!" He shook his head. "Oh, it was the Major all right. I'd recog-

nize that handle-bar mustache of his anywhere."

"You don't believe it was a spook?" Hanley asked gruffly.

"I—don't—know," Quayne said slowly. "It was nothing human. It was something I could see through. It was a man I know is dead, a man whose cold flesh I felt in his coffin."

"I can't arrest a ghost," grunted Hanley. "I think you've been tricked, Mr. Quayne."

"Maybe so," said Quayne. "But if I was, then I can't trust my own eyes any more. Nor my mind. It was Culpepper. I don't know if he was alive or dead or living-dead, *but he walked!* He carried the Colt and he had his boots on. I saw him!"

"It couldn't have been some one rigged up like him?"

"No, no! Majorie thought it was her father so completely," Quayne said, "that she is going to get an order to exhume his body tomorrow to make sure the corpse is still in its coffin."

"Some angle!" I said. "He was buried with that six-gun."

"And his boots."

"Did Norman go home too?" I asked.

"No," said Quayne. "He was too drunk. Boggs put him to bed. He slept through the whole thing. We had to carry him up. He doesn't know yet what happened."

"What was Lamont doing here?"

"The young ass is in love with Majorie—or she with him. I'm not sure. They're engaged, at any rate. I think he's a fortune-hunter. I wouldn't blame the old Major for walking in that case. But the ghost seemed to draw his gun on Ian, who was asleep."

"That's off the record — about Majorie," I said.



"Of course," said Quayne instantly.

Sergeant Hanley got to his feet and yawned. He was bored to death. He didn't have enough imagination to have a nightmare. You know, the kind of a guy who sees an ax murder and then has a hearty lunch.

"Somebody's kidding the hell outa you," he said. "We'll wait for further developments before we make a report at h.q. I've got to be going, Mr. Quayne. Don't take it too seriously."

"Thanks," Quayne said. "Hope you're right."

"I am," Hanley grinned. "Want a lift home, Daffy?"

"Them is kind words," I said, "and helps the ole swindle sheet along. 'Night, Quayne. Thanks for the yarn."

Hanley and I went down the steps to the drive and walked to the squad car which he had brought. "Poppa," I said as we neared it, "what you think, eh?"

"Nuts," Hanley said bluntly.

"Quayne—or the ghost?"

"Both." He sighed. "They're all kidding themselves."

"You don't believe the Major came back, then?"

"Daffy," he said gruffly. "I've been a cop for ten years. I never saw the stiff yet who could rise from the dead—and God knows I've handled enough of them. Aw, let's go home!"

He reached the car and put his hand on the doorknob to pull it open. He was on the driver's side across from me. He stopped and his eyes suddenly took on a stony glaze. I thought he was staring at me, but right away I could see that they were flicking over my right shoulder somewhere behind me. My own eyes fixed on his face. His lips tightened.

He croaked hoarsely: "God!"

I wheeled and followed the line of his gaze in dread. I don't know what I expected to see. Whatever it was—I didn't see it.

I gasped and felt an icy tingle shoot down my spine, studding my skin with goose-pimples and raising the hair on my neck straight out.

TO the right of Quayne's castle, there was a row of tall shrubbery. Right close to the line of shrubbery something was walking towards us, with a peculiar lumbering gait.

For an instant it looked like a cloud. Then, as I focused it more clearly, I saw that it was the ghost—the banshee in boots. Major Culpepper—whose corpse was somewhere in Woodlawn Cemetery—was walking right towards us across Quayne's shrubs. I could see the shrubs through him, waving from the river wind. He loped along, swinging that deadly grave-scratcher at his side.

He threw his head back and forth as though he were looking for some one. Then he straightened up and he glared at Hanley and me. He was hazy and gaseous and he looked like smoke. I could see his handle-bar mustache like Quayne had said. I couldn't open my mouth. I was frozen dumb with terror. The only feeling I had was the tickling of the sweat down my face even though the cold wind was hitting me there.

The ghost stopped walking and looked straight at us. Then it grinned. The Colt six-gun shot up without warning, and it fired at us. There was no sound. There was nothing but a billow of white smoke from the mouth of the barrel and a heavy pall of silence.

Something went by my ear, buzzing

like a wasp. There was a tinkle behind me. I didn't have to turn. I knew a slug had broken through the windshield of the squad car. I croaked:

"Poppa!"

Hanley moved. He came around the front of the car with his service revolver in his hand and as he went by me, he fired twice at the ghost. The flame from his muzzle looked deep-orange in darkness.

The next thing I knew, the ghost was gone into nowhere and Hanley was stomping around the shrubbery where it had been, his gun waving wildly in his paw.

The door of the castle squeaked open and Wilson Quayne shouted:

"My God! What's happened out there?"

Bill Hanley came back and put his gun away. He looked at Quayne and didn't know what to say. He was white as a sheet, and I was no help at all. I was sweating frost.

"What happened?" Quayne asked again. "I heard shots fired!"

"Naw," I gulped. "That was only this can back-firing."

"Y-yeah," Hanley said.

"But your engine isn't running!"

"It stalled," I said. "We got to see what was the matter with it. That's all. It stalled. Get in, Bill, and for God's sake, get the hell outa here!"

We reached Riverside Drive before we looked at one another and said anything. I broke the ice with:

"What—was it, Poppa?"

Hanley's paws were trembling.

"Don't know, Daffy," he said.

"It shot at us."

"I know. Lookit that hole. A slug hit there, and it was a .32, if I'm a judge."

"Culpepper's Colt was a .31," I said.

"I—I know . . . A hundredth of an inch ain't much difference. That's a .31, really."

"Was it a spook, Poppa?"

"I never missed a target in my life," Hanley said. "My slug went right through it, Daffy. If it'd been alive—it'd be lying there now. But there wasn't anything!"

"Then you believe—"

Hanley grunted and hunched his shoulders. "I ain't saying. I ain't saying a thing any more tonight, Daffy. Forget it."

When we got downtown, it was only eleven-thirty and I had plenty of time to get to Dinah's but I didn't go. I went home and went to bed, but I had screwy dreams. So I got up and had a couple of Old-Fashions.

At three o'clock, being sufficiently oiled to sleep without dreams, I went home to bed again. I thought how damn silly the whole thing was. No crime. No one hurt. No hero, no villain, no heroine. All there was to write about was: *One ghost—when last seen, it was wearing boots and carrying a Colt six-shooter.*

It just didn't make sense.

### III

THE telephone next to my bed was jingling when I woke up. I reached over and picked up the receiver and said:

"Yeah?"

"Pardon me, Mr. Vanderastor," said the Old Man, "but did it ever occur to you that a newspaper known as the *New York Chronicle* pays you a salary each week to appear in its office around nine-thirty each morning and then make a pretense of working the rest of the day?"

"Hello, chief," I sighed. "What's wrong?"

"Wrong?" he echoed. "Nothing is wrong, my sluggard. I am only requesting that you report for work. It's eleven-thirty."

I looked at the clock. It was. "Holy, holy, chief," I said, "I'm sorry. I overslept. I didn't get to bed until—"

"Never mind that," said the Old Man. "Where's the ghost story? Every other rag in town has it but us."

"I didn't write it, chief," I said.

The Old Man is sharp. Instead of bawling me out, he muttered, "Then I was right. It's a bigger yarn than three sticks. That's all the space it got. What happened?"

"The ghost walked and I saw it."

"You saw it?" the Old Man yelled.

"Are you sure?"

"Hell's bells, chief, I never want to be that sure again. I dreamt about the damned thing all night. It shot at us and fired a live slug through Hanley's windshield!"

"Daffy," asked the Old Man gently, "are you sober?"

"Cold," I said.

"You saw a ghost? Not a man. Not a trick. A real ectoplasmic ghost in boots and with a six-gun?"

"It was a genuine banshee," I said.

"We've got a yarn!" exclaimed the Old Man. "You know what's happened this morning? Majorie Culpepper got an exhumation order from the coroner's office. What does that mean?"

I jumped out of bed excitedly. "It means she's going to dig out the old man and see if he's gone zombi!"

"Get out to Woodlawn," snapped the Old Man. "Holloran told me she's due there at one. Cover that yarn. Break it in the Wall Street closing. And step on it!" He paused, "Got a camera?"

"I've got the Leica loaded," I said.

"Scram then. Get a hot shot."

I stepped on it. A little after one I was at Woodlawn, strolling towards a small cluster of people in front of a huge white mausoleum. I cut across the grass towards them and reached a uniformed flatfoot.

"Beat it," he said, waving his night-stick.

"Utsnay," I said, starting by.

He grabbed me by the shoulder and shoved me back.

"Hey," he said easily. "Maybe you didn't hear me. Beat it. This is private business."

"Listen, flatfoot," I bluffed, "maybe you don't know me. I'm Holmes of the bureau."

"Sure," he grinned, "and I'm Charlie Chan of the Honolulu police force. Scram, mister."

I sort of stared at him. He was the first guy I ever met who didn't fall for the Holmes gag. "But this isn't private, officer," I said. "Miss Culpepper took out exhumation papers. That's a public statement of intent to exhume a corpse."

"Don't tell me the law," he said. "Just beat it before I wrap this stick around your neck."

"Hey, Bill!" I yelled.

Sergeant Bill Hanley turned around from where he stood in front of the tomb and caught sight of me.

"Call off your dogs," I said.

"Let him through," said Hanley.

The cop flushed as I stuck out my tongue and murmured, "Holmes of the bureau, my man. Step aside." I went up to the tomb. There was Hanley, and Wilson Quayne and Van Lamont—I recognized him from pictures—all slicked up like a Greek god. And there was also the girl and another guy whom I'd never seen before.

The cemetery caretaker was fumbling at the keyhole of the doors of the tomb.

Van Lamont pushed his way towards me and snapped at Hanley, "Sergeant—who is this man?" His classic profile was slightly annoyed and his usual petulant expression was almost girlish.

"His name's Dill," said Hanley. "He's a reporter."

"A reporter?" Lamont exclaimed.

Majorie Culpepper looked me over at those words. She was a nice little brunette with bright blue eyes. She looked haggard. As though she'd been crying a lot.

I couldn't blame her. I had had the jitters all night myself from seeing that spook.

The man with her said, "But, Sergeant, a reporter! Good God, man, we're trying to keep this as quiet as possible. Don't you think—"

"Daffy's a good man," Hanley said. "Besides, he's in this as much as the rest of you. He's the guy who saw the thing with me last night out on Mr. Quayne's estate. He's holding the story back as long as possible."

"Maybe I won't break it at all," I said. "There's been no crime so far. I hope you noticed that the *Chronicle* was the only rag that didn't have a story on it this morning."

"Those asinine stories this morning!" Lamont sniffed.

Quayne looked at me. "Why did you lie to me last night?" he asked kindly. "You said the car back-fired."

"Two reasons," I replied. "One—I wanted to get out of there in a helluva hurry. Two—I didn't want you to be scared the rest of the night." I nodded to the girl. "This is Majorie Culpepper, isn't it?"

"Yes," said Quayne. "And this is

Mr. Ian Norman with her. You know Lamont?"

"I've seen him," I said dryly.

IAN NORMAN was about thirty-four. He was holding his black felt hat in his hand. His hair was thin at the crest of his temples. He was losing it. He wore tortoise-shell glasses.

"I've got it open," said the caretaker.

Norman put his arm around Majorie Culpepper. "I don't think you should go in, dear," he said softly. "After all, he's been—dead over six months."

"Ian's right," Quayne said. "It won't be pleasant."

Lamont sniffed and went to her side. He looked pale around the gills. "Don't worry, darling," he said in the voice Hollywood should have outlawed. "I'll stay here with you."

"Maybe you'd better," I said. "We wouldn't want anyone-getting sick in there."

The gal's eyes flicked on mine for a second as if in mutual understanding, then dropping quickly away to the ground as Lamont held her. I was puzzled. In the first place, I didn't see how anyone could fall in love with a Gila monster like Lamont, despite the fact that he had played the nuptial boards four times. Likewise he had established residence in Nevada four times. A much-married guy. Secondly, Majorie Culpepper looked like a swell kid to me, and not the kind of a gal who'd skid for such a ham.

Hanley had gone into the tomb. Then Quayne, Norman, nervous as the devil, waited for me. I smiled at him to cheer him up, because his hands were really trembling. He went in and I followed him. Then came the caretaker.

Now, tombs aren't exactly hi-de-hey spots and this one was no exception to the rule. It was darkish inside, but through the glass panels of the door, you could see the smooth cold contour of the marble walls. It gave me a shivery feeling.

The caretaker unlocked the hinge on a marble slab and dropped it down. Quayne was sweating like a soda glass. Norman was white and violently trembling. I thought he was going to let go. Hanley was a little nervous about it. I knew how Norman felt. When I was a cub and saw my first corpse, I was the same way—with that sinking feeling in the pit of my belly.

I helped the caretaker when he reached in and pulled out the coffin. It was a nice silver thing and it came out easily on rollers. It lifted right down to the portable stand the caretaker had brought without a bit of trouble. I was glad we didn't have any lifting to do. It looked heavy as lead.

The caretaker attacked the lid holders. I could hear Norman's breathing now, short and gaspy.

Finally the holders dropped down. It was a breathless sort of moment and I could feel the blood pounding through my head as I crowded in. I got the Leica out surreptitiously and held it in my right hand, sighting it by instinct between Hanley's and Quayne's shoulders. No one saw it. The caretaker lifted up the lid.

For a second or two, there wasn't a sound. Not even Norman's hoarse breathing.

Then I sighed and snapped the Leica. I snapped it again to make sure. I turned and went out of the tomb. On the grass, Van Lamont and Majorie Culpepper stared at me stonily, their mouths open, their faces frankly asking a question.

"Sorry, Miss Culpepper. I've got to break the story," I said. "It's the first time in my life I've ever scooped the city press bureau on a metropolitan story and I can't let it go." I took a quick snap of her with Lamont and stuck the Leica in my pocket. Then I ran like hell down the lane towards the administration building by the storage vaults.

The ghost who wore boots, you see, had turned into live news, easily worth a two column twenty-four point head.

Major Culpepper's corpse, and his boots, and his Colt grave-scratcher, had vanished completely from his silver coffin.

#### IV

**B**ODY-SNATCHING still has that old ghoulish lure and when we broke that yarn we broke it proper. The Old Man laid it across the front page of the Wall Street closing edition and I even got there in time for a three column reproduction of the empty coffin, which cinched the yarn.

When it had come off the presses and I was admiring my by-line the Old Man called me in. I entered like Caesar returning to Rome.

"Daffy," he said, "that's a good story. It's going to shoot circulation tonight."

"It's not bad," I said, "but I had the breaks."

"For a follow-up," said the Old Man, "I'm going to use the ghost side of it more fully. You only insinuate in the story that the ghost Quayne and the others saw last night might have some connection. Now, you and I know it *has* got a good connection. Tomorrow I'm going to have you do a signed story, telling how you saw that ghost out at Quayne's estate, how you saw it was Major Culpepper and how it

fired at you. It'll make a swell follow-up and the more weird you make it the better."

"Hell," I said, "I don't have to make it weird. It's the real McCoy. I'm just as interested in reading about it as the man on the street. The only thing is—I want more."

"That's the idea," said the Old Man. "Did you get a statement from Majorie Culpepper?"

"I was in too much of a rush," I answered.

"Well," he said, "run up and see her tonight. Not now. Every rag in New York is trying to see her now. Save it for tonight. And you might check the morgue and see if the corpse has turned up at all. Be thorough there. Any other ideas?"

"Yeah," I said. "I want the clippings on the gal and those on Quayne and Norman and Lamont too. There's something screwy there, chief. She's engaged to be married to Lamont, but she can't stand him. I could feel it. And Quayne seems worried as hell about something. And Norman is worried about Majorie. It's all as plain as day. I don't see what it has to do with the snatched corpse or the ghost, but it may tie in later."

"Good," said the Old Man. "Hit it. How do you suppose that stiff was snatched?"

"Easy," I said. "Master key to open the vault. Same for the crypt hinges. It can be done without much risk if you have a car waiting down on Webster Avenue. You yank out the stiff, shoot the coffin back, relock the door and throw the stiff over the railing. Then climb down and pick up the stiff again, shove him in the car and lam."

"Sounds simple."

"It was simple, I'll bet," I said.

"You don't suppose the corpse is being held for ransom?"

"No," I said. "No ransom there. That's my guess. It's gone because it's supposed to have risen from the dead and come back to ha'nt somebody."

"You don't know how long it's been out of the tomb?"

"Couldn't say. Not long, though. Just since somebody got this scatter-brained idea of the ghost."

"Okay, Daffy," the Old Man said. "Hit the yarn."

I got the clippings on the four of them and pored through them. I found four interesting facts:

One: Majorie Culpepper had been engaged to marry Ian Norman in November, 1933, but broke it off after a trip to Los Angeles where she met Van Lamont.

Two: Quayne had a reciprocal contract with the Culpepper Munitions Company in the use of his steel for shells and firearms.

Three: Major Culpepper designated the control of his company to his daughter, Majorie, with Ian Norman as chief adviser and executor of the estate.

Four: Van Lamont had a smelly rep for marrying rich women, divorcing them with nice cash settlements, and looking for new victims. This last was on the queer. Lamont had some way of hooking women—and not all by his personal charm—if any.

I put on my hat and coat and hied away for the city morgue. In the outer office, I stopped by Dinah Mason's desk.

"Hello, my hollyhock," I said. "Sorry about last night. Did you hear it all?"

"Hello, ghoul," she returned. "I had inklings. What's all the chatter about ghosts?"

"On the level. I saw him myself. I wouldn't kid you, lady, but you nearly lost a close friend. The slug went by my left ear."

"No kidding," she said seriously, looking scared. "Daffy, are you all right?"

"Then you *are* nuts about me," I said. "When do we marry?"

"When you stop playing target and settle down to a nice steady job on the copy desk."

"But—"

"Move along, please," she said, smiling derisively. "You're blocking the aisle . . . Yes, madam? The advertising department is to your left."

I left the building marking an X down in my notebook for my fifty-fourth try at trapping her, and then took a cab down to the morgue. I made it in ten minutes. I don't like the morgue. It has a sort of deadish smell that gets into your lungs.

The place had a chill to keep the bodies from decomposing. It wasn't a nice chill. I made it short and sweet.

"I'm looking for an old one," I said.

"Sure, Daffy," said the guy in charge. Mike Claney was his name. "We got all kinds."

"This one I want, Mike, is pretty old. Six months at least."

"Say," Claney exclaimed mildly. He stopped and peered at me.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Nothing," he replied. "Just sorta queer. The police boat fished out a stiff last night." He grunted. "It was pretty old, too. Six months easily."

HE led me across the chill room to one of the cabinets. He reached up and yanked on the handle. The cabinet rolled out without

a squeak. A still figure reposed on the slab with a white sheet over it. Claney threw the sheet back off the face.

I looked. It wasn't as bad as I thought. The flesh was yellow and stretched over the cheek bones as tight as a drum skin. The eyes were sunken, the mouth drawn down. On the upper lip, beneath each nostril, there were short clumps of hair, as though a mustache had been snipped off with a scissors.

"Found this way? Nothing else?" I said.

"He was found nude," said Claney. "Know who it is? We want to identify him."

"No," I lied. "He's not the one I want. Thanks, Claney."

"We got others—"

"No, no, never mind," I said. I went out and telephoned the Old Man. "I found him," I said.

"The major?"

"Yeah. At the morgue. Fished him outa the East River last night. He's probably been in since last night. Maybe the night before. Better break it tomorrow, It'll make a good streamer."

"Okay. You tell Majorie Culpepper on the q.t. and get a statement tonight."

"Right." I hung up. I called Ian Norman. "This is Daffy Dill," I said. "I want to see Miss Culpepper tonight when she's clear of reporters. Something important. Think you can arrange it?"

"You'll not bother her with questions?" Norman asked kindly. "She's quite upset, Dill. Really she is. The poor child's all awry."

"I found something," I said. "She ought to know."

"Very well," he said. "Come up to my place at about eight. She'll be here.

I'm having her stay here quietly. Until the fuss dies down. Please don't tell anyone else, on your honor."

"On my honor," I said sincerely. "At eight, then."

## V

NORMAN had the penthouse on top of an apartment building on Park Avenue and Seventy-second Street. There was a private automatic elevator, too. I took it up, glancing at my watch as the hands pointed exactly to eight bells.

I was a little surprised when Inspector Halloran let me in. I didn't think that he'd be there. Bill Hanley was there, too. They both looked worried. Lamont and Majorie Culpepper were on the lounge. She looked even more haggard and Lamont was comforting her in a slithery way. He reminded me of an eel—only more so. Wilson Quayne was there. And the host, of course, Ian Norman; who looked very tired, despite his attempted cheerfulness for Majorie's benefit.

I took a chair and sat down. I realized that everyone was staring at me.

"Hey—what is this?" I said.

"I told Inspector Halloran that you said you had found something vastly important," Norman said apologetically. "Sorry if I've ruined a scoop, but it's best that we work together on the thing, don't you think?"

"Sure," I said. "I expected Halloran to hear it. But I didn't want it to get around or the morgue would be swamped."

Inspector Halloran said gruffly, "Daffy, you don't mean—"

I nodded. "Night before last. It's the major, all right. But his gun and his boots were missing. And whoever snatched the body, clipped the handlebar mustache of his."

"Thank God for that, anyway," exclaimed Quayne sharply. "At least we can put him back in decent burial where he belongs. I'm—at sea as to the purpose behind all this . . ."

Norman sighed. "Purpose? I hadn't even gotten that far. I'm trying to figure out just what is happening!"

"I'll run along," said Inspector Halloran, his big beefy face working excitedly. "You too, Hanley. Thanks, Daffy. The morgue?"

"Claney'll show you the body. You can make official identification in the morning, and rebury."

"Yeah," Halloran nodded. Then he and Hanley went out the door.

Majorie Culpepper cried a little. But it was a relieved sort of crying. She felt better that we had located the body. Van Lamont kept patting her shoulder and saying, "Bear up, my darling. Be brave and strong." He sounded like a movie sub-title.

I was sitting uncomfortably there, squirming a trifle and waiting for the girl to get in shape enough to give me a statement on the recovery of the corpse, when it happened.

The room we were sitting in was about thirty feet long and twenty feet wide. A humdinger, with a fireplace at the far end. We were all just sitting there, perfectly peaceable.

Then every single light in that room blew out as though a fuse had been shorted. We were all sitting down, mind you, and I could see the main light plug across the room. No one was near it, not a soul. But those lights went out just the same.

In the second that we were plunged into blackness, I couldn't see a damn thing. I felt my eyes popping as I stared and half rose from my chair.

It took about five seconds for my



eyes to see again, even in the darkness. Up here on the penthouse, it was really black without lights. There were no other glimmers to reflect into the room. A violent tremor shook me as I heard the others begin murmuring.

And the ghost walked.

It was the Major—the dead and gone Major—looking towards us right out of the fireplace, the Colt six-gun in his right hand and the army boots on his legs. He looked to the right and the left. It was hard to distinguish his face, he looked so ghostly and hazy. He moved like rolling smoke, and this time his ectoplasmic stream dug into the floor not far from where I sat.

I was scared stiff. I couldn't move. I watched, transfixed, and waited. On the sofa, to my left, I dimly discerned Van Lamont leap to his feet and choke out a terrified ejaculation.

The ghost stopped looking right and left. It looked straight ahead. It grinned. The Colt six-gun flung up—just like it had at me on the Quayne estate the night before. The hammer went down and a white cloud of powder smoke billowed out of the barrel.

There was a ghastly thud. I had heard those kind before—a slug hitting flesh. Van Lamont groaned shrilly just once. I saw him fall. He hit the floor with a thump which rattled the prints on the wall. I stared at the ghost. The Colt gun had dropped down and Major Culpepper was laughing heartily as though it were a huge joke. Suddenly, he faded from sight right where he stood. He just snapped into thin air.

**M**Y voice returned. I let out a wild yell and got up from my chair. I heard Majorie scream once, then nothing. Quayne lighted a

match and went to the light switch. He clicked it a couple of times. The lights didn't work.

"Short circuit," he muttered. "Ian—call the house manager! Get a new fuse installed downstairs quickly!"

Norman moved past me to the phone. He called downstairs. I listened to him ask excitedly for the electrician. He explained that the lights had gone out. Then he asked the operator to get hold of Inspector Halloran at the morgue and tell him to come right out.

I spied a candle on a sidetable in the flicker of Quayne's match. I ran to it and grabbed it. I knocked a square little box to the floor. I struck a match of my own and lighted the candle. I put the box back on the table, noticing it was a roll of amateur pan-chromatic film, unused. I stared at it for a second. Then I took the candle and went over to the lounge.

I bent down. Van Lamont had fallen on his face. I turned him over. Quayne and Norman were at my side. The girl was out in a dead faint on the lounge.

There was a welt in the middle of Lamont's face, raised like a mosquito bite and flecked with a blue bubble. A slug had killed him instantly, gone through his brain. Yet there had been no sound. I was baffled. I knew you couldn't silence a pistol or revolver. The only thing you can put a silencer on is a rifle. And that makes a *pop*. This shot the ghost had fired didn't make even a *ping*.

Then somebody downstairs fixed the fuse and the lights were on again. We carried the girl into a bedroom before she could see what had happened. After that, we just waited, staring at one another's pale faces and wonder-

ing. I didn't even have the presence of mind to call the paper. I just wondered and kept wondering until Halloran arrived and found us there.

It was after midnight when we finally left. Questioning had gotten us nowhere. Each of us had seen the ghost. Each of us swore that he had seen the ghost shoot. Each of us swore we had heard no shot. It was an impasse. Halloran was stumped. Everyone was stumped. The Public Welfare boys arrived after the medical examiner and took Lamont away. The M.E. said it was a .32 slug, and that was all.

What a headline it was going to make!

#### GHOST KILLS ACTOR

And that was the way it would stand too! For Halloran couldn't shake the testimony, not even mine.

I left after they carted the corpse out. I went down the hall and then huddled up under a skylight near the roof and waited. After about half an hour, I saw Halloran and Hanley and Majorie Culpepper and Quayne leave the place and go down in the elevator.

I climbed down from the skylight and rang the doorbell. Ian Norman open it. He was surprised.

"I thought you'd gone," he said.

"I want to see you," I said.

I went in and he closed the door. I took a seat near the fireplace away from the bloody stain in the rug. He sat down opposite me, his face lined with weariness.

"Norman—let's lay our cards on the table," I said.

"I don't understand."

"I know you killed Lamont," I said evenly.

"You're insane," Norman cried.

"I know how you made the ghost, too," I said.

He shot his hand into his shirt and whipped it out. I stepped forward out of my chair and clipped him neatly on the chin, not too hard. It knocked him over backwards in the chair and sent him sprawling on his skull. Then I dove on him, caught his right hand and took the gun he had in it away from him. I looked at it.

"Thought so," I said. "Pneumatic pistol. No wonder it didn't make any noise."

Norman sat up on the floor and stared at me. There was a reddish welt on his chin and he rubbed it painfully.

"You damned fool—what did you do that for?" I said.

"You said—"

"I know what I said. But if you kill me, you'll fry sure! You couldn't get away with that, not after Lamont."

Norman sighed and set the chair up again. He sat down in it heavily. "All right, Dill," he said. "You've caught me. But I don't care. I've done a good job killing that rat, a good job."

"Agreed," I said. "If ever a man deserved killing, it was Van Lamont. But you certainly made preparations. Let's take it slow. When did you plan first to get him?"

"A month ago," said Norman dully.

"Don't talk like the noose is around your neck," I said. "I'm an all-right guy. I like that kid, Majorie, as much as you do. I'm no cop. I don't have to turn you in."

"You mean—"

"Talk," I said. "That's all now. Just talk."

"SHE—told me a month ago," Norman said. "She was frantic then, because she hated him so. She didn't want to marry him. She thought I might be able to help her. . . ."

"The rat had something on her," I said. "He was blackmailing her into marriage?"

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"She wrote some indiscreet letters. He framed her, and then he threatened her with a breach of promise suit and what not if she didn't marry him. He said he'd rake the whole dirty mess into a court room. She couldn't do a thing. She hated him then, of course."

"So?"

"When she told me a month ago, I was stuck. I didn't know what to do. I'd have liked to have killed him, but I didn't want the chair for a good deed."

"Go on."

"One night shortly after she told me, I ran off a couple of my old reels of film for myself. I'm an amateur movie-maker you know. I had this one of Major Culpepper. I remember when we made it. He was supposed to stalk prey, look right and left, and finally sight at the camera and fire.

"As I watched it and thought of how he would have felt if he had known of Lamont's trickery. I was struck with an idea. If Major Culpepper could come back from the dead and kill Lamont—no living man could possibly be executed for the crime, not even myself. So I went to work. I blacked out the background on the film, leaving just the figure of the major. Then I threw him slightly out of focus and gave him that gaseous, hazy look." I shivered. "It sure was realistic." I pointed to his leg. "And you got a small projector—one of those special palm-size models—and strapped it on your leg, running the light with batteries on your person, right?"

Norman nodded. "Then it was easy for me to lift my trouser leg, turn on the projector by a simple switch in

my lapel and turn it off likewise. Then I had to add realism—to make it look as though the major had really returned. If I could make it good enough—and get a man like Quayne to certify the ghost's existence, it was sold!"

"So you snatched the corpse," I said. "And stripped it and dumped it in the East River. What did you do with the boots and Colt?"

"Dumped them into the river, too. That was the night before we went to Quayne's. It was a simple job. After that, I had to establish the ghost. I acted tight at Quayne's, and while lying on the sofa while the lights were down, I shot the vision of the hazy major on the tapestry opposite."

"It worked, too," I said. "But why in hell did you try to kill me out on the grounds when Hanley and I were leaving?"

"I was careful *not* to kill you," Norman said. "I shot at the car, just to make it credible that a ghost could fling bullets. I shot from my window. I had leveled the projector against the shrubbery from there, too."

"Why, though?"

"You were a reporter—to give the ghost the publicity and make it real. Hanley was a policeman—to make the police think there actually was a ghost that could kill."

"I see," I said. "After that, it was just a matter of letting the ghost kill Lamont."

"Yes," he said dully. "As it was, they couldn't get me. Then you found me out."

"Yeah," I said. "I found you out. Norman—you overlooked one thing in killing Lamont."

"What was that?"

"The evidence he has against Marjorie. Where are those letters?"

Norman smiled craftily. "They

were in his apartment. I got them. I burned them. That side is all clear."

I nodded. "Give me that projector."

He pulled up his trouser leg and unstrapped the machine. It was a small, compact little thing, only about four inches long, built to take only about twenty feet of sixteen millimeter film. I stripped off the film and tossed it on the fire. It burned like a flash. I stuck the projector in my pocket with the pneumatic pistol. I got up.

"FORGET it," I said. "Your story is—like mine and the others—that the ghost who wore boots killed Van Lamont."

"Wh-what are you going to—do with those?" he asked hoarsely.

"Dump them off George Washington Bridge," I said.

"Oh, thank God," he said and broke down in a series of quiet sobs. I never saw a man look so tired.

"One more thing," I said. "How'd you work the short circuit?"

"I had two wires from the lamp under the rug, raised above each other and scraped bare. I stepped on them

and blew the fuse. Their own tensile recoil pulled them apart for the next installed fuse to work without my touching them.

"Smart," I said. "Fix it right tonight so there'll be no comeback when Halloran goes over this place tomorrow."

"I will," he said. "Why—why are you doing this?"

"Majorie's a good kid. And I like you."

"But—can I be sure—"

"I'll say you can! Listen, Norman, when my paper says a ghost killed Lamont instead of an ordinary man, the circulation will rocket. Just another reason for dumping these things in the Hudson."

"But how—can I be sure—?"

"Mister," I grinned, "if they get you, they can get me too as an accomplice after the fact. Aiding a homicide and all that." I waved good night.

When I did drop those things off the bridge next day, I thought how crazy the whole thing was and how it never possibly could have happened.

But it did—just the same!

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# Swan Song

A Novelette

By Maurice Beam

I looked into the cold,  
smoky eyes of the  
masked man



*Ruthlessly and Cunningly  
They Plotted the Most Haz-  
ardous Crime of All—the  
Kidnaping of America's Mil-  
lion Dollar Idol*

## CHAPTER I

### The Scarred Man

**P**ETE ARNOLD was not a grifter like Harry Vance and myself. But he was pretty tough. I mean tough, not pretty. He was older too—forty-five maybe—and carried a small

mystery in the shape of a white scar that laid under his left ear, ran across his neck and lost itself beneath his shirt collar. I never knew just where that scar ended—somewhere on his chest, no doubt. He had a nervous habit of rubbing it that gave me the jitters. His eyes were careless and unfriendly, and he was a trifle bald. He was not the sort of man I liked.

Harry Vance, my partner, said Ar-

nold had once been a transport-pilot on one of the big airlines and had got himself blacklisted for setting down a passenger plane and letting some people burn. I knew this meant Arnold was out of flying forever; it meant also that he was a desperate man. Which was all right.

We met one night in a small tavern in Los Angeles. We faced each other across a table in a dark booth. Arnold hunched his shoulders lazily and the scar on his neck was livid when he moved his round head.

Harry, sitting next to me, said proudly: "This is the lad I told you about. Sonny." Harry smoothed his coat lapels and I nodded slightly. Arnold meant nothing to me.

For half a minute he squinted at me with those shallow, wide-set eyes.

"So you're Sonny Boy Mayhew?" He put out his hand and I took it.

"Have a little drink, Arnold." I signaled Sammy. Pete Arnold was looking at me like a man judging a horse—or a dog.

Sammy brought some highballs and while he was over the table nobody spoke. Arnold continued to watch me. Finally he grinned and leaned forward with his elbows on the white cloth.

"Harry was right," he said. "You'll do."

"Glad I passed," I shrugged.

Harry had told me Arnold knew something we could develop in a big way, but so far I had heard nothing.

Harry put his hand on my arm. "Wait a minute, Sonny. He'll tell you."

**T**HERE was no wait. I was surprised when Pete Arnold began to talk fluently. He didn't appear to be a fluent talker.

"From what I hear you got some-

thing on the ball. If I know anything that's just what this needs. And you're about the same build."

"As who?" I asked. "Is this one of those 'double' gags you see in the movies?"

Arnold grinned.

"Start at the beginning, Pete," Harry said.

The aviator put down his glass—I saw he noticed ours were untouched—and smacked his long, thin lips. He leaned further toward me and gave it to me:

"I been living at the Palisade Hotel, a little place over on Broadway. Night before last, in the lobby, I ran into a fellow named George Stanhope. I used to know him in New York in the old days, when I was with Universal Airways. He's staying at the Palisade till tomorrow. He's a detective, this Stanhope."

I bent my head and said nothing. Arnold was talking fast, his voice almost a whisper. Harry's hand was trembling slightly as it rested on his glass. This must be something, I thought.

"Stanhope's a good dresser, like you, although I can't say he looks much like you; but as I see it, that won't make much difference if a man's got the brains."

"Come on," I said. "What about Stanhope?"

Arnold lifted his hand and rubbed gently at the scar on his neck, at the same time raising his chin.

"He was a private detective, an investigator for some agency, when I knew him in the East. He did lots of work for a big movie company there. Now he's got a contract to work out here in Hollywood."

"And he told you all this? A detective?"

"More than that. Don't crowd me," Arnold said. "Last night we were in a bar and we got to talking. Stanhope had one drink too many, maybe two too many. He said he's just closed a contract with Harvey DeLisle, head of DeLisle Productions, one of the biggest lots in Hollywood."

Arnold lifted his glass and drained it while Harry and me, watching him like hawks from the other side of the table, were merely moving our around, but not lifting them. Harry is like me—he doesn't drink much.

"Hey, Sammy!" I called. "One more highball." Arnold pushed his glass to the end of the table and licked his lips.

"You've heard of Harvey DeLisle, Sonny?" Harry Vance said.

"Sure."

Sammy came, got Arnold's glass and went back to the bar.

"And you know who Marcia Macy is," Arnold stated definitely. "One of the biggest stars in pictures." He coughed. "Well, Stanhope's got a contract to bodyguard her against kidnapers. That gives him ontray to the studio."

None of us spoke for a second. There were two other customers at the bar, twenty feet away, talking to Sammy. Pete Arnold stared at me.

"You mean he can get in out there," I remarked. I hate people who try to use foreign words.

"Marcia Macy's worth a million on her own," Harry said.

"And twice that much to DeLisle Productions," muttered Arnold. "She lives alone and seldom goes anywhere."

"You see? That's where the play comes in," Harry added.

"It doesn't make sense." My voice was louder than it had been. "Why should Stanhope tell you this?"

"Remember, I was ace-pilot with Universal when I knew him," Arnold said quietly. "He thinks I'm still with them. We used to drink together." Arnold shut his mouth as Sammy came with his drink, but when he had seized the glass and taken a deep swallow, he went on: "Nobody connected with the DeLisle Studio has ever seen Stanhope. DeLisle hired him on recommendations from New York. He has plenty of credentials. He made a rep there."

"Did you see the credentials?"

"No." Arnold squinted his eyes at me. "But I know what he told me when we were drinking. I'm telling you."

I CAUGHT Harry Vance looking at me with a fishlike stare as though he were astounded at something. I laughed, and he bent toward me. "For God's sake, you know what this means. You can engineer this."

"A million dollars," said Pete Arnold, and his stock went down with me. I knew then he hadn't the judgment he looked to have. I started talking.

"I can see you never gave much thought to the snatch racket."

He was waiting, with that kind of expression on his face. I knew Harry had told him about me. Yet he said stubbornly: "Marcia Macy's working on her biggest picture now. The papers are full of it. That's why DeLisle called in Stanhope. They're taking no chances. What would DeLisle stand to lose if the picture was held up?"

"It's not what he'd lose; it's what he can raise that concerns us," I snapped. "Most dumb hijackers make just that mistake when they go into kidnaping. They think a millionaire has a million dollars, in cash, when most of them depend on credit to pay their overhead. A hundred and fifty grand, say, in un-

marked and mixed series government currency is a lot of money to raise. The banks would question, if nobody else did. And a good snatch is a secret first of all. It's got to be. I know."

"The papers said you're a college man," grinned Arnold.

"I been to schools," I shot back. "Remember—what the cops or anyone else knows about me they've read in the papers."

"Sonny Boy Mayhew," whispered Arnold. "Okay." He spread his big hands on the table. "Pretty Boy Floyd, Baby-Face Nelson."

"They're punks," I said. "A couple of farm hands gone haywire. Let me ask you a few."

"Shoot."

"When does Stanhope go on the job?"

"Tomorrow morning. His contract starts then."

"Why didn't you say something sooner? It may be too late."

"I couldn't find Harry yesterday."

"How do you know some of these New York movie people, who know him, might not be at the studio out here when he reports?"

"I don't know. I'm saying what I know."

"It's now nine o'clock. Would Stanhope be in his room at the Palisade?"

"I think he stays up pretty late."

"You know his room number?"

"It's 414."

I arose from the table, still looking at Arnold. "We got to work fast. If you had told us yesterday it might have been different. Now—you all set, Harry?"

Harry said yes, and started to get up.

"Wait," said Arnold. "We haven't figured this out."

"I've had it figured for over a year," I said. "It's as near a setup as

you can get . . . that's all you can ask . . . and we won't talk any more here between walls. Come on. On the way to the Palisade I'll tell you both what you're to do."

Arnold glanced at Harry. "God, this guy does work fast." He got up.

"You ain't seen nothin'," Harry said. He had worked with me before.

I PAID the check and went outside. We walked along the dark street toward Broadway. I began on them: "I figure two days at the outside. We'll use the sedan with the fake numbers when we get that far. Arnold, you move into our room with Harry. Give him the address, Harry."

"My stuff's over at the Palisade, Sonny," said Arnold.

"What room?"

"230."

"Wrong number. If it was 430, it'd do. Get your stuff tomorrow morning."

We walked as I talked and finally Arnold broke in: "Let's have an understanding—about the money—just in case."

"We split one hundred and fifty grand," I said. "That much is possible, for DeLisle to get. The important thing is the contact—when they deliver the money. That's where punks slip up. The spot for the contact must be a moving point, not a fixed one."

"Me and Harry take the risks," Arnold replied. "They lynch 'em out here."

"The newspapers started that," I told him. "And they'll never know anything about this. We split even, understand?"

Arnold grunted and I stopped on the sidewalk and faced him.

"One thing," I said, "you got to get straight. Harry and I work well together because we understand each



other. You and I have to do the same thing. If we put this across it'll be because you listen to me. Is that clear?"

His lank body swayed slightly and I could see the thin lips over the wide mouth compress into a line. I outfaced him, but I knew him for a stubborn bird. Finally he shrugged and said "all right," in a tight voice.

"What's Stanhope's full name?"

"George Stanhope's all I know."

At the next corner I told him to beat it to the room and wait there for Harry and me. Harry gave him a key.

"You going there—right now?" he asked, and in the dim light of a street lamp I saw sweat on his forehead.

"Where else we going?" I snapped, and turned to Harry. "You're heeled, I suppose?" and Harry nodded.

We left Arnold and walked fast toward the Palisade Hotel.

## CHAPTER II

### The Grim Sleeper

THE Palisade Hotel was on a corner and had a side entrance opening onto a narrow street. A man, the clerk, bent over a desk in the middle rear. His glasses glinted as he moved. That night, as Harry and I walked past, the place was nearly deserted.

A block beyond we went in a drug store, where both of us entered a phone booth. It was a tight fit. We must have looked like two overgrown high school kids calling up a girl.

"Get this," I said to Harry, and dialed the Palisade Hotel. I am one of those people who believe that if you want something done right, do it yourself.

The clerk answered.

"John Sargent speaking," I told him. "I'd like to reserve a room for tonight."

"Yes. Have you any preferences?"

"I want a quiet room, high up, away from traffic noise."

"We got just the thing, sir. One on the fourth floor."

"Couldn't be better," I said, and meant it. "I'll be over in a few minutes." I hung up.

"I didn't have to ask for it," I told Harry. "That's a good sign."

"How about baggage?" Harry asked as we walked slowly toward the hotel.

"Never mind baggage, but be sure the room's on the fourth floor. Register and pay three days in advance. And tell the clerk you don't want to be disturbed all day tomorrow, that you're tired and want to rest. Have him make a note of it."

Harry nodded, but I kept on explaining until I was sure he understood exactly what to do.

"In about half an hour I'll slip in the side door of the lobby and come up the stairs to the fourth floor. Wait for me in the corridor there. I mustn't be seen."

I left him, circled the block and went into a parking lot, where our sedan was standing. Here I got my little .32 automatic with its special silencer. Twenty minutes later I was back at the hotel near its side entrance. Through the window I watched the clerk bending over the desk as before. Near the front there was a man sitting in a chair reading a newspaper. I looked at him hard, saw he was young and was sure he couldn't be Stanhope.

In about five minutes I entered the side door quietly and disappeared into the stair well. Out of the tail of my eye I noticed the clerk had not moved.

It was a long climb up those three flights of stairs, tiresome because I was nervous and on the alert to dodge any-

one I might meet. On the fourth floor landing Harry came out of the shadow of a doorway.

"What's your room number?" I whispered.

"It's 420—three doors away."

I never worked with a cooler lad than Harry. He was dumb, but in a tight spot he was reliable, which was the reason I picked him as a partner. Like two shadows we moved down the dim hall and came to room 414.

I pounded on the door loud enough to make the transom rattle. Immediately a voice called out: "Who is it?"

"Police!" I said, not too loudly. "Open up."

There was a scraping of a chair and the door swung open about a foot. I threw myself forward and forced in, Harry behind me.

THE man who fell back before our rush had his collar open at the throat; he had a big, good-natured face like that of a private dick, not a copper. Behind him a trunk was standing open with clothes hanging over it.

Without a word I flicked up the edge of my coat and flashed him a view of a tin badge I had pinned there.

"Headquarters," I said. "We want you, Steve Healy."

He began to grin. "Well, boys, this is a big surprise, but I've got to disappoint you. I'm not Healy."

"Nuts," I blustered. "Who are you, then? Our tip said—" I feigned quick anger and pulled out my automatic before he could reply. When he saw that our man's face went sober.

"Wait, officer," he said. "My name's Stanhope."

"What you got to prove it?" I kept the gun trained on his abdomen. Now that he was aroused his face had taken on a shrewd look. To keep up our ruse

I told Harry: "Frisk his clothes, Mike. See if he's got a rod."

Harry approached and ran his hands over Stanhope's trousers, then went to a chair and frisked a coat and vest hanging there. He turned back to me. "Nothing, Sergeant," Harry said.

"If you'll give me a chance," Stanhope said, backing up, "I'll show you who I am."

"All right; get busy. You watch him, Mike." I stood still with my gun up.

Stanhope went to his coat and pulled out three or four letters. He handed them to me. Then, from his hip pocket, he brought out a billfold and opened it, pointing to a card. I took the billfold and held it with the letters.

"Anything more?" I asked him.

Stanhope smiled and I noticed he was looking at me curiously. "Isn't that enough, Sergeant? It shows who I am if you'll look at it. I'm a private detective, the same general line you're in."

"I want it all. I still think you're Healy," I growled. "You got any other credentials in your suitcase?"

"Some," he answered.

"And downstairs in the safe, too, I suppose?" I made my tone as sarcastic as I could.

"No, it's all here, and in the trunk," he said, which was all I wanted to know. He was a short and rather heavy man standing stiffly before me and I saw his jaw set as he spoke. I had kept the gun pointed at his middle. Now I raised it.

"Get your coat on, Healy. We're going."

He didn't flinch, although by now I saw the dawning disbelief in his eyes. As he bent over the chair to pick up his coat I moved up on him.

I fired twice and the gun made spitting sounds. Two holes appeared

magically in Stanhope's head, one in the hair over the right ear and the other an inch forward in his temple. I heard Harry gasp. As Stanhope slumped, I put the gun away and jerked a blotter out of my pocket.

"Don't let him bleed on the floor," I said. "Get a towel."

Stanhope must have heard me because he let out a gasp just as he fell heavily, his head striking the cane bottom in the chair. I ran over and put wads of blotting paper in the wounds. This stopped the blood.

We moved fast then without talking much.

"Go through his clothes and the suitcase with a fine comb," I ordered. "I'll search the trunk. We want everything he's got for credentials."

In ten minutes we had collected every scrap of printed or written matter that had any bearing upon the identity of George Stanhope. Besides the letters he had handed me, together with the card showing him to be a member of the National Association of Private Investigators, I found in the trunk several handwritten letters, evidently from friends, and one from his wife. There was nothing pertaining to or containing a photograph, which was what I looked for.

I stuffed everything into my pockets, including about \$80 in cash in the billfold. Then I went to the door and opened it an inch. The corridor stretched dim and silent under the lights. I turned back to Harry.

"Go unlock your door and leave it open a little. Pull down the shades in your room. He's not too heavy."

WHILE Harry was gone I went over the room again. There was no disarray. Everything appeared in the sort of careless orderli-

ness suggesting the temporary hotel residence of a man with a trunk and a suitcase. Stanhope's absence from this room would not appear unusual for several days.

I walked over and mussed up the bed, wiped the trunk, chair and suitcase free of finger-prints, and finally took a knife and removed all labels from Stanhope's clothes. This would delay identification for at least a short time.

The maid, coming into the room in the morning, would notice nothing amiss.

It was while we were carrying the body along the corridor that I began to feel reaction. Harry walked ahead, supporting the feet, while I, with my hands hooked in Stanhope's armpits, staggered along staring down at that towel-wrapped head.

The blotting paper absorbed what little blood there had been. It's surprising how bullet holes made with a small caliber gun in the head close up. Because of the bone, probably. I always carried a couple of blotters in my pocket ever since . . . Anyway, by the time we got to Harry's room I had to sit down for a minute. The moving of that body down the hall, during which we might have been seen by anyone coming out of the elevator or up the stairs, was the gamble we had to make, and I was glad when it was over.

Harry felt it too, and we looked at each other so long we had to laugh to break the tension.

We put the body in Harry's bed, removed the towel, and covered it up to the neck with bedclothes. We opened the door and hung out the "Do Not Disturb" sign. Again we had to laugh. Here was a man whom nothing could ever disturb. Yet the maid, in the morning, would tiptoe past the door for fear of waking him.

I went to the window, lifted the blind and looked out. The narrow side street bordering the hotel was below, dark and deserted. Directly opposite was the white door of a garage framed on one side by a dark telephone pole. Mentally I took a bearing of the relation of these objects to the window.

At this point Harry made a suggestion which showed again that he was a follower, not a leader.

"Let's go down the fire escape, Sonny. They may spot you going through the lobby."

"And if they see us going down the fire escape," I replied, "what'll we say?"

Harry is like most cheaters who work outside the law. They don't realize that brains count as well as nerve, and that more thought goes into the management of, for instance, a delicatessen store than into the planning and execution of most spectacular crimes you read about, wherein millions of dollars may be involved. Which is the reason you read about them.

I told Harry: "Go down to the desk and get into conversation with the clerk. Ask him the way to the nearest restaurant, and make him point it out. This will cause him to look toward the front of the hotel, because there are no restaurants on this side street. Then, while he's looking that way, I'll slip out the side door."

Harry said: "That's a great idea, Sonny."

I liked Harry. Although dumb, he was very useful.

It was a great idea because it worked.

**W**E talked that night until almost three o'clock and went over step by step the plan I gave them. Arnold asked a lot of questions

which I answered without stalling. I could see by his eyes he had never heard anything like it. No wonder. I had mulled over something like this for more than a year, waiting for just such a chance.

"This tourist-camp is less than a mile from the studio," objected Arnold when I had got that far.

"It would be safer in the next block. Do you punks want to ride all over Los Angeles in a little sedan with Marcia Macy? Do you realize that half the people in the world could recognize her on sight?"

"Jeez," said Harry. "Think of traveling around with Marcia Macy. It's like being invited to week-end with Cleopatrik."

I got up and looked at those two—at Harry, whose little white face was like the face of an aged child, and at Pete Arnold, whose gray eyes were cold as buttons. I didn't grin.

"Listen. If either of you lays a finger on her, or harms her, you'll be chiseling yourself out of a lot of money. Alive and unharmed she's worth a fortune to us because she's worth more to DeLisle. We got a chance to pull the slickest snatch in history, and get away with it. We've had the breaks so far"—I looked at Arnold and saw his jaws clamp. Hearing about Stanhope had shaken him. "—and when I show up at the DeLuxe Studios I want to know I got men I can depend on."

"Don't worry, Sonny," Harry said. "I was kiddin'."

Arnold rubbed his scar and slowly nodded his round, half-bald head.

Before I went to bed I spent another hour going over the correspondence I had found in Stanhope's room. I went to sleep wondering if I would have to rent a tuxedo. Evidently the dick I had

killed had thought that bodyguarding Marcia Macy would be a dress-up affair. In the trunk had been a dress suit as well as a tux.

### CHAPTER III

#### The Masquerader

**H**ARVEY DELISLE was just over five feet high, but with a head large enough to look slightly abnormal. His reputation was a combination of Ziegfeld and Griffith, and he had dark eyes which seemed to absorb me in one glance.

He shook my hand.

"I got your wire," he said, "and rather expected you out last night."

"I stayed in the city." I knew nothing about a wire.

"Ben wrote a nice letter about you. Sit down, Mr. Stanhope."

I sat down. The smoothness of my entrance almost made me apprehensive. At the same time I was sure nothing, for the time being, could have aroused the suspicions of anyone. Among Stanhope's effects had been letters he had received and copies of letters he had written. These had given me intimate knowledge of his relations with DeLisle. He had been highly recommended by one Ben Chalmers of the Interborough Exhibitors' Association, New York. Apparently this was the "Ben" DeLisle now mentioned. Yet I had no further knowledge of Stanhope's contacts with Chalmers or his organization.

"I'm glad I got the chance to come to California," I remarked, and made my manner very positive.

DeLisle smiled, then became suddenly serious and began to talk confidentially. I knew now he had accepted me at face value as being Stanhope, which I had expected.

He took off his glasses and wiped his eyes with his fingers before re-adjusting them.

"Many of the stars out here," he began, "have been the targets for numerous kidnaping threats. Miss Macy's car, in fact, has been followed more than once."

I leaned forward in my chair, paying close attention.

"We are now in the middle of the filming of Miss Macy's new picture, 'Swan Song.' She is working long hours in order to finish it for mid-winter release. Already we have spent nearly half a million dollars on it."

"I have heard that motion picture people work very hard," I said, to lead DeLisle into mentioning the information I wanted. Instead, he answered with humorous sarcasm.

"They do work hard—while actually making a picture. Between times, however, they get in their serious work of life—they divorce and remarry each other."

I laughed and took this opening to ask: "When is Miss Macy done with the day's work?"

"At about seven. She's on the set continuously from ten in the morning until that hour. Your job, mainly, will be to escort her from her home to the studio and back again each day. If she goes out evenings, you're to go with her, keeping her in sight at all times. I suppose you knew that, and have the clothes necessary?"

I remembered the formal attire in Stanhope's trunk. "Of course," I replied. "And where shall I live?"

"I was coming to that. Miss Macy's estate is in the mountains—very beautiful. There's a guest bungalow on it that you're to have." DeLisle drummed on his desk meditatively. "You're not married, are you?" he demanded.

Momentarily I wavered. Here was an intimacy in the real Stanhope's life of which I knew nothing, aside from the letter I had found in his trunk. Might not the offhand mention of his domestic condition have been contained in one of the letters DeLisle had read about him? How much he knew, actually, about the man I had killed I did not know. Without seeming to do so, I studied him nervously as I answered: "I am, and again, I am not," and shrugged slightly, smiling at the same time.

He looked at me fleetingly and then said evenly, as though he understood, "Anyway, there's no wife with you?" "No."

I was thinking my job was relatively simple. After all, it was necessary to delude DeLisle for but two days. Even should a suspicion cross his mind he would need all of that time to learn the truth. I felt entirely at ease.

**A**GENTLE buzzing came from under the producer's desk. He pressed a button on a box, part of an office inter-communication system. A voice came: "Miss Macy, Mr. DeLisle." With a glance at me he answered: "All right." The next moment his office door opened and a woman came into the room.

I had seen Marcia Macy on the screen in one of her numerous pictures, yet this sight of her in the flesh was striking. Unlike many actresses, who are beautiful to the camera because of expert make-up treatment and skillful lighting, this one was lovely anywhere.

As DeLisle introduced us I found myself under the scrutiny of the brightest and most knowing pair of dark eyes I had ever seen in a woman's face. It required but a split second, it seemed,

for Marcia Macy, even as DeLisle had done, to take me in body and soul. I might say it was a guilty conscience, only I had never had one.

Yet at the moment I almost forgot her beauty. Mentally, I found myself raising the ransom price to two hundred thousand dollars. Such a woman was worth that to any movie company.

"I've heard about you, Mr. Stanhope," she said pleasantly, and extended her hand to me. "He"—she nodded at DeLisle—"tells me I am valuable."

Her words repeated my very thought.

"Somehow you don't look like a detective," she continued, "and I'm glad of it." She withdrew her hand, still smiling. "When Har—Mr. DeLisle first told me I was to be guarded, I imagined a big, paunchy, flat-footed man with a cigar in his mouth."

"A policeman," I was glad to say. "I'm a private detective, Miss Macy."

"And a good one," put in DeLisle quickly. "The chap Chalmers recommended."

"Oh, then you know Ben," she stated.

I nodded and expected her to ask me something I couldn't answer, as women have a habit of doing. But DeLisle interrupted by saying firmly:

"He'll ride home with you and Billy every evening, Marcia; when you go out, no matter where, he's to go with you—understand? He's to work until this picture's done." DeLisle's tone was fatherly, and I noticed the fond glow in Miss Macy's eyes as she listened.

"And after that," she laughed, "I suppose I'm to be left wide open to any kidnaper who comes along." She winked at me.

"After that," returned DeLisle dryly, "if he's here, he'll be on your payroll, not mine."

"By then," I replied, "I'll probably be willing to work for Miss Macy for nothing."

**T**HERE was nothing to fear, I now knew, from either of these two. They had accepted me completely on the strength of my credentials, or Stanhope's. What I had counted on—the very unnaturalness of my impersonation—made it seem natural and safe.

DeLisle had mentioned the name Billy. I now asked who this was. The producer answered quickly, giving me the impression that this detail of information ended our interview.

"Miss Macy's chauffeur." DeLisle turned to the actress, who had walked to the window and stood with her back to us, gazing out at a small inclosed court. "Couldn't Billy take Mr. Stanhope into town after his baggage and then drive him to the house he's to live in?"

She nodded without turning.

"Where are you staying?" asked DeLisle.

"At the Palisade Hotel, a little place on Broadway. But"—I hesitated, thinking fast—"I have an errand to do in town anyway. I could bring the baggage out in a cab and go to Miss Macy's home this afternoon."

DeLisle consented indifferently. "Of course. Any way you like. And after you're settled, come back here. And watch the shooting," he added.

"Shooting?" I asked.

"Picture shooting, I mean," DeLisle said, and Miss Macy turned from the window laughing.

I picked up my hat from off the table, and DeLisle nodded at me. With a bow to both of them I opened the door.

"Good-by, flatfoot," Miss Macy

said, and I grinned. "Billy will look after you when you come back."

"Thank you," I said. "About one." I closed the door.

I'm always afraid of women. They're dynamite to any crook. Especially one as beautiful as Marcia Macy.

There was a big, black limousine parked in a small court beside the studio office. I picked this one as being Miss Macy's. I walked past it slowly without stopping and looked at the chauffeur. He appeared to be a man well past fifty, and below his cap I could make out an area of graying hair. He was reading something, and it was hard to decide whether he was a big man or a small one as he sat hunched in his seat with his shoulders rounded.

In the street I caught a taxicab and directed the driver to a downtown section in Los Angeles. There I bought a suitcase and a secondhand typewriter. There was, I knew, writing paper and envelopes in the room where Harry and Arnold were waiting.

On the way we passed the Palisade Hotel and were slowed up in traffic there so that I got a chance to scan the side of the building which held the room rented by "John Sargent," wherein lay the body of George Stanhope. From the position of the garage door and the telephone post I located the window. The shade was still tightly drawn, as I had expected.

## CHAPTER IV

### The Letter

**T**HE rooming house where Harry and I had been living was up a side street in the north part of town. During these last several weeks we could afford nothing better. We had been very careful. Although the newspapers hadn't located me out West

as yet, a small rap would have revived everything and been just as bad as a big one. As a rule, a good newspaper knows more than the coppers. All crooks learn a lot from them, and coppers depend on them more than they admit. Just now, as Arnold had cracked, they were trying to locate Sonny Boy Mayhew, along with John Oley and Touhy.

When I came in, Harry was flat on his back reading a racing sheet, while Arnold had just finished shaving and was in his underwear. I put down the portable typewriter and tossed the suitcase on to a chair. Those two stared at me and waited.

"Okay," I said, and sat down.

"Who'd you see?" Arnold asked.

I told them.

"How does she look?" Harry wanted to know. "Marcia Macy?"

"What do you expect?" Arnold put in impatiently. "She's Marcia Macy."

"No, she's not. She's a hundred and fifty grand." As I spoke, Arnold rubbed his scar and came and threw one long leg across the table.

"I'm due back in about an hour and a half. I'll have to say my trunk was delayed and won't be out till tomorrow. I'm taking two suitcases with me this afternoon, and when I go up to the place with the chauffeur I'll be able to see where we can work best. If we get our chance tonight so much the better; if not, we got one day more. Remember, when they find Stanhope there's going to be heat."

"Yeah," grunted Arnold. "You had to do that."

I swung about and faced him. "You're not working with amateurs. If we'd tied him up he might have got loose and made a noise. It's not easy to truss up a man and be certain he'll stay that way. My mind had to be entirely

free to get away with this impersonation I'm doing. Understand? Doing things halfway is worse than not doing them at all."

He didn't answer and I kept on talking.

"You two take the sedan this afternoon and go out to the tourist camp. I'll give you the address now, and what to do when you get there. You'll rent two cabins under phony names; you'll live in one and Marcia Macy in the other—when and if you get her. Pay the rent for two days in advance so you won't be bothered. I'll be there sometime before five o'clock."

Arnold squinted his eyes and rubbed at that scar on his neck. The movement made me nervous. "For God's sake, quit massaging that scar. Does it hurt you?" I asked him.

He muttered: "It used to."

"Where'd you get it?"

"Two days before the Argonne." He looked at me with those shallow, hard eyes. "You were just out of the cradle." There was a queer look on his face. It flashed across my mind that Arnold was slightly crazy, like lots of other war heroes who really saw action. Maybe he was. But his tip-off about Stanhope hadn't been.

"You shouldn't worry about a guy being bumped after what you've seen."

"That was different. It was war."

"Yeah? Well, anyway—" I got up and began unlimbering the typewriter. "I'm writing the letters now," I said.

Within an hour I had the two letters finished. The first one said:

Mr. Harvey DeLisle,  
DeLisle Productions,  
Hollywood, Cal.

DEAR SIR:

We got Marcia Macy. She is unharmed and well, and if you do as we say she will remain that way.



We know the other one got away and knows about this, but if you tell anyone else, police, newspapers or anybody, it will be too bad.

Get \$150,000 in cash as follows: 4,000 twenties, 4,000 tens, 200 fifties. They must be in mixed series and unmarked. You may have to go to several banks, but we know you can. You will be watched all the time after you get this letter.

Notice the six Ys at the top of this letter. This is our mark.

When you get the money you will be told what to do with it. Remember, you are dealing with

## EXPERTS.

**I** SPENT a longer time on the second letter, which was more important.

This one I gave to Harry, with instructions to get a special delivery stamp for it, but not to seal it.

"When DeLisle goes after the money, I'm going to be with him," I told them. "I'll be there when he gets this one."

"It looks too easy," Arnold said.

"It may be; it may not be. Anyhow, that's the way to do things—in the simplest and easiest way."

I stood up and looked at my watch.

"It's twelve o'clock. You two better start. Here—" I wrote the name of the place on a piece of paper. "It's a little camp and out of the way. I'm taking a cab."

"The typewriter," put in Arnold. "If they found it they might trace those letters. I've read they've done that."

"Leave it here," I said slowly. "The cops find only the typewriters people try to hide."

Arnold looked unconvinced, but made no reply. Then, as I began to throw my own clothes together, putting them into the suitcase I had bought, I was reminded to ask him: "Did you check out of the Palisade?"

"Yes, while you were gone." He

looked at me momentarily. "The day clerk acted all right. He didn't spill a thing about Stanhope."

"It'll be days," I said. "Days before they find him. Now it were warmer—"

Arnold turned away from me and I laughed. For an aviator, he was sure finicky.

Within a half hour I was back at the studio. As my cab pulled to a stop I saw Marcia Macy's black limousine still parked in the same place beyond the circular drive. I carried my bags over and deposited them on the running-board before the chauffeur turned around.

"I'm Stanhope," I told him. "Did Miss Macy mention me?"

"She sent word I'm to take you out, sir." As he spoke the man left his seat and lifted my grips in one hand. I caught his surprise.

"They're not heavy," I said. "Most of my things are in a trunk which will be out tomorrow."

"Yes, sir." Under his outward courtesy I noticed that in the chauffeur's eyes was sharp appraisal of me. He thought of course that he was looking at a New York detective. Somehow the man did not seem like a chauffeur. In spite of the uniform he appeared distinguished—in the manner of an old actor. He might have been one, for that matter. There are queerer sights in Hollywood.

"If you're ready, sir—"

I nodded and got into the front seat beside him, leaving the baggage in the tonneau. At this, he seemed to lose a little of his reserve and began to regard me more as an equal, another servant—if there are any real servants in Hollywood.

I now noticed my companion more carefully and saw he was heavier than

he had at first appeared. His shoulders were wide and his hands, as they rested on the wheel, were brown and muscular. From his eyes and the set of his jaw I judged him capable of being a real threat in any man's brawl. I made a mental note of this. He handled that heavy limousine as though it had been a toy, and we threaded through the streets of Hollywood in silence. I studied our route carefully so as to be able to give a complete description of this ride to Harry and Pete Arnold.

Back of Hollywood the foothills become mountains very suddenly, and in them are many of the estates of the motion picture people. Styles of architecture vary, although the colors of the buildings do not. They are mostly white. From the valley they cling to the long slopes like nesting pigeons.

ON the outskirts of the town we drove along a broad foothill boulevard for some distance before making a sharp turn into a road which wound up a narrow canyon. In the distance, far above us, I caught the glimmer of a long, low building, like a villa. Then, as the road got narrower, my hopes got wider. This was ideal. There were no houses in sight on either side of us.

"Looks like a private drive," I said to the chauffeur.

"It is."

"That Miss Macy's place up there?"

He nodded without turning, keeping his eyes carefully on the road ahead. We were traveling very slow.

"Is this road guarded at night?" I asked, and in my rôle of detective got a little authority into my tone. "If it isn't, it ought to be."

The chauffeur shook his head. "There's not as much danger to the stars here in Hollywood—from kid-

nappers—as they think. Most of the big stars are too well known. Anybody could recognize them. Where could they be hidden?"

"That's right," I agreed. "Still, there's plenty of crooks silly enough to try it. I know."

"Well, you've had experience," he replied. "But as far as Miss Macy's concerned, they'd have a hell of a time." His voice became ominous and he tapped under his left arm. "I carry this, and I always drive her wherever she goes."

"It's a good idea," I said. "I'm glad to hear you're ready for trouble."

A quarter mile further Billy suddenly shifted into second and I felt the car settle into a steep pull. We rounded two sharp turns and came to a white gate which was swung between thick columns of masonry. Almost at once the gate moved back noiselessly on its hinges, and as we drove in I caught a glimpse of a squat figure holding to the latch—a Japanese, dressed in clean dungarees. He held a trowel in his hand and gazed at us with expressionless eyes. Billy ignored him and drove on into the spacious grounds.

Miss Macy's estate was like a small and carefully tended park. There were outbuildings scattered back of the main edifice, the villa I had seen from below, and in the distance I caught the shimmer of water—a swimming pool.

The car stopped near a little Spanish bungalow, one of three similar cottages which stood in a small grove some distance from the big house. Without a word, Billy got out and lifted my two pieces of baggage. I followed him into the house. Here he set down his burden in the center of a large room which was like a conservatory with its many windows. Then, to my relief, he turned to the door.

"I'll be with you in about five minutes, Mr. Stanhope."

"At the car," I replied, and added quickly, "I'm taking the little bag with me. I have some shopping to do tomorrow—some shirts and so forth—and I'll carry them in it."

He nodded indifferently and went out the door.

I sat down on the bed and began to think, although not at all surprised at the way circumstances had shaped themselves. All of us are accustomed to patterns of action. One act logically leads to another. When the unusual occurs—as in my coming to DeLisle using the identity of Stanhope—it is not noticeable so long as it fits the pattern.

As matters stood there was but one thing to guard against. That was the gun under the left armpit of Billy the chauffeur.

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## CHAPTER V

### The Substitute

**A**FTER we left the house in the foothills and regained a through street in the town below, I made an excuse to the chauffeur. I told him I would go into the city to get some needed clothing and see after my trunk. I would return to the studio later.

When the black limousine was out of sight I hailed a cab and rode to within a block of the tourist camp where I had instructed the boys to lie in wait.

The camp was a ramshackle affair in need of paint. It stood in a tree-shaded half acre facing a cement highway, along which there were a few other buildings. At one end of the row of dingy cabins was a gasoline station housed in a frame structure wherein, also, the owner of the place lived. Be-

tween the last two cabins furthest from the gas station I saw our small sedan. I walked toward it across the field. As I neared, the door of the last cottage opened and Harry lifted his hand toward me.

They were there, both Arnold and Harry, lounging about in that shabby room in the restless manner of men with something on their minds. They threw questions at me.

I answered by describing the canyon road leading up to Marcia Macy's house. The place, I said, couldn't have been planned better for what we had to do. They were encouraged, and listened without interrupting while I went over in detail the plan I had figured out.

"It's got to look real," I repeated. "Remember, I'm supposed to protect her from just such an attack. I'm going to fight you boys, plenty. Then, in case things go wrong, they won't suspect me."

"This chauffeur guy—will you take care of him?" Arnold asked, and I saw his eyes now had a greedy expression instead of being accusing. I knew what had happened. The first time you kill a person, or are implicated in killing one, you worry. After that it's easier.

"How do we know just what he'll do? I'm playing safe," I answered.

"It looks like a cinch," Harry said. He had his gun apart, cleaning it.

"Plans are something to start with, that's all," I warned them. "It's what you don't expect that counts against you. That's the main difference between being dumb and—"

"Being an expert," finished Arnold, looking at me.

"Have it your own way," I said.

"You're lucky to be working with a guy like Sonny," Harry blurted, in the sudden way he has of joining a conversation.

"Lay off. Everything's set," I said.

"All right." Arnold's wife, thin mouth split in an attempted grin.

"Don't get nervous. You've got only three, four hours to wait. One of you be in the car, the other in front so he can see me."

I left them then—Arnold lying on the bed staring at me gauntly, Harry at the table cleaning his gun methodically.

I saw neither Billy nor the limousine when I entered the offices of the studio this time, but inside a pretty girl behind a desk recognized me immediately.

"Mr. DeLisle says you're to come to the set where they're shooting. It's number 17." She beckoned a boy who stood behind a railing sorting letters. "Ted, show Mr. Stanhope to the 'Swan Song' set.

I indicated the black grip in my hand.

"Where can I leave this?" I asked her.

"I'll have it put in Mr. DeLisle's office. All right?"

I nodded and turned to the boy. "This way, Mr. Stanhope," he said respectfully.

WE passed through a long corridor and into a huge, roofed-in area which reminded me, in the confusion of its sights, sounds and movements, of the interior of some kind of storage and manufacturing plant. Trucks moved here and there, carrying light standards, cameras, sound equipment and other paraphernalia. We passed sets of interior scenes—kitchens, drawingrooms, palace balconies, night clubs, some buzzing with activity, others darkened and deserted. Then, as we approached a scene depicting a courtroom, I saw DeLisle leave a group of camera men. He came to me and shook my hand.

"Just in time," he said, smiling. "The shooting's about to begin. This is the big scene in Macy's picture I told you of."

"'Swan Song,'" I said, recalling the title he had mentioned. "Sounds like a drama."

The producer took my arm and we walked toward the set. I saw Marcia Macy sitting in a chair at one side of the stage. She was made up as an old woman. She waved at me and smiled.

The set-up of the equipment was confusion, since there was one battery of cameras and lights to take the actual picture and another like arrangement that was part of the scene, dummy props to be photographed. As we stopped and looked on, the actors were beginning to take their places for lighting tests, as DeLisle explained. He was treating me like a guest.

A MAN came over to DeLisle and spoke to him: "Frazier, the extra who was to play the part of the camera man, hasn't shown up."

DeLisle stroked his chin thoughtfully. Unconsciously, I listened to the conversation.

"Damn him," muttered the producer.

"He's holding us up," said the man who had approached.

"This his first scene?" asked DeLisle.

"Yes, sir."

"Well then—" DeLisle suddenly put his hand on my arm. "Why not use Mr. Stanhope here? He's dressed for it and he looks the part. You can make a three-quarters or even a back view. The character's no more than a prop anyway."

The young man, whom I took to be an assistant director, turned toward me.

"Mr. Stanhope's a friend of Miss Macy's," put in DeLisle.

"You'd earn yourself five dollars," grinned the young fellow. "That's the pay of an extra for this rôle."

I thought for a moment that they had been joking, but seeing the assistant's face, I answered: "I'm not much of an actor."

"Not at all necessary," laughed the young man. "You'll be told exactly what to do—if you will."

"Sure." I was surprised and a little bit leery, but it was a situation nobody could control. There was nothing to do but nod my head. To refuse would have been incomprehensible to these men to whom the request was a mere afterthought.

That was how I happened to be photographed in Marcia Macy's "great starring vehicle, Swan Song." It was a fluke, that was all; it didn't seem important enough to bother about. When I posed as the cameraman I took care that my back was to the cameras before the set. They wouldn't, I figured, get much of a picture of me. I wasn't even made up. I followed directions and squinted through the eyepiece of a dummy camera. Marcia Macy did most of the talking. It was the part where she, as an old scrubwoman, reads the lines of the star, who has been injured. She was supposed to be faded, aged, down and out. But she wasn't. Even with all that paint and black shadowing on her face she was beautiful as ever. They're always like that, these beauties who play old woman parts. You can see underneath.

They went over the scene again and again until it got tiresome, but when she really began to act I almost believed it was real. She was an actress, that girl.

After it was over, DeLisle intro-

duced me to several of the movie men in the studio. There were names and faces that I had known—on the screen—since I was a kid. I've always liked movies, especially gangster pictures. You can learn a lot just by watching them. It was a picture that first showed me how to use a Tommy gun. Movie gangsters get their dope from experts, and always look tougher than real ones.

I liked it around that studio, but above five thirty I began to get restless. I knew the boys would be leaving the tourist camp now.

Yet everything went nicely.

At about six thirty Billy came into DeLisle's office and took off his cap. Ten minutes later Miss Macy entered, wearing her street clothes. I remember she kidded me about being a movie actor. Then we all went outside and got into the black limousine.

I saw Harry on the curb and about halfway down the block I spotted the little sedan. I nodded my head while I was helping Miss Macy into the car. Billy was in the driver's seat.

Two blocks from the studio the sedan passed us and I caught a glimpse of those two in the front seat. They were staring straight ahead as though they didn't know we were on earth. Arnold had his hat pulled low over his eyes and a cigarette hung out of his mouth. Harry sat stiffly behind the wheel.

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## CHAPTER VI

### The Snatch

I RODE in front with Billy, the chauffeur, figuring that even a private detective, being an employee, could not presume too greatly upon the friendliness of his employer, which, in a sense, Miss Macy was.

In the rear-vision mirror she looked

tired and indifferent as she reclined on the cushions of the tonneau. She was anxious, probably, to get home to that comfortable mansion in the foothills, where good food, peace and quiet would be a welcome relief from the confusion of the studio.

I had no doubt but that we were headed for the narrow canyon road already traversed earlier in the afternoon. As we rode along I remembered thinking of Stanhope, lying rigid and white on the bed in the Palisade Hotel. I was wondering just when they would find him. When that time came—

I noticed we were not traveling the same route as before on our trip to Miss Macy's house. Instead, Billy had turned off and was moving along a side street which I was sure led to the city.

"Going downtown?" I asked, keeping my voice level.

"No," he said slowly. "I take a different route every night — DeLisle's orders."

I recalled what the producer had mentioned — that the Macy car had been followed.

I said no more, and presently we turned again and headed in the general direction of the house. There was but one entrance, I was sure, and that the narrow canyon road up which we had traveled before.

Darkness had fallen when we made the turn and began the slow ascent. Beyond the brilliant swatch cut by the powerful headlights was a wall of black shadows. As we moved forward I became more and more tense.

Yet what I expected occurred with a swiftness that for a moment or two confused even myself. What I had watched for—our little sedan blocking the road—had not appeared. Instead, there came simultaneous scufflings of

feet on the running-boards on both sides of the car. In the open window of the door beside Billy I saw a man's head materialize. It was Harry, easily recognized in spite of the handkerchief wound around the lower part of his white face. A pistol gleamed in his hand. On the instant a scream came from the tonneau and I caught a glimpse of Miss Macy's face in the mirror. A voice on my own side cut in: "Put 'em up." I turned and looked into the cold, smoky eyes of Pete Arnold.

I HEARD Harry's voice: "Cut that!" and on the instant caught a movement on the seat beside me. The right hand of Billy, the chauffeur, was moving slowly across his chest toward his left armpit. Scarcely thinking and in one flash movement, I jerked out my own gun. I fired twice at the side of his head, holding the automatic out of sight under my arm. His hand dropped and he slumped forward. I heard the impact as his head struck the steering wheel. Harry was staring down at me as I grabbed the emergency brake and stopped the car. The engine clucked and died. When I looked up Harry was gone.

Without a warning, I unlatched the door on my side and swung it outward. It struck and pushed Arnold ahead so that he balanced for a split second with one hand grasping the cowl-light. Then I was outside, on my feet, grappling with him directly in the path of the headlights. As we struggled, I managed to whisper: "Let go of me, you fool. Go help Harry." His grip relaxed and I fell to the ground. I heard Arnold laugh.

A second scream came from the car as Arnold moved around to the rear door. Harry was grappling with the

terrified girl. I heard curses and the muffled sound of a slap. Then the name: "Stanhope! Stanhope!" Another scream was cut short as a hand clapped over Miss Macy's mouth.

I got up and staggered around the car. Both Arnold and Harry were holding the actress. She was straining desperately, but uselessly. Already, a handkerchief was partially pushed into her mouth. I came on, watching them in the reflected glare of the headlights, holding my gun, my eyes on Pete Arnold.

It was Harry who fired twice, in the air over my head. The bullets sung and one of them ricocheted off a tree on the slope behind us. Arnold leaped at me and my gun came up slowly. Something in his hand smashed against my skull and I went down—and out. In the flash before insensibility I had seen Harry twist the actress about and drag her off in the darkness.

It was a good act, well staged. Arnold was glad, I knew, to play his own rôle with realism. Particularly when he cracked down on me. It was several minutes after I came to before I could think clearly. I realized then that I heard the sound of a motor from far down the canyon in the direction of the town. Evidently the boys had not parked the car ahead of the limousine, but had hidden it and come up here on foot, knowing that on the steep ascent the limousine would be moving slowly.

Now, the only audience who might have been impressed by our little act was no longer critical. Billy, the chauffeur, had made the error of going after his gun. He was slumped behind the wheel, stone dead.

I dragged the body out of the car and partly up the slope, taking my time and covering it with leaves and sticks, making sure that even in day-

light it might be unnoticed. Then I went back to the car, got in and started the motor. As I maneuvered to turn around I thought of the letter in my pocket, got out of the car and laid it carefully on the rear seat. Then I drove slowly down the canyon. In the town I took the darkest streets towards the studio. The tourist camp was barely a mile away on a lonely road.

IT wasn't hard to work myself up into a lather of nervous excitement. By the time I reached the studio offices I was in that kind of mood. But I kept my head. DeLisle must be the only one to learn of this. I parked the limousine in the drive, leaving the letter on the seat.

I talked calmly to the girl in the outer office, who had told me what I had hoped to hear—that DeLisle was still in the studio.

"Do me the favor of going out and telling him to come into the office. Tell him Mr. Stanhope says its important," I ordered.

The girl recognized me and knew I was on intimate terms with the producer. She arose at once and said, "Yes, sir."

In DeLisle's office I sat down, took off my hat, rumbled my hair and felt of the tender spot on my head where Pete's blackjack had landed. There was dirt on my clothes, acquired when I rolled on the ground. I left it there. All this was for effect.

It couldn't have been longer than three minutes before DeLisle walked into the office. When he saw me his eyes began to shine with excitement. I stood up, leaning on the desk as though weak. In speaking, my voice shook:

"Miss Macy!" I whispered. "They've got her!"

DeLisle stared at me astonished.

"In the canyon road leading to her house—there were two of them—they jumped on the car, slugged me, shot Billy!" My hand went to my head and I sagged against the desk.

"My God!" DeLisle muttered and sank down into a chair.

I went on, talking fast, describing in detail that scene in the canyon, but giving the impression that Billy and I had put up a terrific fight. "The fellow fired just as Bill got his gun out. Then he fired twice at me and missed! The other one hit me on the head."

"Where's Billy?" DeLisle's voice shook.

"They took him along; they must have. When I came to he was gone." As I said this, DeLisle jumped up and caught my arm. He was game. Out of the corner of my eye I saw him straighten and regain control of himself.

"Two of them? Would you recognize them?"

"One, at least."

"All right. We'll get the police."

I began slowly brushing off my clothes and smoothing my hair. "I don't know," I said. "That might be just the thing—"

"But Marcia—we've got to get her."

"That's it. If this is a kidnaping, and it looks that way, we might spoil everything. We ought to go slow, until we hear from them." I was anxious that it should be DeLisle himself who found that letter I had left in the car.

He listened anxiously.

"But why would they take Billy?" he asked suddenly.

I was ready for that one.

"He no doubt recognized them," I answered. "That's what I figure. They'll probably hold him too."

"Maybe they'll kill—" groaned DeLisle.

"Maybe. They were a tough pair."

"Well, what can we do?"

"If it's a kidnaping, they'll write, or get in touch with you in some way. Has Miss Macy any relatives?"

"Not out here, no," he said hopelessly and met my eyes. Then reached for a phone. "I'd better call her home and tell them she won't be back for a couple of days. You're probably right. We'll have to wait."

WHILE he was telephoning I was searching for some excuse to get him to the limousine. As a last resort, of course, I could bring in the letter myself; yet it would be more convincing if he found it personally. But when he hung up the receiver he seemed resigned to the idea of waiting. He sat back weakly running small white fingers through his thinning hair.

"We'll wait here," he said at last. "They know they can find me here."

"I think so." I sat for a few moments in silence, then got up quickly with an air of determination. "I'm going to look the car over carefully. There may be some clue. They might have dropped something."

From the manner in which DeLisle nodded I knew he was at the moment incapable of any analysis of what I did.

Five minutes later he was reading my first letter, after slowly unsealing it, listening to my explanation as to where it had been found. Then without a word he passed it to me.

"A clever gang," I remarked when I had finished reading.

"Educated people," DeLisle nodded forlornly. "There seems to be lots of them in crime nowadays. Have you ever worked on kidnaping cases, Stanhope?" His voice sounded hopeless.



"This is the first." I hesitated. "I can't tell you how sorry I am, Mr. DeLisle—"

He lifted his hand. "You couldn't help it. They had the drop on you. Probably the same gang who followed the car before."

I could have denied this, but didn't.

"I wonder when we'll get the second letter they mention?"

"You should get it tomorrow," I told him. "They'll wait till they're sure you've got the money and haven't notified the police. That's the way they work."

"\$150,000 is a lot of money, Stanhope."

"I wouldn't take chances till we get her back. Then we can really go after them. As long as they have her, they've got the odds their way. And they know it."

"Even then, they may harm her," groaned the producer.

I shook my head dejectedly.

"Our hands are tied," I said. "We'll have to wait."

"We can sleep here tonight," he said after a moment's silence. "There's a couple of bedrooms attached to the studio."

As we left the office I put the letter in my own pocket. Seemingly, the amount of money demanded had not struck the producer as unreasonable. His thoughts had been upon Miss Macy rather than upon the ransom involved.

That night I slept but little. For the first time I felt worried, thinking of Marcia Macy alone with that half-crazy Arnold and with Harry, whose impulses were almost as uncontrollable as those of an animal. This period of waiting was harder than anything so far encountered in the working of my plan. Actually, the delay wasn't as long as it seemed.

DeLisle himself awoke me in the morning and I came back to consciousness groggily, realizing that I had tossed half the night. It was already past nine o'clock.

"Get your clothes on," he said. "We're going to the bank."

Overnight a new determination had come into his bearing. He was anxious, now, to get through with this affair. While I was dressing he called from the room and gave instructions to notify the staff that Miss Macy was ill and would not be down. He paced back and forth, after that, and at last turned to me as I was entering the bathroom.

"Already they might have murdered her, and Billy too," he stated suddenly.

"I don't think so, Mr. DeLisle. She's worth too much to them alive for that."

"But how are we to know she's safe and unharmed?"

I did not answer and DeLisle continued to pace the room nervously. Here was a point I hadn't thought of. DeLisle, a cautious, shrewd man, would no doubt demand proof that Marcia was safe and unharmed before consenting to give up the money for her ransom. While I washed my face in the bathroom I thought over this development and came to a conclusion. I must in some way get word to Harry and Pete—yet here the real difficulty in all kidnapings confronted me. If the victim is not freed, unharmed, ransom money is thrown away. And what guarantee can there be in the mere promises of kidnapers? None. Unless DeLisle were given absolute proof that Miss Macy's safety was assured, impossible under the circumstances, he might balk and upset my entire scheme.

It was on the way downtown, and with DeLisle sitting beside me holding

on his knees a large brief-case, that I formed a perfect answer to this threat.

## CHAPTER VII

### Death Strikes Again

THAT morning we visited three banks, and what most surprised me was the amount of money accessible to a really wealthy man of DeLisle's standing. Before we were done I began to wish I had asked for half a million instead of a paltry \$150,000. The sight of so much cash made me that way.

Only one banker asked questions or seemed to regard DeLisle's need for so much money as unusual. This was the vice-president of the first place we visited—the MidTown Trust, I believe it was. He knew DeLisle intimately I judged, and sized me up shrewdly when he heard the demand for \$75,000 in mixed series of greenbacks. In answer to questions, DeLisle drew him aside and held a whispered conversation for a minute or so. I stood still and tried to appear indifferent, not doubting DeLisle was telling him of the kidnaping, for when the banker came toward me there was a look of serious concern on his face. Afterward, he and DeLisle disappeared toward the vault in the rear of the bank while I remained in the outer office.

It was then I saw Pete Arnold. He was standing at one of the little writing-desks forming a line down the center of the big room of the bank. His head was bent slightly but his eyes were focussed on me like those of a cat. I returned the stare for a moment, rubbed my chin and nodded at him slowly. Imperceptibly, he returned the gesture, turned and walked toward the door. At a mail-box built into the wall I saw him drop a letter.

He was lounging outside on the curb when DeLisle and I came out a few minutes later. The brief-case which the producer carried was noticeably heavier.

In two other banks there was even less delay in getting the remaining \$75,000. By the time our errand was over the case had become too heavy for DeLisle to carry. He handed the money to me and signalled a cab.

At that moment, I noticed again the gaunt figure of Arnold leaning lazily against a building wall not twenty feet away from where we stood. He held a newspaper in his hand, and, as I watched, his thin lips moved, forming a soundless word. His eyes wandered away as our cab came to the sidewalk. But I had caught the meaning of that word.

It was "Stanhope," a lip motion easily read.

The body of Stanhope, then, had been found.

I sat in the cab with the \$150,000 brief-case in my lap. There remained now a three or four hour wait for the second letter I had seen Arnold mail. Containing as it did a special-delivery stamp, it would come out to the studio late that afternoon.

WE sat in DeLisle's office, at first talking during nervous intervals, and again lapsing into silences in which I read the morning papers. There was however nothing in any of them as to the finding of the body in the Palisade Hotel. Arnold must have read of it in an afternoon paper, which I had no chance to buy.

The brief-case was thrown carelessly on an empty chair. Now and then some message would come to DeLisle concerning the routine work of the studio; for of course, with the ex-

ception of Miss Macy's play, the huge place was uninterrupted in its activity.

The hands of the clock on the producer's desk pointed to exactly four-thirty when the letter, the second I had written, was delivered. DeLisle accepted it nervously from the hand of the girl who brought it in. Even before he passed it to me to read, I was recalling its wording almost verbatim:

MR. HARVEY DELISLE,  
DeLisle Productions,  
Hollywood, Cal.

YYY YYY

DEAR SIR:

Marcia Macy is safe and well. To prove it, she has signed her name at the top of this letter. We know you got the money and here is what you are to do.

Put the money in a traveling bag and let one man leave the studio with it this (Tuesday) evening at exactly seven o'clock. He will get into an open car and drive to Balboa Beach. In the slip running from Balboa Harbor to the ocean, near the inner end, will be tied a small white boat containing an outboard motor. On the motor will be stuck a red flag to mark it. This motor will start at one or two revolutions of the flywheel. Let the man, who can be either yourself or the man in the car when we got Marcia Macy, get into the boat with the money. Let him start the motor and head straight out to sea. There is no surf at this point.

If the man is not alone in the car and in the boat, it will be useless. Remember, we are,

EXPERTS.

"That word 'Tuesday' has been filled in," said DeLisle.

I nodded. "The letter was written before the kidnaping, probably—before they knew the exact date they would be successful." I watched DeLisle closely. "It shows careful planning," I added. "Is that Miss Macy's signature?"

"Yes!" As the word exploded, DeLisle leaped to his feet. "This is preposterous, Stanhope. There's no harbor outlet at Balboa Beach such as they describe. I know. I've sailed out of the place on yachts many times."

I replied slowly: "Then why would they write such a thing?" Again it

appeared as though DeLisle was ready to thwart my plan.

"That's for you to figure out!" he snapped, surprising me. The strain he was under was wearing down the man's reserve. I recovered myself quickly. Had I wished, I could have told him the exact answer to my own question. I talked rapidly:

"All right. Then my advice is to do as they say. Take the money to Balboa, get the boat, if there is a boat; if not, wait there. It may be that they intend giving further instructions at that point. Remember, they're experts. If you want me to take the money and make the contact—"

"Damn!" said DeLisle, and jumped to his feet and seized the telephone. "I won't do it," he shouted. "I'll call the police, the federal authorities! These kidnapers are crazy! They ask me to deliver the money without any knowledge as to whether Marcia is safe—or murdered!"

I LEAPED toward him and grabbed the phone out of his hand. On the instant, in my mind's eye, the elaborate house of cards I had built came tumbling down around my ears. And all because of the cautious obstinacy of this little punk of a movie director.

With this thought the act I had already decided upon became almost mechanical, outside my volition. From my armpit holster I flashed the silenced automatic. DeLisle, half-heartedly struggling for the telephone in my hand, was too stupefied to move. I fired twice, just as I had fired at Stanhope. And with almost the same result, except that DeLisle's little body fell against me, into my arms.

I don't believe he ever realized what happened. I pushed him back into his own chair and the telephone clattered

to the desk. I picked it up and put back the disengaged receiver.

As in the case of Stanhope there was very little blood. That's why I always aimed at the head. I hate the sight of blood. I picked up a blotter, wadded it, and thrust a plug into each of the holes. DeLisle twitched for half a minute, then was still.

Carrying the brief-case, I walked out of the office, snapping the catch-lock on the door as I left. The girl at the switchboard, the only one remaining in the offices outside, barely noticed me as I passed, although my eyes never left her. By the time I had reached the outer door, I was sure DeLisle's interrupted call had not been the cause of alarm.

Outside, I walked down the street two blocks, went into a drug store and to a telephone. It took about five minutes to get Harry on the wire. If I had failed in that, I was ready to go to the tourist camp in a taxi.

"I've got it," I told him. "All of it. Let her go." I heard Harry gasp. I guessed he was in the gas-station, operated at the tourist camp, and so couldn't talk. "I'll meet you in L. A., in the room, in half an hour. Get it? Let her go."

"All right," Harry said finally.

"Is everything all right?" I asked him.

"Yes."

"Pete, and the girl?"

"Yes—yes, Sonny."

I laughed at Harry. He was so slow in understanding. And no wonder. I was working so fast, it had *me* dizzy. Even that second letter, about carrying money to Balboa Beach, was of course just a stall. Kidnapers always work out some scheme like that and so it made everything look regular. What I had counted on was my ability to in-

fluence DeLisle to let me deliver the money. Then I would have scrambled. When he made this impossible I had to kill him.

## EPILOGUE

SINCE that day, after I met Harry and Pete in the little room in L. A. and divided the ransom money equally between us three, I haven't seen Arnold. I think he went to Mexico. He spoke of it at the time. Harry Vance is with me—again, after being on his own for more than two months.

Yet after that last meeting, following my plan, I went to New York and rented a little room much like the one I had left in Los Angeles. It was on Sixty-eighth Street. I figured to live quietly and wait for the heat to blow away. There wasn't a chance of being caught through the money I spent; I knew positively those bills were unmarked and in mixed series. In the meantime the Macy kidnaping case broke wide open in the papers and I followed it step by step.

Stanhope's body was found the day I arrived in New York and shortly after the discovery of Billy and DeLisle. Then came a series of simple deductions on the part of the police and the feds who were working together. From the clerk at the Palisade Hotel they got the description of "John Sargent", who was Harry. After that they figured out, very neatly, exactly what had happened. The man who had impersonated Stanhope, they said, had plotted the entire crime, or series of crimes. With the aid of his accomplices, one of them "John Sargent", he had murdered the chauffeur, kidnaped Miss Macy and confined her in the tourist camp—she recognized the place after her release—and then killed DeLisle and escaped with the money.

This was all true enough. For once, the cops and feds were going good.

Many arrests were made in and around Los Angeles and the suspects brought before Miss Macy, the banker who had seen me, the office girls and the staff at the studio. One by one, when nobody could identify them, they were freed. Every day the papers had a new suspect. Within three weeks I read that I had been captured or seen in Arizona, Florida, Wisconsin and Alaska, sometimes on the same day. Then the cops stopped arresting the wrong men.

They had a very accurate eye-witness description of me which was printed in hundreds of newspapers all over the country, but it was of course inaccurate as to weight and height and was valueless, since there were ten thousand other men who tallied very closely with it. Had they known it, there was both finger-prints and photographs of me in the IB at Washington. Yet at no time was the name Sonny Boy Mayhew mentioned in connection with the search for the kidnaper. I knew then that the authorities were merely taking blind shots.

By the end of a month I knew I was safe. Already the papers were saying here was another mystery to be listed among the unsolved crimes of the century.

I came and went as I pleased but without attracting any attention. In all, it had been six months since the papers had even mentioned me in connection with the rap I had beaten in Chicago before going West. And two months after I left Los Angeles, the kidnaping of Marcia Macy was almost forgotten.

Only once during this time did I have any reason to worry. This was when I read that Marcia Macy was

coming to New York on a week's vacation and shopping trip. The piece gave the date of her arrival and where she would stay. All that week I kept to my room, going out only to eat, usually late at night. Even in a city as big as New York there's always the danger of a chance meeting. When she returned to Hollywood I again felt free to move around. After that, with each day's passing, the case dropped further and further into the background.

IT was two and a half months after I had left the West Coast that I saw the advertisement announcing the showing of Marcia Macy's picture, "Swan Song."

Naturally I was anxious to see it, since I myself had helped make it. No great help, I admit. I had stood with my back to the cameras during the whole of the two minutes of my appearance. I had seen to that. Nevertheless, here was a chance to see part of myself, at least, in pictures. And more than that—the opportunity of judging the effect of the one false move I had made, or might have made, while in Hollywood. I had worried considerably about that picture, even though I knew that both the cameras had been behind me. The theatre where it was to be shown was one of the largest. I would be one of thousands of people.

On the day of the opening I left my room late in the afternoon, took a cross-town cab and got out in front of the theatre. I had come at this hour to escape waiting in the long line outside the ticket office.

Even then the place was nearly full, as I noticed when I climbed up a flight of stairs and found a seat in the balcony.

The feature picture had not started

and I sat impatiently watching a news-reel depicting the assassination of the king of Jugo-Slavia. It was a clumsy job. That gunman jumped on the running-board of a car and shot through the window at a king and a prime-minister while thousands of people looked on. No wonder that press of cops on horseback collared him before his gun stopped smoking.

Immediately after the news-reel the title "Swan Song" flashed on the screen. I sat on the edge of my seat and read all the printed matter introducing the picture. "A DeLisle DeLuxe Production." Then a full-length picture: "Elsie Merton played by Marcia Macy." Marcia was smiling straight up at me. There followed the cast of characters, many of whom I had seen in the studio.

As the story unfolded I recalled the plot. Marcia Macy, as Elsie Merton, the young actress who gives up a brilliant career because of a fight with her husband, was good. As the picture went on, she drifted down and down, shabbier and shabbier in each scene, finally, as an old woman, coming to Hollywood and getting a job as extra.

Finally, the big courtroom scene, wherein Marcia Macy drops her mop, steps forward and reads the lines of the other actress, who is supposed to be injured.

The audience around me was quiet and tense. I could hear the sounds of breathing in the darkness and here and there a cough, or a sob, for the picture was sad. Otherwise the big theatre was still.

The next moment I went stiff as a ramrod. As clear as the sun, my own face had leaped from among that group of shadows on the screen. There was the array of dummy cameras and lights as I remembered them, with me grind-

ing away at a black box on a tripod. There was Macy, before me, reading her lines, dressed as the old woman. But instantly, the view changed. My face was now staring straight out at the audience; in the background, yes, but clearer than my own living features would have been. In that moment I realized there had been other cameras on the set besides the ones I had known were behind me. A common trick, I recalled now, too late. It is not unusual to train a dozen cameras on an important scene.

I GLANCED on either side and saw the people about me were entirely lost in the picture. Slowly, I got to my feet and gained the aisle.

The stairs which I had climbed an hour before seemed twice as long now. The lighted lobby, when I finally reached it, was like a show-up stage at headquarters. On the sidewalk, I pulled my hat low over my eyes and made for a cab at the curb.

I had actually opened the door of that cab when two men materialized out of the sidewalk crowd and seized me, one on either side.

"Take it easy, Sonny Boy Mayhew," said a voice in my ear. "We'll take this cab."

I tried to jerk loose and the man on my left twisted my arm in grip like a steel vise. He held me that way till we were inside. Then both of them frisked me and took my gun. After that, I lay back nursing my arm.

"What's the idea?" I said and one of them laughed. I knew they were feds, not coppers.

The man who had spoken before answered me: "'Swan Song' opened to-day in twenty cities, each theatre with plenty of guards, all of 'em looking for you."

"Nuts," I said and those two feds grinned at me. They were feeling good, now that they had got me without a fight.

As you know, if you've read the papers, that guy was telling the truth. They figured I'd go to that picture sometime, some place. They were prepared to watch every showing of it. And the newspapers had been framed to purposely keep my name out of the list of suspects. It shows what a lot of power the feds have. It was a good idea because it worked.

And now you know too why the papers keep running that line about "Swan Song, starring Sonny Boy Mayhew and Handsome Harry Vance." The "Handsome Harry" is their own idea, not mine.

They picked Harry up in Chicago

two days before they got me. He went there to call on his old sweetheart, to show her his money.

Harry goes first, at midnight tonight. I follow him. It'll be the only time he didn't follow me in anything we've done together.

Harry's that way — dumb, but damned reliable.

I been wondering if they'll ever get Arnold. With that scar on his neck, which he keeps rubbing all the time, even a copper ought to be able to find him.

For about a minute this afternoon I couldn't see to write. They were testing the juice, the death-house screw told us, putting 50,000 volts through the hot seat.

That's a dollar a volt for Harry and me.

## NOVEMBER CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB

*Cryptogram fans submitted 4,682 answers to the twenty-four puzzles; Nos. 259-82, inclusive, published in our cipher department during November, raising our grand total for the first eleven months of 1934 to 57,376 answers! Your name is included in the following list if you sent us solutions to any of the November brain teasers! Fans who solved one or more of the Inner Circle ciphers are marked by asterisks. The December, 1934, Solvers' Club will appear in an early issue. Watch for it, fans! And try your hand at this week's puzzles!*

*Twenty-four Answers*—Jay Abey,\* Los Angeles, Calif.; Amanovlettus,\* Franklin, N. H.; Herbert E. Batho,\* Avalon, Calif.; See Bee Bee,\* Hamilton, Kans.; A Has-Been,\* Union Grove, Wis.; Michael Bernhardt,\* Canton, Ohio; Mrs. Wm. L. Bodie,\* Long Beach, Calif.; Mrs. W. F. Brooks,\* Montreal, P. Q., Can.; Ben Brownie,\* New York, N. Y.; T. F. B.,\* Vancouver, B. C., Can.; Mrs. C. G. Burroughs,\* Madison, Wis.; E. M. Camp,\* Albany, N. Y.; Charles L. Carpenter,\* Berwyn, Ill.; L. P. Carr,\* Soda Springs, Idaho; Blue Hen Chick,\* Middletown, Del.; CIPHERMIT,\* Houlton, Me.; A. B. Clark,\* Rochester, N. Y.; Comrade,\* Baltimore, Md.; Joseph E. Conklin,\* Riverhead, N. Y.; I. R. C.,\* Port Washington, L. I., N. Y.; Corundum,\* Denver, Colo.; Cucumber,\* Redondo Beach, Calif.; W. E. Dalton,\* Marion, Ind.; D'Artagnan,\* Colorado Springs, Colo.; James W. Davidson,\* Moncton, N. B., Can.; Edward J. Drumm,\* Eagle Rock, Calif.; M. E.,\* Scranton,

Pa.; Arty Ess,\* Scranton, Pa.; Ezymarc,\* Franklin, N. H.; H. C. Fetterolf,\* Palmyra, Pa.; Fiddle,\* South Langhorne, Pa.; Clark W. Fish,\* Springboro, Pa.; Mrs. King Fish,\* Perrysburg, Ohio; C. F.,\* Baltimore, Md.; G. Fulton,\* Cleveland, Ohio; Gi Gantic,\* St. Louis, Mo.; Mandl-Gephart,\* Trenton, N. J.; T. Gleason,\* Brooklyn, N. Y.; Izzy Greene,\* East Millinocket, Me.; H. J. Haewecker,\* Middle Village, L. I., N. Y.; Makem Harder,\* Berkeley, Calif.; John Harrington, Corona, L. I., N. Y.; Leon C. Pickering,\* Lake Mary, Fla.; T. Hegarty,\* Brooklyn, N. Y.; Holly,\* Swoyersville, Pa.; Hoodwink,\* Bastrop, Tex.; G. M. Howe,\* Allston, Mass.; M. W. Hughes,\* Hollywood, Calif.; A. L. Hunt,\* Harwich Port, Mass.; Mrs. F. M. Ingalls,\* Glendale, Calif.; Sam Isen,\* Saginaw, Mich.; Jaefsee,\* Accord, N. Y.; Jayel,\* Canton, Ohio; U. U. Jeff,\* Massillon, Ohio; Jokel,\* Salt Lake City, Utah; Joubert,\* New York, N. Y.; Earl Karstens,\*

(Continued on Page 95)



**ILLUSTRATED  
CRIMES**

*by Paul Berdanier*

**THE VON MALUSKI  
KIDNAPING**

It was Sunday, March 29, 1925, about eight in the evening. On an uptown Manhattan street children were trudging eagerly along in the wake of a Salvation Army band. Among them was chubby-cheeked little Sonny Von Maluski. Behind them, unseen, unnoticed, a taxicab slowly followed. In the rear seat a woman nudged the driver, pointed out little Sonny. Steadily, as with a sinister purpose, the strange stalking continued.



**SONNY  
VON MALUSKI**

Sonny Von Maluski did not return to his home that night, nor in the days or nights that followed. And his frantic parents called the police.



Harold Jones, a boarder living with the Von Maluskis, had refused to live with his wife, Mary, after he had learned that her past had been spotted with shoplifting convictions and bigamous marriages. Mrs. Jones had failed in persistent efforts at reconciliation, she had been ordered to stay away from the Von Maluski home, and had even faced a larceny charge lodged by Von Maluski for the alleged theft of jewels and money.

COMING NEXT WEEK—



"I know my wife is back of this," Jones declared. "She said she would play a trick on Von unless I went back to her."

Even while police sought the woman, it was learned that Mrs. Jones had offered a Bowery habitue \$100 to kill Von Maluski, but the bid had been spurned. At last Mrs. Jones was found and arrested. She stolidly denied any knowledge of the kidnaping.



Mrs. MARY JONES

The hunt for the missing boy extended over days and weeks. The Harlem River was dragged. Houses, alleys and yards near his home were scoured. But no trace of Sonny was found, nor has been to this day.

At the trial damning evidence piled up. Taxi drivers testified that Mrs. Jones had been seen with a boy resembling Sonny the night of the abduction. A ten-year-old girl positively identified her as the lady she had seen following Sonny in the wake of the parade.

Mrs. Jones was offered a light sentence if she would reveal the whereabouts of the missing boy, but she maintained a stolid silence. Keeping her secret to the last she took a 25 to 40 year term in Auburn Prison. From time to time Sonny's parents get tantalizing letters from her, offering to tell the full story. But nothing ever comes of it.

Police believe the boy was slain. Whatever his fate, only the brooding, silent prisoner knows. And she may never tell.



## THE MURDER OF EDITOR MELLETT



"If one of you cowards moves  
there'll be a massacre here!"

# Lone She-Wolves

A True Story

By Howard McLellan

*Behind Their Smoking '45's  
These Gun-girls Stalked Their  
Prey—Men*

**A**MERICA'S first lone gun-moll so shocked the world that the great Lombroso, famous criminologist, branded her the "most formidable female offender ever recorded by man." That was fifty years ago when women were supposed to be gun-shy homebodies who had no right to vote, smoke, drink, mix in politics, or fill men's jobs.

It was Belle Starr who provoked the eminent criminologist. Belle Starr not only went gunning, but she went gunning alone—thus violently upsetting the tradition that if women were larcenously inclined they ventured into crimes without violence; shoplifting, pocketpicking and various forms of tricky swindling.

Professor Lombroso passed from the earthly scene long before the Godless Girl, the Icy Blonde, the Baby-Talk Bandit, and the Gun Girl of the Bottomlands and scores of other mod-

ern lone she-wolves launched upon gun careers which dimmed the exploits of Belle Starr, the roughriding Amazon of the raw frontier. Compared with this modern crop of professional gun-girls, Belle Starr seems a gentle soul.

Buffalo herds and Indians still roamed the Southwest when Belle was born, February 3, 1846; in her father's hotel in Carthage, Mo. He was also the village justice of the peace. He gave Belle every advantage, both good schooling and instruction in music and dancing. It was just unfortunate that the girl was born in an hotel, for every grown-up who visited the inn patted the curls of the pretty and precocious daughter of the owner. At fifteen Myra Belle was a thoroughly spoiled vixen.

When the Civil War broke out, her brother Ed rode away with Quantrell's famous guerillas. This nearly broke Belle's heart. She wanted to go too. The best she could do was to get on her pinto, two six-shooters hanging from her belt, and carry fodder and news to the bushwhackers while they were hiding from the troops.

Three notorious young men were members of Quantrell's band. They were Cole Younger and the James brothers, later train robbers, bank bandits, and all-round bad men. Belle met them, looked with awe and envy upon them, wished she had been born a man. Jim Reed, a hot-headed young Southerner was glad she hadn't been born a man, for then he would not have fallen

in love with her. They married and settled down near Dallas, Texas to "raise" horses.

WHEN Jim Reed was felled by a blast of buckshot from the gun of a horse-raiser, Texans knew that the horses which filled Belle's and Jim's corrals had been "raised" in the old fashioned Texas way—by theft.

Belle retaliated by setting a torch to the first country store she came upon after Jim's funeral and watching it burn to the ground.

She was very beautiful, very wild and a splendid rider. A sedate old gentleman became enamored of the wild and beautiful widow and spent a small fortune freeing her from the arson charge — where-

upon she rode off for the range, leaving her aged admirer holding an unused marriage license. Belle was out to do any male who crossed her path.

She went into the land of the Cherokees, then known as Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, and married Sam Starr, son of old Ellis Starr, chief of Cherokee badmen. She made Sam stay at home while she, lone-handed, rode the range and stole horses on a wholesale scale.

Sam, with time hanging heavy on his hands, spent much of it at gaming tables. Belle learned of the gambling joint which had taken most of his money. Swaggering into it one evening she leveled her six-shooters at dealer and players and calmly announced:

**T**HRILL-MADDENED  
gun girls — they  
took to the pistol to make  
men cringe. The Godless  
Girl, the Icy Blonde, the  
Laughing Lioness, the rabid  
Gungirl of the Arkansas  
Bottomlands, all walked a  
bloody, desperate trail.  
Single-handed, alone, they  
defied all men. She-wolves  
of death, they belong in  
this seventh article of the  
great series, "Killers"  
Molls."

"There's a little change due one of my friends, gentlemen, and if you want it back, come and get it."

"She scooped up the kitty, rifled the pockets of players and dealer, shot up the place, and rode away.

Belle could not restrain the urge to molest men. Spotting a bank in her travels, she walked into it, calmly ordered the banker to hand over every cent, and, when that was done, walked out; twirling her gun on a finger. The editor of a country weekly printed disparaging remarks about her. Belle heard that he was attending a country fair. Riding boldly into the fair grounds she snatched the editor by the nape of the neck and dragged him out.

A lady editor printed a column of abuse against the roughriding Belle, but instead of being snatched up and treated to the medicine which the male editor had been forced to take, the editress was called upon by Belle and patted on the back for having printed just what should have been printed.

Belle Starr resorted to womanly means when a getaway was necessary. Jailed in a workhouse, she abandoned her masculine attire. She spent much time primping. All this to a purpose—for the turnkey, a married man, made eyes at her. They eloped before half her sentence had been served.

The countryside and the turnkey's wife thought he had been kidnaped and slain until he turned up alive to tell a tale of being forced by Belle Starr to escort her out of jail. But Belle Starr was not through with him. Though absent from his home-coming, she had a woman's proverbial last word. As the turnkey's wife was running through his coat she came across a little note sewed to the inside pocket:

*Found to be unsatisfactory upon using.*

It was in Belle Starr's handwriting, and the turnkey spent many hours trying to explain it.

Belle would have no man she could not boss. Sometime in 1888 she mated with a singed badman known as Watson. One evening he aroused her wrath. She studied him in silence for a long time, and finally remarked:

"I could put you in jail for the rest of your life." Watson snickered.

That day was February 3, 1889 it was Belle Starr's forty-third birthday. She swung aboard her steed to ride off to a country dance to celebrate her anniversary. A charge of turkey shot from Watson's shotgun knocked her from the saddle.

As she lay unconscious on the ground Watson took one of her six shooters, shot her in the back and breast, waited until she breathed her last, and then galloped away on her horse.

She was buried at Younger's Bend. A modest tablet rises above the grave and on it these words are carved:

#### BELLE STARR

Feb. 3 1846—Feb. 3 1889

Shed not for me the bitter tear,  
Nor give the heart to vain regret.  
'Tis but the casket that lies here,  
The gem that filled it sparkles yet.

#### II

FOR more than forty years no moll arose in America or elsewhere to emulate Belle Starr's wild career. She had won infamous renown as the first and probably the last woman to challenge with her gun a world ruled by men.

Then came the great metamorphosis in the lives of women. The World War flamed. Women braved the dangers of the front line, traveled seas

terrorized by submarines, drove trucks and taxis, toiled at machines formerly "manned" only by men. With the close of the war they won the right to vote. The new, emancipated women appeared upon the scene.

And many young women, gripped by this new sense of freedom, took up the gun as a career and concentrated their attacks against men, going it single-handed to prove that they were well able to take care of themselves and their guns without the aid of a male.

Seventeen-year-old Anna Kolodye might have had an uneventful, happy girlhood save that the feeling that she was on an equal footing with men crept into her consciousness shortly after the dawning of the age of freedom for women. Clad in a trim little middy suit she occasionally ran into boys on the corner near her Brooklyn home.

She was red-haired, an extremely stubborn little person, and she sought to declare herself in on the street corner confabs of the boys and to run with them on an equal footing. They were proud young males. They roused feminine wrath with a taunt:

"You dames, you make us guys sick. You ain't got the guts we have. G'wan, stick to the skirts, where you belong."

"Oh, is that so?" The red-haired girl flared at them. "We girls haven't got any guts? Wait and see!"

It was the old conflict of man and woman in boy-and-girl land. Anna went out to prove her case. Suddenly newspapers flashed headlines about the schoolgirl in a middy blouse who took great delight in walking into gambling places, where only men were allowed, and sticking them up.

She did not take any coin, which puzzled the police. The country was

shocked to hear of a mite of a girl who was terrorizing rugged gents engaged in a wholly masculine pastime. A chit of a miss, challenging the whole police department, the first gun-girl of the modern age! Who for apparently only the thrill, raided stalwart males and passed up the coin which she might easily have scooped into her hand bag; whose hand was so small and frail that it drooped with the weight of a hefty .45 automatic.

Sometimes she made her victims take off their trousers. With impish delight made them throw the pants out of the window, and departed laughing.

Finally the police collared the lone marauder—and the first of the new crop of gun-molls laughed at her predicament.

"Huh!" little Anna sniffed. "I guess those fresh kids on the corner won't tell any more girls they haven't got guts. Who do those birds think they are, anyway? Take a rap for this? Why, certainly. I'm dying to see the inside of a prison."

Stern ladies stood aghast at this exhibition of the new girl bent upon showing up men. They wondered what had come over their sex. Anna, however, was not a militant suffragette. She was a flaming-headed schoolgirl who had had enough of the self-asserted superiority of men. She was also the forerunner of a large crop of lone she-wolves who arose throughout the country to show that some young women were taking their new freedom with a vengeance.

**I**N Toledo, Ohio, a month after Anna had been caught, a young woman with a firm voice called banks on the telephone and asked for the president. When that dignitary got on the phone she announced:

"I'm coming down in a few minutes to do some business."

"The banker, anxious to serve a new customer, was delighted with the news and sat awaiting the call. Presently a young woman with bobbed hair walked into his office with this greeting:

"I'm the lady who phoned a little while ago. I'm ready to do business."

Whereupon she opened her handbag, flashed a small gun and said:

"Make it snappy or I'll say it with hot lead. I want to draw about three thousand dollars." In some instances she was accommodated; in others she was kidded into withdrawing via the front door.

For weeks this young woman visited banks in and around Toledo, using the same technique on each visit. She eluded capture, and became the second lone she-wolf to make people wonder what in the world was possessing the young women of the day, and what had happened to stern bankers that they should quail at the sight of her gun.

Jacqueline Rogers was the next to startle newspaper readers. To all outward appearances Jacqueline was a quiet girl who liked to dress mannishly and live alone. Her countenance was sharp-featured. With a mannish fedora hat pulled low over one eye, her features resembled those of the Prince of Wales, and in the matter of wardrobe she was also like him.

In her closet were a dozen suits of men's clothes, costly and marvelously tailored. Her friends called her "Walesy," but none of them knew precisely what she did for a living. She had money and plenty of it. By day she was a demure young woman sitting in her apartment; by night she was a prowler, stalking about New Jersey cities stealing automobiles.

Sometimes, but only rarely, she was assisted by a young man—who occasionally had to be prodded into jumping into a car and driving it away by the jabbing of "Walesy's" gun into his ribs. Otherwise Jacqueline was a lone-wolf moll, a hot-car girl who had evolved what, for a time, was an unbeatable system for stealing cars and disposing of them.

Alone, she attended to all the intricate details, eradicating serial numbers with acid and blow torch, changing the color schemes, manufacturing fraudulent bills of sale, and making keys to fit every type of automobile on the market. It was not a difficult trick for her to dispose of fifteen "hot heaps" in a fortnight.

But as in the case of many another moll, Jacqueline's make-up proved her undoing. She thought she looked best in a man's fedora hat worn at a rakish angle and pulled down over one eye. The police merely had to keep an eye out for a lady who looked like the Prince of Wales, in due time they colared "Walesy."

Though arrest and conviction almost inevitably followed the exploits of this early crop of lone she-wolves, other molls came in their wake, each seeking to outdo the other as if they were engaged in a contest. Twenty-year-old Stella Bickness carried a gun hanging by a silver chain from her neck and prowled Newark, N. J., homes in a hunt for jewelry. Each night after a prowl she sat down in her room and wrote a chapter of a book, "The Girl Who Never Was Caught." An inquisitive landlady looked at her literary efforts and called the police.

Unusual streaks of meanness cropped out. In Brooklyn, N. Y., a white-haired miss, whom the police dubbed the Icy Blonde, spent the

Christmas holiday season dashing from one Salvation Army Santa Claus to another, poking her gat into their ribs and emptying their little iron kettles of coins. She eluded capture. Little Marie Glynn, seventeen, fell afoul of the law after setting a high record for stickups—242 in a few months. Miss Tillie Sacks had a boy-friend who gambled incessantly and always lost. Her feminine soul sprouted a heavy grudge against gamblers. Arming herself with two guns, Tillie stuck up gambling games until lookouts in such joints locked their ice box doors to all women, and were especially alert for a meek looking girl who dressed all in green, Tillie's favorite gunning rig.

She shrewdly got around this barrier by planting herself in the doorways of gambling joints and sobbing aloud. Lookouts, hearing her pitiful cry, opened their doors, saw a girl slumped in a corner. When they bent to inquire into the cause of her great misery Tillie jabbed two guns against them, and walked into the joints and out again with plunder.

### III

**I**N spite of the brazenness of these lone molls comparatively light sentences were meted out to them. Juries were invariably chicken-hearted towards them, apparently oblivious of the fact that the young women had taken it upon themselves to work with the gun on an equal footing with gunmen.

Presently the cry went up that the courts should treat them as men were treated. When Vivian Wright, twenty-two, and Helen Baker, twenty-seven, had been rounded up for a series of lone-wolf stickups in Brooklyn, N. Y., Judge F. F. Adel took it upon himself to deal in a new way with the

gatted exponents of the new freedom for women.

"Young ladies," he announced from the bench, "you have elected to play a man's game and you must get a man's punishment." He meted out sentences on this basis—thirty years maximum to Vivian, fifteen years to Helen. In New York City, the lone gun-molls suddenly recalled the old rule that a woman's place is in the home. There was a lull in the activities of lone she-wolves.

In other sections of the country more than one young woman was seized with the urge to gun it alone, and on the whole these unfettered ladies made a more violent showing than their gatted sisters of the great metropolis.

Thrown into the vortex of crime in Chicago, at the heyday of such masterminds of organized crime as Capone, Torrio and O'Banion, it is perhaps not strange that Margaret Bayne sought to stand out as an exemplar of the new woman in crime. It was most unfortunate for her that she had a delightful, musical little laugh which she could not suppress.

She was a comely maid of twenty-one, dressed in the height of fashion, her trim feet clad in snakeskin pumps. She took to running up the steps of Elevated railroad stations late at night and presenting herself at the ticket office, a .45 automatic thrust out before her.

"Pass out the pin money, please." This, with a smile which bared perfect white teeth, was Margaret's usual greeting.

It seemed like a joke to the ticket sellers and invariably they said so, only to find that her finger pressed a little firmer against the trigger, and to hear her say:

"You can't see the trigger on this gat, but if I move my finger another hair you'll find out it's not a joke."

Instantly the ashen-faced men behind the little arched openings in their cells pushed out all the small change visible. Then came the laugh, a bit of girlish soprano on the crescendo, and Margaret's snakeskin pumps went clicking down the steps.

After some twenty midnight stickups of ticket booths the young woman became known as the Laughing Lioness. It was reported that Capone, hearing of her prowess, dispatched agents to engage her services as a gun-girl. Possibly Capone's scouts got on the job too late. At any rate Margaret, who looked like a well-dressed college girl, was scurrying about midnight from one elevated ticket booth to another when a policeman spotted her and asked why she wasn't home like a girl of her age should be.

He received in response a merry little soprano laugh whose lilt had been carefully charted by specialists in the detective bureau. Taken to a police station, the Laughing Lioness could not for the life of her give a demonstration of her odd little laugh, but the presence of hundreds of nickels, dimes and quarters in her pockets and handbag settled her in jail.

Then, in St. Louis, doll-faced Louise Showlter, whose face might have made her a fortune in the movies, tried to go Margaret Bayne one better. With a diminutive pearl-handled revolver Louise set out to raid filling stations in a fleet roadster. She was not gifted with an unusual laugh, but she was addicted to baby talk. It fitted her doll-like face, and it is a misfortune that once a young lady acquires the habit of babbling like an infant it is difficult to get rid of it.

Sitting in her roadster, her gun leveled at the filling station attendant, Louise's voice would babble:

"Now itsey-bitsey baby boy give itsey bitsey mama those pretty-witty 'ittle coins o-o have."

Immediately the coins were in the baby-talker's hands she was off in a flash. Finally a police flyer chased her into a blind street where she clinched the case against herself by greeting her captors with:

"Oo aughtie-naughty, eenie-meanie men."

Louise just could not free herself from the purely womanly habit of talking baby-talk. To the grim business of armed stickups Louise and Margaret Bayne added a bit of feminine clowning, though their antics were not so comic to victims watching their trigger fingers.

The chivalry which men display towards women led Alice Le Ferre into a series of raids on Los Angeles filling stations. Almost without exception filling station attendants rushed up to Alice's blue coupé to wipe the windshield and to courteously ask her if there was something else they might do to the car, a little fixing here and there which a woman driver might not be able to do.

The instant the attendants raised their cleansing rag to her windshield, Alice thrust the nose of a gun into their necks and ordered them to shell out the change in their pockets. For months this lone she-wolf raided filling stations and the police were unable to catch up with her.

**A**LICE was inordinately proud of her work. Each night when she repaired to her room she counted her change, took out a little ten-cent diary and in it recorded the day's



doings. She spared no details. This little trick of keeping a diary is common to women. On the other hand, women have insatiable curiosity to learn the secrets of their sisters. To them another woman's diary is a tempting morsel.

Alice's landlady was not different from the average curious female. One afternoon while Alice was racing from one filling station to another the inquisitive landlady peeked into her diary, gasped, and hurried to a phone. When Alice came home from an afternoon of raiding the police were waiting for her. She and her diary were promptly escorted to the lock-up. Alice had faithfully kept her daily record. In it were entries like:

Slick old trick of letting them wipe the windshield hooks them every time. Took in \$120 today, and the cops again got the old run-around.

This sad ending to an exciting career should have made it obvious to anyone who read of Alice's exploits that molls are invariably the victims of treacherous habits peculiar to their sex. Margaret Bayne had been hooked by an infectious little laugh, Louise Showlter had been betrayed by her baby-talk, and Alice Le Ferve had been turned up by a feminine propensity of recording her daily doings in a diary. But this inevitable irony of fate did not deter Sally Scott from setting out upon a career as a desperate lone she-wolf.

When women were given the right to vote and embrace their new freedom, Sally Scott was a small girl in Detroit, with no feeling about the matter one way or the other. She was a cute kid with large dark eyes and raven black hair trimmed into bangs which fell over her forehead and made her look like a Japanese doll. There was a somnolent

listlessness to her dark orbs. She was what is often called a deep girl, the serious, brooding type.

At seventeen she became a trained nurse and was received into wealthy Detroit homes to care for ailing members of the household. She was often called upon to attend male patients. Sally was strictly feminine. She did not want to compete with men, and nursing was mostly a job for women.

Clad in the immaculate costume of a nurse, with a crisp little nurse's cap riding her black tresses, Sally moved noiselessly in and out of sick rooms. She always spoke in a soft voice. Frequently, as part of her professional routine duties, she had to hold the hands of a male patient while she read his pulse. Usually she was alone in the room with her patient.

It was while one of these pulse-taking operations was under way that Sally got the shock of her young life. The rich patient suddenly sat up, threw his arms around the girl and attempted to attack her. She screamed, fought off her assailant and fled from the house as if she had encountered a monster in it.

That was the end of Sally's nursing career. If a rich man would resort to attacking a woman brought into his home to minister to his illness, then no man could be trusted. She brooded for days. An intense hatred for all men completely mastered her. It flamed into a hate for all society, and her deep, brooding nature drove her to strange lengths. It was something she must never forget.

A street carnival came to Detroit. Sally wandered into its tented streets, stole into a tent, rolled up her shirt-waist sleeves to the elbows and grimly sat while a tiny electric needle buzzed on her bare arms. When she emerged

from the tent her arms bore tri-colored symbols tattooed on her fair skin.

On her right arm, "THE GODLESS GIRL," was lettered above a viper with jaws open and fangs ready to strike. On the left forearm was a grotesquely worked symbol of a skull and dagger, and above this the legend "DEATH BEFORE DISHONOR."

She was marked for life, marked plainly where anyone might see the symbols when she wore a sleeveless waist. A string of red Oriental beads circled her neck and lay upon her white throat, which she kept bare by throwing open the collar of her blouse. Suspended from the string of beads was a miniature silver revolver, sometimes a silver-bladed dagger of watch charm size. The addition of two automatics, carried in pockets built into her skirt, equipped Sally for deadly business.

For weeks the former nurse prowled Detroit streets with a venomous gleam in her eyes, and a hatred of men flaming in her heart. Now and then she dropped into a cigar or drug store, looked over the men behind the counters, then went out to pay visits to other stores where men were employed.

Finally she struck. Walking into stores she had already fingered Sally drew both her guns, held them firmly leveled on men clerks, stood grim and silent for an instant and then leered:

"You beasts, now I've got you just where I want your kind. How do you like it?"

The clerks stood dumfounded. Sometimes she ordered them to open the cash register and come across. At other times she stood mute while her victims paled and quailed, then, thrusting both hands upward, she sprayed the ceiling with lead or turned her fire on bottles and mirrors, and put on an old-time mining town exhibition of

gunplay. Then, shrieking a curse, she would flee.

#### IV

AFTER some weeks of these violent outbursts of deadly fireworks, Detroit awoke to the realization that a lone demon in skirts was running amuck. Police motor patrols lay in wait for her, only to find that she had extended her field of operations to outlying sections of the city and small towns nearby.

The police were puzzled by her indifference to money. Frequently when the contents of cash registers were laid on counters at her command she turned loose her pistol fire and fled without touching the money. They were likewise mystified by her appearance only in stores where men were behind the counters. The epithet "beast" which she hurled at her victims, and the grim manner in which she watched them turn white and shiver, indicated that she was not the ordinary predatory stickup artist.

The lone marauder next ventured upon a bold frontal attack against the trousered enemy. Her earlier attacks had been directed against one, two and three men. This time she would face them in the mass.

Walking into a café filled only with men, and burly fellows at that, she stood at the door rolling up the sleeves of her waist. Fifty men, sitting at a lunch counter and at tables, turned from their food and drink and wondered what was up. Presently the visitor threw open the neck of her blouse, tossed back her head and drew two guns.

Men gasped, dropped knives and forks, sat with mouths agape as the gungirl shouted a command.

"You herd of beasts!" she cried.

"If one of you cowards as much as moves a foot there'll be a massacre here!"

Her bare, tattooed arms shot up into the air and a volley of bullets crashed into the plaster ceiling. Great gobs of plaster rained down upon the frozen-faced diners. If a foot moved Sally Scott was not aware of it.

There was a lull in the firing. She stood mute, glaring at the objects of her deep hatred. Then she laughed, a high-pitched, harsh laugh, fired one gun into the steaming coffee urn and let the other blaze at a boiler full of soup. Still the men sat motionless and owl-eyed, while coffee spurted from the pierced urn and soup poured out of the bullet hole in the copper pot.

"Cowards! All of you!"

Sally Scott sent a bullet crashing into a plateglass showcase and another past the head of a waiter who moved a hand to turn out the gas under the coffee pot. She backed toward the door, her tattooed arms outstretched, a warm gun in each hand. Some of the enemy were seated on stools not five feet from her, their eyes riveted on her bare arms.

She jumped into an automobile at the curb and raced away, thrilled by her triumph over a mass of the enemy. Her tattooed arms lay over the rim of the steering wheel, their ghastly symbols feeding fresh life to her hate for men. For hours she drove wildly about the city. As she was racing along a boulevard a runabout came up from the rear and brushed the running-board of her car. A uniformed patrolman stepped out of the runabout and threw himself on her tattooed arms and cut off the switch.

There was no doubt about his being in the right car. He raised Sally Scott's bare arms to his fellow officer in the

runabout and read aloud the legend over the tattooed viper: "THE GODLESS GIRL." Hundreds of young women at the wheels of cars had been stopped that night by officers, but only one of them bore upon her arms the symbols which a dozen male eyes had spotted as their gatted Nemesis withdrew from the bullet-shattered café.

A defiant moll faced the police at the station house.

"What was the idea back of all the fireworks?" Sally Scott was asked. "You didn't get enough money to buy a cheap hat."

"I hate all men," she shot back, thrusting out her left arm. "See that!" she cried. "'Death before dishonor.' Well, it means just that, death before I'd let a man dishonor me."

"But why did you pick on God?" a detective asked, pointing to the tattooed symbol on her right arm.

"Because He's a man, and I hate all men."

With the ghastly symbols etched into her flesh, Sally Scott came as near injecting hatred into her blood as it is humanly possible to do so. Facing trial, she evidenced no change of heart towards men. Her lawyer, believing that the jury might be lenient because of her unfortunate experience with the patient who had attacked her, was prepared to go to trial. He was utterly dumfounded when his client announced:

"I plead guilty."

"No, no, Your Honor!" he cried. "She doesn't plead guilty! She stands mute."

The lone she-wolf glared at her defender.

"I stand mute nothing!" she blurted. "Say, does a woman have to fight to plead guilty, too?"

The Godless Girl was accommodated

with a prison term. She carried into prison the symbols of her hate of men. An overpowering hate transformed the soft-spoken nurse into a manhunting demon.

A DEEP attachment to a lawless father worked the same transformation in Helen Spence. This Arkansas gun-girl was born to the sight of guns and reared amidst their deadly sound. The houseboat in which she was born was one of many floating lean-tos which cluster along the banks of the White River in southeastern Arkansas. From these floating shacks many pitched battles have been fought in the river mists.

Cicero Spence, the girl's father, was a hard-working, horny-fisted fighting man, a tall, gaunt figure who bowed only to that form of law which is administered with bullets singing through the river mists.

The mother of Helen was a woman of education and refinement from a home in the prosperous hill country of Arkansas. This she gave up to wed the shiftless Cicero. When she died after three years among the uncouth river people, Cicero Spence went around as though his tough heart were broken. He had apparently loved the woman from the hill country.

She had bore him two daughters, but the one he worshiped was Helen. In physical appearance she resembled her father. She was tall, sharp-featured, alert-eyed. In spirit she was like her mother, soft-voiced, gentle and remarkably bright. And she in turn worshiped her hard-drinking, hard-fighting sire.

When they went out in the family rowboat, Helen handled the oars, and though she was not fifteen an automatic pistol lay in her lap covered by

the folds of her red and white polka dot frock. Cicero sat with a rifle across his knees, a fishing pole in his hand. Now and then the old man would take time out from his fishing to train his small daughter in the art of popping floating bottles with her gun. There was no telling. At any moment a gun might blaze at them from the shore. Not all the feuds that had arisen among the bottomland people had been settled.

One night the sluggish waters of the river yielded up the body of Jed Wilsey, a timber watchman. He had been shot through the head by a rifle bullet. Cicero Spence was arrested for murder. Finding herself alone in the houseboat, Helen married young Buster Eaton. Spence was convicted and sentenced to nine years in prison for the murder of the young timber watchman. Released on bail pending the outcome of an appeal to higher courts, Cicero Spence returned to his houseboat and often went fishing with his favorite daughter. Always she carried the gun in her lap and took frequent occasion to show her father how she had improved in her shooting.

The old man sat brooding over the nine-year sentence.

"Pa, don't worry like that," she said.

"Can't help it, child. If the case should happen to go agin me—"

"If it does you'll never serve a day in prison, pa."

Old Cicero stared at her. "What yo' sayin' there, child?"

"I mean it. They'll never take you away from me again."

"Git sich notions outer yo' head, child. Yo' got yo' husband to look after now."

"He's not a Spence. He wouldn't fight for you, and I've got no brother."

"Fightin's not for women in these parts, child." And Cicero Spence went on fishing.

The appeal went against him. There was a great drunken orgy among the friends of Jed Wilsey. They were not pleased with the course the law had taken. Cicero Spence should have been hanged. Presently the law of the river was invoked against Cicero Spence. His body was found floating in the river, a bullet hole through the temple.

Mrs. Spence, the dead man's second wife, told authorities that while she was rowing downstream with Cicero, two young rivermen, Jack Worls and Jess Nipson, had asked to ride with them. They got aboard, pistols flashed and Cicero Spence died at the oars. Then Worls and Nipson had assaulted her. A few days later the widow died of her injuries.

A mighty change came over Helen. Almost overnight the mild, gentle ways of her mother vanished from her character. She had her hair cropped short, pulled the drops from her ears, tossed away two cheap little rings, got rid of hats and went about in a full-length raccoon coat and high boots.

She now looked like a man. She became almost an exact double for her father. She quit Eaton, gave up the houseboat, took her gun and paid a visit to the jail where Worls and Nipson were locked up on a charge of having murdered her father.

The houseboat folks thought it strange that she tried to get bail for the pair accused of the slaying. But bail was denied them. Helen had interceded in their behalf to get them out into the open where she might demonstrate with her gun that at least one river woman could use the weapon of men.

The refusal of bail was a great blow to the young woman. Unable to

avenge the slaying of her father, she tried to shoot herself. The wound was not fatal. Not until she heard that Worls was to be tried forthwith did she show signs of interest in life. She vanished from the hospital, turned up in the court room on the day the twelve jurors retired to deliberate upon Worls' fate.

## V

THE court room was jammed by friends of the accused man. Immediately the jury had gone out these followers gathered round Worls and assured him that in a jiffy he would be set free. Cicero Spence had only one friend in court, a figure in a raccoon coat who had found a refuge in a shadowed corner in the rear of the court room. She didn't stir until a deputy sheriff came from the jury room and whispered something to Worls and his friends, something that made them slap Worls on the back and clap their hands.

Slowly the figure in the corner arose, raised a furred arm. A .45 caliber automatic snorted four times. Jack Worls' case was taken from the jurors' hands. Helen Spence Eaton had turned the river law on him. Calmly she walked up to the judge's bench.

"I'm not sorry for it. Not a bit. He killed pa. Yeah, I shot him in the back. Wasn't that where he shot pa?"

His Honor stared at her aghast.

"You had no reason in the world for doing this, young woman. No miscarriage of justice was about to occur. The jurors had decided upon a verdict of guilty."

"Down in the bottoms where I come from," she cried, "the law acts quicker! And if I had to do the thing over again I wouldn't hesitate a minute."

Up to the time Helen Spence Eaton had embraced the gun no woman had arisen in the houseboat colony to challenge the exclusive right of its gaunt men to kill and be killed in executing the laws of the White River bottomlands. It was said of her that she must be crazy, and an effort was made at her trial to prove that she was insane. She scoffed at the idea.

"I'm a gunwoman, but that don't prove I'm crazy. Women ain't weaklings any more. When they killed off pa there was no man in the family, so I took the place of a man."

The jurors found her guilty of murder in the second degree, with a penalty of five years in prison. The lone gun-girl was pleased. It meant that she would not go to a crazy house. She was admitted to bail pending the outcome of her appeal. She promptly acquired a new gat, a raccoon coat and high boots. Fear of prison had not divorced her from the gun. She was again a lone-wolf, stalking for prey.

She found employment as a waitress in a riverfront restaurant operated by fat, glossy-faced Jim Bohots. While her duties did not require the packing of a gun, she carried a .45 in her blouse. There were lulls in her duties, and on these occasions she sat on a tall stool scribbling on her check pad, jotting down such cryptic writings as "prison . . . never" and "the woman pays—with a gun."

Bohots had a notion that he could tame Cicero Spence's child. At frequent intervals, while she was engaged in recording her thoughts on her pad, he sidled up and tried to put his pudgy hand around the waist of the young woman who had worshiped only one man—her father.

As often as Bohots tried to put his arm around her waist she pushed him

away with a warning not to "monkey with a river girl."

Bohots had always taken liberties with his waitresses, but none of them had packed a gat nor had they harbored an ambition to go life alone with only a gun to protect them.

It was also during one of the lulls in her café work that Helen picked up a file and cut a deep notch into the grip of her pistol. Then she opened the cigar case, took out a fat cheroot, lit it and through its smoke studied the fat face of Bohots. Perhaps it was a sudden urge to thoroughly tame the cigar-smoking river girl that prompted Bohots to ask her to ride out with him in his car. Possibly it was a sudden decision to prove to him that she couldn't be tamed that prompted her to say "Yes," and then help herself to a dozen fat cigars which she stowed away in her blouse. They rubbed against her pistol.

At any rate, big Jim Bohots never lived to tell the story of the ride. No gungirl of the modern crop had resorted to gangland's trick of taking a victim for the ride. Helen Eaton did, and Jim Bohots was found slumped at the wheel of the car, shot twice in the breast, one of the bullets in his heart.

The gungirl spent the remainder of that night in her room, smoking one cigar after another and filing a second notch in her gun. With the approach of dawn she took up her father's little Bible and read, a solemn duty which Cicero Spence had always performed after a gun battle in the mists of the river.

When she retired a note in her handwriting was pinned to the inner side of her bedroom door:

*To Whom It May Concern*  
*I will never be taken alive*

She went to sleep with her hand around her two-notched gun.

About mid-morning she was awakened by raps on her door. She buried the gun in her nightgown, opened the door. A sheriff and his deputy came in. She greeted them calmly. When she was asked about Jim Bohots she said she had last seen him in the restaurant the night before, and was astounded when they told her he had been killed. No, she hadn't been out with Bohots in his machine. Her callers were satisfied. They left. Later she was arrested on suspicion and was being held in jail when news came that the high court had reversed her conviction for the murder of Jack Worls.

A strange sullenness came over the girl. The news from the high court was disappointing, for it made it appear that, after all, she had not killed Worls and she wanted the world to know that she had; that she, a lone woman, had taken the law into her own hands and had inflicted a penalty in accordance with the old laws of the bottomlands. So she pleaded guilty to killing Worls and was sent away to serve two years on the Jacksonville State Farm for Women.

**A**MONG the tamed inmates of the women's farm she was lost. The dull routine palled on her. The drab creatures around her were not in her class. She was a gunwoman, as reckless as any man and as quick on the trigger as her father had been. She had killed two men, and though she boasted openly of it to her sister inmates they wouldn't believe it.

She might have shown them the two notches on her gun, but that weapon was out of her reach now. Parole opened the gates to her and she drifted back to the river country, gatted again

and searching for work to be done with a gun, something that would prove her to be the equal of any man along the river.

A strange creature, yet from childhood she had carried and fondled the gun, and was drawn to it as a painter is drawn to his brush. In spite of her boast that she had already killed two men, the natives refused to believe it.

"I'll prove to you that I did," she said. "And when I do I'll show you that I wasn't born a daughter of Cicero Spence for nothing. They'll put me in prison, but they won't keep me there."

Proof that she was justified in carrying a two-notched gun came in abundant measure a few days later. Helen walked into police headquarters in Little Rock and made a confession:

"I killed Jim Bohots. I took one shot at him while he sat in his car. He just sat there quiet with his eyes wide open. It didn't look like he was going to die, so I shot him again. I couldn't stand the way he pawed me like I was nothing but a female cat, so I took him for the ride. Now do your damndest, but I warn you, you better lock me up where I can't get out. I'm the child of old Cicero Spence, and jails were never meant for people from the White River."

A ten-year sentence returned her to the prison farm. She entered its walls determined to soon emerge in a wild and bloody break that would give her river people something to think about and all Arkansas something to read about.

One September morning she sneaked out of her prison quarters and beat it pellmell for the nearest town, planning to lay hands on a gun. Bloodhounds were set on her trail and she was picked up in a field, unarmed.

Four days later she escaped again,

sneaking out of the mess hall. She was tracked by bloodhounds, brought back before she could reach town and equip herself with a weapon.

Next time she went out with a trusty, Ruth Clark, in a truck, both clad in overalls and men's denim blouses. They abandoned the truck in the Faulkner County mountains near Little Rock, planning to go into Little Rock by hitch-hiking. There Helen planned to arm herself and make it a special point to come back to the prison to put up an armed battle.

They were nibbling at cheese and crackers in a country store when Helen said:

"If I could only put up some kind of a gunfight . . . but they don't have guns in the women's prisons. It's too tame for me. I'm itching to smell gun smoke, get my hands on a gat. You'd see something then . . ."

At that moment bloodhounds appeared at the door and sniffed. Before nightfall the gungirl and her companion were in double-barred cells in the prison farm, while prison authorities pondered the question as to whether Helen Spence Eaton was suffering from claustrophobia—a morbid dread of confined places.

## VI

THE truth lay concealed within her. She craved the flash and crack of a gun, the smell of powder smoke and the high tension of pitched battle. Now, in a double-barred cell, she was thrilled by the glimpse of a gun. This time she was being guarded by a man wearing a six-shooter. The hour came when she was to leave to pick strawberries in the prison patch. She said she was ill and was excused from duty.

Somehow she got hold of a six-

shooter, the weapon she had always favored, stole out into the prison corridor, paused to pen a note and then pin it to the matron's door. It said:

*To Whom It May Concern.*

*I'll never be taken alive!*

Helen Eaton, armed at last, reached open country. She relieved a motor car driver of his black felt hat, overalls, shirt and red bandanna handkerchief. Clad in these, with the bosom of her shirt open, her six-shooter stuck into the belt of her overalls, she reached a farmhouse and ordered the lone woman in it to drive her to Little Rock.

As the car bounded along the road Helen sat with her gun in her lap, her blazing eyes on the road behind. Suddenly she ordered her driver to halt the car and, leaping out, she made for a clump of brush alongside the road. The car turned and went back to warn the posse Helen had seen.

In ambush the gungirl was ready to put up the pitched battle which the lack of a gun had prevented in her previous attempts to escape. Through the tangled thicket she saw dust swirling up from the road a quarter of a mile away. A car came on, halted some three hundred yards away.

A tall, rangy man got out, a shotgun in his hands. He came closer. She recognized his face. He was a trusty prisoner, a killer serving twenty-one years for murder, a man from the river bottomlands, a dead shot who had been sent out with a posse.

For a moment the girl made no move for the gun sticking out of her belt. Certainly a fellow-convict and a man of her own kind, a bottomlands gunfighter, would give her a break. She stood still. He came on slowly, gripping his gun. He was within thirty



yards of the thicket when he called out:

"Put up your hands, Helen."

She made no move. He advanced a few steps.

"Ain't you goin' to put up those hands, girl?"

"Not on your life," she shot back through the tangle of branches.

She reached into her blouse with one hand.

"For God's sake, girl, don't be a fool!" the trusty yelled as he saw the glint of a nickel barrel against the fabric of her shirt.

She stepped back, drew a deep breath. He raised his gun and with the deadly accurate aim of a bottomlands man he ended with a single pull of the trigger the career of the first, and perhaps the last, lone she-wolf from the

misty world of the White River house-boaters.

There was a lump in the throat of the trusty as he bent over the corpse of Cicero Spence's gun-crazed daughter and tore the red bandanna from her white throat.

Helen Spence Eaton had written, "The woman pays—with the gun," and "I'll never be taken alive." To the last she had had her way. They buried her in the prison graveyard. The wind that sweeps over the mound of earth is the same wind which travels the old badlands where, half a century ago, Belle Starr hitched her six-shooter to a bloody star and started out to blaze a name for herself in a land where hitherto only men had ventured upon that deadly sort of lawlessness.

## MOTHER MOLLS

Another in the Great Series of Killers' Molls

By Howard McLellan

Coming Soon!

Watch For It!

## NOVEMBER CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB

(Continued from Page 77)

Lockport, Ill.; Kate,\* Crowley, La.; Dave Keilbach,\* Brooklyn, N. Y.; Hi Kerr,\* Norfolk, Va.; Bud Kistner,\* Cincinnati, Ohio; Kriptobens,\* Paducah, Tex.; J. C. K.,\* Gary, Ind.; Peggy B. Lennox,\* Baltimore, Md.; Cara E. Lloyd,\* Lima, Ohio; E. H. Loyd, Jr.,\* Chicago, Ill.; Wm. Lutwiniak,\* Jersey City, N. J.; Nice A. M.,\* Indianapolis, Ind.; Magi,\* Chicago, Ill.; Carroll B. Mayers,\* Trenton, N. J.; James C. L. McKnight,\* Seattle, Wash.; Del J. McLane,\* East Liverpool, Ohio; Carol P. McNeill,\* Salt Lake City, Utah; Chas. H. Mentzel,\* Bronx, N. Y.; A. Meredith,\* Pittsburgh, Pa.; Minerva,\* Marion, Ind.; Mossback,\* Mossyrock, Wash.; Ralph L. Motz,\* Bismarck, N. D.; Betty Murray,\* San Francisco, Calif.; Numero,\* Evanston, Ill.; M. O.,\* Bronx, N. Y.; Mrs. Anna M. Page,\* Shelburne Falls, Mass.; Phoenix,\* Phoenix, Ariz.; W. F. Plette,\* Galesburg, Ill.; Primrose,\* Baltimore, Md.; Quefanon,\* Roxbury Station, Conn.; Edward F. Raiford,\* Holland, Va.; Ray Rasmussen,\* Chicago, Ill.; Elmer Richardson,\* Brooklyn, N. Y.; Alvin

Robb,\* London, Ont., Can.; Hugh B. Rossell,\* Washington, D. C.; Alice Routh,\* Oklahoma City, Okla.; Ruth,\* Laramie, Wyo.; Edw. H. Schlader,\* Chicago, Ill.; Sleepy,\* Bryn Mawr, Pa.; G. A. Slight,\* Newburgh, N. Y.; Nick Spar,\* Lynchburg, Va.; Jack-Stay,\* Tucson, Ariz.; Dick Tate,\* Battle Creek, Mich.; Old Timer,\* Guthrie, Okla.; F. E. Tinkham,\* Ripon, Wis.; Eugene Waltz,\* Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio; Mrs. E. E. Weinmann,\* Denver, Colo.; Westex,\* Kerrville, Tex.; Whe,\* Baltimore, Md.; H. F. Wickner,\* Las Vegas, Nev.; Wildcat Willie,\* Bronx, New York, N. Y.; E. A. Wilson,\* Oakdale, Pa.; Sam Wilson,\* Chicago, Ill.; Howard H. Woerner,\* Berwyn, Ill.; Doctor X,\* Kansas City, Mo.; Lew Zirn,\* Wilkes-Barre, Pa.; A. R. Zorn,\* Perris, Calif.

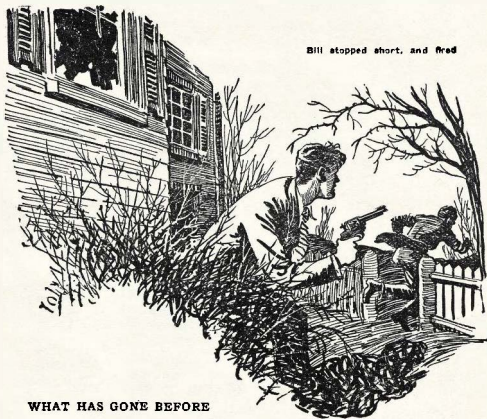
Twenty-three—Judson H. Clark,\* Elmira, N. Y.; Kappa Kappa,\* Seattle, Wash.; Box Six,\* Lapeer, Mich.; A. Traveller,\* Washington, D. C.; Uuem,\* Dayton, Ohio; H. L. Williams,\* Oakland, Calif.

(Continued Next Week)

# The MAN with the CLUB FOOT

By  
Fred MacIsaac

*By the Twist  
of a Key in a  
Hotel Door  
Bill Anderson  
Clears Up a  
Murder Mys-  
tery and Gets  
His Reward  
for Blocking a  
\$500,000 Rob-  
bery*



Bill stopped short, and fired

## WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

**B**ECAUSE Bill Anderson let a pretty blonde stay overnight at the St. Christopher Hotel without registering, he became accessory after the fact in the stabbing of J. Montague Forbish, the jewel fence. For hard-boiled Sergeant McCaffery was positive the blonde was a murderess. Bill didn't believe it even when he discovered that she had left Forbish's

wallet in the hotel. He threw the wallet down a sewer.

The next night while Bill was lured to an upper floor by a "Mrs. Gibson," the hotel safe was robbed of a \$500,000 diamond stoma-cher that belonged to the Duke of Gault. Bill's job was changed from night clerk to hotel dick. Though he was

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for January 5

lucky enough to see "Mrs. Gibson" attempting to check out under the name of Weston, she escaped.

Meanwhile the sinister Man with the Club Foot registers. He has plotted with the Duke of Gault to steal the stomacher for the insurance. But the pair discovered that the stomacher was not in the safe when their hired peterman opened it. They suspect, Bill Anderson, or the day clerk, Hawk Hoban, of the theft.

Bill learns that the blonde is Maud Lester, social secretary to the wealthy Youngmans. She explains that she left Forbish before he was stabbed, which satisfies Bill. McCaffery doggedly follows her trail. Patrick Gordon, detective for the insurance companies, hires Bill. He suspects the Man with the Club Foot and Billings, an English friend of Maud and the Youngmans of the robbery.

In reality, Hawk Hoban, Joe Lynch, and Elaine Bower, who masqueraded as "Mrs. Gibson" and "Gwen Brady," have the diamonds. Forbish was to fence the gems for them, and they do not know why he was murdered. But as Bill Anderson is the only witness who can testify against them, they decide to put him on the spot.

They kidnap Maud and force her to write a note that lures Bill to their apartment on East Fiftieth Street. He is overpowered, and manages to escape only because Lynch—whom Bill knows as "Mr. Weston"—and Elaine Bower learn that a mysterious assassin has stabbed Hawk Hoban in a doorway near by. But as Maud and Bill rush to the street, they are arrested by Sergeant McCaffery for the murder of Forbish—and the sergeant has built up an ironclad, though circumstantial, case against them both.

### CHAPTER XXIII

(Continued)

"STICK out yer hands, Anderson," McCaffery snarled. He pulled the bracelets from his pocket.

But Bill was looking beyond him. A cab rolling along Fiftieth Street stopped abruptly. Out of the cab stepped Lieutenant Fogerty, and, to

Bill's amazement and pleasure, he was followed by Patrick Gordon.

"Mr. Gordon!" he cried. "Upstairs! In Apartment Six D you'll find Weston. He kidnaped Miss Lester and made her send me a letter to come there. We've been tied up for hours. Hawk Hoban was with them. I knocked Weston out and we got away."

"McCaffery, you wait here with these people until we come down," commanded Fogerty. "Let's go, Gordon!"

The pair rushed into the building.

"Stick out them hands," commanded McCaffery grimly. "You may fool those guys, but you can't fool me."

Resignedly Bill put out his hands and felt the cold steel snap around his wrists. Maud clung to his arm and uttered a protesting cry.

"If I had another pair I'd put them on you," stated McCaffery. "Thought you could make a sucker out of me, did you? You and your pull with the commissioner! Well, we've got the goods on you, miss. You'll go to trial."

"McCaffery," said Anderson, shaking with wrath, "when they take these things off my wrists, as they will in a few minutes, I'll beat the life out of you."

"Yeah?" retorted McCaffery. "Well, bo, you'll get a chance. When I get you downtown you and me will go into a room and you'll be carried out feet first. You hit me when I wasn't looking. I can knock you cold any time, any place."

"Aren't things horrible enough without you men talking about fighting?" said Maud tearfully.

"You're entitled to courtesy from the police, and I'm going to see that you get it," Bill declared.

McCaffery's little eyes gleamed venomously. "That'll be all," he rum-

bled. He stepped back, set himself, and hurled his right, with everything he possessed, at the prisoner.

The blow landed on Bill's jaw. It staggered him, caused him to sway. But he did not fall, because Maud threw both arms around him and thrust herself between the men.

"Don't you dare strike him, you



MAUD LESTER

brute, you brute!" she screamed. "Oh, Bill, darling, did he hurt you?"

"McCaffery," said a stern commanding voice. "Report to headquarters immediately. You are charged with brutal assault upon a helpless prisoner."

Lieutenant Fogerty and Patrick Gordon had stepped out of the apartment building just as the sergeant swung on the handcuffed young man.

"He drove me to it," growled McCaffery. "He insulted me."

"On your way," directed the lieutenant. "I'll take these people down in this taxi. You can hoof it until you find another."

With a venomous glance the ser-

geant turned and moved heavily down the street.

"The bird had flown, Anderson," said Gordon. "Weston must have left by a back door. We found the ropes on the bed, which confirms your story. Can't we take off those handcuffs, Lieutenant?"

"If my key will open them. Reckon it will."

In a moment Bill was free again, sitting in a cab with Maud and two men whom he knew to be fair-minded and disposed to be friendly.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### Bill Breaks a Confidence

THE hour was 2 A.M. Patrick Gordon was reclining on a couch in his room at the Waldorf, and Bill Anderson sat gloomily in a big chair a few feet away.

Maud Lester was still in a cell. Knowledge of that beat on his head like a trip-hammer. Maud had looked pitiful when they took her away, and yet had smiled at Bill so bravely. Maud was confident that he would sweep away her trouble—and he had no confidence in himself at all.

"You are not listening, Dr. Watson," accused Gordon.

"I—I beg pardon, Mr. Gordon."

"I requested you to call me Patrick. Didn't I tell you we'd have the girl free in twenty-four hours? We shall, if I can secure your coöperation."

"All I can do is sit here and listen."

"That's the coöperation I require; but, damn it, you're not listening!"

"From now on I am."

"I shall recapitulate. I have revised my theory regarding the robbery and the murder of Forbish. And this is why: the man whose apartment is rented in the name of Joseph Lynch,

but who was registered at your hotel as Frank Weston, said, in your hearing, that he opened the safe and turned over the deposit envelopes to Billings—then and there?"

"That's right."

"Which convicts Billings of safe-robbery, provided we can catch Lynch and persuade him to testify against Mr. Billings. You're sure he didn't say that Timothy Turnbull was aiding and abetting, too?"

"No, he didn't."

"But when the news came of the death of Hoban the woman said, 'They're wise. They'll be here any minute. Billings and that horrible lame man.' Of course Turnbull is the lame man."

"I reckon he must be."

"And of course we knew that Hoban was a pal of Elaine's and Lynch's. He was on his way to join them when he was knifed."

"Yes."

Gordon put the end of his long, slender fingers together and twiddled his thumbs.

"But Lynch was a hired safe-cracker working for wages. He did his job, received his money, turned over the deposit envelopes and went on his merry way. Why should he interest Messrs. Billings and Turnbull any further?"

"I don't know," said Bill despondently.

Gordon poured himself a drink.

"I shall elucidate: as Turnbull and his tool, Billings, made a deal with Forbish and then eliminated him. For I assume that Miss Lester did not eliminate him for them. In the same way, Lynch was untrue to Turnbull and Billings. He worked a double-cross. But, as he turned over the stolen deposit envelope deposited by the Duke of

Gault, my conclusion must be that the envelope did not contain the stomacher."

Bill stared at the ace detective of the British insurance companies.

"Enter Mr. Hawk Hoban—curious Christian name that. Hawk Hoban opened the safe between the time the stomacher was deposited and midnight, when you went on duty. He abstracted



BILL ANDERSON

the stomacher and put something else in its place, something worthless."

"Gol darn it," cried Bill, "that's what Club-Foot insinuated!"

Gordon stiffened and gazed sternly at his companion.

"To whom?"

"To me."

"He discussed the robbery with you?"

"Yes, he said he was interested in crime. It was the night he arrived. He sat with me in the lobby. He said, if he was a detective he would wonder if a thing so valuable as the stomacher would be entrusted to ordinary safe-robbers. That it might be taken out of the safe before the robbery, which was committed as a blind. I thought it was a ridiculous notion."

"Of course you would," said Gordon. "Besides, it was. The robbery was not a blind. Somebody beat the robbers to the stomacher."

"Well, he said he didn't like Hoban's looks; that I ought to investigate him."

Gordon grinned joyfully.

**T**HERE you are! Billings and Turnbull haven't got the stomacher. Lynch has it. Turnbull was trying to figure out in what manner they had double-crossed him. He wanted you to pull his chestnuts out of the fire, no doubt."

"Come to think of it, he said that he'd furnish the brains and I the legs and we'd split the reward if our efforts recovered the stomacher."

"Very well," declared Patrick Gordon. "Now we're traveling. He was suspicious of Hawk Hoban, but not of Lynch. Recently he figured out a connection between them. He or Billings, or both, trailed Hawk Hoban tonight. Hoban must have turned on them and they had to kill him. Perhaps it was self-defense. Otherwise they would have been led to Lynch's apartment."

"It explains what I was unable to explain. Turnbull, of course, was going to dispose of the stomacher. We know he kept out of sight before the robbery and fixed his alibi to arrive from Brazil the day afterwards. If the stomacher had not been lost, he would not have gone to the St. Christopher Hotel. He would have departed from New York with it immediately. The alibi was arranged upon the contingency that he might be recognized somewhere and inquiry made regarding his whereabouts on the day of the robbery. Naturally he had to bestir himself when Billings turned up empty-handed. He's not one who would let himself be robbed of what he considered his property. We're

reaching a point where we dare put the Duke of Gault on the grill. No doubt he will break down and admit all, but what I'm interested in is the recovery of the stomacher. Other things afterwards.

"Both you and Miss Lester can identify Lynch and the woman?" Gordon demanded.

"Yes, but how is it going to help Maud?"

Gordon crossed the room and laid both hands on Bill's shoulders.

"The time has come, my lad," he said gravely, "to tell me what you are holding back regarding this young woman. I agree with you that she's innocent, but unless I know all the facts I can't help her. Is she, as our agreeable acquaintance Sergeant McCaffery avers, the woman who rode in the cab with Forbish?"

"No," said Bill sullenly.

"You are lying. She's the woman. Continue to keep your mouth shut and she'll be convicted as sure as shooting. I'll keep your confidence, but I want the truth."

"If you tell the police, Mr. Gordon, I'll murder you. I swear that I will."

"I never tell the police anything I can avoid. So she was in the cab?"

"Yes," said Bill unhappily.

"Let's have the whole story."

And Bill told what Maud had confided to him, holding out only one incident: the concealing of the murdered man's wallet in the lining of his suitcase, and his disposal of it. He was afraid that the recital of that detail might shake Gordon's conviction of her innocence — as, for a time, it had shaken his.

"Looks like Billings killed Forbish," commented Patrick Gordon. "He and Forbish held the party to celebrate the completion of the ar-

rangements. He sent Miss Lester out for the evening with Forbish, got rid of the other girl, and trailed them. He is rotten enough to attempt to divert suspicion of murder upon himself to a woman."

"I can't believe that. He befriended her. She told me so."

"When it didn't cost him anything. He wanted to have Mrs. Youngman's secretary loyal to him in view of his intrigue with the wife of a powerful man."

"I certainly am grateful to you for believing that Miss Lester didn't do it."

"Not at all the type," said Gordon airily. "Unfortunately the police are poor psychologists. Their ambition is to get a conviction and wipe a mystery off their books. I suggest you go home now and sleep. I'm weary myself. I'd much rather have the stomacher in the hands of your late captors than in the clutches of Timothy Turnbull. Judging by her many impersonations, this Elaine person is a professional actress. You and I shall visit theatrical agencies tomorrow and look at pictures of young character actresses. Good night."

"But Maud—Miss Lester—is in jail. Shouldn't we concentrate—"

"Out you go," declared Gordon. Suiting action to word, he good-naturedly pushed Anderson out of the room.

## CHAPTER XXV

### Mr. Billings Receives

**A**T eight-thirty on the following morning Harold Billings was awakened by the prolonged ringing of his doorbell. He grunted, muttered, rose, pulled a bathrobe over his pajamas and opened his door. To his dismay he was confronted by the

bulldog countenance of Sergeant McCaffery, who was accompanied by a more gentlemanly looking person.

"Want to talk to you," stated the sergeant, entering as jauntily as if he had been invited in. "This is Lieutenant Fogerty. Homicide squad."

Mr. Billings grew pale and apprehensive.

"How would you like to go to jail as an accessory in a murder?" demanded the sergeant brusquely.

Harold wet his lips with the tip of his tongue.

"Really," he said shakily. "I shouldn't care for it at all."

"Then cough up the truth and no shennanegan," ordered the sergeant. "We don't need your testimony. We got enough to convict her—"

"Her?" demanded Billings sharply. "Of whom are you talking?"

"Your girl-friend Maud Lester. And don't tell us she spent the night with you. We know where she spent the night."

"I—I'm afraid you'll have to explain more fully."

"I'll do the talking, McCaffery," said Lieutenant Fogerty. "Mr. Billings, we have proof that at nine o'clock last Wednesday morning Miss Lester called at your apartment. You admitted her and a couple of hours later drove with her to Mr. Youngman's residence at Southampton. We have her own admission, the statement of the doorman of this building, and of Mr. Youngman's chauffeur."

"Well," asked Billings sullenly, "what if I did?"

"Miss Lester is in jail charged with the murder of J. Montague Forbish in a taxicab on Sixth Avenue about three o'clock Wednesday morning."

"That's preposterous."

"Did you know Mr. Forbish?"

"I've met him casually."

"You entertained him at dinner in this apartment Tuesday night, did you not?"

Billings shrugged his shoulders. "As a matter of fact, I did."

"With two young women, a Miss Stacy and Miss Lester."

"Yes, but that doesn't prove—"

"Miss Lester left this apartment with Forbish. Miss Stacy passed out and you took her home."

Billings managed a smile. "Were you, by any chance one of my guests on that occasion?"

"We have ways of finding out things. For example, photographs of Miss Lester have been shown to headwaiters and doormen at several clubs visited by Forbish after he left here. They have identified her as his companion."

"I've know Miss Lester for a year or more. I can't believe it. There doesn't seem to be a motive."

"How did you make her acquaintance?" asked Fogerty.

Billings hesitated. "Well, I had a notion a year ago that I would write a book. Britisher's impressions of New York society. I called up an agency and asked for a secretary. Miss Lester was sent up. I dictated to her for several weeks and abandoned the book idea. Seemed sort of silly, after all. Miss Lester was in financial stress. I heard a friend of mine, Mrs. Youngman, mention that she needed a secretary who was a lady, and I recommended her."

"Oh, yeah?" sneered McCaffery.

"Shut up," snapped the lieutenant.

"Do we have to have this fellow here, Lieutenant?" asked Billings. "I object to almost everything about him."

"In view of the situation, you are

willing to testify to what you have admitted to us?"

"Well, I suppose I can't avoid it under the circumstances."

"You're a material witness," said the incorrigible McCaffery. "Let's take him along, Lieutenant."

"What were your relations with Mr. Forbish?"

"Purely social."

"Did he tell you what business he was in?"

"He said he was a promoter."

"That's a laugh," remarked the sergeant.

"Did Miss Lester appear to be attracted by him?"

"Well, she left the apartment with him. According to your statement she spent part of the evening with him."

"I'm very much obliged to you, Mr. Billings. In view of your frankness—"

"He lied like hell to me," said McCaffery. "Claimed he never saw this doll."

"Mr. Billings, obviously, is chivalrous," said Fogerty, smiling.

Billings bowed. "Why, thanks," he said. "Glad you understand. Lie like a gentleman. Of course, I took no stock in this man's charge that Miss Lester was a murderess."

"What I wish to say," said Fogerty, "is that a man of your standing should not be confined as a witness. If you will agree to repeat what you have told us to the district attorney this afternoon or tomorrow, and promise not to leave town without informing us, we won't interfere with you in any way."

"Now that's very decent of you," said Billings brightly. "I wish you good morning, gentlemen."

Billings saw them out with satisfaction and went back and lay down on his bed.



On the way back to headquarters McCaffery was grumbling to his superior officer.

"That guy's slippery," he complained. "We ought to have him under lock and key. We've got her cold on his testimony."

"You're lucky to be alive," replied Fogerty. "You ought to be broke for slugging Anderson last night. If it wasn't for your good sleuthing on the Forbish case, I would have pushed the charge against you. Gordon wants Billings left at large, and he has a drag with the commissioner. Billings will be around when he's wanted," Fogerty assured him.

**B**ILLINGS rose from his bed after a while and went about the business of bathing and dressing. Half an hour passed, when there was another ring at his bell. He swore softly, but there was nothing to do except to answer it.

A woman instantly slipped inside and closed the door.

"What do you want? How dare you come here?" he exclaimed angrily.

Elaine Bower smiled at him impudently and picked herself the most comfortable chair.

"I could use a drink," she stated. She reached for a bottle of whisky which stood on a coffee table beside her chair and poured a stiff jolt into a glass.

"Of all the assurance! You were paid off!" Billings spluttered. "The affair is closed and I don't want to see either of you again, I assure you."

"I'm not exactly crazy about you," she retorted. "I hate adenoids. I'm here on business."

Billings scowled at her. "We have no business. I'd be obliged if you'd leave."

"Keep your shirt on. Joe and me want to play ball."

"What the devil do you mean?"

"We bit off more than we can chew. We need a stake to scam."

"Go where you like for all of me."

"Let's talk turkey," she said smiling at him appealingly. "You know what to do with it and we don't."



HAROLD BILLINGS

"Suppose you talk English," he said angrily. "Do with what?"

"The diamond stomacher," she said coolly.

The astonishment of Harold Billings caused her to laugh loudly.

"You want it and we got it," she declared. "So what?"

"You mean you have the stomacher?"

"You said, talk English. You don't seem to understand it. What you thought was in the envelope, we have."

"How could you," Billings exclaimed. "I was with Lynch when he opened the safe. He handed me the envelopes. I picked what I wanted. The diamonds were taken before we broke open the safe."

"You thought Hawk Hoban did it, so you knifed Hoban last night."

Billings turned livid. "Damn you—how dare you—"

"But Hawk didn't have the stomacher. Joe had it," she said calmly.

The Englishman stared at her intently. "Then he must have been in cahoots with Hoban."

"Kind of," she said, grinning broadly.

"Then why bother to crack the safe?" he demanded.

"It was like this: Forbish and Joe were pals. Monty was going to play square with you, but the night before the job Monty got scragged. We tell you we'll go through just the same and do business with you instead of him, but we wonder why Monty had to check in that night before we pulled this trick.

"Well, Joe knows this Hoban. Hawk used to work outside for him before he got yellow. This Duke shows Hawk what he's putting in the safe, and then we know what everything's about. We don't cotton to you much, and we ain't got any use for your lame boy-friend. So we tell the Hawk to get the thing out of the safe and fix up the envelope so you won't notice it's been opened."

"I begin to understand," said Billings savagely. "Please go on."

"WELL, everything would have been all right 'cept that this hotel dick Anderson gets a good look at Joe and me when we check out of the hotel next day. We'd blow the town after an ordinary job, but we got to hang round New York to get a good price for the sparklers. So we can't have this Anderson setting cops on us.

"Hawk slips the girl that runs the

news-stand some dope in a soda he got her. She got sick and closed up. In I conic and reopen. Well, the boob falls for me and I take him to a joint where Joe has fixed things for him to get his. The sap won't drink his Mickey Finn, and they have to try strong-arm stuff. He fights his way out."

"What's your proposition?" Billings demanded furiously. "I'm not interested in the fistic prowess of this Anderson person."

"I got to tell you why you get a proposition. Hawks gets wise that Bill Anderson is crooked about this Lester dame that took the ride in the cab with Forbish. McCaffery, who's on the Forbish case, takes her down to headquarters, but they let her go. She goes to the hotel to see Anderson and misses him. When she leaves the hotel Joe and a couple of boys nab her and make her write a decoy note to Anderson."

"Then she is not at police headquarters."

"Oh, they got her again. Anderson calls for the note. We tie up him and the dame in Joe's apartment. Joe thinks they both have to be got rid of, but he's going to make Hawk do the job—so as to have something on him. We tip Hawk to come up to the apartment as soon as he gets through work at midnight.

"Well, somebody—maybe you know who—knifed Hawk almost in front of our place. We figure that you and old Club-Foot are wise we have the stomacher and are going to pay us a visit. I take the junk and scam. Joe is going to give you a warm welcome. But this boob gets out of his ropes and knocks Joe cookoo. This boob Anderson and the girl make a getaway. They run right

into the arms of the homicide men who came up to see about Hawk Hogan. They rush the apartment, but Joe has come to and gets out before they break in."

She paused for breath.

"You've scrambled things very nicely," said Billings contemptuously.

"Well, we done it for the best," Elaine Bower replied. "The cops got a line on Joe now, and that means me. We can get this reward of twenty-five grand that's offered—"

"And about twenty-five years in jail," he said curtly.

"—but we'd rather do business with you," she went on. "The stomacher's worth half a million. We could get a hundred grand for it if we didn't have to fade. You can have the thing for the twenty-five grand."

Billings walked up and down the room. He stopped in front of her. "We haven't got so much money. It's impossible."

"Well, maybe the duchess can dig it up. I'll go to see her."

Billings laughed scornfully. "I'm not afraid of that. Look here, let me consult my partner. Where can I reach you?"

"Up to midnight tonight," she said, "you can call this number and make an appointment. After that, nothing doing. We'll hold onto it for a year or two and then clean up."

She took a business card from her pocket and wrote on the back of it with a silver pencil, after which she handed the card to Billings.

"No use bothering after midnight," she said as she moved toward the door. "We're taking a terrible chance waiting that long."

The door closed on her. Billings dropped into a chair and stared despondently into space. After ten min-

utes of intense concentration he put on hat and coat and left the apartment.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### Bill Gets a Break

WHEN Elaine Bower left Harold Billings' apartment, she walked briskly to Forty-Second Street, hesitated on the corner of Park Avenue, and then walked west. Had she walked east, it is highly probable that Maud Lester might have been tried and convicted of killing J. Montague Forbish, that Timothy Turnbull might have departed for Brazil with the diamond stomacher of the Duchess of Gault and that the Crown Insurance Company of London, England, would have been forced to pay to the Duke of Gault the sum of eighty thousand pounds.

She walked west. Presently she arrived at Broadway and then walked north. She entered an old building and went into the offices of James King, theatrical agent.

As Patrick Gordon had shrewdly surmised, a young woman who could disguise her appearance as effectively as she had done on four occasions could be nobody but a character actress. Being an actress, she was vain. There happened to be in the hands of James King a large envelope which contained pictures and clippings of Elaine in the various roles which she had played up to the time the depression had made things difficult for her.

Elaine was leaving New York for a long period. She wasn't going without her pictures. The police could trace her by them.

James King had a large outer office and a small inner office. In the private office, when Elaine arrived in the establishment, was William Pell An-

erson. He was inquiring whether Mr. King knew of a young woman who could play old and middle-aged rôles, and whose first name was Elaine.

"I can't remember any such person," said Mr. King, without much interest. "This is one of the largest actors' agencies in New York. We have thousands of names on our books. I can't remember any girl who plays characters. Actresses don't go into that sort of thing until they're getting along."

"Well, maybe this one isn't so young but; she sort of looks young. She—"

Bill Anderson leaped to his feet and signaled for silence. The partition dividing the inner from the outer office was very thin and Bill had heard a voice.

"Good morning, Miss Cohen," said this voice. "I'm leaving town. I called for my pictures and press clippings."

"Better leave them, Miss Bower. We can show them and there may be something doing after Christmas. You'll be around by then."

"I don't believe so. I'm going to be away a long time. I'm—er—going abroad—"

"We've recommended you to London managers. If you have an engagement it must be due to our efforts and we shall expect our commission."

"I'm not going abroad to act, Miss Cohen. I doubt if I ever act again."

"Oh! Wait and I'll get them for you. Elaine Bower?"

"Yes."

"That's her," whispered Bill excitedly. "Don't say anything! Let me wait in here until she goes."

James King nodded. Bill had explained that he was a detective and Mr. King didn't wish to be unpopular

with even a young detective like Bill Anderson.

"Here you are, Miss Bower," said Miss Cohen. "You'll find everything there. You're certainly lucky to be going abroad."

Elaine laughed. The laugh was familiar to Bill Anderson.

The outer door slammed. Bill immediately left the private office and stepped into the hall. He had a glimpse of a woman with a big envelope under her arm, a typical specimen of earnest young actress. Elaine knew she was taking a chance in showing herself anywhere in daylight after the events of the previous night, but her clippings and photographs had to be hidden from the police.

Bill was not far behind her as she turned south on Broadway. He went through the subway turnstile within twenty feet of her. He hid behind a pillar when she waited on the platform for an express train, and when she entered the front door of an express car he went through the rear door. The car was well filled, but he was able to keep her in sight.

He was uncertain what he ought to do. He had no authority to arrest her, and he couldn't lose sight of her while he telephoned to Patrick Gordon. He felt sure Gordon would tell him to keep her in sight until she led him to Lynch.

He almost lost her at Fourteenth Street when she changed to a local train, but he managed to squeeze through the closing door and saw her crossing the platform. A local was just pulling in. It was not crowded. Bill was inspired to pull a discarded newspaper from a waste box. When she entered the same car he buried himself in the newspaper.

Elaine remained on the local until it reached South Ferry station, then

went up to the surface and entered the Staten Island ferry. Bill Anderson was on the boat. He stationed himself at the front end so that he could not miss her when she left at the Staten Island side.

He left the boat immediately and placed himself inconspicuously outside the ferry exit. She arrived in the middle of a crowd, but immediately hailed a taxi. There were half a dozen in a row and Anderson jumped into the second one. He handed the driver a five dollar bill and said:

"Follow that cab ahead. Don't get too close and don't lose it."

He leaned back feeling at last like a detective. As a matter of fact, it was the first time that he had justified in any respect the title which had come to him through the parsimony of the old lady who owned the St. Christopher Hotel.

The cab presently was rolling through the outskirts of the town. The first cab increased its speed, and Bill's driver looked back.

"He has a better cab than I have. I can't keep up with him," he said.

"Do the best you can," Bill advised.

**A**BOUT two miles outside the town Elaine's cab turned into a side street. When the driver of the second cab reached the crossing Bill saw the first cab stopping three or four blocks down the street.

"Don't turn in," he said sharply. "I'll get out here."

The driver was curious. "What is it?" he demanded. "Your wife keeping a date?"

"Is it any of your business?" asked Bill, grinning.

"Come to think of it, it ain't," replied the taxi man, grinning back at him.

He drove on. Bill saw Elaine paying off the driver, and waited until she pushed open a gate in a white picket fence before he started down the street. He noted that it was the only picket fence in the block. He approached slowly and cautiously, and was careful not to pass in front of the house. It was a single house, built of wood and in need of paint. It had a lawn in front of it. He had trailed the woman to her lair. Judging by the appearance of the house, she hadn't lived there long. Most likely she had only rented it that morning.

The next thing? As there were no street cars at hand and the cab had been dismissed it was reasonable to suppose Elaine Bower would stay in the house for a while, which would give Bill a chance to consult Gordon. He had to walk back half a mile to find a pay station. From there he called the Waldorf. Gordon was in his room and answered. Excitedly Bill told the Irishman his news. "What do you want me to do?" he asked anxiously.

"Watch the place. Most likely Lynch is hiding out there. If either of them come out, follow. Never mind anybody who remains behind."

"She said at the agent's office she was leaving for Europe. They may leave any minute."

"Discount that. There's a curious development here. The Duchess of Gault has been keeping her other jewels in her suite because she wears them at teas and dinners. They were stolen this morning. Worth five thousand pounds. Also insured in my company. I've a quaint notion about this new theft, but I'll join you as soon as possible. What's the name of the street?"

"Juanita Street."

"I'll keep an eye out for you. Carry on, young sir; and congratulations."

"Shouldn't we get in the police?"

"I'll take that under consideration. Get back to your post."

He hung up—and Bill left the pay station rather disgruntled that his chief should take his big news so calmly.

If Lynch and the woman had the stomacher, they must have it with them. They wouldn't dare to entrust it to a safety deposit box. He expected Gordon to arrive posthaste and raid the place. He was uncertain of his ability to act as a shadow. Suppose both Lynch and Elaine came out and went in different directions. Which should he follow?"

However, he walked swiftly back to Juanita Street and pretended to be watching a house in process of construction a block and a half below the place where the two desperate criminals were hiding.

His mind went back to the problem most important to him. Who had killed Forbish? How had the crime been committed? How could he hunt the murderer when he was stuck here watching people whom Gordon didn't think had any hand in it?

## CHAPTER XXVII

### The Man in the Closet

AT three that afternoon Harold Billings stepped up to the desk of the St. Christopher Hotel and sent his name up to the Duke of Gault.

After a moment the operator, Miss Smith, relayed a message.

"His grace is not in just now, but her grace would like very much to see you."

"What is the number?"

"Number 624 and 626."

He ascended and rang the bell at the door of the suite.

The Duchess's maid opened.

"Please come in, Mr. Billings," she said. "Her grace will receive you in the bedchamber."

"I'm prostrated, Harold," called the duchess through the open doorway. In fact, Mayda, Duchess of Gault, was half-lying, half-sitting up in bed, her face streaked with tears, her eyes red. She stretched out her hand. Billings kissed it with the deftness of a Frenchman.

"This last blow will kill me," she declared. "First the stomacher and now my bracelets, my pearls, and my rings."

"Another robbery?" he exclaimed.

"During the night while we were peacefully sleeping. We are fortunate that we were not killed in our beds."

"And you didn't hear or see the robber?"

"Do you suppose I wouldn't have made a disturbance if I had?"

He shook his head sympathetically. "It was a risk to keep them by you."

"I was wearing them every night. It's a nuisance to be sending to a bank which is closed when you want to get something out. Besides, they were insured. It isn't the money loss, but they were dear to me." She broke into fresh sobs.

"I'm terribly distressed," he assured her. "I haven't heard anything about it. When did you discover your loss?"

"I happened to open my jewel case about ten-thirty this morning. It was empty. Gault was out somewhere. I was alone with my grief. Of course, I called the police, and this Lieutenant Fogerty came up with a man named Gordon, who is connected with the insurance company."

"Patrick Gordon? A very tall, very thin man?"

"I didn't inquire the first name. He was a person of no consequence. But he was tall and thin."

Billings muttered something under his breath.

"What did you say?" she demanded.

"I said it was probably an insurance detective."

"Well, they asked me to say nothing for a few hours. Mr. Gordon was confident that we would soon recover the jewels. I wish I shared his confidence."

"Mrs. Youngman wished to invite you to occupy her box at the opera tomorrow night. That's why I called."

The Duchess held up her hands in horror. "Without my jewels? Impossible."

He rose. "Then I'll express your regrets."

"Do, like a nice boy. If you run across the duke in some of these stupid New York bars, please tell him that I want to see him immediately."

He kissed her hand once more and was ushered out of the apartment. The corridor was empty. He went up the stairs two steps at a time to the eighth floor, saw that the coast was clear, strode to the door of the room of Timothy Turnbull. It opened and he stepped quickly inside.

"Well?" he asked anxiously.

"I have the money," said Turnbull. "Sit down. Have a drink."

"Twenty-five thousand dollars?"

"Twenty. They'll take it and be glad. Gault brought me his wife's jewels. I sold them to a fence that Forbish introduced me to last week. All the cash he had was fifteen thousand. I'll advance five thousand. I wouldn't pay that except that the police

will nab those bunglers, get the stomacher and return it and we won't have a penny for our trouble."

"It's your fault," Billings protested. "If you hadn't killed Hoban he would



THE MAN WITH THE CLUB FOOT

have led you to the apartment in which they were hiding. The woman told me that Hoban was on his way there."

"I had to kill him," said Turnbull. "He noticed that my taxi was following and when he left his he hid in a doorway. My cab stopped a few doors down. I paid the man off and walked toward the house he had entered. He stepped out of the doorway and pulled a gun. I threw my knife at him and got him just as I got Forbish, except that he was facing me and it hit him in the chest. I dragged him into the door-

way, searched him on the off chance that he had the stomacher on him, and got away nicely. Nobody in sight."

"I don't believe in killing," said Billings. "It's bad luck. We've certainly had bad luck. They'll convict Maud Lester of killing Forbish, which is a pity."

"One blond girl more or less does not matter," said the other indifferently. "We have one hundred and thirty thousand pounds at stake. Are you in the clear, do you think?"

"I told the police the truth this morning, and the head man was very considerate. Asked me not to leave town, as my testimony was important."

"You're sure you're not being shadowed?"

"Reasonably confident. The Bower woman came in immediately after, and got away nicely. And they had a description of her and were in search of her."

"They may find her before we get what we want from them. Let's get started."

**T**URNBULL put on his hat and coat and poured himself a last drink of brandy.

"You go first," he said. "Rent a car at the place you secured one Tuesday night. I'll be along in five or ten minutes. How far is Staten Island?"

"One drives down to the Battery and takes a ferry. I don't know how far out this place may be."

"It doesn't matter. Telephone from a pay station that we meet their terms. I hate to turn twenty thousand dollars over to those rascals, but it's a trifle compared to what we stand to gain."

"Right-o."

Billings departed. Just beyond the door of Turnbull's room was a broom and mop closet, the door of which had

a curious feature—a small hole in one of its panels. As Billings passed an eye observed him through this peephole.

A few minutes later the unseen watcher heard a thumping sound and he knew before Club-Foot had passed that Timothy Turnbull was on his way out.

When he heard the elevator door clang, the man in the closet emerged. He was cramped and dusty, for he had been there for hours and there was a lot of him to be confined in small space. He was Patrick Gordon. He inserted a pass-key in the door of Turnbull's room and entered. He came forth in a few minutes wearing an air of satisfaction. He did not ring for the elevator on the eighth floor, but descended two flights and summoned the car from the sixth floor.

He crossed the lobby, went out into the street, and picked up a taxicab.

"Hotel Waldorf," he told the driver.

In his box at his hotel were four messages which stated that Mr. Anderson had called. Bill had called about once every hour.

Gordon chuckled. "Poor youngster," he said under his breath. "He must be on tenterhooks."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### The Shot in the Dark

**W**ATCHING a house in broad daylight on a quiet street in a suburb is a tough job, even for a professional trailer. While he can see the object he is watching for a considerable distance, he can also be seen. And in such streets, where the little houses are detached, old ladies are apt to be looking out of windows. Knowing everybody in the neighbor-



hood they spot a stranger instantly, and wonder why he is loitering in the vicinity.

Bill had to keep some distance away from the house in which Elaine Bower had taken refuge. There was a woman in a house about a block below who kept opening her front door and staring at him. When she did that he would walk down to the highroad. It was a chilly day and his overcoat was not very heavy. Though he wore gloves the tips of his fingers became numb. After a while he thought he would risk walking around the block to the next street, returning to Juanita Street a block above the house he was watching. He did so and made an interesting discovery—that there was a vacant lot behind the woman's refuge which ran through to the street behind, and that there was a basement entrance to the house at the rear.

He walked fast and was back on post in time to be sure that nobody had walked from the house down to the highroad. He would have heard a motor car if one had arrived and departed.

Each hour seemed six or eight hours long. What could be keeping Patrick Gordon? Bill called the Waldorf from the pay station up the highway, to be told at intervals that Mr. Gordon was not in his room. For a man who professed to like that room he spent very little time in it, it seemed to Bill.

He was certain that the woman was still in the house and that nobody had joined her there. Certain until late in the afternoon, when it occurred to Bill that a regiment might have marched out or entered the house across the vacant lot at the rear without his being aware of it. It came to be five o'clock and it began to grow dark. Bill ventured to approach nearer the house,

and was relieved to see that the curtains had been drawn at the front and that a room at the right had been lighted.

While he was congratulating himself that there was still somebody within, a motor car turned into the street from the main road and approached slowly. A block below Bill Anderson the car stopped as a resident of one of the houses nearby came out.

A question, apparently, was asked by somebody in the car; for the man pointed up the street. The car came on again—a cheap black sedan. It slid up to the curb in front of the criminal hangout. Bill flattened himself against a tree and stared. It was not too dark to recognize somebody he knew and it looked very much to Anderson as though the man who descended first was Harold Billings. He wasn't sure—but when the second man walked toward the gate on a club foot, he recognized Turnbull positively.

They walked across the lawn, stepped up to the door and rang the bell. The door was opened and they were admitted.

Turnbull and Billings making a friendly call on the woman and the man called Joe. But they were enemies! Elaine and Joe had fled the night before because they feared a visit from Billings and the "horrible lame man." Now they were entertaining them. What did it mean? And what was Bill Anderson going to do about it?

While he stood there irresolute he heard the tap of running feet on the sidewalk and saw a long, lank form approaching at high speed. With a gasp of relief Bill hastened forward.

Patrick Gordon stopped in his flight and slapped him heartily on the shoulder.

"Well, well, Watson!" he demanded, breathing heavily. "Still faithful to your duty?"

"What in hell kept you?" cried the thoroughly exasperated shadow. "It's five or six hours since I told you that she was in that house there!"

Gordon laughed softly. "No doubt it seemed five or six weeks. Well, William, I was picking up threads and tying them together into a rope that might hang a person on a pinch. And I seem to have arrived at a proper moment: Behind the façade of that humble domicile are foregathered a number of hardened criminals. I am a little late, but not too late."

"Then you know—"

"That Timothy the Club-Foot and Harold the Remittance Man are inside? I do."

"I saw them go in," said Bill, crestfallen because his astounding information was already in the detective's possession.

"I planned to arrive in advance of them," said Gordon, "but I had to straighten out a certain matter, of which I'll tell you anon."

"But last night they were enemies."

"An armistice has been signed, a bargain satisfactory to all has been agreed upon. Well, shall we join them?"

"Go in there?"

"Why not?"

"But they'll be warned. They won't let us in?"

Gordon laughed. "We won't tell them of our intention. Gun on hip?"

"You bet."

"Come on."

He pushed open the gate and walked to the front door, not on the path but upon the grass. Bill followed in his footsteps.

It was almost dark now. Gordon

drew a pencil flash from a vest pocket and a bunch of skeleton keys from his trousers.

"Old house. Old-fashioned lock," he whispered. "A mere trifle."

HE fiddled with the lock and in a moment the door swung open. They stepped into the dark hall and closed it behind them. The door to the living room in which the conference was held was closed.

"Draw swords!" whispered the light-hearted Irish detective. Bill produced his clumsy but reliable Colt with its long blue barrel. Gordon had an automatic in his right hand.

With his left hand he softly turned the doorknob, suddenly thrust the door inward and stepped into the room. Bill stood beside him, shoulders touching.

"Sorry to intrude, gentlemen!" Gordon began. He stopped, for once faced with a contingency he hadn't anticipated. The front windows of the room had heavy, full length drapes. And just as the door opened two men had leaped from behind these drapes and hurled themselves upon the backs of Billings and Turnbull!

There was a table in the center of the room upon which lay a package of bank bills and the diamond stomacher, unveiled and glittering with its customary malevolence. Behind the table stood Joseph Lynch, who had just drawn a revolver. And at the side of the room, just at the right of Bill Anderson, was standing Elaine Bower, who, anticipating violence, had withdrawn herself from the center of it.

There was a fraction of a second of mutual stupefaction. Then the nimble-witted woman pushed the switch button and the room was plunged into darkness. It was illuminated for an infinitesimal space as

Lynch fired a shot at the men in the doorway. But the diversion was sufficient for Billings and Turnbull to break away from the men who held them, and in that small room began a battle royal.

Turnbull plunged at the table, his fingers reaching out for the stomacher. He tripped and the table overturned. Billings was hitting out right and left. Gordon staggered and slumped against Anderson.

"Winged," he gasped.

Elaine, at the same instant, made a plunge at Anderson's gun arm. He thrust her off so roughly that she fell. Gordon slid to the floor. An unseen fist struck Bill in the jaw. He fired pointblank in the dark, missed, and saw in the flash a changed picture. Turnbull, a knife in his hand, was thrusting at someone. Billings was down, rolling over and over on the floor with an opponent. Lynch was out of the picture. Darkness again.

Gordon down! It was up to Bill to get the stomacher. He rushed toward the overturned table. A man collided with him in the dark. He clubbed his gun, swung at him and hit him in the back. And suddenly a whirling mass crashed against Anderson as he was stooping behind the table, trying to find the diamonds in the dark. Diamonds only reflect light. In darkness they are invisible. The two battlers who had hurtled into him caught him off balance. He was hurled with great force against a window with a low sill. He struck the window frame. It splintered. Bill drove through with fragments of glass and fell five or six feet. He landed on top of a thorny bush and toppled from it to the ground. He never relaxed his grip on his Colt, but he was half stunned.

A man who had come out through

the basement door darted past him. Bill was up.

"Stop," he shouted. It was too dark to see who the man was. At a sprinter's pace the fellow tore across the vacant lot. Anderson lumbered after him.

He hesitated too long before deciding that the man was not Gordon. Gordon was taller and had been hit by a bullet. And anyway, he wouldn't run from a battle.

"Stop or I'll shoot," Bill shouted. The man was now only a shadow in the dark, almost invisible and forty yards away. Bill stopped short, and fired. It was an almost impossible shot, but nothing was absolutely impossible for Bill Anderson with a gun in his hand. He knew he had hit the man as the bullet left the gun. The black form ahead dropped. Bill came up at a run, stooped over and peered into the face of Lynch. And clutched in Lynch's right hand was a chamois bag which contained the stomacher.

Bill examined the wound. The bullet had entered below the left shoulder blade and had penetrated the heart. He thrust the chamois bag into his pocket. He turned toward the house. The lights were on again in the living room. The battle was over. The whole neighborhood was awakened. Women were screaming. People were running down the street.

Bill went in through the basement entrance; up the stairs to the kitchen, groped his way through the dark and arrived in the living room.

Pat Gordon was sitting on the floor. He had his coat off and was gazing ruefully at his left shoulder. His shirt was gory.

Timothy Turnbull lay on his face, his club foot doubled up under him. Aside from these two the room was

empty. There were half a dozen banknotes of large denominations on the floor. The rest of the stack of bills had vanished.

"Are you badly hurt?" asked Bill anxiously.

"YES," said Gordon wryly. "In my pride. I told the police the rendezvous was at five-thirty. I meant to give myself half an hour in which to clean up. I didn't expect the crooks would work another double-cross. I expected to find three men here, and a woman—no odds at all for you and me. Instead Lynch intended to get the money and keep the diamonds and had a couple of thugs on hand to overpower Turnbull and Billings. It looks as though Tim would not make any more books at Epsom and Ascot."

"Your wound?" Bill demanded.

"Practically nothing. I'm what's known as a bleeder, worse luck," Gordon explained. "Lynch got away and took the stomacher with him, I judge. I take it you were the johnny who went through the window."

"Is this the damn thing?" asked Anderson, drawing the chamois bag from his pocket.

With trembling fingers Gordon grasped the bag and opened it.

"I wouldn't be surprised. How come?" he said.

"As I fell out the window, Lynch escaped through a basement door. I chased him and when he wouldn't stop I fired. He's dead."

"How many yards?" demanded Patrick Gordon.

"About forty, I reckon."

"In the dark? How would you like to spend a few months with me in Africa hunting lions?"

"I've got to find who murdered For-

bish. I have to get Maud Lester out of jail," declared Bill unhappily. For a few moments, in the frenzy of battle, he had forgotten his main object.

"She's out," said Gordon, smiling broadly. "I was going to tell you. Saving it for a climax, so to speak. That was the business I had *en route*. It was what delayed me a little. Getting your Maud out of jail."

"But how come?" cried the overjoyed Bill.

And at this moment Gordon, who had been growing very pale, suddenly toppled over unconscious.

"A nice mess you made of it," said a familiar voice from the door.

BILL was leaning over Gordon. He looked up. Lieutenant Fogerty stood in the door. Behind him was a throng of people.

"They shot the fool," Fogerty exclaimed. "Damn him, I told him to wait for us."

"Get a doctor. Get an ambulance!" Bill insisted.

"We brought a doctor along with us," said the lieutenant. "Hey, one of you men, go out and fetch the doctor." He knelt and inspected Gordon.

"Flesh wound. Fainted from loss of blood," he said. "You hurt, young feller?"

"I fell into a thorn bush," said Bill. "Aside from scratches I'm okay."

"A couple of you light up this joint and put this man in a bed," commanded the lieutenant. "McCaffery, bring in those we nabbed for identification."

Gordon was tenderly removed. Bill's enemy pushed into the room Elaine Bower and a man unknown to him.

"This is Lynch, ain't he?" demanded McCaffery loudly.

"No. It's not Lynch," replied Bill.

"You'll find Lynch lying in a vacant lot out back—dead."

There was a dreadful cry from Elaine. She would have fallen to the floor if an officer had not caught her.

"And the stomacher?" demanded Fogerty.

"It's in Gordon's pocket."

"Then he got it. Well, damn him, I've got to hand it to him!"

Bill let it go at that. After all, he was working for Gordon.

"Who shot Lynch?" demanded Fogerty.

"I'm afraid I did," Bill confessed.

Fogerty laid an approving hand on his shoulder. "Well, they won't hang you for that," he declared.

"Lieutenant, just before Gordon fainted, he said that Miss Lester was free. He, wasn't mistaken?"

"Nope. She's loose. Don't know what he told the commissioner, but he says that McCaffery's case was busted into pieces. Eh, McCaffery?"

"You go to hell," said the sergeant, with a savage glare at his superior.

"This is the woman you told us about?" demanded the lieutenant, pointing at Elaine.

"It's she. She was Mrs. Gibson, and the girl at the news-stand in the St. Christopher and the one in the apartment with Lynch last night."

"Good." Fogerty went over and gazed down at Turnbull. "The way this Gordon figures things out is beyond me," he said. "He hops down from Canada, and immediately puts his finger on the right parties after we're on the job for days and haven't got anywhere. Club-Foot, here, comes in from Brazil two days after the murder, one day after the robbery. We check that. But Gordon guesses he's responsible for the whole business and smashes a perfect alibi."

"Did you capture Billings, the Englishman, Lieutenant?"

"He was first out of the house. We've got him. What's the verdict on Gordon, doctor?"

"He'll be okay. Is this man dead?"

"Plenty. Come on, Anderson. Show me where you potted this Lynch," Fogerty ordered.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### After the Round-Up

PATRICK GORDON was stretched at full length on the divan in his room at the Waldorf. Maud Lester and William Pell Anderson occupied chairs drawn close to the couch. Maud and Bill were openly holding hands. As usual the Irishman had a glass of Scotch in his hand. Presently dinner would be served in the room.

"Young woman," said Gordon. "I like this boy. Be good to him. He's a first-class fighting man, and he has a pretty fair head on his shoulders besides. To be frank, I suspected you of killing Forbish. I thought you were working with Billings and Turnbull. When I met you I wasn't so sure, but circumstances certainly were against you. William, here, never faltered in his faith. Splendid example of devotedness. They say love is blind. In this case it was far-sighted."

"I'm profoundly grateful to you as well as Bill," said Maud fervently.

"Well," replied Gordon. "I never claim to be a hundred per cent right. I form a theory regarding a crime, proceed as though my theory were fact, and modify it here and there when circumstances force changes. I was about seventy-five per cent right in this case. Dr. Watson, here, knows that I deduced from the murder of Hawk Hoban, almost on the threshold of the

Lynch ménâgé, that the stomacher was in the hands of Lynch and not in possession of Billings and Turnbull, as I had assumed."

"That's right," said Bill.

"That was a facer," Gordon admitted. "Early yesterday morning, the police tell me that Billings, with apparent reluctance, admitted that you, Miss Lester, had left his apartment with Forbish on the eve of the murder and had returned to his apartment at nine the following morning. At my suggestion they left a man to watch Billings' apartment.

"Shortly afterward a good-looking brunette called on Billings, remained half an hour and departed. The shadow had no instructions regarding visitors, and she left unquestioned. Right afterwards Billings made a phone call at a pay station. Billings and Turnbull communicated with each other from pay stations. Good way to avoid listening in on their telephone lines.

"An hour later Fogerty reports that the bracelets and rings of the Duchess of Gault had disappeared from her suite. As said jewels are insured in my company, this distresses me.

"By and by, William here phoned from Staten Island. He has picked up Elaine Bowers at a theatrical agent's office, and had shadowed her to a house on Staten Island. I had wondered if Billings' beautiful young brunette visitor were not the Elaine of the Lynch-Hoban combinations. This persuaded me. Suddenly the whole thing became clear."

"I don't see how," said Anderson.

"We knew that she was the decoy, and Lynch and Billings the safe-robbers. We had concluded from the events at the apartment in the East Fifties that Lynch, and not Billings, had the stomacher. Their attempt to

get rid of you two young people had failed. Their lair had been discovered and, the police had learned who they were and would pounce upon them sooner or later. Forbish being dead and Lynch having no good connections, the disposal of the stomacher must be a problem. They decided that they could get a better price out of Turnbull and Billings than from a fence. So Elaine called on Billings and made him a proposition. That was my theory."

"Well?" said Bill.

"Immediately the bracelets and rings of the duchess disappear. I assume Billings has put the proposition up to Turnbull. Turnbull, being in need of quick cash, has snatched the duchess's remaining jewels and sold them to a fence of his acquaintance. I assume that he and Billings will have to get together to discuss ways and means, so I go to the St. Christopher Hotel and seat myself in the lobby in an inconspicuous position.

"I have established friendly relations with Manager Steuben, as you know, William. I ascertain that Turnbull is not in the hotel, so I get into his room and make certain arrangements. Then I go downstairs.

"After a wait of several hours Turnbull returns, looking very complacent. He has disposed of the jewels. By and by Billings enters and asks for the Duke of Gault. He goes up to the Gault suite. On the next elevator I proceed to the eighth floor and hide myself in a service closet which happens to be next door to Timothy Turnbull's room. I do not have to wait long before Billings comes toddling along. His visit to the Duke was a blind to get upstairs in the hotel and make a clandestine call upon his pal Timothy.

"I give them a few minutes for social amenities, and then I turn a switch. A wire which passed through the wall closet into the Turnbull room causes a dictaphone which I had concealed there to go into action."

"A dictaphone!" exclaimed Maud Lester. "How ingenious!"

"On the contrary, it's such a hackneyed device that criminals usually make a search for one before they engage in confidential chatter. In about five or six minutes, Billings departs and Turnbull follows shortly. I slipped into the room, secured my record, disconnected my wires and took a look around. I found on the table a slip of paper with a Staten Island telephone number, which I pouched.

"It was necessary to return to my hotel to play my dictaphone record. I may say, Miss Lester, that your plight was not my concern at the moment. My policy is, one thing at a time. You judge of my delight, however, when in explaining how and why he had killed Hoban, Turnbull said that he had thrown his knife just as he had thrown it at Forbish except that Hoban was facing him and the knife hit him in the chest."

"But how could he? I don't understand," cried Maud excitedly. "Mr. Forbish was alive when I left the cab!"

**A**S I figure it out, Billings and Turnbull had been trailing you and Forbish all the evening. Billings was driving a rented car. Turnbull was sitting beside him. Their opportunity came when your cab was stopped by the lights, and the Billings car drew up beside it. Although the weather was chilly, the windows were open."

"He said he needed air," Maud explained.

Gordon nodded.

"As you jumped out of the cab," he continued. "Forbish leaned forward to protest. Billings threw the knife and struck him in the back of the neck. He then stepped on the running board and withdrew his weapon, and was back in the other car when the lights changed.

"Here was reasonable proof of your innocence. My duty to William, here, was to set you free at the earliest opportunity. First I phoned the Staten Island telephone number, imitated Billings' voice, got Elaine and said:

"We may be delayed a little. What time did we agree upon?"

"Five o'clock. You better be on time," she replied.

"We'll be there within a few minutes of that hour."

"Thus I knew what time the appointment was for. I regretted leaving you out in the cold for so many hours, Anderson, but you see how things were. I hastened down to police headquarters. I played my dictaphone record for the commissioner and he ordered your immediate release, young lady. He insisted upon sending a squad of police to Staten Island. Fearing they would gum things up, I told them that the hour of the appointment was five-thirty. That bit of swank almost cost me my life but I had no notion that Lynch was audacious enough to plan to get the twenty-five thousand dollars and retain the stomacher. You should have warned me that there were other men in the house, William."

"I didn't see anybody go in," said Bill, apologetically.

"Well, I was only scratched."

"I think you're a most amazing person," declared Maud Lester admiringly.

"Nothing of the sort, my dear

young lady. The case was really quite simple. There was one puzzling feature, the apparent arrival of Timothy Turnbull from Brazil after the murder and the robbery. As soon as I pricked his alibi I was on solid ground.

"William, you were good enough to listen to my theory the first day we met, and you stated that my notion that Forbish's murder upon the night preceding the robbery was far-fetched. Billings' confession sustains me in almost every respect.

"Billings made the original plans for the robbery. Forbish put him in touch with Lynch, who was an expert cracksman from your West, and not known to the New York police. Lynch was to go with Billings to Forbish's residence. The envelope containing the stomacher was to be opened and Forbish was to pay sixty thousand dollars in cash for it. When the Man with the Club Foot arrived, this became an absurd sum. For Turnbull had arranged a sale for fifty thousand pounds in Brazil—if he could get the stomacher. At the time Lynch was not aware of what would be in the envelope.

"Turnbull and Billings decided that Forbish had to be put out of the way so they could deal directly with Lynch. They accomplished the job. Lynch readily agreed to turn the envelope over to Billings for ten thousand in cash. Hoban, having seen the stomacher, tipped Lynch to its value. They double-crossed Billings. Hoban secured a handful of green peas from the restaurant kitchen and put them in the envelope instead of the stomacher.

"As the envelope was delivered to Billings unopened, he did not suspect Lynch at first. Turnbull made up his mind that Hoban had taken the stomacher. My dictaphone record reveals why Turnbull killed Hoban."

"What is going to happen to the duke?" asked Bill.

Gordon laughed sardonically.

"Nothing happens to the blighter. He's a duke. There is only Billings' statement that he was concerned in the affair. He had no knowledge of the plot to murder Forbish and of the killing of Hoban. He hadn't even filed the claim for the insurance money. He did steal his wife's bracelets, but they have been recovered. He was coerced by Turnbull into taking them; and his wife, naturally, will not bring charges against him. There's another little matter. The stomacher and the other gems have to be re-insured in six months, and my company wants the business."

"Then he gets off scot free?" Bill protested.

"Which is one of the advantages of being a duke," Gordon smiled. "The police have no case against him, and it would be bad policy for us to prosecute. We would lose the aristocratic trade."

"I think he's dreadful," said Maud. "A stupid man who tries to flirt with every girl he meets."

"I think dinner is about ready," said Gordon, as waiters entered carrying a table and tray. "I want to make an announcement: Turnbull and Billings expected to collect eighty thousand pounds insurance on the stomacher and sell it in Brazil for fifty thousand pounds. So Billings has informed the police. They stood to win one hundred and thirty thousand pounds. They made use of Forbish, tricked and murdered him. They murdered Hoban because they thought he had tricked them. They were ready to pay ten thousand dollars for Lynch for the stomacher because it was a trifle compared to what they expected to clean up. Lynch



planned to get the twenty thousand and keep the stomacher.

"When we intruded, Lynch escaped. Had it not been your fiancé, Miss Lester, Lynch would have vanished with the jewels and my company would be out eighty thousand pounds. There is a reward of twenty-five thousand dollars, offered by my company, but unfortunately William isn't eligible for more than twenty per cent of it because of an agreement made with me when I engaged him."

"I don't give a hang about that. All I wanted was to get Maud out of prison," said Bill.

"IT'S a pity," Gordon smiled. "Let me state a curious situation:

Gault stole his wife's jewels and gave them to Turnbull. Turnbull sold them to a fence for fifteen thousand. He added five thousand to that sum, and laid it on the table in that house in Staten Island. The fence has been forced to refund the jewels. Knowing they were stolen, he is not entitled to get his money back. Turnbull is dead. The twenty thousand has no owner."

"But it disappeared," added Bill. "The thugs grabbed it when they ran. It has owners now, all right."

"You're mistaken," Gordon contradicted. "When the police whistle blew outside, immediately after your spectacular departure through the window, the gathering fled from the house. I managed to turn on the lights and found that the bulk of the cash had been tossed quite close to me when the table went over. I had collected and put almost all of it in my pocket when you returned with the stomacher, William."

"You never miss a bet, do you?" exclaimed Bill.

"I'm making your fiancée a present

of it," said Gordon. "An engagement present."

"But I couldn't accept," Maud gasped. "Why, it's not really yours to give."

"Nobody is going to bother about this money," said Gordon, smiling. "It will compensate William for failing to obtain the whole reward, to which he is entitled. And it will save my company four thousand pounds."

"If it's nobody's money, you ought to keep it," protested Bill.

"In addition to a liberal salary I have a most satisfactory commission arrangement with my employers for the recovery of goods insured with us. So you see, you must take it."

"I shall," said Maud joyfully, "and give it to Bill."

"Maud," said Bill. "I know a ranch in Arizona that we could buy for that. The cattle business is coming back. We could make a fortune in a few years. Would you like to live in Arizona on a ranch?"

"I'm going to live in Arizona on our ranch," she declared.

"As for me," said Gordon. "I'm hungry. I'm buying champagne this evening, children."

## CHAPTER XXX

### Sergeant McCaffery Receives

THE following day, when Bill Anderson was leaving the St. Christopher Hotel to keep a lunch engagement with his fiancée, he saw—to his annoyance—Sergeant McCaffery sitting in the lobby.

The sergeant bore down on him.

"Say, you," he said offensively, "I want to see you."

"Well, I don't want to see you," replied Bill. "There's nothing to talk about between us."

"There ain't, hey? Well, this darkey in the hospital has come to. He made a full confession. He told everything—get me?"

"Everything about what?"

"How this dame come in here that night, and how you gave her your room. And you lied yourself black in the face afterwards."

Bill stared at him blankly and burst into laughter.

"Why, you're not bothering about that still?" he demanded.

McCaffery scowled ferociously. "You bet your life I am. Nobody lies to me and gets away with it. I figured out that the dame who was in the cab with Forbish got shelter in this hotel."

"But she has been completely exonerated—"

"She got stewed with that guy, didn't she? She was in the cab with him, wasn't she? I don't give a damn if they have pinned it on a dead man. She's got a big pull, she has, but she's no better than she should be."

"Let's talk privately," said Bill softly. "Just a minute."

He crossed to the desk and asked for the key of the banquet room on the second floor. He returned to the sergeant.

"Come on, McCaffery," he said shortly. They entered the elevator and rode up one flight. Bill unlocked the door of the banquet room. They entered. Bill locked the door on the inside.

"What's the idea?" demanded the sergeant.

"You big, thick-headed, flat-footed, mean-minded side-winder," said Bill, who was removing his coat, "you made one remark too many. I wasn't going to do anything about that crack in the jaw you gave me when I had

handcuffs on, but before you get out of here you're going to tell me that Miss Lester is a sweet young lady that you respect and admire highly."

"Oh, yeah?" inquired McCaffery, as he unbuttoned his coat. "And if I don't happen to tell you anything like that, what?"

"You're agoin' out feet first," replied Anderson, who was unbuttoning his collar. "You said something about taking me on anywhere and any time. How about this place?"

McCaffery grinned.

"This," he remarked, "is a swell place. Say, Anderson, you took me unbeknownst that time you knocked me down. I don't ask nothing better than to get you in a room and beat the bejabbers out of you."

"Ready," declared Bill, who was stripped to the waist. McCaffery pulled off his shirt and undershirt simultaneously. He proved to be a hairy brute with big shoulders and huge biceps, and he looked like a dirty fighter.

"Bare knuckles and no rules," stated McCaffery.

"You said it, hombre." Bill had reverted to the range. "I'm agoin' to put the boots to you if I get you down."

"You mean jump on my face, eh?"

"You bet."

"That dame ain't going to like the way you're going to look," stated McCaffery. He was beaming with confidence and pleasure. He had fifteen pounds on Bill Anderson. He rushed like a bull. Bill slipped out of his path and planted a left to his eye as he passed.

Mac grunted and squared off. Bill closed in cautiously. He was no boxer, and McCaffery knew something about boxing. Bill, however, was as quick on his feet as a mountain lion, and his muscles, though not bulging, were

plenty powerful. He let go a right hook. The sergeant blocked it and planted a right on Bill's jaw that shook him up. Quick to follow up his advantage, McCaffery rushed in, swinging like a gate. Bill drove a left to the other eye, which opened a cut, and slid out of a clinch.

He had no intention of letting the other fellow get him in his bear's embrace. He circled around McCaffery, up on his toes, alert for an opening. Mac turned to face him, flat on his feet, face and stomach well guarded. He charged. Bill eluded him and got in a rabbit-punch.

"Stand up and fight," roared McCaffery. Bill slammed a hard right to his mouth as he was speaking. It enabled Mac to throw his arms around him and get him in a clinch. Bill broke it by dropping suddenly to the ground when Mac was trying to break his back with hands locked at the base of his spine.

They went down together, McCaffery on top. Bill rolled him over, broke his grip by raining hard blows into his face, and scrambled to his feet. McCaffery got on his knees and Bill drove a right against his mouth which knocked him flat.

"That ain't fair," he growled.

"You said, 'No rules.' I ought to have put the boots to you then and there," Bill panted.

McCaffery was up and coming. "You'll never get another chance," he shouted. "How do you like this?"

He had noticed that Bill had backed toward a corner of the room. He drove Bill backwards, both arms working like pistons, taking three blows to deliver one. He had a terrific wallop, but Bill had a life of clean living and hard work behind him. He could take it. He found himself jammed in a

corner, a wild man in front of him and his face and stomach full of fists. He plunged into a clinch, locking Mac's arms. McCaffery promptly kicked him viciously in the right shin. Bill responded by kneeing him in the groin. With a groan, McCaffery dropped his



SERGEANT McCAFFERY

guard and Bill plastered him with blows and forced his way out of the corner.

They had been fighting four or five minutes. Sweat was deluging their bodies and the blood from the cut eye of McCaffery was smearing them both. So far, McCaffery had a little the best of it. His blows had more force. One or two of them would have finished a weaker opponent.

Bill, however, was fresh and Mac was already blowing. Realizing this, he kept his distance and caused the policeman to miss a dozen terrific swings. If he had been a boxer, he could have cut McCaffery to pieces, but Bill was just a good two-fisted fighter and missed a score of opportunities.

He saw what he thought was a chance and pinned everything on one

ferocious lunge with his right. McCaffery ducked and came up with a right which crashed into the Westerner's chest and sent him over backwards. Bill landed on his shoulders with a heavy thump. He was not out, but much surprised. And he saw an awful smile upon the battered features of Sergeant McCaffery.

"THE boots, eh?" cried the sergeant. He gathered himself together and leaped into the air with the intention of landing his heavy shoes upon the face of his flattened opponent. But Bill rolled out of the way. McCaffery hit the floor stiff-legged. Bill immediately pulled his legs from under him—and the sergeant was flat.

The next he knew Anderson was sitting on him, and jamming his face into the carpet with his left hand and beating him savagely on the side of the head with his right. For a few seconds Mac heaved and twisted, but could not dislodge his rider. Another punch smashed him into oblivion. When Bill was convinced that his enemy was thoroughly and completely out, he rose to his feet—and became aware that many fists were thumping on the door.

He opened it. There entered Mr. Steuben, the day clerk, and Mrs. Bottomly, the proprietress.

"Who is this awful person?" Mrs. Bottomly cried shrilly.

"It's the house detective," said Steuben.

"Then discharge him instantly!"

"I believe he has resigned," replied Steuben.

"Then put him out of the hotel! Instantly!" cried the irate old lady.

Bill turned from them and walked over and looked down at Sergeant McCaffery.

"Well," said Mac, who was conscious, but still unable to get up, "go ahead and put the boots to me."

"You're ugly enough already. Do you take back what you said about that lady?"

A grin spread upon the bloodstained, battered features. "Oh, sure. She's all right. It's you I ain't got no use for."

"Well, that's fine," said Bill. "Excuse me, madame. I'll dress and wash and check out of the hotel right away."

"A prize fight, a prize fight in my ballroom!" cried Mrs. Bottomly. "So this is what my hotel has come to! You're discharged, Mr. Steuben!"

Steuben grinned. "I was going to resign. I'm offered the managing directorship of the new Castilian."

"Congratulations," said Bill.

McCaffery got heavily upon his feet and began to dress.

"Come on, Mac," said Bill. "There's a washroom off the banquet room. I guess we're quits."

"I could lick you any time with rules," stated the sergeant.

"'No rules' was your idea."

"Well," said the sergeant. "It was a fight, anyway."

Bill nodded and walked to a telephone.

"Maud dear," he said, after he got his number, "do you mind if we have lunch in a private room?"

"No—o, but you were going to take me to the Ritz," was the answer.

"I've been in a fight," he confessed.

"Bill Anderson," Maud said shrilly over the wire, "that's terrible! Who did you fight with?"

"I just had the pleasure of beating the head off Sergeant McCaffery."

"Oh!" cried Maud in a tone of pure rapture, "you perfect darling!"

# Compensation



A clanking of chains at the open door set the jury tense in their chairs

*There Was More Than One Ear Glued Along Doc Bender's Party Line That Black Night—and at One Phone a Listener Plotted Murder*

By H. H. Matteson

INDIAN JOE entered the blacksmith shop. Frank Ortle, who was shoeing a horse, served as deputy sheriff of that remote Puget Sound island. Indian Joe waited until Frank had set down the last hoof.

"There's a dead human on the beach near Devil's Bend," said Joe.

"You seen 'em?" demanded Frank.

"No. Eagle is flying over the spot."

"How you know it hain't a dead deer?"

"An eagle flies 'round and 'round animal dead. When it's human, an eagle flies three times this way, three times back. It's human."

Frank nodded his head, cast aside his leather apron. This would be important official business, so Frank stepped into his living quarters in the

rear of the shop, put on his best hat. Within a few minutes Joe's canoe deposited the deputy on the beach of Devil's Bend. Joe had been right. The body of a man lay sprawled in some bush, the feet in the trail that had been the last.

"It's Jim Yancy," said Deputy Frank. "Shot through the head. The pockets inside out."

Jim Yancy had been the island boat builder, with a little shop not far from the blacksmith shop.

"This is official," said Frank importantly. "Jim Yancy didn't have any enemies. He always had a little cash. It's murder."

The blacksmith-sheriff pointed significantly at the rifled pockets. "You stand by, Joe. Don't allow nobody to touch the body or to mommix up any clues. I'll go phone to Doc Bender."

Frank Ortle hurried back to his shop, gave the phone a sharp, insistent ring. "Hello, Doc. That you? Jim Yancy's been killed. Murdered! I . . . What's that?"

Frank Ortle was wearing his best hat on a week day. Important business must be afoot, so several curious village loungers had come slouching into the shop.

"I— What's that you say, Doc? Why—"

With an impatient striking in the air with his big, black hand, Frank admonished the inquisitive islanders to silence.

"What's that you say, Doc? How'd you know? You better come right on over."

Deputy Frank Ortle hung up the phone.

"Hain't that the beatnest? I break the news to Doc Bender. He says, 'Yes, yes, I know about it. Jim was killed about seven-eighteen o'clock last

night, somewhere along the trail by Devil's Bend. Jim's been dead about fifteen hours. I know about it.'"

Frank Ortle shook his head at the gaping audience.

"How does Doc Bender know so much about it? Do you suppose— No, no, Doc never killed Jim Yancy. Doc hain't a fool. He wouldn't own up to damaging circumstantial evidence if he'd killed him. But it beats me how Doc knows so much, the hour exact that Jim Yancy died. Oh, I know Doc is scienced. Just the same—"

Doc Bender was a queer one. After thirty-five years of active practice as a physician, he had retired to a snug cabin on this sequestered Puget Sound island, to sit upon the veranda, or before the fireplace, meditating the mysteries and surprises of human kind. Doc no longer practiced, save in emergencies. He had no official status. But his word went, would go in this instance of the murder of Jim Yancy, with the authorities at the county seat miles away.

WITHIN half an hour Doc Bender had arrived at the blacksmith shop. In less than an added twenty minutes he had viewed the remains of Jim Yancy; had said that it would be all right to remove the body to the former home of the ship builder, who had been a bachelor.

"But the clues, Doc," expostulated Frank Ortle. "Shouldn't we ought to hunt some clues?"

Doc Bender waved a hand at the rocky hillside, where, assuredly, no footprints of the murderer would show. The bullet, fired obviously from this hillside, had made a tiny hole in the left side of the man's head, a shattered, fist-sized gaping wound on the

right, where it had emerged. That bullet rested somewhere in deep water out in the bay. No clues.

The body was conveyed by several of the villagers to the home of the former boat builder.

"You still kind of think Jim was shot along about seven-eighteen last night, Doc?" asked Frank Ortle. "That's terrible accurate—seven-eighteen. It's kind of—why, it's downright suspicious."

Doc Bender smiled indulgently. "I might be off ten minutes either way, Frank. No more. Listen to this. Shortly after six last night my phone rang. Jim Yancy. What a fool Jim is, I thought, to talk as he did, over a party line, everybody listening in as they always do. Jim said he'd been considering, had decided to buy that rock bight of mine, at the far end of my waterfront. Jim said the bight was a natural dry dock; that he would take it for seventeen hundred dollars. 'I'll be right over,' Jim said, 'and fetch the cash along.'"

"Oh, I see," exclaimed Frank Ortle. "And someone listened on your line; knewed that Jim was on his way, over a lonely trail, seventeen hundred cash in his pockets?"

The doctor held up a hand, fingers spread.

"First," he said, "you fetch for me Mim Dufrane. She was listening."

Frank Ortle shook his head. Mim Dufrane was a little, shriveled woman, fantastically religious, with plenty for her simple wants.

"Also," said the doctor, "you better fetch Barney Dole, and Colville. They was listening in, too."

"How in—" spluttered Ortle.

But the doctor's hand warned him to silence.

"This young Billy Masters, he—"

The sheriff interrupted with a wide, uplifted hand. "There's a suspect. I've had an eye on him for some time, official, of course. Word was passed to me, Doc, that he's an embezzler; stole thirteen thousand dollars in good bonds from a bank where he worked."

The sudden rounding of Dr. Bender's steady gray eyes suggested that he had heard some news about Billy Masters.

"Another thing, Doc. Masters has a hang-dog look. He never looks a party in the eye."

"That doesn't mean anything. The most unmitigated scoundrel I ever knew would look you in the eye as steadfastly, unwinkingly as an old tomcat. Maybe something worries Billy. He might be supersensitive. Maybe a grave injustice has been done him some time. A lot of things make a man shifty-eyed sometimes besides guilt."

"Yes, but he's terrible hard up besides. He owes the store. They're taking out his phone soon. Last week he tried to borrow ten dollars off me on his rifle. That rifle of his'n, say—"

Frank Ortle pointed a thick, dirty forefinger pistol-fashion at Doc Bender. "It was a thirty-thirty rifle—Billy's. That hole in Jim's head—I bet it was tracked by a thirty-thirty. Was Billy listening in? Did he know about Jim being on the way, with seventeen hundred in his pocket?"

The doctor shook his head. "Billy alone, of all the people on the line, was not listening. At any rate, there was nothing to indicate that he was. That's in his favor."

"Oh, is it? I'd say it hain't, Doc. All these other suspects, Mim Dufrane, Barney, all of 'em, you say, was listening. How you know Billy wasn't listening?"

"I do not know. I couldn't swear that Billy Masters was not listening."

"Well," said Deputy Frank Ortle decisively, "I aim to convene a coroner's jury right off, summons all the witnesses. That coroner's jury can say who's to be took to the county seat as suspect of murdering Jim Yancy. Oh, Orlo!"

Orlo, mouth agape, pale eyes a bit wild, came lurching forward.

"You summons Mim Dufrane, Orlo, and Barney and Colville. Tell 'em to repair herewith, under penalty, and forthwith, as enacted. Tell 'em to be prompt at Jim Yancy's house at eleven o'clock."

Frank Ortle ran his eye over the gathering crowd. "Hey, Ben. You summons this here jury. Here."

The blacksmith meditatively nibbled a stub of pencil, wrote the names of six islanders, handed the paper to Ben. "Eleven o'clock sharp—under penalty."

The official bit himself off a chew of tobacco, removed a rusted set of handcuffs from his let-down desk, buckled a belt about his waist from which depended an immense old six-shooter of the siege gun type.

"I aim to fetch Billy Masters in personal," he said grimly.

## II

**B**EN OLSON led his six jurors into the living room of the Yancy house, cleared the center table of a kerosene lamp and a battered book, set the table a bit forward, with a chair beside it, waved for the jurors to seat themselves along the wall. In order thereafter arrived Mim Dufrane, fussily nervous; Barney Dole, acting a bit important; and Colville, appearing certainly the sick man that he was reputed to be.

A clanking of chains at the open door set the jury forward onto the edges of their chairs. Deputy Ortle was removing the handcuffs from the wrists of a pale, wretched looking youth who, one vast hand of the officer beneath his elbow, suffered himself to be propelled into the room. The blacksmith pointed his prisoner to a chair, ostentatiously leaned against the table a rifle that he had carried in. "Hear ye, hear ye," said Mr. Ortle, glaring about the room. "Quiet now. I say quiet."

Mim Dufrane, emitting a defiant cackle, took the stand. Tartly she denied having listened in on the conversation between Jim Yancy and Dr. Bender; declared that, even to keep even with the neighbors, she wouldn't snoop on the line; and concluded with a challenging, "Now, what, Frank Ortle?" Very positively and convincingly the woman asserted that she knew nothing of the killing of the boat builder, and assuredly had had nothing to do with the tragedy.

In similar vein, Barney Dole denied having overheard the fateful talk. Barney asserted that he had a couple of nests of Mallard ducks about to hatch, and that if anyone was listening on phones it was snooping women, who didn't know any better.

The testimony of Mr. Colville gave Acting Coroner Ortle his first surprise. Colville, very gentle, patient but positive, stated that he had not listened in on the phone; that he never did so, as he had no interest in the affairs of the neighbors save an abstract concern such as any Christian would have.

Ortle, a bit mockingly, glanced at Doc Bender. Doc Bender, without saying how, had been positive in the declaration that Colville had overheard the conversation of Jim Yancy; had



known, with the other neighbors, that Jim would be traveling along a lonesome trail with seventeen hundred dollars in his pockets.

Flatly, in response to repeated questions, Colville said that he had not overheard the talk. Gratuitously Colville added the information that he was a wealthy man; had no need to rob anyone.

The jury, squirming uneasily in their seats, conveying the impression that all this futile preliminary was irksome, inasmuch as, beyond all doubt, the real culprit had been fetched in in irons, sat now looking at the floor, the ceiling, everywhere but at the jury or the inquisitor.

**I**N a voice weak and wavering Billy Masters admitted ownership of the rifle that Deputy Ortle had brought into court. At this juncture the deputy passed the rifle to the jury. The weapon passed from hand to hand, each smelling of the muzzle, two of the number thrusting fingers into the bore, sniffing at them.

The rifle had been fired recently, had not been cleaned. At a word from the blacksmith, the jury arose, marched into the adjoining room, filed solemnly about the corpse, taking especial note of the tiny hole on the left side of the skull, the terrible, fist-sized shattered hole on the right.

Back to their seats came the jury, four of the six making no attempt to disguise the hateful conviction in the scowls directed at Billy Masters.

Billy's rifle was a thirty-thirty. It was a favorite bore among the islands. Not a man on that jury but that at one time or another had shot a deer through the head with a thirty-thirty. Always just such a wound as that that had snuffed out the life of Jim Yancy

resulted—a tiny hole where the bullet entered, a yawning, jagged orifice where it emerged.

"Where was you last night about six-thirty, Masters?"

"On my way to Deer Point to dig clams."

"You got back—when?"

"About nine. I haven't any watch any more. I sold—"

"Never mind. Anybody see you, come or go, or when you was digging?"

Billy Masters turned, glanced at Colville.

"Mr. Colville might have seen me. I went by his cabin both going and coming. Unless he saw me, I guess nobody did."

Colville shook his head slowly, almost reluctantly. No, he had not seen Masters at any time during the evening.

Billy sat weaving his fingers nervously.

"You owed a big bill at the store, didn't you, Masters?"

"Yes."

"You tried to borrow ten dollars off me last week on this rifle?"—holding the weapon up to view. "How you happen to come to this island in the first place? You hain't got work here, a ranch, fish boat, nothing."

"I've always thought of an island as being a sort of sanctuary, a place to get away from trouble, disgrace. I was mistaken, it seems."

"You was running away from disgrace, eh? Tell the jury."

"I was accused of stealing thirteen thousand dollars in bonds from the bank where I worked. I was found guilty. My employer, the banker, was very kind. He interceded. My sentence was suspended. But I was discharged from the bank."

"Suspended sentence, eh? If this jury was to commit you for murder, to the superior court, why, then, automatic, whether you was stuck on the killing charge or not, you'd go up, do your term for thieving them bonds, eh?"

"Yes. I am out during good behavior. Even a very flimsy charge against me would put me behind the bars for ten years."

"What bank was this here?"

"The Seaboard National."

The jury moved impatiently in their seats.

The blacksmith sat toying with the rifle barrel, wondering just what the next move should be. "To make it official, and all records clear, and so forth, I guess we'll hear what Doc Bender has got to say. Tell us about your talk with Jim Yancy exact, Doc, time and so forth, etcetry."

### III

**D**OC BENDER arose to his feet. In one hand he held the ear pieces of a stethoscope, the disk dangling at the end of a length of rubber tubing. Very briefly the doctor reviewed the circumstances of his talk with Yancy, the time being something after six o'clock; the fact that Yancy had said he would be over "right away," fetching seventeen hundred dollars in cash.

The doctor took a brief pace back and forth before the jury, all eyes fastened hypnotically on that dangling, glittering stethoscope disk.

"I should like to amplify my testimony, gentlemen, with matters that may seem to you extraneous, foreign."

"Go right ahead, Doc," said Frank Ortle indulgently.

"Gentlemen of the coroner's jury,

when a bone breaks, and heals itself, the new bone growth is thicker, stronger than the old. Doctors call that 'compensation.'

"When a leak in a heart valve develops, the walls of the heart thicken themselves, the heart muscle strengthens itself to give the diseased organ greater propulsive force. We call that phenomenon 'compensation.'"

The doctor lifted the stethoscope, held it toward the jury.

"The heart of a person stricken with what doctors call mitral regurgitation, or leaky valve, becomes enormously enlarged. Under stress of powerful emotion, sudden passion, intense greed, murderous design, the heart of a person so diseased develops a characteristic, thunderous murmur. The person so diseased should avoid every excess of emotion—hate, yes, or love. Even though calm and collected, the mitrally insufficient heart betrays itself with a clicking sound that no experienced physician can mistake.

"More than once, when answering my telephone, I have caught unmistakably, over the wire, the click of a diseased heart.

"Somebody, with heart disease, thinking to hide the fact that they were listening in, had placed the receiver of the phone tight against the left breast. Yes, several times I have heard the murmur of a bad mitral case."

Again the doctor paused to hold forth the stethoscope.

"Last night, while talking to Jim Yancy, I heard again that betraying click of a bad heart. In the instant that Jim Yancy declared that he would be on his way, along a lonely, unfrequented trail, with seventeen hundred dollars cash on his person, that diseased heart registered thunderously its exultation over the opportunity pre-

sented. Greed, avarice, murderous design instantly whipped that heart into such a tumult of abnormal action that the wonder is that person did not instantly die.

"Gentlemen of the jury, I will stake my life on the assertion that the murderer of Jim Yancy has a grossly enlarged heart, with a profound mitral murmur."

The doctor started as if to affix the ear pieces of the stethoscope. "Surely, those persons on the party line, all of whom knew that Jim Yancy was traveling a dark trail with much money on his person—none of them can object if I listen in turn to the action of their hearts?"

Mim Dufrane nodded her head in agreement. Barney Dole began fumbling at the front of his flannel shirt. Billy Masters' hand went nervously to his throat. Colville—

"Water! A glass of water! Mr. Colville has fainted!"

Mr. Colville was quite dead.

"I SUPPOSE," said Mim Dufrane, acidly, after the excitement was over, "you had to say we had all been snooping, just so to hogtie that poor Colville, fix him with the goods, so to speak."

Over Doc Bender's weathered face flitted a mischievous light, like the eye of a sly old fox.

"Mim," he said flatly, "you was listening on that phone call—always did listen. I never said anything, but I knew it every time."

"Well, I never!" And the spinster flounced indignantly as if to leave, but thought better of it. "How—how could you tell? How you know anybody besides Colville listened in?"

"Funny about you, Mim," cackled the doctor. "You wouldn't swear for

the world. Just the same, you've got profanity in your system, like the rest of us. Only you do your swearing vicariously, by proxy. While Jim and I talked I could hear Old Bulger, Mim's wicked old parrot, growling away, 'To hell with you! To hell with you!' Yes, Mim, you was listening in."

Mim Dufrane blushed, and somebody tittered.

The doctor's voice drawled on. "Barney Dole was listening in. I could hear the quacking of that noisy band of clipped-wing Mallard ducks that always clutter up his muddy dooryard. Barney was listening.

"'Tain't a mite like Barney, murder ain't, of course. Between I and you, Barney is too lazy. Barney's got a dog and a gun and a clam bed. That's all he wants. Who's next?"

"Colville comes next."

The doctor continued silent for a thoughtful moment.

"Yes, he was listening too. Let's take him over to the cabin. Unless," Doc said slyly, "some of you folks want to argue some more about that little matter of snooping on party lines."

There was an embarrassed and quite complete silence. Then they picked up the dead man and filed out the door.

IN the bottom of a trunk in Colville's cabin was found a bundle containing thirteen thousand dollars in good negotiable bonds. Also a wad of crumpled bills totaling seven-teen hundred dollars.

There could be no doubt but that Colville had seen Billy passing with his bucket and shovel, knew he would be absent at the clam bed for some time, slipped over, took the rifle, shot Jim Yancy, rifled the pockets, returned the rifle to Billy's cabin.



## Hot Money

By Arthur Lowe

*"Good-by, Sucker," Says Hennessey, and Walks Out with His Twelve Grand Loot, but a Strange Fate Goes after Him—*

**S**PIKE HENNESSEY had made his plans for lifting the Sangamo payroll with machine-like nicety. Every move was timed as carefully as a broadcast schedule. Right now he was building up fear, building up in the mind of the man before him the terror of sudden death.

The cashier was as nervous as a cat facing a bull pup, which was exactly what Spike Hennessey wanted. Spike was a psychologist as well as a killer.

He knew the importance of a build-up, of making his victim sweat with terror. He knew that a fearful man is incapable of impulsive action, and it is impulsive action—the sudden, unpredictable move—which will foil a holdup.

He had planned this job for a month and his plans were flawless. He knew that on payday it was the cashier's custom to return from lunch promptly at one-fifteen and to begin counting out the money before the rest of the staff returned. He counted it out on a table in his cage, well back from the wicket, and the cage was kept locked.

To get the money Hennessey knew that he must compel the cashier to hand it over. It was there that his knowledge of psychology came into play. A

sudden command would have brought perhaps a sudden refusal; and then, shoot though he might, he could not have reached the stacked-up bills.

So he was building up fear.

His method was simple. He had entered the office and asked brusquely for the manager. The cashier, looking up from the notes he was counting, had told him that the manager would be back in a few minutes. At that Hennessey had moved to the wicket, not saying anything, but standing there, sinister and menacing.

The cashier went on with his counting. He lifted the bills from a pile in front of him and ran through them, reaching out his hand from time to time to moisten the rubber shield on his finger. But his movements were mechanical, for all the while he was staring into Hennessey's eyes.

Hennessey knew that others had looked into his eyes and cowered before the menace and evil they had seen there. He knew that the cashier had already recognized him for what he was—a killer, ruthless, without feeling or pity.

"He knows he's in a tough spot," he said to himself. "He knows I'm going to put the finger on him for the dough, and he's wondering if he'll have guts enough to refuse. Like hell he will! In another minute the yellow-belly'll be squawkin' for me to take it."

The cashier continued to riffle through the notes, but he was no longer recording the count. Hennessey could see by the sweat-beads on his forehead that he was finding the suspense unendurable, that his faculties were paralyzed by fear. He was broken. He would hand over the money without even a pretense at resistance. The plan was working flawlessly—and yet something disturbed Hennessey.

There were still minutes to spare before the rest of the staff would straggle in and Hennessey was in no hurry. He found sadistic pleasure in watching the sucker sweat and tremble. It made him want to laugh the way the cashier went on counting the bills, not even looking at them.

The dumb cluck, stabbing blindly at the stacked bills, and all the time his eyes fixed in front of him, not noticing what his hands were doing. Hennessey started to watch the hands warily. They seemed to have lost coordination. He half moved forward. Something was wrong, something he couldn't quite place, and the sensing of it, hardly more than instinct, turned his sneer of derision to the cold, wary rage of the killer.

Maybe it was the guy's eyes; staring, hoping for—what? Hennessey waited until the last packet was done; then he pushed the muzzle of an automatic through the wicket.

"Shove it over, guy!" he ordered, "and don't act funny."

The cashier gave a gasp of relief, as though he had been holding his breath waiting for the command. He moistened his lips and began tremblingly to obey the order. His hands shook as he gathered up the packages.

"Hurry!" Hennessey rapped.

The cashier gathered the bills into his arms and dumped them on the counter by the wicket. Hennessey picked up the packages one by one with his left hand and stowed them into his pockets. With his right hand he kept the man covered.

"Thanks!" he said at last, grinning.

There was a momentary silence so complete that it seemed to have substance and depth. The black muzzle of Hennessey's gun moved the fraction of an inch. Hennessey's grin wi-

dened. Suddenly he fired and the terror that had been stamped upon the cashier's face changed to tragic surprise. For a moment he stood there, swaying behind the wicket, then with bright red blood bubbling from a hole in his throat he sank to the floor.

"Good-by, sucker!" Hennessey said, and pocketing his gun he walked unconcernedly to the door.

For Spike Hennessey was a practical killer as well as a psychologist. He saw no reason to leave alive the one man who might have identified him.

**T**WELVE grand, Hennessey figured, was a nice haul for a loner, and it was safe money. As safe as if he had checked it out of his own bank account. Most of it he hid in his apartment, but with a roll of several hundreds he sauntered out to do some shopping and take in a matinee, for he believed in putting on a quiet front.

"The bulls won't be looking for a guy circulating around," he told himself. "They'll figure on somebody who's either lying low or taking it on the lam."

He was not afraid of the police and when on leaving the theatre a plainclothesman recognized him he exulted at the break, in spite of the fact that the detective had looked suspicious.

"It's as good as an alibi," he reasoned. "A dick would never figure on a guy having the ice to go to the pictures after a shooting."

He was amused when he read in the afternoon papers that the police were following up an important clue. He knew something about police methods, and the "important clue" business was the oldest gag of all. It was handed out in the hope that it might frighten the criminal into making a false move, but it didn't mean a

thing. Not to Spike Hennessey it didn't.

When darkness came he felt the need for bright lights, music, a woman. He wanted to celebrate. At first he thought of throwing a party, but the cold judgment which made him a dangerous criminal warned him that it would be dangerous; the police, dumb as they were, would be looking for underworld characters flashing easy money.

But he was not to be denied a mild celebration. He called up a girl who pleased him.

"Get your frills on," he said. "You're coming with me to the Golden Slipper an' giggle soup's on the menu."

Later, sitting opposite the girl, it came to him that he was no ordinary criminal. An ordinary criminal who had cleaned up twelve grand in an afternoon would have made a splash which might have put the police wise, but here he was, cold sober, spending the evening with a dame in a roadhouse that was as respectable as a community club.

The ordinary criminal, too, after putting a guy on the spot, would have been jumpy, nervous, ready to hit the liquor. But Hennessey wasn't jumpy. Fear, he figured, didn't enter into his make-up.

He ordered champagne, for he wanted to make a hit with the girl, but he drank cautiously himself. The girl, an angel-faced blonde, sensed that he was in funds; but he was careful to tell her nothing. Too many of his kind had met disaster through boasting to a woman.

"Gosh! You must be the original close-mouthed guy!" the girl said when he had sidestepped one of her questions. "Sometimes I wonder if you're a stool."

"Go on wondering," he told her. "Maybe I am."

She looked at him queerly, then shook her head. "You're not a stool," she said at last. "You're too damn hard for a stool. You can always see something in a stool's eyes, like he's nervous and afraid of being bumped, but your eyes—they're hard. Sometimes I think you're not human."

It pleased him to be thought inhuman. He grinned enigmatically. "There's nothing I'm scared of, kid," he said. "I don't know what fear is."

They danced and his blood ran hot at the closeness of the girl's alluring body. He liked to feel the coolness of her flesh and he liked the intoxicating scent of her hair. But he dismissed as unwise a half-formed desire to team up with her. He didn't want to get hamstrung by a broad, and this kid, though she seemed to be on the level, would probably keep him digging into his kick for money. They were all the same.

When he suggested going home she showed him that his judgment was right.

"Pretty flush, aren't you, big boy?" she said.

"So—so," he admitted. "Why?"

"I'm up against it. I need dough—and how!"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Fifty help you?"

"Make it a hundred," she said. "I owe the landlord a hundred."

The roll he pulled out of his pocket was a slim one. He flattened it on the table and peeled off ten bills.

"Here you are," he said.

The girl took the bills and placed them on the table while she fumbled for her purse. Something about the top bill caught her attention and she held it under the table lamp. She did

the same with the next and the next.

"What's eatin' you?" Hennessey asked.

"You must be a close guy," she laughed. "Do you mark all your money?"

She handed him one of the bills and he saw it was marked in the right hand corner with faint violet lines. The other notes were similarly marked.

## II

HALF an hour later Spike Hennessey knew the beginnings of fear. He sat alone in his apartment. Stacked on the table in front of him were the bundles of notes, and each note was marked with the violet lines that the girl had noticed.

It was hot money.

Hennessey remembered vividly the events of the afternoon, remembered passing the money in store after store where he would be recognized. Already some person who had received one of the bills would perhaps have identified his picture in the rogues' gallery. Perhaps the police were already looking for him.

He remembered now the note in the papers about the police working on an important clue. It came to him suddenly that for once the police were not bluffing. They must have known all along that the money was marked, and they were sure to have warned banks and storekeepers to watch out for it.

He cursed himself five minutes on end for his carelessness. In tendering the bills he had shown no sort of caution. He had even paid some into his bank account. And he recalled that the teller had seemed to pay a lot of attention to them, giving each one a little snap before pushing it into the till drawer.

"The guy was wise," Hennessey

told himself, "but he was afraid to put the finger on me in case I pulled a gun. It's a cinch he's tipped me to the police by this time."

His account was under another name, but he knew that was not likely to make any difference. The teller would have no trouble picking out his picture down at police headquarters.

He paced up and down the floor, going over the matter in his mind, and he realized that he was lucky not to have been arrested already. He remembered meeting the plain-clothesman outside the theater, and he wondered now if that meeting had been a coincidence.

"Maybe I'm tailed," he thought. "Maybe they had a tail on me all evening."

The fear that he was under surveillance took hold of his mind and grew from suspicion to certainty. The police, he figured, must have found out by this time that he had been passing marked money. Instead of arresting him at once they were tailing him, believing perhaps that he had pulled the job with a partner. Perhaps they were waiting now outside the door.

He began to be afraid that they would burst suddenly into the room. In his imagination he pictured it all—the crash of the door, men crowding towards him, the fusillade of shots. He saw himself stagger and crumple in a heap.

He remembered how Dillinger had met his end, and another picture flashed through his mind. As if in a dream he saw himself leaving the apartment, walking with agonizing slowness, step after step. He saw figures weaving in the shadows, then he saw bursts of orange flame as he was shot down like a mad dog.

It was this last picture, which would

not be driven out of his consciousness, that sent him to the front window. Looking down he saw the main entrance to the apartment immediately below him. Just beyond the entrance he made out a policeman talking to two men in the shadows.

"They're watching for me," he muttered, and felt the sweat cold on his forehead.

Terror began to get him, then. Not the terror of death, but the terror of waiting, minute after minute, for something to happen. Waiting for a crash on the door, a blast of firing.

When, as time passed and nothing happened, a glimmer of sanity returned to him. He told himself that his one chance lay in getting out of the apartment, getting clear of the town. If he could do that there was no reason why he should not make good his escape altogether.

Outside his bedroom window there was a fire escape which zig-zagged down to the flat roof of the apartment garage eight stories below. The garage was set in a rectangle between apartment blocks so that the only way of leaving it was through the main entrance, which led from the court to the street. It was this entrance, he figured, which the police were watching. By doing so they would save themselves the need for placing men at the different doors, since all doors led into the court.

At first he could not see how the fire escape would help him, for even if he reached the garage unobserved he would still have to pass through the main entrance. Driven by panic, however, he evolved a scheme which offered some hope.

In the garage roof was an open skylight. Once he made the roof it would be an easy matter to drop through to



the floor below and get his car, which was stored there. In the car there was a bare chance that he might get by the detectives, whom he reasoned would be waiting at the entrance.

**F**RANTICALLY, now that he had formed a plan, he stowed the cache of bills into his pockets and swung out of the bedroom window on to the platform of the escape.

He came at last to the garage roof and from there he could see the shadowed archway leading to the street. Vaguely he made out the buttresses of the arch. He figured the police would be waiting behind them, expecting him to appear from one of the doorways leading into the court.

He crept towards the skylight and crouched down beside it. After listening for a while and hearing no sound inside he wriggled through the narrow opening and hung for a moment half a dozen feet above the floor.

From the courtyard came the sound of voices, but the dim-lit garage was deserted. He dropped lightly to his feet.

His car, a roadster, was parked against the back wall. He climbed behind the wheel and started up the motor, looking all the time at the archway in front of him.

He slipped the gear into second, raced the motor for a moment and dropped his foot from the clutch. The car shot forward.

Fear clutched at his throat and it seemed to him as if time was at an end, as if he would remain forever poised on the brink of death watching the car hood blocked against sinister shadows. Then suddenly the shadows closed around him.

A figure loomed up to one side. Somebody screamed. There was the

screech of metal as he ripped off one of his mudguards against a buttress. The car roared into the street.

He gagged with relief as he realized that he had escaped. He figured that the detectives, taken by surprise, had had no time to shoot.

He had gone scarcely a block when he heard behind him the stutter of a motor cycle, traveling furiously, and he knew that he was being followed. The stutter increased, became a roaring crescendo.

Hennessey shoved his foot down hard on the accelerator and the car rocketed forward. Ahead of him the traffic was tied up at an intersection waiting for the red light to change. Without slowing down he veered to the wrong side of the road and shot through the crossways traffic, traveling at sixty miles an hour.

The stutter of the motor cycle became fainter and its single light contracted in the driving mirror. He figured he had beaten the cop at the intersection, but he knew that on a straight run he would be overhauled.

He tried to think calmly, tried to formulate a plan of action, but he was in the grip of panic again, hounded by fear. At every corner he expected the police to be waiting for him. His body tensed to meet the smack of their bullets, then became weak and cold as his fears were not realized.

It came to him that even if he escaped he would spend his life like this in an unendurable suspense. Tomorrow the newspapers would print his picture and the story of his getaway. From then on every policeman in the country would be gunning for him. He would die not once, but a thousand times.

From behind came the stutter of the motor cycle again, getting steadily

louder. He skidded round a corner, banging against the curb, and shoved his foot to the floorboard.

Ahead of him was a straight highway leading out of town and he sped along it, reckless of what lay ahead. The street lamps dropped behind like falling beads and the rush of air was like a weight pushing against his face.

The sound of the motor cycle gradually increased until it became a staccato roar. Light from its headlamp threw up in relief the road beside the car. It began to pull alongside.

Hennessey's hands moved ever so slightly. The car swerved to the side of the road, then back again. The policeman on the motor cycle slowed down to avoid a crash. Hennessey could hear him coming up again. He heard, too, above the noise of his machine the whip-crack of an automatic.

"The dirty rat!" Hennessey sobbed. "He's not giving me a chance."

He clutched the wheel and waited for the end. Every vestige of manhood left him. He was a pitiful thing, without courage or reason, waiting for the hammer blow of a bullet to end by death the appalling fear of death.

No blow came. Instead the motor coughed, choked, settled down into an even purr, then choked again. The car jolted to a stop. The policeman rode up alongside with his gun drawn.

"Where the hell d'you think you're going?" he asked.

Hennessey cowered away from the gun and shielded himself with an arm.

"Don't shoot!" he whimpered. "Send me to the chair if you like, but don't shoot!"

The policeman narrowed his eyes and frowned thoughtfully.

"Get out and get your hands up!" he ordered.

Hennessey climbed out and stood

with his hands above his head while the policeman searched him.

"You'd never have got me if it had not been for the money," he babbled as the policeman tossed the packets of bills into the car. "You never could have hung it on me if the bills hadn't been marked."

### III

"IT'S Spike Hennessey," the constable told the sergeant. "He's confessed to the killing at the Sangamo works. Had most of the money on him."

The sergeant looked first at the policeman, then at the prisoner.

"Confessed?" he repeated.

The constable nodded. "Yeah. He's got some story about the money being marked. I was pinching him for reckless driving—he knocked a woman over coming out of the Bellevue Apartments—and then he told me this about the money. Seems he thought we knew all about it and were waiting to pick him up."

"Let me look at the money," the sergeant said.

He flipped through the bills one after another, then nodded.

"It is marked," he said, "but the police were never told. I guess it got marked accidentally some way."

And then Spike Hennessey remembered. He remembered the other man was broken by fear. He remembered how he had sensed something wrong. He saw the man counting through the notes again, mechanically, like one in a trance, and he saw him reach out from time to time to moisten the rubber shield on his finger—too frightened to notice what he was doing. And all the time he was moistening the rubber shield on the indelible ink pad that lay beside the sponge.

# How Faces Reveal Character

By WILLIAM E. BENTON



RIGHT  
or Conscious Side

JOHN OLEY.

*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

JOHN OLEY was formerly a member of the Legs Diamond gang.

The upslanting, catlike eyes and brows and the small pointed ears bespeak an alert, sagacious and selfish mind.

The deep, heavy, somewhat pointed chin shows great capacity to concentrate all his energies on difficult exploits of all kinds. A man with a chin like this is a natural daredevil, but a poor coöperator. Oley's face reveals a character that will be likely to draw upon him the enmity of his associates. He has the physical traits of a man who neither is loyal to others, nor able to inspire loyalty in them.

Looking at his right or conscious side, you note particularly the large, full-lipped, sensuous mouth and deep, very pointed chin. These denote a man who would devote a good deal of time and energy to his personal pleasures, but who has little consideration for others.

On the left or subconscious side you note a wider mouth with two deep indentations beneath his lower lip. This shows that subconsciously he has a great desire for words and acts of affection. John Dillinger possessed this trait. Oley has the same passionate, violent nature and is likely to be double-crossed in the same way.

*Next Week—H. Bedford-Jones*

## 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

Mr. Benton will tell you what your features reveal of your character. You have qualities and talents that you don't suspect. Your face is your fortune. What is your fortune? You may be following the wrong occupation. You may be in love with the wrong person. You can send in a coupon, with a photograph of anyone you wish. Enclose one dime *with each coupon* to cover mailing and handling costs.

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## Flashes From Readers

*Where Readers and Editors Get Together to Gossip and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind*

**W**E are discontinuing our plan of paying a dollar for each letter printed in "Flashes from Readers." Instead, we're going to give you a chance at a truly important prize, and at the same time help THE CRIME JURY to learn the kind of detective fiction you like to read.

You'll find the new plan in the box at the bottom of this page.

**T**HERE'S always a certain gratification in hearing your own ideas praised by someone more or less in the same line of business. You know at least that the man giving you the

boost is pretty much of an expert in your own line and knows what he is talking about.

For this reason, probably, we confess to a little mental lift over a letter we received last week. It came from the West Coast, written by a news dealer—a man who has his ear close to the ground when he buys magazines, a man who has the pick of every magazine printed when he turns to reading for his own enjoyment.

### FROM LABORER TO BANKER

DEAR EDITOR:

May I add an unsolicited brief on as worthy magazine as DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY? I

**W**HAT 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.

can consider myself a "Judge of Quality" on the reading material in your valuable issues.

I have sold your magazine since the days it was called *Flynn's*, and I can truthfully say untold thousands have passed through my hands. There hasn't been an issue that I haven't first gone through and checked up on my favorite authors and marked the stories I am first to read.

Being in contact with the purchasers of your magazine affords me the information of the class and intelligence of the people that indulge in *DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY*. They range in class from laborer to banker. Believe me, when I inform some of these people that I have just sold the last issue and have to wait for the news driver to replenish my stock, they display utter disgust, as they are faced with an evening at home without their favorite magazine.

Yours for success, and a lot more *Satan Hall*, *Park Avenue Hunt Club*, *Riley Dillon*, and the rest of your delightful character stories.

Yours very truly,

M. L. BIEMAN,  
Los Angeles, Calif.

#### ON MACHINE GUNS

DEAR EDITOR:

In the Dec. 8 issue of D. F. W. the article, "The Lady from Paradise," page 94, it states Geo. Machine Gun Kelly, in way of entertainment of his lady friend Klitty, trained his new machine gun, the first one he had ever handled, on a barn two hundred yards away and traced out his signature with bullet holes. Quite good shooting I must say, and I will also say that a machine gun is not noted for accuracy in shooting, and doubt if there is a man living today who could fire all his shots in a ten-foot circle at the distance named. And as for seeing the bullet holes, nix. I have good long wave eyes and I would consider a hole six inches in diameter about as small as I could detect. I believe most machine guns are .30 caliber. If a man is going to tell what he claims is true stories, he should be a little more careful in his statements.

I am a charter member of Ananias Lodge No. 3, Amalgamated Association of American Liars, and we tell some whoppers when in session, and if the author of this tale should ever present himself for membership I could certainly endorse his application as one who could hold his own in any company.

J. NEWTON POWELL,  
Arkansas City, Kans.

#### A DRILLER MEETS GAS

DEAR EDITOR:

I have been a reader of D. F. W. since it started as *Flynn's*. I have never missed a copy, and I never miss reading "Flashes from Readers" and at last comes a flash that hits me where I live.

I had a narrow escape from carbon monoxide. I was lucky to have partners with me who acted promptly. I was sinking a well in hard pan and had to use powder. I usually blew the bottom last thing at the end of the day's work, and left it all night for the gas to dissipate, but at about 60 feet in depth, possibly owing to atmospheric conditions, this time the gas stayed in the bottom. The first trip I went down in the morning I got out of the bucket and filled it with water and sent it up. Then I began to realize there was something wrong—my respiratory organs began to work double time and my light began to fade. I yelled to my partners to send down the bucket quick and they did. The last thing I remembered was the bucket whacking past my nose. When they got me up I had one foot in the bucket and holding the rope with one hand, and they had great difficulty in getting my grip off the rope. Was unconscious about 15 minutes after being got out; did not feel any ill effects after. The sensations were just shortness of breath and general fade out; nothing near so obnoxious as chloroform or anything of that description.

GEO. WELBOURN,  
New Westminster, B. C.

#### THANKS FROM ENGLAND

DEAR EDITOR:

In your issue dated Dec. 1, '34, you were kind enough to publish my "Request from England" asking for copies of American magazines.

How well America has responded may be gauged from the fact that on some days I have to have special deliveries from the post office, parcels large and small, parcels in abundance; whilst some of my drawers are crammed full of American letters.

I have replied to about three dozen letters, but as they are still coming in I am not getting the arrears down. Eight small parcels of British mags are now on their way to some of your whole-hearted readers, and more will follow as I get hold of fresh supplies from my British friends.

Many Americans have shown interest in our Royal Family and recent events in connection with them. I only wish I could give America half the photographs she asks for.

To these Americans and all others who have been kind enough to write I wish to express my sincerest gratitude through your mag.

It will be some weeks before I can reply to all personally, but I am sticking to the job as long as possible.

Further supplies of mags will be greatly appreciated as any excess will find their way into some of our hospitals.

Yours sincerely,

B. WATKINSON,  
Station Rd, New Selston,  
Notts, England.

# 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.*

**T**HIS department takes great pleasure in announcing a new puzzle organization, the Hunt Club, of Norfolk, Virginia, formed by a local group of members of the National Puzzlers' League and the American Cryptogram Association. The officers of the new club are as follows: A. Chem, President; Hi Kerr, Vice President; Viking, Secretary; and Su San, Treasurer. The Hunt Club cordially invites new membership. If you live in or around Norfolk, write to Erik Bodin, (Viking), 1249 44th St., Norfolk, Va., for information. It is not necessary to be a member of any other puzzle organization in order to join the Hunt Club. All puzzle fans are welcome. So drop Viking a line, fans! And good luck, Hunt Club!

Vowel sifting afforded a ready method of solving last week's biterminal pangrammatic cipher, No. 24 by A. R. Zorn. Thus, frequencies in SEDD (2-14-3-3) marked symbol E as a vowel. Similarly, JW (7-3), LNXXJA (3-10-7-7-2), \*PXKS (4-7-8-2), QOZ (4-10-2), etc., contributed symbols J, N, K, and O as highly probable vowel material.

Trying N as e, due to its use in the last two positions, the polyvowels NE, OE, OJ, JK, and KEO responded as ea, ia, io, ou, and uai, respectively. Substituting, CKEOHB (-wai-) suggested quaint, unlocking NHBNT (ente-), evidently enter. \*TJKQEHOE (Rou-ania) then followed as Roumania; and so to the full translation.

Before taking up this week's puzzles, a few words are necessary for the benefit of newcomers who are asking if they may submit cryptograms for publication in this department. The answer to this question is, "Yes, indeed!" And as many of these contributions will be published as is

possible. But remember, fans, we need easy ones as well as hard ones!

The current division puzzle by F. J. S. employs a ten-letter key word, numbered from 0 up to 9. The symbol for zero may be found by inspection. But the rest is not so easy! Compare B and BAH for a starter in Uuem's crypt, following up with \*R and RA, then BYD, UPD and UT. You will thus have all but three letters in the long 14th word.

Short words NLZ, ND, and BLXSL provide entry to Ruth's cryptogram. Having guessed these words, substitute in NLAXON and fill in, noting the two-letter group DO; etc. The next message, by L. A. Steeves, may be attacked through EZ and HTES, which will give all but one letter of SZDE. Word 14 will then drop into place, followed by words 1 and 12.

Patterns and double letters should afford an entering wedge in Numero's construction, with interesting possibilities for vowel spotting. A solution of Tintype's Inner Circle cipher and the answers to all of this week's puzzles will be published next week. The asterisks in Nos. 26, 29, and 30 are used to indicate capitalization.

No. 25—Cryptic Division. By F. J. S.

Q R I ) Q L L Q N Q ( N M U  
E I B M

A U R N  
A M N Q

R E B Q  
R E B Q

No. 26—Conversational Detail. By Uuem.

BFFTYHRAN UT B KUOHV RA TOY XBANOBND, UPD  
ZTKU LYDGODAU XV OKDH STYHK RA UDXDEPTARAN  
BAH SYRURAN BYD " \*R," " VTO," BAH "UPD."

No. 27—Mountain Paths. By Ruth.

LDGDA, XGNZUAXNF, NAENLOERGZHH, NLAXON,  
HDPAXZNF KTF PZ DRV-OTHLXDGZV JXANEZH, PEN  
NLZF TAZ NLZ DGRF AERZH DO RXOZ BLXSL, STG RZTV  
ND AZTR UAZTNGZHH.

No. 28—Inside Information. By L. A. Steeves.

UZNZDP MLNSPWZC ATBFPD OPMZYLTC SZDE MJ  
CPNTEW ZQ PATRLDECTN DJXAEZXD. SZDE ZMUPNED  
EZ ZMYZITZFD "ZCRLY CPNTEW" HTES XPLW!

No. 29—Transient Trepidity. By Numero.

\*XYZPDY, XKUKXYQ \*XVTRRASAXS EXSSAVXF, XBXOLQ,  
XEZR XKGFFT XSHANDR XVNDZ ETEFNLS, KPAEP  
USNEUR QNKS RPXEU! ZXULR XRMAYAS; YLJXASR  
ENBMNRDYL.

No. 30—Good Riddance. By Tintype.

EXGGRXALTV YKGU RXAYH HRXAORXT HLNDTY  
\*AKOFB FBNHLXEBNL XEBXFY TAVXAY ZFKTORL  
DXGUKL. LRXAUZNV HDBNHK RKXPKH HTOR, SKYH  
XABLRKF RNHEXAY.

#### LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

19—Key:     0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
              M A N I F O L D E R

20—The faded ink in old documents can be restored by brushing the writing with three per cent solution of tannic acid.

21—Sneak prowls boudoir of wealthy dame; grabs platinum wrist watch, pearl ring. Pet macaw upon obscure perch asks, "How are you?" Panicky thief drops swag, makes get-away!

22—Sioux maiden tranquilly enjoying reflection along river bank, whirled about sud-

denly. Venturous warrior, gazing fondly, begged pardon for intrusion.

23—Jubilant psychic student fashions obscure cryptic brochure for cynical czar. Spy purloins cipher key, readily solving enigma.

24—Plump cadi from Iraq and urbane Slav xebec nabob of Baku visit Cluj, Roumania; enter quaint yellow kiosk; hearken to zestful jazz; mix with lusty dancers gyrating.

Send us one or more answers to this week's puzzles Nos. 25-30, inclusive, for enrollment in our February Cipher Solvers' Club. Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

# Jujutsu for Self-Defense

By JOHN YAMADO  
Formerly of the Tokio Police

## *How to Open a Clenched Fist*

**M**OST people, when trying to open someone's hand, simply claw futilely at the fingers, without much result. But if you know how to go about it, opening a clenched fist is comparatively easy.

The best way is to grasp your opponent's wrist firmly, either in one of your hands, or by claspng it to your body with one of your arms. Then take his closed hand in yours, with the palm of your hand against the back of his hand and your fingers pointing toward his wrist. Then bend his hand sharply forward. His fingers *must* open; it is impossible for him to keep them closed. If you are practicing this with a friend, be very careful to do it gently, or you will tear the ligaments in his wrist.

Another method is to grasp his little finger and squeeze it shut. If in doing this you press on the nail and the first knuckle—which will be directly opposite, when his hand is closed—the pain will be so great that his hand must drop whatever it is holding. Pressing with the knuckle between the two joints of your thumb will enable you to do this better than the usual way of pressing with the fleshy part of your thumb. Your knuckle is harder and therefore hurts more.

If he is holding some large object, so that the tips of his fingers are not protected by the palm of his hand, there are two other ways to make him let go. One is to press in the way just described on the root of the nail of any

finger, or to strike this point with the knuckles of your fist. The other method is to pry any one of his fingers loose from its grasp and bend it backward. The little finger or the ring finger, are easiest, because they are usually weakest.

Now here are two other methods, a bit harder to learn, but very effective. Clench your left fist, and with the end of your right thumb press into the hollow between the knuckles of the middle and ring fingers. This hollow is on the striking surface of your fist, not on the back of the hand. If you press hard here, you will find that pressure applied to the tendon holding these finger bones together will hurt enough so that your hand will open.

To use it, hold your opponent's wrist still with one hand and press the sensitive spot on his hand with the thumb of your other hand.

Another spot is on the wrist, near the point where the doctor takes your pulse. Find it on your left wrist with your right hand, and on your right wrist with your left hand, until you are able to locate it instantly at any time, without having to feel for it.

To take this grip, let your fingers encircle your opponent's wrist, while the knuckle between the first and second joints of your thumb presses this spot on the spot on the front of his wrist. This method is better than the one previously described, as it leaves one of your hands free, to take care of his free hand.



## Next Week the Crime Jury Selects—!

PEOPLE called Sir Ronald the handsomest man in Europe. Certainly he was the richest. But only a few could know that his ruthless hands held the power to cripple two great nations, plunge their peoples into anarchy and bloodshed and riot.

But Washington knew, and so a secret order sent young Jack Laurence to England, over a trail studded with danger, to find this man who spent stolen money to foment rebellion in America. Only one plan they gave him. It was: "Bring him back alive. Two governments will fight his extradition; you'll be murdered by his own men if he has the least reason to suspect you; you'll get no backing from us if you get in trouble. But—bring him back alive!"

And Laurence followed that trail to dark Oswald Abbey, pitting a hunch and a prayer against the worst man in Europe. One thing he knew. He would die like the others before him—garroted in the night without a trace—  
—or he would find the man who had sentenced the United States to death—find him, and bring him back to answer for his crimes.

Here's the start of an astounding serial by a great new author. THE CRIME JURY has picked a winner! Read

### BRING HIM BACK ALIVE

By DONALD ROSS

IN a room above a sinister cabaret in Paris lay the uncrowned Czar of Russia. Handcuffed, he was waiting for the agents of the "Gay Pay OO," the dread Russian secret police, to murder him. In the audience downstairs was the Number One secret agent of Japan, determined to snatch the Czarevitch away, and use him to start a revolt in Russia that would mean a war in Europe, and a free hand for Japan in the East. And on the stage Anthony Hamilton, leader of the counter-espionage agents of the United States, was dancing. But his dancing feet tapped out a message that meant life or death for the uncrowned Czar.

Don't miss this dramatic story in which the three smartest, most daring espionage men in the world fight hand to hand—

### SPY!

*The Case of the Man in the Shroud*

By MAX BRAND

Also a Riley Dillon novelette by H. Bedford-Jones, another episode of THE LADY FROM HEIL, by Eugene Thomas, and stories by Robert H. Leitfred, Laurence Donovan, Dugal O'Liam, and others.

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