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FICTION WEEK

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JUNE 26
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WRECKED

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Electrical Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Patternmaker | | <input type="checkbox"/> R. R. Section Foreman | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation |
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| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping | <input type="checkbox"/> Fruit Growing |
| | | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Farming |

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- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Cost Accountant | <input type="checkbox"/> Salesmanship | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning |
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|---|---|--|
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DETECTIVE

FICTION WEEKLY



TITLE REGISTERED U. S. PATENT OFFICE

Formerly FLYNN'S

VOLUME CXI

JUNE 26, 1937

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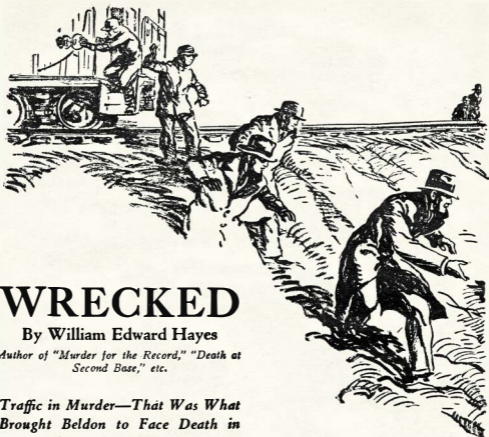
BALLOON TIRES				CORD TIRES			
Size	Size	Price	Price	Size	Size	Price	Price
29x4-40-1	29x4-40-1	\$1.75	\$0.85	30x3	30x3	\$1.75	\$0.75
29x4-40-2	29x4-40-2	1.05	.65	30x3-1-2	30x3-1-2	1.75	.75
30x4-40-1	30x4-40-1	2.00	.85	32x4-40	32x4-40	2.25	.95
30x4-40-2	30x4-40-2	1.45	.92	32x4-40-1	32x4-40-1	2.25	.95
30x4-40-3	30x4-40-3	1.45	1.02	32x4-40-2	32x4-40-2	2.25	.95
30x4-40-4	30x4-40-4	2.45	1.02	32x4-40-3	32x4-40-3	2.25	.95
30x4-40-5	30x4-40-5	2.45	1.02	32x4-40-4	32x4-40-4	2.25	.95
30x4-40-6	30x4-40-6	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-5	32x4-40-5	2.25	.95
30x4-40-7	30x4-40-7	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-6	32x4-40-6	2.25	.95
30x4-40-8	30x4-40-8	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-7	32x4-40-7	2.25	.95
30x4-40-9	30x4-40-9	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-8	32x4-40-8	2.25	.95
30x4-40-10	30x4-40-10	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-9	32x4-40-9	2.25	.95
30x4-40-11	30x4-40-11	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-10	32x4-40-10	2.25	.95
30x4-40-12	30x4-40-12	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-11	32x4-40-11	2.25	.95
30x4-40-13	30x4-40-13	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-12	32x4-40-12	2.25	.95
30x4-40-14	30x4-40-14	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-13	32x4-40-13	2.25	.95
30x4-40-15	30x4-40-15	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-14	32x4-40-14	2.25	.95
30x4-40-16	30x4-40-16	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-15	32x4-40-15	2.25	.95
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30x4-40-32	30x4-40-32	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-31	32x4-40-31	2.25	.95
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30x4-40-34	30x4-40-34	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-33	32x4-40-33	2.25	.95
30x4-40-35	30x4-40-35	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-34	32x4-40-34	2.25	.95
30x4-40-36	30x4-40-36	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-35	32x4-40-35	2.25	.95
30x4-40-37	30x4-40-37	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-36	32x4-40-36	2.25	.95
30x4-40-38	30x4-40-38	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-37	32x4-40-37	2.25	.95
30x4-40-39	30x4-40-39	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-38	32x4-40-38	2.25	.95
30x4-40-40	30x4-40-40	2.45	1.11	32x4-40-39	32x4-40-39	2.25	.95

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Size	Price	Size	Price
34x8	\$3.25	36x8	\$3.50
36x8	\$3.50	38x8	\$3.75
38x8	\$3.75	40x8	\$4.00
40x8	\$4.00	42x8	\$4.25
42x8	\$4.25	44x8	\$4.50
44x8	\$4.50	46x8	\$4.75
46x8	\$4.75	48x8	\$5.00
48x8	\$5.00	50x8	\$5.25
50x8	\$5.25	52x8	\$5.50
52x8	\$5.50	54x8	\$5.75
54x8	\$5.75	56x8	\$6.00
56x8	\$6.00	58x8	\$6.25
58x8	\$6.25	60x8	\$6.50
60x8	\$6.50	62x8	\$6.75
62x8	\$6.75	64x8	\$7.00
64x8	\$7.00	66x8	\$7.25
66x8	\$7.25	68x8	\$7.50
68x8	\$7.50	70x8	\$7.75
70x8	\$7.75	72x8	\$8.00
72x8	\$8.00	74x8	\$8.25
74x8	\$8.25	76x8	\$8.50
76x8	\$8.50	78x8	\$8.75
78x8	\$8.75	80x8	\$9.00
80x8	\$9.00	82x8	\$9.25
82x8	\$9.25	84x8	\$9.50
84x8	\$9.50	86x8	\$9.75
86x8	\$9.75	88x8	\$10.00
88x8	\$10.00	90x8	\$10.25
90x8	\$10.25	92x8	\$10.50
92x8	\$10.50	94x8	\$10.75
94x8	\$10.75	96x8	\$11.00
96x8	\$11.00	98x8	\$11.25
98x8	\$11.25	100x8	\$11.50

TRUCK AND BUS BALLOONS

Size	Price	Size	Price
6.00x20	\$3.10	8.25x20	\$7.45
6.50x20	\$3.25	8.75x20	\$7.95
7.00x20	\$3.40	9.25x20	\$8.45
7.50x20	\$3.55	9.75x20	\$8.95
8.00x20	\$3.70	10.25x20	\$9.45
8.50x20	\$3.85	10.75x20	\$9.95
9.00x20	\$4.00	11.25x20	\$10.45
9.50x20	\$4.15	11.75x20	\$10.95
10.00x20	\$4.30	12.25x20	\$11.45
10.50x20	\$4.45	12.75x20	\$11.95
11.00x20	\$4.60	13.25x20	\$12.45
11.50x20	\$4.75	13.75x20	\$12.95
12.00x20	\$4.90	14.25x20	\$13.45
12.50x20	\$5.05	14.75x20	\$13.95
13.00x20	\$5.20	15.25x20	\$14.45
13.50x20	\$5.35	15.75x20	\$14.95
14.00x20	\$5.50	16.25x20	\$15.45
14.50x20	\$5.65	16.75x20	\$15.95
15.00x20	\$5.80	17.25x20	\$16.45
15.50x20	\$5.95	17.75x20	\$16.95
16.00x20	\$6.10	18.25x20	\$17.45
16.50x20	\$6.25	18.75x20	\$17.95
17.00x20	\$6.40	19.25x20	\$18.45
17.50x20	\$6.55	19.75x20	\$18.95
18.00x20	\$6.70	20.25x20	\$19.45
18.50x20	\$6.85	20.75x20	\$19.95
19.00x20	\$7.00	21.25x20	\$20.45
19.50x20	\$7.15	21.75x20	\$20.95
20.00x20	\$7.30	22.25x20	\$21.45
20.50x20	\$7.45	22.75x20	\$21.95
21.00x20	\$7.60	23.25x20	\$22.45
21.50x20	\$7.75	23.75x20	\$22.95
22.00x20	\$7.90	24.25x20	\$23.45
22.50x20	\$8.05	24.75x20	\$23.95
23.00x20	\$8.20	25.25x20	\$24.45
23.50x20	\$8.35	25.75x20	\$24.95
24.00x20	\$8.50	26.25x20	\$25.45
24.50x20	\$8.65	26.75x20	\$25.95
25.00x20	\$8.80	27.25x20	\$26.45
25.50x20	\$8.95	27.75x20	\$26.95
26.00x20	\$9.10	28.25x20	\$27.45
26.50x20	\$9.25	28.75x20	\$27.95
27.00x20	\$9.40	29.25x20	\$28.45
27.50x20	\$9.55	29.75x20	\$28.95
28.00x20	\$9.70	30.25x20	\$29.45
28.50x20	\$9.85	30.75x20	\$29.95
29.00x20	\$10.00	31.25x20	\$30.45
29.50x20	\$10.15	31.75x20	\$30.95
30.00x20	\$10.30	32.25x20	\$31.45
30.50x20	\$10.45	32.75x20	\$31.95
31.00x20	\$10.60	33.25x20	\$32.45
31.50x20	\$10.75	33.75x20	\$32.95
32.00x20	\$10.90	34.25x20	\$33.45
32.50x20	\$11.05	34.75x20	\$33.95
33.00x20	\$11.20	35.25x20	\$34.45
33.50x20	\$11.35	35.75x20	\$34.95
34.00x20	\$11.50	36.25x20	\$35.45
34.50x20	\$11.65	36.75x20	\$35.95
35.00x20	\$11.80	37.25x20	\$36.45
35.50x20	\$11.95	37.75x20	\$36.95
36.00x20	\$12.10	38.25x20	\$37.45
36.50x20	\$12.25	38.75x20	\$37.95
37.00x20	\$12.40	39.25x20	\$38.45
37.50x20	\$12.55	39.75x20	\$38.95
38.00x20	\$12.70	40.25x20	\$39.45
38.50x20	\$12.85	40.75x20	\$39.95
39.00x20	\$13.00	41.25x20	\$40.45
39.50x20	\$13.15	41.75x20	\$40.95
40.00x20	\$13.30	42.25x20	\$41.45
40.50x20	\$13.45	42.75x20	\$41.95
41.00x20	\$13.60	43.25x20	\$42.45
41.50x20	\$13.75	43.75x20	\$42.95
42.00x20	\$13.90	44.25x20	\$43.45
42.50x20	\$14.05	44.75x20	\$43.95
43.00x20	\$14.20	45.25x20	\$44.45
43.50x20	\$14.35	45.75x20	\$44.95
44.00x20	\$14.50	46.25x20	\$45.45
44.50x20	\$14.65	46.75x20	\$45.95
45.00x20	\$14.80	47.25x20	\$46.45
45.50x20	\$14.95	47.75x20	\$46.95
46.00x20	\$15.10	48.25x20	\$47.45
46.50x20	\$15.25	48.75x20	\$47.95



WRECKED

By William Edward Hayes

Author of "Murder for the Record," "Death at Second Base," etc.

Traffic in Murder—That Was What Brought Beldon to Face Death in The Deserted Yards!

I

KIRK BELDON sniffed the atmosphere of the smoky office and shook the sleet from his hat with a downward swoop. The hard particles of ice fell from the folds of his coat. The continuous pelt of the sleet against the rattling panes was dimmed for a moment by the passing of a yard engine, belching smoke from its squat stack, rattling cars along importantly behind it. And on the other side of the main track, a short distance removed from the passenger station, the roundhouse vents smudged the darkening sky.

Familiar smells and familiar noises. Beldon had known them long back in his boyhood because he had come from a railroad family in a railroad town and had eternally disappointed an adoring father because he had allowed his feet to follow other paths. The law, the district attorney's office, the excitement of criminal investigation.

Now in his pocket was the shield of a Hoover man, the only thing about him that marked him for what he was. In the glow of the ceiling light he stood straight and slim, the hint of something unbending in the set of his jaw below a faintly humorous mouth. Eyes that changed lights, that could harden like steel or soften to mistiness. Straight, slim fingers that were ex-



Arlio cried, "It's—awful! The steam—it got 'em!"

pressive and deft—and one was peculiarly deft with a trigger.

The girl at the desk rose and came to the railing, and Beldon muttered his name.

The girl said, "Oh, yes. They're waiting." She opened the railing gate and Beldon followed her to an inner office.

Lee Shelby, the division superintendent, rose and came forward, his hand outstretched. There was a quick relief in Shelby's drawn young features. Beldon took in the other three at the table

with a swift appraising glance, even as he shook Lee Shelby's hand. This Shelby was one of those men who, at forty, could still look thirty-one.

The short, stout man with the pink face—that would be Durand, the general manager. The big-bodied man undoubtedly was Kipke, the traffic chief. The federal man placed them instinctively from what Shelby had told him about them in that half hour's telephone conversation over long distance wire.

His appraisal was correct. Shelby introduced them. The wrinkled little man at the end of the table was Hitchings, trainmaster.

General Manager



Durand said, with a shrug, "With a federal man here now, Shelby, you'll perhaps feel better."

The young-looking division super's mouth tightened with a curious whiteness about it. "As I explained," Shelby addressed his superior, "the thing is beyond us, beyond our resources."

Beldon lit a cigarette and watched the match burn down before he extinguished it. His eyes snapped as he glanced up.

"Let me understand the situation fully," he said. His voice was deep and quiet. "Mr. Shelby, on the telephone, gave me the general picture. An organized racket striking at your freight shippers. Your shippers, whose products are moved in what you call less-than-carload lots. Interstate shipments."

"That's right," Kipke said. His powerful shoulders were hunched. He was clean-shaven, well-tailored, the successful sales-manager, the director of the freight and passenger traffic solicitors. He smoked a heavy cigar with long, meditative draughts.

There was a moment of silence while Beldon waited for Kipke to continue. The ceiling lights threw the hollows beneath Lee Shelby's cheek bones into shadow and his eyes seemed to recede, making him look older and thinner. It was as if he were listening to the sleet rattling like fine shot against the windows in the teeth of the rising wind. Sleet on the steel, enemy of time and speed. And Beldon knew what it meant. Disrupted schedules, costly delays, maintenance men taking the sting on leathery cheeks while they thawed clogged switches, engineers squinting from open cab windows for signals while ice formed in their grizzled brows.

But it was Shelby who spoke.

"UP until two weeks ago," Shelby said, "it was the trucks that had us licked on that less-than-carload business. The trucks went to the manufacturer's door, picked up his cargo, delivered it to the door of the consignee. We made a fight to institute such a service of our own. Finally the Interstate Commerce Commission granted us the right to operate trucks in our important manufacturing centers, picking up the producer's cargo, bringing it to the freight platform, hauling it by rail to destination and there delivering it again by truck."

"I remember reading about the case," Beldon said, frowning. "The truckers tried to halt you by injunction when you first appealed to the I. C. C."

"But the injunction was refused," Shelby answered. "We won our case, we bought our pickup and delivery trucks, we went to our former patrons. Mr. Kipke can tell you what happened."

"I can almost tell you in a word, Beldon," the traffic chief said. "These shippers wouldn't even listen to my solicitors. They declared they were satisfied with the truck service as it was. They refused to be won back to the railroad."

"And I tried to find out why," Lee Shelby snapped. "I suspicioned a racket. I told my associates here that it stood to reason that these shippers weren't returning to the railroad simply because somebody wasn't permitting them to return."

"But we could get no proof," Kipke said. "Shelby put out some of his own men—investigators. They hung around shippers, they watched the trucks, they couldn't learn a thing. There hasn't been a thing to give us a lead. . . ."

"Nothing until today," Shelby said, his mouth tight and drawn. One fist on the table before him was clenched.

He turned to Kipke and Durand, the general manager. Both raised their brows slightly at his last statement. Hitchings, the trainmaster, straightened in his chair.

"Then you've really got something?" Durand cried. His eyes were as round as his pink face.

"I've got something," Shelby replied. "And I found it out myself. That's why I called you gentlemen on long distance from down the line and asked you to be at this meeting. That's why I called on the federal man. Down at Prescott, at noon today, I found two of our former shippers who are tired of paying a tribute to gangland on every pound of freight they move. . . ."

"What's that, you say?" The general manager swallowed.

"Just that," Shelby answered. "They've come to the end of their string, these shippers."

Kipke, who had half risen from his chair, settled back again and stuck his cigar between his lips.

"Then you know definitely it is a gang racket?" Durand queried, blinking and working his lips.

Lee Shelby leaned over the table. Beldon watched the youngish superintendent narrowly.

"That gives us something to go on," Kipke cried.

"The shippers," Durand blurted. "Who are they?"

"The shippers are Salem Byrd, the auto accessory manufacturer, and John Landers of the Landers Radio Corporation," Shelby snapped. "Both of 'em were heavy shippers in the old days."

"Shelby," the general manager broke in, "let's get this straight! Byrd and Landers, you say. Did they give you any intimation—"

"No," Shelby answered tightly. "They couldn't. They don't know them-

selves. They've been scared. The racket works like this:

"We'll take Byrd's situation. He ships his stuff in less than carload lots all over the country. The truckers have a rate applicable to his products based a good deal like rail rates. That's all right. But there's the matter of insurance. That's where the rub comes. The rate is so much a hundred pounds, and the shipper must pay it. The trucker can't assure him of safe handling without that insurance fee. The fee is the racket. It makes the freight, per hundred pounds, cost almost half again what the same shipment by rail would cost."

"Good Grief!" Kipke crushed out his cigar. "Can't the shipper refuse to pay that insurance?"

Shelby fished into his vest pocket for a newspaper clipping. He unfolded it. "You may remember this," he said. He handed the slip to Beldon. He glanced at the black type.

"Yes," Beldon answered.

"That man, Miller, over at Ladlaw City who had that foundry?" Durand queried, taking the clipping.

He frowned heavily.

"Exactly," Shelby went on. "Miller also was a former shipper of ours. But the trucks took him over. When the I. C. C. granted us the right to use trucks of our own, Miller wanted to ship by rail. In fact, our truck called at his place and picked up a cargo on the afternoon of the third. The morning of the fourth, Miller was found in the wreckage of his car in a ravine. Apparently he'd skidded on wet pavement and crashed through the highway fence."

"But how can we know, Shelby," Kipke asked, "that Miller's decision to defy the truckers and use the railroad had anything to do with his death?"

SHELBY smiled a little bitterly. "Because," he answered confidently, "whoever it is that takes this insurance tribute, let Byrd and Landers know that Miller didn't use good judgment."

"You're sure of that?" Beldon said, sitting forward.

"But great Scott, Shelby," Durand cried, "if Byrd and Landers talked to such people, surely they could call the police and identify—"

"They can't identify a telephone voice," Shelby retorted, "they only know a *voice*. Kind of soft and silky. I stopped at Miller's foundry on my way back here this afternoon. I talked with the dead man's secretary and asked her if she ever heard a voice like that on the telephone and she said she had. The afternoon before Miller died. The voice called about ten to five that day and asked to speak to Miller."

"Can't the police get to this voice, this fiend," Durand demanded, "through the men who drive those trucks? It looks like—"

"That's the hell of it," Shelby retorted. "The men who drive the trucks are all right. At least most of them. They're men employed by the trucking concern, just ordinary drivers and they collect the insurance fee along with the freight charges. They don't know who gets the extra fee. . . ."

"But they turn it in to the truck owners, don't they?" Kipke asked.

"Yes," Shelby answered with a slump to his shoulders. "And the truck owners turn it over to the racketeers. The truck owners are respectable citizens. They, like the shippers, are scared stiff. They won't talk. You could haul them before a grand jury and you couldn't find out a thing because they keep no records. Nothing at all in their files or books or even on their way bills that shows a tribute collected. There's

a peculiar stamp put on the shipping tag which undoubtedly shows the fee on the shipment has been paid, but you couldn't even prove that. Not a thing a policeman could do anywhere."

"But we've got to do something," Durand almost shouted. "I mean, if our railroad and our shippers are jeopardized by something like this."

"There's just one thing we can do," Shelby interrupted, "and I'm doing it. Byrd and Landers are going to play ball with us. They're going to use the railroad. They're going to help us bring this thing into the open. Byrd ordered one of our trucks to call at his warehouse this afternoon at three to pick up his first cargo."

"Two hours ago," Durand mumbled.

"Wait a minute," Beldon said crisply. "I wish you'd have held up this defiance until I had a chance to go into the matter. If this is all you say it is, these men'll need protection. . . ."

"I took it upon myself," Shelby broke in, "to promise protection. I detailed one of our best special agents to act as Byrd's bodyguard. A man named Cannon. I told Cannon not to let Byrd out of his sight, day or night. And now, Mr. Beldon, I'm sure we're all anxious to have you—"

"Pardon me, Mr. Shelby?"

The voice came from the door and they all turned. Beldon saw a thin, white-haired man, pale and trembling, holding to the door knob as if for support. The man wet his lips and gulped, and Beldon sensed his panic.

"What is it?" Shelby asked.

"Extra 3707 west," the man blurted. "Boss, it's—"

"It's what?" Beldon rose slowly but Shelby advanced on the man with a leap.

"In the—ditch on the curve beyond Marshall Cut," the man quaked. "The

engine and twenty-eight cars. The train's on fire and there's no telling what's happened to the crew. A farmer's wife drove miles through the sleet to get word to the nearest telegraph office."

"The wrecker," Shelby snapped. "The big hook. Call out—"

The eerie wail of the wrecker whistle interrupted his breathless speech. Beldon came up to him and clutched his sleeve.

"This train," Beldon cried. "What sort of freight train was—"

"The pickup local," Shelby retorted grimly, his eyes slitted down. "The train that had Salem Byrd's shipment on board. It looks like—"

"Like we ask for war," Bob Hitchings the trainmaster crackled, speaking for the first time. "An' like we're gonna get it. Glory be!"

II

THE point where the pickup local took to the ditch was on that section of the division's single track called the speedway. The scene of the accident was at the center of a wide curve on the right of which was a steep embankment. Thirty feet below the track level was the right of way fence.

It was down this embankment that the charging, smoke-plumed front end of the pickup local had plunged. Twenty-eight cars had followed it, some of them twisted and splintered.

Kirk Beldon rode with Shelby and, from the cab of the wrecker engine, he could see the glare in the sky as he stood tense behind the engineer.

"The whole damned train's in flames," Shelby shouted, his fist doubling. "Won't this heap of scrap iron travel any faster?"

Bob Hitchings stood imperturbable in the gangway, sucking on a dead pipe,

his cheeks soot-stained, his eyes reddened by the wind. Back of the engine was the caboose and the big hook and the other wrecker cars with the crews.

There was a siding a mile and a half west of the scene of the accident and it was here that Shelby ordered the equipment set out with the exception of the car containing the chemicals and other fire-fighting aids. This car he put ahead of the engine. A lineman skinned up a pole to establish connection with a portable telegraph set and a young man named Sale manned the brass key and sounder clamped to the table inside the caboose.

The roar of the flames, the crackle of wooden cars, the smell of burning oil from a broken tank car, the swirl of black smoke off the oil gave a weird touch to that picture of destruction as Beldon followed Shelby from the car.

His years in the federal service had brought Beldon in touch with gangland before, and now he knew he stood in the face of an unseen enemy, merciless and sure in its attack and execution. All the way down with the wrecker he had questioned Shelby so that now there was no doubt about this wreck being something more than coincidence.

Shelby had assured Beldon that his talks with Byrd and Landers had been held in the utmost secrecy and each of the shippers had sworn himself to secrecy. And yet. . . .

The flame and the devastation. It stirred in Beldon's stout heart the flame of hate for those secret enemies of society, those parasites of the underworld sucking the blood of legitimate enterprise. Here was their handiwork. Here stood a tall gaunt man, Shelby, the youngish superintendent, who looked like he hadn't slept for days—helpless and uncertain. Beldon's mouth was humorless now—a grim line.

He turned as the derailed train's conductor, Arlie Case, came loping up. Beldon only needed one glance at the conductor's face to read the worst. He knew what had happened here. The huddle of those farm folk, the scared white faces of the women hunched in the raveled sweaters and old coats and engulfing shawls.

Shelby said, "They're in there, Arlie?" He glanced toward the crushed cab.

Arlie said, "It's—awful! The steam—it got 'em. Cooked—" He stopped, his white face contorted in agony.

Beldon grabbed the conductor's lantern and worked closer to the up-turned giant whose wheels pointed to the leaden night sky. The engine apparently had turned over at least twice before coming to rest with its cab broken in beneath it, half buried in the ditch water and the mud.

The icy water, half slush, squelched in his shoes as he sought to peer into the one opening visible. He held up the lantern and turned sick. He could see the twisted bodies. Steam hissed around them still, a dying whisper.

"Your head brakeman, Arlie?" Shelby queried as Beldon rejoined the stricken conductor. "Did he—?"

Arlie Case pointed to the form beneath the black raincoat. "He musta tried to jump." Arlie said. "He broke his skull. I guess he broke most his bones from the way he handled when we lifted him. His woman's in the hospital at the division point. It's gonna kill her. . . ."

"I know," Shelby said. "His young wife. This would be their first baby."

THE wrecker boss said something to Shelby about bringing up the big hook. Shelby told the wrecker boss to take charge.

Beldon turned to the conductor. "How'd it happen? Any idea?" There was on him now the urge of battle, the driving urge for haste.

"I don't know how it happened," Arlie said sadly. "I was in the caboose. We was cuttin' along here about forty or forty-five I reckon. I felt a jerk. That was all. Just like the air was in emergency. I heard Slim, my hind brakeman, yell an' I braced myself. I didn't know the engine'd left the track until I heard Slim say somethin' about a fire up ahead."

"How many cars did you have in all?" Beldon queried, his nails biting into his palms, his words chopped.

"Sixty-five," Arlie answered. "That's why we didn't feel anything more back in the caboose. But when Slim yelled, I looked out from the rear platform an' then I heard the splinterin', an'—well, I guess I got my lantern an' run for it. Seemed like that tank car got on fire some way. That's what started the blaze. I know Slim come runnin' with our caboose fire extinguisher but we couldn't do a thing with it. Anyhow we wanted to get to the engine an' see if Lem an' Dusek an' the kid brakeman was all right.

"Some people come runnin' through the field an' I yelled for somebody with a car to get to the nearest telephone. Mr. Shelby, nothin' like this's ever happened to me before. Long's I been on this division I ain't—"

"Arlie," Shelby cried, "it wasn't your fault! Look! What time did you stop at Prescott?"

"We picked up two cars at the freight house," Arlie answered, frowning. "Musta been about 3:05 when we pulled out. I can look at my book—"

"Never mind," Beldon snapped. "Everything was all right leaving Prescott?" Already Beldon had a picture of

the division in his mind, the miles between the principal points.

"Why sure," Arlie answered slowly. "I didn't see anything outta the way. Not with the train. I mean—"

"Where'd you put the two Prescott cars into the train? How far back of the engine?" Beldon rushed. His eyes were narrowed, his fingers had closed over the conductor's thick wrist.

"About ten cars back," Arlie answered. "Yeah! Right ahead of that tank car. Them cars was all right, if that's what you're drivin' at. They was in damn good order. Nothin' broke about 'em or—"

"Ten cars back," Beldon muttered. He dropped the wrist and turned toward the wreck, his features set and savage. "From what I can see from here the train parted two cars behind the engine. The engine broke loose and—"

"That's somethin' it's gonna be hard to tell," Arlie moaned. "I mean just how the spill did happen. Nobody on the head end left alive. All them wooden cars burned to a cinder. I mean if it was a defective brake or a beam down or—"

"Let's go back to your caboose," Beldon said. "I want to look at your way-bills. Nothing we can do here now. Every time I think of that kid lying over there . . ." Beldon drew up his shoulders.

His feet were stiff when he tried to walk. He waded across the ditch through the slush, following the booted conductor, and Shelby came behind.

And over and over in his mind ran the chain of thought: Byrd's shipments in that tenth car. Right ahead of the tank car. Byrd, through Shelby's own promise of protection, had defied the truck racket. And now three innocent men lay dead while flames took thou-

sands and thousands of dollars worth of property.

"Arlie," Beldon ended suddenly, "you made no stops after leaving Prescott?"

The conductor stopped abruptly. He turned worried eyes to the federal man and the division boss.

"Yes. One. At Baldrock." Arlie ran a reflective finger along his lean jaw. "We set out a car of mules. Didn't pick up anything."

"What time was that?"

"It was 3:40. We set out the mules an' then went into the sidin' to let No. 7, a westbound flyer, go around us. No. 7 cleared the block at 3:55 an' then we tore out followin'."

"What time did that put you on this curve, Arlie?" Beldon pumped. "What time was it when you piled?"

"It was 4:45 an' so misty an' dark you couldn't see ten cars away except where the flame was shootin' up."

"At 4:45," Beldon's eyes were points of flame. "That means—well, I'm not sure yet. But if they did anything to the equipment they had a chance while you stood in the Baldrock siding. They—"

"What's that, Mr. Beldon?" Arlie asked, alarmed. "Who did what to—"

"Nothing Arlie," Shelby intervened. "Let's get going. I'm frozen to the bone. If the temperature drops any on this we'll be in for it. Hurry."

THEY had taken ten steps when Beldon saw, toward the rear of that portion of the train that had been left standing, a bull's eye torch flashing on and off. It cut the sleet and the early darkness like a sword, and from the motion it made whoever held the light was running. Running and slipping because once the light swerved down toward the ditch and seemed to roll like

its owner had rolled over and had gotten up again.

The light neared and then they heard the shouting, and they halted.

"That you, skipper?" the voice in the darkness bawled. "Get the super—quick. The boss—get the boss—"

"Who is it?" Shelby called.

"Quick, Mr. Shelby," the voice behind the torch sounded closer. The light seemed to have stopped. Now it touched on Arlie and Beldon. "It's me—Burk. I got—"

They came up to the special agent, one of the division's gumshoes, a thick-set man with a red face and no neck at all, and eyes distended.

Beldon saw his mouth and saw the lips trembling.

"Up on that car!" Burk pointed in genuine agitation. "Hurry. If that ain't—"

Beldon was slipping and banging his shins and doing his best to mount the icy ladder rungs. Shelby crowded behind him. The special agent kept blubbering unintelligibly, staring up at them.

Beldon reached the slippery roof and scrambled across it with his feet threatening to go out from under him. Then Shelby came with the lantern which sent its feeble yellow rays across the ice-sheeted deck.

At once Beldon caught his breath. He took a step back and almost sent the superintendent skidding off.

Two ice-coated faces—human faces—stared upward. Two dead faces with stark, staring eyes glazed over by the ice.

Beldon moved forward, his breath in his throat. It was incredible. Like some hideous nightmare. Not like a railroad in the middle of a civilized country.

Shelby cried, "It's Salem Byrd and

Cannon, the man I left to guard Byrd!"

From out of the stinging sleet the voice of the special agent sounded: "I knew it was Cannon the minute I looked at him, but the other stiff—I seen his face somewhere before. But look, Mr. Shelby. The wreck didn't do this. Not to them. Look, Mr. Shelby. They're tied on. That's a rope around 'em to keep 'em from slidin' off. An'—well, all you gotta do is look at their throats. Mr. Shelby, they've been—"

"Murdered!" Beldon snapped and his voice hid a savage note under its deadly calm.

"And—I'm the murderer," the stricken Shelby cried. "I sent—'em both—to death."

III

THE word was war! Yes, a fight without quarter—a battle to the last ditch with the unseen powers of gangland.

The word went out over the system from that midnight conference in the board room at general headquarters where the president of the road himself sat at the head of the table and pointed a lean and shaking finger at Lee Shelby's drawn, set face.

Kipke was hunched in his chair, grim and determined, his hands clasped together on the mahogany. General Manager Durand looked badly frightened. Trainmaster Hitchings was still down at the wreck trying to find out what had caused the catastrophe.

The fire had been brought under control at a little past nine and the big hook had scattered the wreckage enough to keep the blaze from spreading. The track had been repaired and the standing cars brought into division headquarters. The line was open for traffic at reduced speed on the curve after almost seven hours of complete tie-up.

Beldon had returned from the scene of the wreck with Shelby. Again he had questioned the young division superintendent minutely. He had studied the map of the division, had memorized details about it that men who traveled it daily would have taken months to learn.

He had communicated such information as he had to his own chief officer via long distance and had called for six picked men to be sent by plane at once. The storm was clearing and his chief had promised the men by four in the morning.

Beldon watched as Powers, the president of the railroad, aimed his shot at the likable Shelby.

"You should have consulted me personally," Powers thundered. "This afternoon. Before you—"

"I thought Mr. Durand would tell you," Lee Shelby defended and Beldon thought he winced a little when Powers went on:

"If you'd taken me into your confidence the deaths of these men might have been averted. It's incredible that a thing like this could get a start on our railroad. It's incredible that—"

"Pardon me, Mr. Powers," Beldon interrupted. "In gangland nothing is incredible. Nobody knows better than I what Shelby's been up against in his efforts to get information, to get something to go on. What's happened—well, it's nothing he could help. It's—"

"And," Durand interrupted hopefully, "we haven't yet established that this wreck was actually perpetrated by this so-called gang. I mean even the federal man here says there's no proof."

"There's this proof," Beldon snapped. He didn't like this roly-poly pink-faced little man. "The train with Salem Byrd's shipment left Prescott and

stopped at a place called Baldrock. The medical examiner's report on the approximate length of time Salem Byrd and John Cannon had been dead at the hour of his examination, places the murder definitely at Baldrock. I'm informed that the siding there is down a ways from the village and because of the heavy murk and the sleet it was impossible to see that section of the train from either the caboose or the engine."

"It's your belief," Kipke said, "that the murderers tied those two men to the car on which you found them, then slit their throats?"

"Right," Beldon snapped. "There's the evidence of the blood."

"The gangsters," Kipke said, "had to take those two men from Prescott in a car, race to get to Baldrock ahead of the pickup and then pick out a place to plant the men?"

"That, Mr. Kipke," Beldon answered, "is exactly what happened. The hoods wanted to be sure you'd find the bodies of those men where it would impress you most—at the wreck. Right there where the wreck of that train cost you a couple of hundred thousand in tonnage. And what effect will this have on the shippers now?"

Kipke glanced at Durand. Powers glared at Shelby. Beldon fumbled with a cigarette.

"They'll probably tell us less than ever," Kipke offered mildly.

Beldon's eyes narrowed. "By this minute every shipper that may be in any way inclined to rebel and call on the railroad for help has been warned by telephone. As far as those less-than-carload shippers are concerned you might as well close down your door-to-door pickup and delivery service. Unless—" Beldon broke off and lit his cigarette.

"Unless what?" Powers queried.

"Unless," Beldon answered with deliberation, "we can smoke out the brains behind the thing. Get whoever it is out where we can fight. I'm going down the line tomorrow. I'm calling on Landers. I'm calling on the other shippers too. Shelby can give me a list of them. I'll have help on the outside. But I've also got to have it from the inside. Every man on this system has to keep his eyes open and report."

"There's one thing wrong," Durand suggested, "with advertising this and telling it to every man on the system."

"What's that?" Powers, the president, frowned at his cigarette and tossed it away.

"RIGHT now," Durand said, "the newspapers know only one thing about it. We've had a wreck. Our workmen, our operating employees know only one thing about it. A wreck. A murder, too, apparently, but with no definite connection. I mean not one of us has said anything about this racket suspicion we've had.

"But the minute we announce that we're up against what Mr. Beldon seems to think we are, then these operating men will back up. They'll get skittish. They'll be expecting something to happen to them, and Heaven only knows what it'll do to the service. These fellows are solidly brotherhood men. You can't tell what they might refuse to do if they think they're taking chances outside the regular line of duty. See what I mean?"

"You're wrong," Shelby retorted. "There's not a man on my division that I wouldn't bank on. Not a single one of them!"

"I wouldn't be too sure of that," Beldon interrupted. "As I get the picture now, there must be somebody on the

inside cooperating with the racket, tipping off such things as Salem Byrd, for instance, calling your agent's office for a truck to pick up his stuff. You said yourself that you told him to speak of his intention to no one. No one, that is, but the man he had to order the truck from."

The president's cold eyes turned to Shelby and squinted.

President Powers said, "All right gentlemen. It's war, but it's war under cover. The special agents will be fully instructed. They'll guard all trains. We'll borrow men from other divisions immediately. We'll concentrate on this district. What we're actually driving at will be known only to the special agents and to ourselves. That way the special investigators might have a better chance of burrowing in. If there's any inside work we'll find it out. Meanwhile—"

"I'd suggest, Mr. Powers," Beldon interrupted, his fingers tensing, "that since this is a federal matter, outside the realm of the railroad itself in its present stage, with interstate commerce involved, and murder in interstate commerce, that the federal authorities take full command of the investigation. Your special agents will report to me. I'll detail them. You'll advise them to that effect. This thing—well, it can be bungled too easily. I trust you understand. I don't underestimate your own men, or their abilities."

"By all means," the president said readily. "You, I assume, Beldon, will be in complete charge—"

"I am in complete charge."

Beldon thought there was the slightest tension, the slightest resentment toward him, but he crushed out his cigarette and settled back in his chair.

At six o'clock the following morning he was on his way back to the scene of the wreck after having spent three

hours mapping out his campaign. The plane with his six men had arrived at a little past three, and he'd immediately jumped into his program. He assigned two men to the trucking company headquarters with instructions to find who got the tribute money if they had to tear the joint apart. He detailed the other four to watch the truck drivers at certain points of vantage. All were instructed to learn, as soon as possible, what likely racket boss could be operating in the district and report to Beldon immediately.

At a quarter to six Beldon had the names of Butch Mannafee and Gus Pappas, the former an ex-beer runner, the latter a slot machine boss. Beldon further had the information that an armed truce existed between the two hoodlums so that there wasn't much possibility of them being jointly concerned in the freight racket.

The chief of city detectives at this important railroad terminal got out of his bed to visit Beldon at the latter's hotel and give him what information he could.

Beldon welcomed him.

"If Butch is livin' off the truckers," the city chief had said, "it's a new one on me. We just busted up his fresh produce traffic. As to Gus the Greek—you can't ever tell what he'll be into. I wish you luck."

Beldon felt he would need it. He went down to the passenger station at six to join Lee Shelby on the latter's private car. Shelby, too, was headed for the scene of the wreck after a few hours rest.

Shelby was occupied with a sheaf of telegrams as the special pulling the car, departed eastward. For several minutes neither man spoke. Forward in the car a white coated Negro went about preparing breakfast.

Suddenly Shelby looked up. Beldon saw his eyes change color.

"What is it?" Beldon asked, instantly alert to Shelby's nervousness.

"Code," Shelby said. "Look."

Beldon stared at a meaningless jumble of words. He shook his head.

"From Sale, Tommy Sale," Shelby explained. "That young emergency telegrapher we left in the caboose at the wreck last night."

"I remember," Beldon said.

"What he'd want to send me a code message for—" Shelby broke off. Then, "Look. Hours ago. Nobody said a word about it—" He took a book from his drawer and started, silently, to translate while Beldon stood behind him and the rails rumbled beneath the rolling car.

Suddenly Shelby straightened and got to his feet. He had scribbled the translation on a sheet of paper.

"Look! Look at this!"

Beldon read the words. "Just found out what caused wreck. See me soon as you come back." Beldon repeated the words aloud. He blinked.

"Don't you see?" Shelby cried. "Tommy Sale, the operator at the siding near the wreck—"

"I see," Beldon answered. "How long will it take us to get there?"

It took them what seemed an incredibly long time. They ate breakfast and discussed the various aspects of the case. And always Shelby went back to the young telegrapher's message. And, "But what would he want to send me that information in code for? . . ."

The wrecking crew's caboose was still there in the siding a short distance west of the wreck. Shelby dropped from his car and ran across to it. Beldon followed. There was an odd chill racing along his arms that he couldn't define. The fog lay heavy about them.

He mounted the caboose platform and looked in. The telegraph instrument was still clamped to the desk. But the caboose was empty.

"Sale!" Shelby called the name, glanced up into the cupola. Only silence.

Beldon stared at the stove and his jaw set. He whipped off the lid. Dead out, and it had been out for a long time. His fingers bent into tight claws.

Suddenly he charged through the caboose and out the other end. He glanced about him. No sign of life anywhere in that impenetrable milky thickness.

"That's damned queer," Shelby said in a tight voice. "He ought to be here. He—"

"Let's go down to the wreck! Quick!" Beldon ran back to the special.

THE going, however, was painfully slow because the wrecking crew was working in the block. Shelby's engine and car had to proceed prepared to stop in an instant.

But finally through a rift in the fog they saw the big hook's crane hoisting charred timbers from the ditch into gondola cars.

They found Bob Hitchings, the diminutive trainmaster, whose whiskers in spots on his grimy face gave him a strangely moronic cast.

"What'd you do with Sale?" Shelby demanded. "Not a soul back there at that caboose to—"

"His relief ain't there?" Hitchings asked sharply, squinting out from beneath his battered hat brim. "Why, you sent the man down—"

"I sent what man down where?" Shelby cried.

"The feller who came on No. 16—"

"What feller?" Beldon half shouted.

"For Heaven's sake—"

"You mean," Bob Hitchings cut in, "you didn't order Tommy Sale relieved by a guy named Sutton? Tall slim feller with dark hair an'—"

"I didn't order anything of the kind," Shelby answered. "Tell me. What—"

"Why when No. 16 come rollin' east at a little past four this mornin'," Hitchings answered with alarm in his thin tones, "this man Sutton got off an' he had a message to Sale from you for Sale to go back to division headquarters on No. 1. He said he was takin' over—"

"A message from me!" Shelby's knuckles were white.

Abruptly Beldon caught Hitchings by the lapel.

"Look here," he snapped at the trainmaster. "Was this Sale down around the wreckage at any time between—well, prior to two o'clock?"

"Why, yes. Yes, he was. He come down from the siding about midnight with the wrecker engine. He said he wanted to see what the spill looked like. Wasn't no reason why he shouldn't. So I said, 'Sure.' He come on down. I saw him pokin' around here an' there with the inspectors. After while he went back to the engine an' returned to the caboose. Nothin' wrong in that—"

"Did he say anything to you or to anybody else about finding something in the wreck—about knowing what had happened?" Beldon shot.

"No!" Hitchings was genuinely upset. "No! He never said nothing. . . ."

"Shelby," Beldon barked, "can we get another telegrapher? Somebody to—"

"I'm a telegrapher," Shelby answered. "What—?"

"Let's get back to that caboose," Beldon snapped.

Shelby had his special back up to

the siding where the caboose stood. Beldon was conscious of Hitchings and Shelby staring at him. But his mind was groping for some way of making sense out of things.

A man who had called himself Sutton had appeared on No. 16 two hours after Tommy Sale had sent that mysterious code message. This Sutton had relieved Sale and had given him authority to return to headquarters. No. 1, the train Sale left on, had departed from the siding about 4:45 A. M. west-bound. No. 1 would put Sale back at headquarters at a little past seven.

On arrival at the siding Beldon again loped over to the parked caboose.

"Shelby," he ordered. "Get on that telegraph and find out if Sale arrived at headquarters."

Shelby opened the key and began pounding.

For an interminable time the pounding continued and Beldon watched the gaunt face of the youngish superintendent. How much did this Lee Shelby know about this business that he hadn't told? Beldon chided himself for such a suspicion.

He prided himself on his ability to read men, and the expression on Shelby's face was beyond the capabilities of any actor, no matter how good. The sweat was coming on Shelby's forehead although the caboose was cold. Shelby was crouched over the metallic chatter of that brass telegraph sounder and his eyes were fretted with worry.

After a long moment he snapped the telegraph key shut and straightened.

"Well," he said, "that's that. Sale has disappeared."

"Disappeared!" Beldon's eyes narrowed. "The dispatcher doesn't know anything about having him relieved?"

"Nothing," Shelby answered. "This message in code came to me a little past

two. The conductor on No. 1, that west-bound limited, got a message at Prescott over my signature to stop here and pick up Sale. No. 1's conductor was in the office at headquarters just then and the dispatcher asked him about Sale, but the skipper says all that happened was that he stopped and some stranger on duty here at this caboose said Sale was staying and for No. 1 to go on."

"So Sale never even boarded the train," Beldon muttered, his teeth clamped. "Sale was down at the wreckage. He found out something that was so important he thought it best to communicate directly with the division superintendent in code. He did so at about two o'clock. Two hours later he's relieved by a man who gets off an east-bound train. You don't know the man—Sutton. A short time after that the conductor of a westward train gets a message to stop here and pick Sale up. Your dispatcher at headquarters would be the one to issue such a message?"

"Yes."

"And he didn't issue it?"

"No."

"We'd better get to Prescott," Beldon said. "As soon as possible."

Inside job! Beldon's lips twitched as he found a cigarette. Inside job and a blank wall to go against. He made his way back to the superintendent's private car.

IV

PRESCOTT was a manufacturing city of a hundred and fifty thousand. One of the most important on the railroad. In the days before truck competition the railroad maintained a classification yard, day and night switch engines, a roundhouse and other facilities.

Now the rails in the yard were rusty from long disuse. The old yard build-

ings and the telegraph tower were boarded up and stripped of equipment. The freight house, of course, was kept open for service to such patrons as cared to use the road.

A large number of the manufacturers were makers of products which were shipped in the less-than-carload lots.

It was almost ten that morning when the special with Beldon and Shelby pulled into the spur behind the Prescott passenger station.

Beldon was immediately besieged by the sheriffs of two counties who came to report on the activities of their posses. The country was being scoured for anybody who might look even the least bit suspicious.

"But it's no soap," one said.

So that it was almost eleven before Beldon got the superintendent to rout out the telegrapher who'd come on duty the previous night.

While Beldon was waiting for the operator to get down to the station, he went to the long distance telephone booth in the waiting room and called one of his aides at division headquarters. It was a long time before the connection was made.

When finally the heavy voiced federal man came on he was explosive.

"Look, chief," he blurted, "we thought you'd never call us. We've rounded up the trucking owners but it's like that division superintendent said. You can't get 'em to open their traps. They're scared stiff and the papers have hit that story of last night's wreck and murder hard. They've smeared it. Your general manager—Durand, I guess it is—is about nuts. He's threatening to call on the governor and get troops or something."

"You keep him quieted," Beldon shot. "For Pete's sake don't let us get any more mixed up in this investiga-

tion than we've got now. How about Gus the Greek?"

"He's outta town," the man on the other end of the wire reported. "We picked up one of his hoodlums with the help of the city dicks here, but the hoodlum is the dumbest hood in all the world. He don't know anything. An' as for the other mug, this Butch Mannafee, we haven't got hold of him yet. When we do we'll put the pressure on. You can be sure of that. What's this about a telegraph operator named Sale missing?"

"That's all," Beldon mumbled. "Missing. You might ask Butch about it when you take him in. Anything else?"

"It's the missing operator that's got the railroad's general offices on end as much as anything else," the men reported.

"You can get me here at this Prescott passenger station," Beldon concluded. "Keep me informed of every slightest detail. When the company gumshoes show up at your end hold 'em together until I get time to work out details for their assignments. You might send me thirty picked men on the next train, however."

"We've got about fifty here now," the man answered. "I'll send thirty of 'em down. Anything else you need . . ."

When Beldon returned to the depot telegraph office the night operator, red-eyed and tousle-headed, was there. Superintendent Shelby was greatly agitated and straightened from the telegraph instruments as Beldon entered.

"Well, it's all out now," Shelby cried. "Just what we didn't want to happen."

"What's out?" Beldon felt a sinking at his middle.

"About Sale, the man we've got missing, and a lot of other things.

These wires have been burning up. The general manager, on my neck to get something done, to find that operator if we have to turn over heaven and earth. There's panic on the main line. Sale's mother down at the dispatcher's office waiting for word of him."

"Swell," Beldon muttered. "Get everybody jumpy and we might as well call the investigation off." He turned wearily to the red-eyed young man who stared with his mouth open. The chap's name was Barker.

"All right, Barker," Beldon snapped, "you copied a message in the early hours this morning for Train No. 1, a westbound flyer."

"Yes, sir." Even Barker's voice trembled. "Is there anything—I did—that was wrong? I mean—"

"Got a copy of it?" Beldon demanded.

BARKER went to a spike and fingered nervously through a sheaf of papers. Finally he brought out a yellow slip and handed it to the federal man.

Beldon read the wording, his lips tightened, his eyes narrowed. It was a conventional message in every respect.

"That's the carbon," Barker explained. "I copied the message at 4:10 A.M., about five minutes before No. 1 arrived here. I—"

"At 4:10," Beldon said sharply. "Barker! Was there anything at all about this message that struck you as peculiar?"

"Why—yes." Barker's eyes widened.

"What?" Beldon was leaning over the young man with his fingers clenched.

"I don't know if you know about it," Barker answered, "but Mr. Shelby can tell you. Every telegrapher's sending is like his handwriting or his voice.

I mean if you work with a man a couple of times you get to know his Morse like you know his voice. Well, the Morse that sent this message to me wasn't like the dispatcher's. It was—different in a way. It—"

"Different! How?" It was Superintendent Shelby who interrupted, his thin face drained of blood, his eyes far back in his head. He didn't look youngish now. "Think, man. Think back and—"

"Well," Barker said, "it was a hell of a night. I mean the sleet and the ice, and things tied up in a knot because of that pile-up west of Marshall Cut where they found Mr. Byrd and the dick with their throats cut."

"I'm asking about the message," Beldon prompted, holding on to his patience.

"Well, like I said. It was a hell of a night. The sleet wasn't doing a thing to the wires. Sagging 'em. Swinging 'em. Raising hell with the telegraph. The wire'd been dead for about five minutes before I heard my call come in sort of sudden like. Then, when I answered, the sender gave me that message. It didn't sound like Mickey, the night dispatcher. I mean I thought it was funny, but then with the way the wires had been cutting up I figured it was—that."

"Then after you copied the message?" Beldon pressed. "How'd the wires act after that?"

"They seemed to get worse. Just a lot of stuttering. You know how it is—"

"But the message was clear?" Beldon asked, fumbling for a cigarette.

"Fairly clear," Barker answered.

Beldon went over to the jack board on the wall, a board made up of brass strips with little holes and plugs that fitted into the holes. It was by the

means of these plugs fitted into the proper holes that certain circuits could be cut in or cut out of the office. It was also by these plugs that trouble could be detected east or west of the station. Beldon had a general idea of the use of the jack board because he had hung around a railroad station as a kid. Yes, once in his life he thought he'd learn telegraphy. He wished he had a working knowledge of it now.

Beldon studied the board a long time while the rain which had followed a rise in temperature, pelted at the windows of the small office. He could hear, above the patter of the rain, the breathing of the men behind him.

Incredible that all around him, at this moment, hovered some unseen evil. Incredible when you glanced through the windows and saw the dreary day with the mist low over the tracks and heard, now and then, the rumble of the rail traffic flowing by.

He was standing thus when the city telephone bell broke the silence with an insistent jangle. Shelby reached for the instrument.

"Who? Landers?" Shelby's voice was suddenly tense with excitement. Beldon stared at the superintendent.

"Yes," Shelby said into the telephone. "Immediately. As soon as we can—oh, all right." The receiver clicked on the hook.

Shelby faced the federal man. "We won't have to look up our shippers one by one," he said, and there was something triumphant in the way he spoke.

"What do you mean?" Beldon demanded.

"That was Landers, the radio manufacturer," Shelby answered. "He's called a meeting. He's got a group of the shippers together. Over at the Chamber of Commerce under police guard. Landers say it's—war."

"Let's go," Beldon thundered. He was already at the door.

V

IT made you think of an armed camp, that upper floor of the Chamber of Commerce. Beldon's badge opened a cordon of city police and he and Shelby pushed their way through to where a stalwart man opened a door.

All eyes turned from that long table inside. There must have been twenty of them. Grim-eyed and face drawn. A score of men, mostly in middle years or past, showing the evidence of long mental strain, the inroads of hidden fear.

At the head of the table a gaunt, big-boned and stooped man rose and sucked in his lips. He was Landers, the radio man, the chairman of the meeting.

He shook hands gravely with Shelby, then with Beldon. He introduced Beldon to the others and Beldon saw relief at once in their faces.

Then he got to the point without prefacing.

"Gentlemen," Landers said quietly, "we're at your service."

There was a pretentious silence. Beldon swept the faces. Lee Shelby swallowed and shifted his feet nervously.

Shelby said, "You mean, Mr. Landers, that you men, after what's already happened, are fighting on our side? We're standing together?"

"Together," Landers answered. "These men have paid their last cent of tribute. What they did to Byrd can't scare us. We called this meeting to discuss our position. We've been in here four hours threshing this thing out. These of us here represent forty-five of the community's less-than-carload shippers. Here is the list." Landers

handed Beldon a sheet of paper. "We're asking police protection. We're asking to have every one of our plants guarded by men armed to the teeth. We have considered calling on the governor to send a company of two of the militia if we need it.

"This afternoon we'll have our usual shipments for forwarding. The trucks have been notified by wire not to stop. Your station agent will furnish company trucks instead. We're moving freight out of here this afternoon or we'll die together in the effort. Three or four of your men died last night trying to take care of Salem's shipping. We're going to do our best to see that no others die."

Beldon cleared his throat. "You don't have to call on the police," he said slowly. "You don't have to call on the governor. Personally, I'll be glad to have the local police cooperate with me, and furnish me any men I need, but I promise you, gentlemen, in the name of the federal government, that your tonnage will move today without harm to you or to it. If others who've been racket-ridden had the courage to stand shoulder to shoulder with the government forces that you men are showing now, there wouldn't be any rackets.

"Your plants will be protected. Your persons will be protected. You want Shelby's pickup trucks to call at your plants today. They'll be there."

They made a strange, grim picture—those shippers—as Beldon filed by them, shaking their hands, assuring them individually, seeing their tired faces relax.

Outside the police again made way for Beldon and his companion, and as they went down the steps to the street Beldon's lips twitched into a small fighting smile. He was thinking, at the

moment, of the huddled figure under the black raincoat last night by the wreck—the kid brakeman whose wife was confined at the division hospital and who probably hadn't been told. He was thinking how hard it was for men like that to die in the ruthless execution of gangland's plans.

A sharp drop in the temperature about the middle of the afternoon again froze the rain as it fell and, with glazed rails, the main line's schedules were demoralized. The pickup local from the east, the extra freight train that would carry the Prescott cargo out, derailed three cars of coal down the line and crippled itself for two hours trying to get the cars back on again.

Thirty railroad special agents arrived on an eastward passenger train and were immediately detailed to the various factories while Beldon called on the Prescott police to furnish motorcycle escort for the railroad trucks.

The dispatcher burned the wires up between division headquarters and the Prescott telegraph office with inquiries from the general manager relative to developments and Lee Shelby finally had to spend almost a full hour on the telephone giving a detailed report.

The sudden decision of the shippers to fight the thing to the finish taxed the Prescott truck pickup service to the limit and it wasn't until five o'clock that the first of the cargo began to arrive at the freight warehouse for loading into the string of empty box cars that had been lined up.

From the looks of it the cargo would take at least twenty cars, but at six o'clock it was certain that the estimate was all cockeyed. Shelby stopped an eastbound freight train long enough to use its engine to get additional cars from a storage track and when finally, at 6:45, all the loads were

complete he found thirty-three cars on his hands to move.

"I should have an extra engine right here to make a train out of this," Shelby told Beldon. "But there isn't an engine available."

BELDON skidded and slipped and one time fell making his way to the freight house to supervise the final details. He had eaten but little all that hectic day and coupled with weariness his hunger was weakening. He kept trying to tell himself that already he had the racket licked. But he could find no comfort in the thought. He meditated on the missing Sale. Sale knew what had derailed that train last night on the curve west of Marshall Cut. He had telegraphed in code that he knew. Two hours later something had happened.

"Inside stuff," Beldon muttered to himself. "Somebody listening on the wires."

Somebody listening where? Who was listening?

There wasn't any answer to either question. In the dimly lit freight house the activities were feverish on the westbound platform. Grim shapes moved silently. The volunteer guards. Two million pounds of freight, a thousand tons in thirty-three cars all carded westward when the engine arrived.

"Everything all right?" Beldon queried when he found Landers, the radio builder.

"All right," Landers answered slowly. "Quiet. Not a thing happened. Not a truck molested. We've got 'em licked, Beldon. I *know* we've got 'em licked. You get us the engine and get these cars into motion and—"

"Nothing's licked yet," Lee Shelby answered. "This quiet. I don't like it."

He echoed Beldon's thought, but Beldon wouldn't express it.

The icy darkness lay heavy over Prescott as Beldon groped his way back some minutes later to the telegraph office in the passenger station.

The pickup extra arrived, the front of its engine resembling a glacial formation from which glared a single eye. Arlie Case, the conductor, was talking to Shelby on the station platform as Beldon came up to them.

"How many cars you got now?" Shelby inquired.

Arlie said, "Only thirty."

"That'll make it sixty-three in all. Not too much of a train." Shelby shook the ice from his battered hat. "I'll get your orders for you. Take your engine down and pick those cars up, then back onto the rest of your train here. There'll be no stops from here on. I'll get you rights over everything."

Beldon followed Shelby into the telegraph office and found the operator who'd come on duty at four that afternoon, tense and nervous.

"I'm sure glad you're here," the small man said. "We just don't have any telegraph. Listen to that wire."

The sleet was getting in its work. Beldon, who knew no code, could read the story. The ice-laden wires sagging and swinging into each other out there on the poles. The brass stuttering unintelligibly.

Shelby bent over the table and opened the key. He pounded and paused and there came an answer. He would be asking the dispatcher for official orders, Beldon thought.

For a long moment the dispatcher seemed to delay, then when his answer came, it was choppy and unreadable. For five minutes Shelby worked, feverishly, one eye on the clock, one ear on the fury of the storm.

Suddenly the wire broke open and the office was strangely still. The only sound was the pepper of the sleet. Shelby reached for the key and Beldon could see little beads of sweat standing out on his forehead.

Then, as Shelby's fingers touched the key, the circuit closed with a sharp metallic snap and the brass arm of the sounder broke into stuttering Morse.

Beldon couldn't read it but somehow he sensed the import of the code. He stared at the superintendent who stood tensely bent over the sounder. He saw Shelby's lips move. He saw Shelby's body stiffen. He heard a small frightened cry from the operator behind him, a nervous intake of breath.

And then the wire was strangely still and Shelby was turning with bulging eyes, and Beldon found himself clutching the superintendent's sleeve, crying: "What is it, man? What'd it say? What—"

"Tommy Sale," Shelby answered in cracking tones. "It was Tommy Sale on that wire—somewhere. He said—'Stop that train—'"

"You an—" Beldon didn't finish. He stared back at the brass sounder. "You're sure—"

"It was Sale," Shelby cried. "I'm positive! I'd know his sending in a second. He didn't quite get the word train spelled out when the wire broke again. It's—open. Wide open."

"East or west?" Beldon demanded. His eyes sought that jack board on the wall.

Shelby sprung to the board and manipulated plugs. There was a click on the sounder. Shelby tried another plug. The sounder opened and stayed that way.

"West of us," Shelby said tensely. "Open west."

"Quick," Beldon ordered. "That tele-

phone. Get your next west telegraph station on the telephone and ask him to test his board."

Beldon followed Shelby into the waiting room, crowded behind him at the booth.

It seemed an eternity before connection was made and then another eternity before Shelby's request of the operator at a town called Spencerville was answered.

"East of you, you say? Are you sure?" Shelby was blurting into the phone.

Then he hung up and turned to Beldon with staring eyes.

"East of Spencerville," Shelby said grimly. "West of us. Between us and Spencerville. Somewhere—"

INSIDE the telegraph office the brass instruments sent up a clatter again. The circuit once more was closed.

"You're sure it was Sale on that sounder?" Beldon insisted as he charged back into the office ahead of Shelby.

"What could have happened to him?" Shelby moaned. "He left that circuit open—"

"On purpose," Beldon snapped. "That's it! Sale couldn't give you his location because somebody caught him tapping that wire. But leaving the circuit open—"

Through Beldon's mind flashed a picture of this section of the division. Then his mind was far ahead of speech. He remembered that dark and deserted yard west of the town. Those boarded buildings. A bridge under which cars traveled on concrete highway.

Inside job! Why not?

"Well, Mr. Shelby, looks like we're ready to go."

It was Arlie Case coming into that tense room and his voice sounded strangely grotesque in its buoyancy.

Beldon wheeled. "You're not ready to go, Case," he shot. "Listen! Have you got an empty gondola car in that train, or in a spur, or somewhere—?"

"There's one in the spur across the intersection," Arlie answered, bewildered by the federal man's short speech. "But what—"

"Cut your engine off your train," Beldon ordered. "Get that car ahead of your engine. You, Shelby!" He wheeled on the superintendent. "Herd those guards at the freight house together. Load 'em on that gondola. Give me fifteen minutes. At the end of fifteen minutes have the engine follow me down through the yard without lights."

"But what in the name of—"

"Give me something to make a light with. A flare." Beldon glanced about the office. "One of those fuses you use."

The operator mechanically produced a long slim cylinder of heavy cardboard in the end of which was a spike.

"When you see this flare," Beldon spouted to the bewildered super and his conductor, "unload your guards. Shoot to kill. Only look out for me."

"But where'll we—"

"Watch for the flare. In fifteen minutes." Beldon shoved the cylinder beneath his coat, pulled down his hat, charged out of the room.

VI

GAUGED by the length of city blocks it was a matter of perhaps eight of them down to the farther end of that old deserted yard with its rusted rails. Beldon found cover in the shadows of scattered cars that had been stored here and there, and ran heedlessly on. Twice his feet went out from under him and he crashed heavily to the ice, but each time he got up and continued.

Beneath his left arm pit was his serv-

ice gun and along the palm of his right hand ran an itching tingle. Was his reckoning right?

He came to the more open part of the railroad property and checked the speed.

The night was heavy, almost impenetrable, broken only by the distant green eye of the switch at the far end of the westbound siding. A full mile from here. On his left was the main line and on his right the abandoned yard tracks paralleled it. The sleet stung his face, got down his coat collar. The ice beneath his feet made a small crunching sound.

Perhaps he should have brought the engine and the armed men with him. But that would never have worked. There was first the job of getting the exact location. An engine coming up the main line and stopping first here, then there, would spoil any chances for complete surprise. That he would face an unyielding enemy was certain. The element of surprise would be his only chance.

Suddenly Beldon turned sharp right and crept gingerly toward a dark, squat building. That would be the old yard office. Now and then he paused to listen, to see if he could hear any sounds foreign to the whine of that bitter winter wind.

Once he turned to look back. He didn't have much time. Maybe he should have told Shelby to give him twenty minutes. If this damned wind would only let up. If—

He halted and dropped to his knees. There was a sound distinctly near, and it wasn't the wind, either! A man had sneezed. There directly ahead of him!

Beldon wondered if he could be seen against the gray blur of ice covered ground. He held his breath and squinted into the storm.

Yes, a shape was moving forward—not in the direction of that squat old yard office but toward the west end of the yard lead. That other building down there. The old tower which hadn't been used now for five years or more.

Stalking behind that hurriedly moving shape, Beldon kept crouched low to the icy earth. Once he saw the figure falter, stagger and slip. He heard a soft curse come down the wind.

The abandoned tower presently loomed over the figure who was immediately lost to Beldon's vision. Once more Beldon hesitated and strained his ears. His finger tips, inside his gloves, felt frozen. He ran a hand inside his coat to grip his red flare.

Was that the sound of rusty hinges? He was certain that a door had opened and closed. How long since he had left the Prescott depot platform? Was his fifteen minutes up?

He clenched his teeth and edged forward into the shadow of the tower. The dim shape was lost to sight completely. This was the place, then. This had to be the place. How simple it would be to rig up some wire tapping in the telegraph room of that forbidding structure!

Beldon eased around to the back of the tower. He could make out nothing in the dense shadows, but he removed his gloves and felt with the fingers of one hand for the boarded door. There must be some way in. . . .

Feverishly he felt of the heavy lock. He tried it and found it secure. Entrance certainly hadn't been gained by the door. He put his ear to the edge of the door and listened.

The blood froze in his veins. He stood rigid with sweat beneath his hat band. His shoulders were hunched and a strange chill crept down his arms.

Faintly, almost imperceptibly, came

the sound of a telegraph instrument. The metallic voice of a busy wire where no metallic voice should be!

Inside job! No wonder!

A mad exultation filled him. Now for that engine. The engine and the guards. Those inside would give no quarter. They would ask no quarter. How many were there? Had they harmed Tommy Sale?

He gripped the flare and drew it from his coat. He twisted the removable cap with the emery surface as he moved around the tower toward the east wall. He would back off from the building, light the flare to guide the engine and guards and hurl it toward the tower. He would surround the tower with his men and close in—

It came without an instant of warning. It came out of the very side of the tower itself, too fast for him to realize what it was.

He was there against the east wall of the tower in deep shadow when a section of the very wall itself seemed to open. It opened with that creak of hinges he had heard so faintly just a few moments before.

IT opened against him and knocked the flare from his hand unlit, and a figure stood before him. They saw each other perhaps at the same instant. The dim shape uttered a small cry of surprise.

Beldon, going for his gun with one hand, struck for the man's throat with the other, to choke off any outcry.

But he missed in his mad lunge and the man shouted. He swung on Beldon and the federal man had to use both hands to grapple with his antagonist. The two crashed heavily against the ice. Beldon used feet and knuckles and knees. He slugged and even tried to bite in that fury of desperation.

From somewhere above a voice yelled, "Shut that door, you lug!"

The engine! Where in hell was the engine! The engine and the guards! They'd be looking for the red flare, of course, and—

Now he had no time to think of flares. For the second time the man cried out. He called a name.

"Butch!"

Butch Mannafee! The name was big in Beldon's mind as he tried to aim a blow. In a second others would come rushing from that dark gap in the side of the tower. In another second—

A sudden movement of his opponent's arm warned him. He had an impression that the man's hand came out of somewhere with a pistol. He grasped the wrist and held it down against the ice. His breath was whistling through his teeth and his eyes were seeing strange lights.

He tried again with his left for a blow to the chin. The blow landed and the pistol skidded off into the dark. The man heaved up and knocked Beldon to one side.

Beldon skidded on one knee but clawed at the other's legs. The man fell forward and one heel came up to crack Beldon in the mouth. The blow rocked him. His face felt paralyzed, and then had no feeling. He tried to move his lips but it seemed that he couldn't.

Blood was in his mouth, trickling down his chin, warm and salty against the bite of the sleet.

Then a light flashed! A light from the tower, a bull's-eye torch. The torch was suddenly on him and on the man he clung to.

In that instant there was a wild yell. A yell of triumph.

"It's the dick," the voice shouted. "Butch, take a look. It's the dick an' look who he's got! The chief himself!

He's knocked out the chief. Great Heavens!"

Beldon half bewildered, half stunned, crouched on one knee and the words penetrated his brain. The chief! The flashlight was still on the prone figure. Beldon saw it even as he jerked his gun free from its holster. The man with the light had out a gun.

They fired together, and the flashlight crashed. A wild cry! A gurgle.

Beldon's head cleared. The wind howled around the tower. The opening loomed black and suddenly points of flame filled it. Beldon slumped over and pulled his trigger. He was on the ground on his face. He was hit. He didn't know how badly.

That damned engine! Where—

Hot lead ripped across the back of his coat, tore the cloth, scorched his skin. He gritted his teeth and held on to consciousness. He kept his eyes and gun on that patch of black. No one should get out of there. But he was slipping. He wanted to go to sleep. The prone shape, the chief, was stirring beside him.

"Butch! The tommy-gun!"

Beldon was aware of the sudden flood of light. The tower stood out in sharp relief.

The engine and the guards!

All about him were shouts, the crack of rifle fire. Beldon crawled forward under the fire. He crawled into the tower and fumbled for the stairs. Men came piling down, trampling him. Wild panic filled the night. He got to his feet and fought his way upward.

"Sale!" he cried. "Sale, are you all—right—"

No voice answered him. Somebody running for the stairs tripped over his foot and dived downward. Outside the shots were splintering the lower part of the building.

Beldon touched something with his toe. The pinpoint of a strange fire in his eyes made him giddy. The tower was gyrating like a plane in a tailspin.

His knees wouldn't support him. He dropped to his knees and his fingers touched cords—rope around the body of a man.

He was struggling with the rope blindly when light broke over him and he saw Shelby's grim face above him. He heard, from a great distance, Shelby's voice cry out:

"Sale! It's Sale! And Beldon! Hurry, they're both bleeding badly."

He didn't hear any more.

VII

BELDON stood over the bed that was part of the equipment in Shelby's business car. Two doctors leaned over Tommy Sale and one said, "The heart of an ox, the constitution of a horse. If anybody else had stopped that much lead we'd have been ordering flowers by now. How about you, Beldon? You feel all right?"

"I've been plugged before," Beldon answered. He was far from feeling tops but it was this kid telegrapher he was interested in.

"He can talk now?" Beldon turned hopefully to the medicos.

"He oughtn't to," one of the doctors answered, "but if you're careful—"

"Did any of 'em get away?" Tommy Sale asked, facing the federal man.

"One," the federal man said. "The one we wanted to nail the most. My fault though. If I hadn't muffed my light—" Beldon smiled faintly.

"You didn't muff anything," Shelby said. "You laid out their chief in the dark, and somebody was dumb enough to come out of the tower with a torch to lay you out. Our engine was almost

on top of you then, looking for a red light. You didn't hear it because it was moving slowly against the wind. Sorry we didn't do our end of it more efficiently."

"We accomplished what we set out to do," Beldon said. "That's the main thing." He turned to the stricken telegrapher. "That code telegram you sent Shelby. You said you knew what had caused the wreck."

"Yes, I knew too much," Sale answered. "That was my trouble. When I went down to look the wreck over a little after midnight, I happened to see a man pick up something and examine it closely. I was right behind him. It was a derailing frog. I watched the man hide the thing—"

"You didn't know who the man was?" Beldon demanded.

"I thought he was one of our inspectors," Sale said. "I watched him climb down to a set of trucks that had belonged under the head car in the train and remove something from them. I saw what it was. A metal strap arrangement that must have carried the derailing frog in such a manner that, as soon as the air brakes were applied hard, the frog would drop under the wheels and—well, that's exactly what did happen and the man was one of this gang. I wired in code and that's where I made a mistake."

"Evidently," Beldon said, "everything that went on about shipments and operation was known to the men in that tower. When they knew that Tommy Sale was wise to the cause of the wreck they figured that was too much for anybody to be trusted with. They simply took him."

"They'd planned to wreck this train tonight, too, only it was to be more spectacular than the other," Tommy Sale said. "That's why I watched my

chance and got on their telegraph key!"

"You thought fast there," Shelby said throatily.

"They had my hands tied behind me. Their operator had gone out for a minute. I had backed up to the telegraph table and had asked the man guarding me for a cigarette. He put it in my mouth and was lighting it for me. I merely flipped the key open and got as much warning to you as I could. The man saw my arms move and jerked me away from the table. I got the key shut finally. He never knew what I'd put on the wire."

"But we knew," Beldon said.

Suddenly Tommy Sale straightened. "You say one man, their chief, got away. He is Kipke, who was behind this all the time."

The federal man frowned. "Yes."

"You've got men after him?" Tommy Sale cried.

Beldon smiled.

"That's not necessary. He finished himself off in the right of way ditch. Got the gun I knocked out of his hand while the guards were rounding up the others. He was working with Butch Mannafee. But, you'd better get some rest now, fellow."

Beldon turned to Shelby and his shoulders slumped wearily. "You can report to your shippers now," he said. "And by the way, Shelby, if your railroad ever strikes off any medals, I'd suggest young Sale here as a candidate for—something or other."

Shelby took the federal man's hand. "We'll look out for young Sale," he said quietly.

Scores Gambling Racketeers

POLICE COMMISSIONER VALENTINE of New York City has declared himself to be in favor of the pari-mutuel system of betting at New York's race tracks.

He believes the ticket system would take betting out of the hands of "gambling racketeers" and produce needed revenue for the State. His statement said:

"It works out well in other States, and I don't see why it wouldn't work out well here. It would bring revenue to the State and will eliminate the undesirables and put it under the supervision of the State. It would take betting out of the hands of gambling racketeers."

—Michael O'Hara



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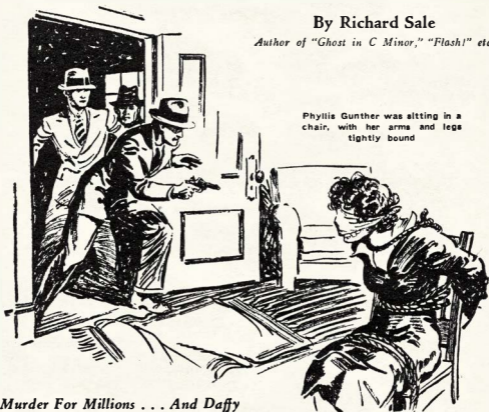
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UPDRAFT LATEST DISCOVERY
IN PIPES

Hanley Has a Homicide

By Richard Sale

Author of "Ghost in C Minor," "Flash!" etc.



Phyllis Gunther was sitting in a chair, with her arms and legs tightly bound

Murder For Millions . . . And Daffy Dill Was to Furnish the Killers an Iron-Clad Alibi

WHEN I finally reached the upper tiers in Bill Latham's resplendent Hideaway Club, on Broadway, between 42nd and 43rd Streets, I found Dinah Mason sitting in our regular Saturday night niche, smoking a cigarette and looking like a bad dream. Annoyed wasn't the word. Ferocity is high understatement.

Let you forget, Dinah is the little Westport (Conn.) gal who went to Alabama U., and got a burning ambition to do a George Jean Nathan, only better. The Old Man, who is very

thoughtful that way, promptly put her in the reception room of the New York *Chronicle* where she could answer telephones to her heart's content. It took her eight months to get out of that berth and into assistant movie reviewing at which task she now toiled.

As a matter of fact, Dinah wouldn't have gone so badly in pictures herself. She had platinum pink hair and it was natural, so she swore. What there was of her nose was a knockout. What there was of her legs—but why go into that? You get the idea. All in all, she gave me visions of wedding bells and athlete's heart.

I sat down opposite her and said politely, "Good evening, Angel-eyes."

Dinah stared hard at me and sighed once and then replied coldly: "Listen, hero. You may have caught the Temple snatchers with a guy named Candid Jones. And you may have been to Hollywood and been within twelve miles of Garbo on the MGM lot. But by the big horn spoon . . ."

"Great horn spoon," I corrected.

". . . by the beard of the prophet," Dinah quibbled, "if you ever come half an hour late on a date with me again, I'll ignore, avoid, avert, and dislike your presence."

"Hey," I said, "you didn't have a hard day or something, did you? Why take it out on me?"

"Daffy darling," she replied in her changeable way. "I had to rest these eyes on two gorgeous cinematic projects. One was called *The Spider Strikes* and the other was *Vampire's Revenge*. It's getting so I can't sleep nights. I'm losing weight."

"Maybe it's good for you," I said.

"Nice going," she said. "I invited that one."

Just then a girl came by and stopped in front of the stall. She was a smooth little lady, tanned, about five feet three, and decked out in a silver evening gown that would have shown a birthmark. She must have been poured into that dress and overflowed. She was brunette with a puckered little mouth. A Scotch and soda nestled in her left hand and a pretzel in her right. She was swaying some and looked tighter than a Scotchman's fist, as we toppers say. She stared at me a long time and then said, "Hello you."

I said, "Hello you too. Dinah, say hello to the lady."

Dinah threw me a poisonous glare and leered at the girl, "Hiyah dearie."

"Dinah!" I said, horrified. "Remember your manners!" Then to the girl: "You mustn't mind Dinah, lady. She's a fingerlady."

The girl blinked her eyes. "Lady-finger, you mean?"

"Oh no. Fingerlady. She works for gangsters. They pay her so much and she lures the victim to a nice quiet spot and they rub him out. It's a nice job if you can get it. Have a seat."

"Thanks," the girl said thickly. She sat down. Dinah didn't interest her at all. She kept looking at me. She drank another sip of her Scotch and soda and then set the glass down on the table. She was having a hard time focusing and I saw that we would have a passout on our hands sooner or later. She blinked finally and pointed an unsteady hand right at me and said: "I know you."

"Is that a fact?" I said.

"You're Daffy Dill," she said. "You're the reporter on the *New York Chronicle*. You cover crime. You're a terrible speller."

Dinah laughed. "*She's* not drunk."

"Wait a second," I said, watching the girl. "Who are you, lady, and how did you know me?"

"Oh, I know you," she said thickly, trying to hold her head steady. "I recognized you from pictures."

"Now that's a bit supernatural," I said. "I haven't looked a bit like my pictures in fourteen years. Who are you and what's the gag?"

"Phyllis Gunther," she said. "That's who I am. How would you like to make five thousand dollars?"

"The idea appeals to me," I said.

"Me too," said Dinah. "But Daffy is very squeamish about bumping people off. Or is it an honest job—and if so, why overpay a ham like Adonis Dill here?"

PHYLLIS GUNTHER leaned forward tipsily. "Listen," she said, in a low voice which was neither thick nor tight nor drunk. "Never mind the act I'm putting on here. That's for somebody else's benefit. It was the only pretense I could use for seeing you and not making Walt suspicious. I'm on the level. I'll pay you five thousand dollars. But you'll work for it."

"Good," I said. "Who's Walt?"

"Walter Bains," she said. "My brother. He'll be here in a minute and you'll see him. How about it? Are you on?"

"No," I said. "Not until you spill more than you have. Anything worth five grand in cold cash is a big job. I want the facts."

"You'll get them," Phyllis Gunther said. "I'll call at your office tomorrow. Now I'm tight again. Here comes Walt to herd me home." She laughed shrilly. "Oh, Daffy Dill, you say the funniest things!"

"Ha-ha, doesn't he?" Dinah said gloomily.

Walter Bains was tall, dark, and handsome. His eyes were shifty, though, and they sat very close together and had a nasty slant. He was in a Tux and was smoking a cigarette. That he was annoyed was plain. "Beg your pardon," he said. "Hope the young lady hasn't been bothering you."

"Not a bit," I said.

He gripped her arm tightly. The flesh rose up around his fingers and I knew he was hurting her but I made believe I didn't see it. "Come along, Phyl," he said in an utterly charming way. "You have had a little too much tonight, I think."

They left. They disappeared into the maze of people who moved around the club. Out on the floor, the band started up again and the lights went down and

the dancers moved onto the postage stamp of a floor. Dinah frowned at me. "Now what," she asked, "did all that mean?"

"Time will tell, time will tell," I said. "Let's dance. . . ."

AT nine o'clock the next morning, and a Sunday at that, I was deep in the arms of Morpheus when the telephone rang. I didn't know it was the telephone at first. I thought it was my alarm clock which had long before been slammed out the window and into 45th Street because of its shrill tones.

I picked up the handset and I groaned loudly once and then I said, "How could you, so early in the morning?"

"Listen, you oversleeping hound of hell," roared the Old Man, giving an imitation of March going out like a lion, "where in the name of Salome's seven veils were you last night? I tried everywhere and each time they said you had just left. For pete's sake, Daffy, must you give good stories the cold shoulder when they come out and walk after you?"

"What are you," I asked drowsily, "raving about, little man?"

"Murder," said the Old Man. "Plain ordinary, good old-fashioned murder. It happened last night, and, of course, you would be debauching with Dinah. Poppa Hanley called you right after you left, about eight o'clock I'd say. You'd better get in touch with him and get the yarn. When Hanley has a homicide, it's usually a man bites dog. Get on the job, Eightball, and no back talk."

"Yea verily," I groaned. "May pink elephants walk your walls on the morning after."

I hung up and he hung up. I got out of bed and gingerly began to dress. My clothes felt pretty cold. Then I went

into the kitchen and rustled up a cup of Java. I was in the midst of imbibing it when the bell rang, the door opened—I always keep it unlocked—and Lieutenant William—Poppa to you and me—Hanley, the homicide bureau's claim to fame, walked in.

He was chewing stolidly on a nickel cheroot and his coat collar was up and his hands were in his pockets. He looked like a detective for once in his life. "Hello, Daffy," he grunted, taking a seat opposite me in the kitchen. "I'll have a cup while you're at it."

"Thanks," I said with sarcasm. "If this isn't irony! The Old Man just called me and got me out of bed to go down to Centre Street and have a talk with you. I no sooner tear myself away from the sanctity of my bed when you walk in here in person."

"Yeah," Poppa Hanley said, preoccupied. "Too bad."

I stared at him. "What nice conversation! You wouldn't have something on that thing you laughingly call your mind, would you, my fran?"

"I had a homicide last night, Daffy," Poppa said. "I gave you a buzz on it because I wanted you to see things. Too late now. It was a queer one."

I asked, "Who died?"

"An old geezer named Jeremiah Devon," said Poppa Hanley. "He rode the horse in front of the freight trains on Tenth Avenue. You remember, there was a feature on him once in the *Chronicle* called The Cowboy of Tenth Avenue."

"I DON'T remember," I said. "But I know about that cowboy stuff. There's an old city ordinance which says that a man on horse has to precede every moving train on the avenue with a red flag, warning cars aside. A lame duck law from the good old nineties."

"That's right," said Poppa Hanley. "He's dead. He got bumped last night. Damned funny thing."

"Why is it funny?" I asked. "Something phony in Denmark?"

"In a way." Poppa Hanley scratched his ear. "It was about seven-thirty, just after it got dark. A New York Central switching engine was bringing a string of refrigerator cars down Tenth, and old Jerry Devon was up ahead of the loco, waving his flag and riding his nag along to clear the way. The train was coming down that track in the middle of the street so that cars could pass on the right side. Then the train stopped and Jerry Devon pulled in his nag and waited for a signal from the loco engineer. Meanwhile a friend of his, guy named Porky Taylor, a brakehand on the train, hopped off the pilot of the switcher and walked over to Jerry and told him that they'd lost a car near the end and that they were backing to couple it on again. And while Taylor was saying this, Jerry Devon suddenly sagged in the saddle and fell to the ground."

"Dead?" I asked.

"Like a pickled herring," said Poppa Hanley. "Shot through the head from one of the passing cars on the right side."

"Shot!" I exclaimed. "Didn't Taylor see the flash and hear the explosion? Didn't he get a line on what car it was?"

Poppa Hanley grunted. "That's the catch, Daffy. That's why I gave you a buzz. It's your kind of story. In the first place, there was no flash. In the second, there was no explosion. In the third place, the slug is out of the barrel of a Mauser pistol. It's a small calibre Mauser bullet. What does that mean to you?"

"Well," I said, "it means this. There

was a silencer on the end of the murder gun. A Mauser is one of the few heaters which will operate with a silencer on the nose and not jam."

"Right," said Poppa. "But where do we go from there? I haven't got a lead. Jerry Devon lived alone in a little hotel on the west side, almost a flop house. He had no friends, no enemies, no money. We haven't got a suspect. Who was in what car last night with a silenced Mauser automatic?"

I shrugged. "It's high class killing to me," I said. "You don't find a car and a Mauser and a silencer all together in a derelict's back yard. Do you suppose Jerry Devon was bumped off to shut his mouth? Did anything happen recently in which he was implicated, a witness, a plaintiff, a—"

"Wait a second," Poppa Hanley said. "As a matter of fact—"

"Eureka," I said. "D. Dill scores again. What is it?"

"As a matter of fact, there was a crash two or three weeks ago on that line. Man and woman driving along Tenth trying to get onto the West Side Highway, lost control of their car and slammed into a moving locomotive. Car was knocked all to hell. Man and woman were both killed. Jerry Devon saw the thing and he got them out of the car before the ambulance arrived. But they never went to the hospital. They were dead when the internes got there; they went to the morgue. There was a medico on the scene too. Happened to be passing. A Dr. Orlando. He couldn't do much apparently."

"YOU sound like a case history," I said. "You've got a hot lead there and you don't know it. As sure as you're flatfooted, your killing is mixed up in it. No other reason in the world why an insignificant guy like Devon

should suddenly be bumped with such fine precision. Who were the couple killed?"

"You remember the story. Franklin Gunther and his wife."

"I remember now," I said. "Retired department store owner. He was sixty-seven. Left quite an estate. . . . Hmm. That stumps me. I don't see how—" I snapped my fingers and looked suddenly smart. "Holy, holy, holy. What a dope I turned out to be! Franklin Gunther! By George, that's it! I met a dame at the Hideaway last night who offered me a five grand job. Her name was Phyllis Gunther. And I'll wager you ten genuine simoleons, Poppa, that she's the corpse's daughter—Gunther's, I mean, not Jerry Devon's."

Just then the telephone rang. I motioned to Poppa to hold his horses and I went into the living-room and picked up the handset. I said, "Hello?"

"Daffy Dill, please."

I said, "Speaking."

"This is Phyllis Gunther," she said quietly. "I'm sorry I acted such a fool last night but it was rather necessary. I'll explain when I see you. Are you still willing to take that job?"

"When I know the facts and if they're honest," I said.

"They're honest enough," she said. "I must talk with you. I visited your office but you weren't in. I should have known better than to go down there so early, but I'm desperate. They gave me your home telephone. Will you meet me?"

"Anywhere you say," I said.

"I'm calling from Times Square now," she replied. "If you'd meet me somewhere—it's all dangerous, Mr. Dill—suppose—" She stopped and I heard a gasp on the other end of the wire.

"Hey," I said, "hang on here. What's the matter?"

The reply was a whispery hiss, sharp, distinct, fearful. "I can't talk—he just came in and he sees me—he'd kill me if he knew I were telling you this—"

"Telling me what?" I snapped. "You haven't told me a thing!"

"I will—I will—if anything happens to me, see Duncan LeMaire, my lawyer. I've instructed him to tell you what's the trouble. It's about the will—my father's will—I've got to hang up now—it's Walt and he sees me—"

The sharp click spoke for itself. I hung up too.

I said, "Well, I'll be a beach-comber . . ."

Poppa Hanley came in from the kitchen. "Something important?"

"It should have been," I said. "There was your lead. The same gal, Phyllis Gunther, spouting a lot of guff about her brother being on the warpath for her. I think she's neurotic! Screwy, all women are screwy. And now I suppose we'll just sit tight and wait for her to call again. . . ."

ABOUT eleven o'clock on Monday morning, I was sitting at my desk in that sunless corner of the city room where Pasquale, my pet mouse, lives beneath the rear legs, and I was banging out the figures in a bone-dry statistical crime survey when the telephone rang and when I answered it, Poppa Hanley said, "I'm coming over to see you, Daffy. Two things. Somebody tried to kill Dr. Georgi Orlando last night—the same Dr. Orlando who attended Franklin Gunther and his wife after that crash. The other thing is that Phyllis Gunther is missing. I'll tell you about it."

When he had hung up, Dinah stopped at my desk and said, "What have you got to do with lawyers, darling?"

"Nothing," I said. "Why?"

"There's one to see you," she said. "A guy named Duncan LeMaire. And I don't like him."

"Duncan LeMaire!" I said. "Why, he's the ginzo Phyllis Gunther told me to get in touch with in case anything happened. . . ."

"What's happened?"

"She's missing. She didn't show up again after that phone call she made to my place yesterday. There's something terrifically phony around here. Tell LeMaire to come in, eh?"

"I still don't like him," Dinah said. "He reminds me of Uriah Heep. But it's your funeral."

Dinah was right. He was a queer sort of guy. He was red-headed, with short crinkly hair and he had nasty eyes and his mouth was crooked. He dry-washed his hands when he spoke and he was so so obsequious. He sat down in the chair next to my desk.

He said quietly, "Mr. Dill, Phyllis told me she had spoken with you. She asked me to get in touch with you in the event that anything went wrong. I believe things have gone wrong now. I'll explain just what is the trouble."

I said, "I wish you would. I'm getting tired of this hocus-pocusing all around."

"You knew about Franklin Gunther and his wife dying in that crash last month? Yes. . . . Now I must give you a picture. Franklin Gunther had Phyllis by his first wife who died two years ago. Then he married Marion Bains who had a son of her own, Walter Bains. Phyllis and the Bains did not get on at all. Phyllis always felt that Marion Bains married Franklin for his money. As a matter of fact, I know she did just that. Franklin came to me and said she had asked him to remake his will. He was compelled—morally through her nagging—to leave his en-

tire estate to his new wife, cutting off Phyllis entirely. In the event that his wife died first, then the estate was to go to Phyllis. Mrs. Bains meanwhile, also had a will in which her entire estate was left to her son, Walter. . . . Now the problem is this: which one of the two of them died in that crash first that night?"

"Aha," I said.

"If Franklin died first," said Duncan LeMaire, "then he left his money in that brief moment to his wife who, if she died second, left it to her son. Thus Phyllis is cut off entirely. But if Marion Bains died first while Franklin was still breathing, then Phyllis becomes second beneficiary under his will and his estate goes to her."

"Keep talking," I said. "I'm going crazy."

"Walter Bains has always hated Phyllis. It was his mother's fault; she poisoned his mind against the girl. He has repeatedly gone out of his way to hurt her and threaten her. And I am of the opinion that he might kill her rather than let her receive this money instead of him. He is a hysterically emotional type, Mr. Dill, capable of anything while in a white heat."

"O.K.," I said. "So what?"

"**YOU** have learned what happened to Jerry Devon?" Duncan LeMaire said. "Shot and killed. Murdered. I want you to understand I am making no accusations. But the facts are these: Jeremiah Devon was to be our chief witness. I contacted Jerry Devon two days after the funeral of Franklin Gunther and his wife. I knew the varied wills and I had to have witnesses in order to probate them. Jerry Devon told me that Mrs. Gunther was instantly killed. He pulled her out of the wreckage dead. Then he got Franklin out.

And Franklin was still conscious. He gasped once, 'I didn't see it—I didn't see it—' meaning the locomotive, and then he stiffened and died."

I said, "In other words, Gunther lived longest which makes Phyllis Gunther his sole heir. What's the estate?"

"Two million dollars," said LeMaire.

"Well, who was this Dr. Georgi Orlando?"

LeMaire looked surprised. "I wasn't aware you knew of Dr. Orlando," he said. "As a matter of fact, he happened to be passing the scene in a car and he got to the mess just as Franklin died. He also knows the true facts. He also is one of our witnesses."

"Somebody tried to kill him last night," I said. "But he lived through it."

LeMaire was out of his seat like a rocket. "Good Heavens!" he cried, paling absolutely white and the hue looked strange beneath his red hair.

"Wait a second," said a new gruff voice. "You've got that wrong, Daffy."

We both turned. Poppa Hanley had come into the city room and had reached my desk. "Hi, Poppa," I said. "Meet Duncan LeMaire. Phyllis Gunther's lawyer. What do you mean I was wrong about Dr. Orlando?"

"I mean," Poppa Hanley said evenly, "that he's dead. He died at the General Hospital twenty minutes ago of a bullet in the gizzard which they couldn't remove without killing him. After he died, they took it out. It's a low calibre Mauser slug, Daffy, same as the one that killed Jerry Devon and from the same gun."

"Good Grief," LeMaire said again, sinking into a chair, "what will I do now? Both my witnesses gone—"

"What happens to the estate?" I snapped.

"Division, I guess," he said. "No

proof either way. Just ordinary probate. A million for each of the children. . . ."

"And somebody playing with murder to bring that about!" I said. "Poppa, you've got to find a Mauser automatic and when you do—"

"A—a Mauser?" Duncan LeMaire put in.

Poppa nodded to him. "Yeah. Why?"

"Nothing. . . ." LeMaire said. "I want to make no accusations."

"It's obvious enough," I snapped. "The only man to gain from killing Devon and Orlando was Walter Bains. Is he the guy who owns a Mauser?"

LeMaire bit his lips. "He—he does."

"Where does he live—at the Gunther home?"

"No. He keeps a bachelor apartment on West 86th Street."

"Let's go."

WE went down to West Street and got into Poppa Hanley's prowler car. It wasn't a regular radio car, although it was equipped to catch all police calls sent out from the radio room at Centre Street. Poppa Hanley took the wheel and we roared uptown toward 86th Street wide open along the express highway.

"It's possible," said LeMaire as we drove, "that Bains has Phyllis Gunther at his apartment. I thought of dropping in there myself later today and checking that possibility. I don't know why he would try to keep her prisoner. He'd gain nothing by that. But he's a queer boy, given to doing emotional things. And he just might have her there. She did not return home all last night the servants told me."

We reached the place in fifteen minutes. It was one of those sandstone houses which had been furnished over

into three floors of two apartments each. Six tenants altogether. We went in downstairs and walked up. Bains' rooms were on the top floor in the rear of the house.

The door, which I tried gently and quietly, was locked on the inside. Yet when I stooped down and peered through the keyhole, there was no key in the lock on the inside.

"Well?" Hanley said.

I went over to him and I said, "Whatever happens, don't be surprised. Act as though you expected it." I said it in a whisper so that Duncan LeMaire couldn't hear me. "Let's go in."

Hanley walked over to the door and hammered on it noisily three times and said in brusque tones: "Open up in the name of the Law. This is the homicide squad, Bains. Let's talk."

There was no answer.

"O.K.," Poppa Hanley grunted. "If that's the way you want it, I don't mind." He took out his .38 calibre Police Positive and weighed it a moment in his right hand. Then he stepped back from the door, raised his right leg and drove his heel hard against the jamb of the door. It splintered easily, the knob went banging down the stairs, and the door flew open to strike the wall behind it with a cracking crash of wood against plaster.

We went in. . . .

I don't know quite what I expected to find, but whatever it was, I didn't find it. I saw Phyllis Gunther first. She was sitting in a straight chair with her arms and legs tightly bound to the chair itself. There was a gag over her mouth and a bandage around her eyes. She could hear us and she started to struggle. The ropes had been tied with great force and the knots were in a position far away from her hands.

"Take a look at this," Poppa Hanley said loudly and unnaturally.

I didn't even bother to untie Phyllis Gunther. I went right over to Poppa. He was staring down at the lifeless body of Walter Bains and staring hard. In Walter Bains' right hand was a Mauser pistol with a long dark tubular silencer—it must have been half a foot long—screwed on the thread at the muzzle of the gun.

There was a black hole in Bains' head just behind his ear. A bullet wound which had a smudge of powder burn around its rim like the sun's corona. The smudge was thicker below the hole than it was above. There were no unburnt powder flecks at all. The wound hadn't bled at all outside, except for a purple bubble which was raised over the hole itself.

"Untie the dame," Poppa Hanley told me.

I went over. Duncan LeMaire came with me and we attacked the knots. We took off the blindfold and the gag first but Phyllis Gunther didn't say anything until all the ropes were off. Her flesh was badly lined from the ropes, but she was all right. She gasped noisily for breath.

"Daffy," said Poppa Hanley. "Read this."

He handed me a note he had found on Walter Bains' desk. It said: "*I can't go through with it . . . I didn't mean to kill Devon and Orlando but I wanted the money. I think this is the best way out.*" And Bains had signed it.

"Suicide," murmured Duncan LeMaire. "I'm damned. The boy had done a lot of crazy things in his life, but this beats all. Are you all right, dear?" he asked Phyllis Gunther.

"Yes—" she gasped. "—it's been all so horrible—"

What bothered me was how the door

could be locked inside with no key in the lock. I went through Bains' pocket and found no sign of a key. I said so.

"Why," said Duncan LeMaire, "it's in the door, isn't it?"

It was. I went to the door and there was the key in the lock. It hadn't been in the lock five minutes before.

"What happened?" Poppa Hanley asked the girl.

"Yesterday—after I called Daffy Dill—Walter caught me. He had trailed me to the phone booth. He had his gun. He made me come with him here and he told me ghastly things. He threatened to torture me and kill me. He said I'd never touch a cent of that money if he had to kill everyone connected with the crash of my father."

"Yeah?" Poppa said.

"But he didn't kill me. This morning he was full of remorse. He sat there and kept brooding and saying he was no good and that he ought to kill himself. Finally he said he would kill us both. He tied me all up and gagged me and blindfolded me. I heard him writing a note, his pen scratched terribly. Then there was a shot—I thought it was for me. And I've been waiting—waiting for the bullet—ever since. . . ."

There were three things in that room which called her a liar. I said evenly: "Poppa, this is no suicide. You've got a homicide on your hands whether you like it or not. I've seen faked suicides in my day, but this one takes the cake. A couple of amateurs going high, wide, and handsome." I pointed a finger at Phyllis Gunther. "You're a good liar, gal, but you're going to fry in the chair."

PHYLLIS gasped shrilly. Duncan LeMaire instantly bridled and glowered at me. "Be careful what you say, sir! If you are making any accusa-

tions against this girl, I must remind you that I am her lawyer, I will not permit her to be . . ."

"Skip it," I said. "Skip it, LeMaire. You're going to need a lawyer yourself. She'll fry in the chair for being an accessory before and after the fact. But *you'll* fry because you're a killer! You bumped Jerry Devon and Dr. Orlando and Walter Bains! It was a neat gag sending Phyllis after me to get me interested and also to build up the terrible temperament of Walter Bains so that I'd fall right in line with newspaper publicity on your side. But it's no go. You've botched the job."

"You're mad!" LeMaire said hoarsely.

"Like a fox," I snapped. "There wasn't any key in that lock when I peeped through the keyhole a few minutes ago. I can't prove that and it's only my word against yours, so that won't count. You had your nerve pulling that one. But here are two other things that will fry you nicely."

I pointed down at the bullet hole in Walter Bains' head. "That Mauser has a six inch silencer on it," I said. "If Walter Bains had tried to kill himself with it, he would have run into a lot of trouble, trying to hold the gun far enough away to do a clean job. And if he had, the powder smudge would have been *above* the wound instead of below it, because he would have fired up from his elbow instead of down from above his ear. But the smudge is heavier on top the wound because you shot him while you were standing and he was sitting. If he had killed himself, holding that gun to his ear, you would have found unburnt powder flecks all around the hole. He was shot from at least two or three feet distance."

Duncan LeMaire went white. His eyes shone glassily. He did not move.

"Keep talking, Daffy," said Poppa. "It's very interesting."

"You overlooked something else," I told LeMaire. "When Bains fell, his right hand knocked over that desk clock there. See it? It fell on the floor and broke its face. The hands of the clock are stopped at ten fifteen, the minute he died. But when he died, the girl was supposed to have already been bound and gagged. *Look at her own wristwatch!* You damned fool, you wanted her bound so tightly, you wanted it to look so much as if Walter Bains had really tied her, you wanted to make sure police wouldn't think she had killed him and tied herself that when *you* tied her, you broke her wristwatch. Look at it. You can still see the glass splinters on the face. And the hands have stopped. Can you see the hour? *Ten twenty-five!*"

"By George," Hanley grunted.

"You get it, Poppa," I said. "It was a frame. Bains never saw Phyllis Gunther yesterday. She came to this place with Duncan LeMaire this morning. LeMaire gunned Bains with his own rod, forced him to write the suicide note. Then LeMaire killed him and tied up Phyllis Gunther. Why? Just turn the facts around. Jerry Devon and Dr. Orlando knew that Franklin Gunther had died *first*, not Mrs. Gunther alias Marion Bains. In other words, there were witness to say that the two million bucks went to Walter Bains and not to his half-sister! And Duncan LeMaire didn't like that any more than Phyllis did because—I'll bet any taker four to one—*they're married!* And that meant that Phyllis' two million was also LeMaire's. And for two million bucks, he would have done anything! He lifted Bains' own rod, killed those guys with it to cinch a case against Bains. Then, afraid that Bains might

beat the rap, he suicided Bains to make sure there would be only one sole heir to the dough no matter what happened!"

PHYLLIS GUNTHER screamed and ran for the door. I stuck out my foot and tripped her and she went flat on her face and right in the path of Duncan LeMaire who fell over her heavily, pulling out a small .32 revolver with a beautiful pearl handle.

He fired twice at me before Poppa Hanley got the Police Positive going. The .38 drowned out the spiteful little crack of the .32 and two slugs hit LeMaire in the chest. He dropped the gun and slapped back against the floor while Phyllis Gunther kept screaming shrilly. I dove for LeMaire but when I got to him, the etiolated waxiness of death was already creeping up into his face. One of those slugs had torn into his ticker.

"She'll talk," Poppa Hanley said, staring at the hysterical girl. "She'll rave like a senator. Call the wagon, Daffy, and have Dr. Kyne get up here pronto. . . ."

She talked all right. And what she said was exactly the setup I've given you. But she didn't get the chair. They gave her life imprisonment because most of the evidence was circumstantial.

But after the case was over, Poppa Hanley said to me one day. "You run in a helluva lot of luck, Daffy. You didn't have a damn bit of proof on anything in that room. It was your word against LeMaire's on the key not being in the lock. It *was* possible for Walter Bains to kill himself from a screwy angle and not leave unburnt powder because the silencer's baffle plates might have stopped the flecks of the discharge. And did it ever occur to you that as far as the discrepancy in the two clocks was concerned—the girl's watch might have been ten minutes fast that day?"

"Sure, Poppa," I said, grinning. "I knew all that. But LeMaire didn't. One thing about killers, you sawed-off flat-foot, they build up perfect murder theories with exquisite precision on paper and they see how much they can make a cop swallow. But when it comes to standing the gaff and getting a little dose of barrage on the theory, they always figure flight is the next best thing and they give their hands away. The point was to make the girl talk. She did, didn't she? She told us where they were married and when and the works, didn't she? And what more can you ask than that?"

"Nothing," Poppa Hanley sighed. "Nothing but a little peace and quiet. . . ."

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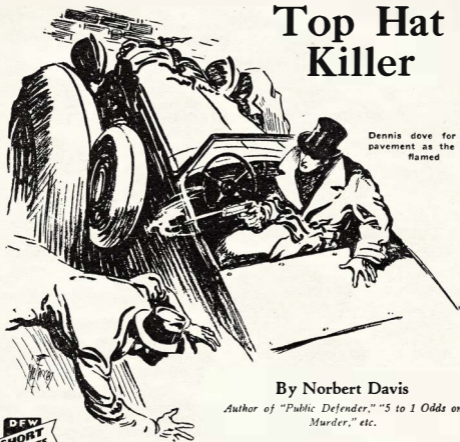
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Top Hat Killer



Dennis dove for the pavement as the gun flamed

By Norbert Davis

Author of "Public Defender," "5 to 1 Odds on Murder," etc.



He Wore a Fuzzy Yellow Coat and a Shiny Topper; the Crimes He Committed Seemed as Crazy as His Clothing

I
TRADE STREET was a narrow, grim slot cutting through a jumble of warehouses, small factories, cluttered little stores, and gauntly ugly tenement buildings. It was dark now, and deserted, and the fog from the river was sliding along the blackness of the building fronts in slow silver threads that moved gently and softly. The street lights, widely spaced, were fuzzy balls with the pavement black and slick and shiny under them.

Harley Dennis' footsteps made a muffled clatter of echoes that followed him along the street. He was a big

man, wide-shouldered and tall in a long blue overcoat. He had long legs and a long springy stride that moved him along quickly with a minimum of effort. His broad face was deeply tanned, with high cheekbones and a heavy jaw. It was a good-humored, tolerant face with laugh wrinkles cut deep around widely spaced blue eyes.

He was smiling to himself now in the darkness, thinking back to the time when he had walked this street alone every night. That had been when he

was a policeman. Trade Street had been at the tail end of his beat in those days. How many years ago? Three, almost four. The time had gone fast. It had brought no changes that he could see to Trade Street.

A thin, eerie wail sounded faint and far off and incredibly lonely in the wet darkness. Dennis stopped instantly, swinging around. He knew that sound of old. It was a siren on a police prowler car. Long training enabled him to place its direction and distance.

It was on Stone Street, which crossed Trade at the next intersection a half block ahead. It was about six squares away, coming very fast. Dennis started on a run for the corner.

He had gone about twenty paces when he heard the sound of the other car. It was a powerful roar that swelled out into sudden thunder as the car slammed into the intersection ahead. It was a roadster with a low, narrow body and a high hood that gleamed with nickel. It was traveling at incredible speed, and Dennis suddenly dug his heels in and stopped short, with an incoherent cry of warning as he saw that the driver meant to try to make the corner.

The big tires screamed on the pavement. The top was down, and the driver was a hunched dark figure bent over the big steering wheel. The car skidded wildly, heeling far over, straightened out for a second, then the spinning wheels hit a slick spot in the pavement. The big hood shot glinting reflections of light as the car spun clear around twice. It bounced up over the high curb, half-turned, and smashed sideways into a lamp post.

There was a rending, echoing crash. The lamp post teetered over drunkenly, jangled on the pavement. The roadster stopped with its nose jammed

against the solid brick wall of a building.

Dennis ran forward. He could see the figure of the driver struggling out from under the steering wheel. It was a man, and Dennis caught the glossy gleam of a top hat that was tilted crazily down over his eyes.

"Wait!" Dennis shouted. "I'll help—"

THE driver didn't need any help. He was out from under the steering wheel now, half kneeling in the low seat. He jerked around to face Dennis, and his arm swung up and down in a short chopping motion.

Dennis had seen that motion before, and he knew what it meant. Without a second's hesitation he threw himself flat on the wet pavement. There was a cracking report, and a thin red pencil of flame spat out of the driver's hand. The bullet whipped over Dennis' head, and he rolled frantically sideways into the scanty shelter of the curb.

The driver vaulted over the low door of the roadster. He was small and thin, wirily quick. His face was a black blur under the dented top hat. He wore a long yellow camel's hair overcoat that billowed around his legs in flapping folds as he ran for the slit-like mouth of an alley across the street.

Dennis rose to his knees. In that second the driver of the roadster reached the alley opening, spun around in a billowing swirl of the yellow overcoat, and fired again at him. Then he jumped backwards, and the blackness of the passageway swallowed him.

Dennis got up slowly and brushed at his coat. He was breathing hard, and his eyes were narrowed, glinting with anger.

The sound of the siren was a sudden driving howl in his ears. The police prowl car roared across the intersection. One of its occupants must have seen the yellow roadster smashed against the building wall, because instantly after it passed, tires screeched on the pavement. Gears grated noisily, and then the engine began to roar again.

The prowl car swung into the intersection, screaming in reverse. It whirled around, lights flicking over the roadster, the tall form of Dennis, then jarred to a halt against the curb.

"That way!" Dennis shouted. "The alley!"

Two uniformed figures popped out of the prowl car, legged it for the alley mouth. Revolvers swinging in their hands caught the light and glittered thinly cold. A third figure slid out from under the steering wheel, walked heavily toward Dennis.

"Now, you," he said. "Did you see this roadster crack up?"

"I did," said Dennis. "What's the matter, MacCarthy? Are you too stuck up with your new stripes to recognize an old friend when you see him?"

MacCarthy poked his head forward, squinting. "Why, it's Harley Dennis! And him all dressed up like a banker, too!" His big red paw engulfed Dennis' hand and clamped down hard. "It's good to see you, boy! And so now you're sneaking down of a dark night to sniff the air on your old beat, eh?"

Dennis chuckled. "Not the reason this time. I came down to see a client."

"So!" said MacCarthy. "It's clients you're getting now, is it? Losh, Harley, you've been climbing in the world these days. I never thought I'd see the time when you'd be a dressed-up lawyer, in spite of all the books you were

always studyin' when you should've been loafin' like an honest cop."

"I did my share of loafing with the rest."

"That you did," said MacCarthy. "Many's the time I caught you. But you were a good cop, Harley, and there's damned few these days. You should have stuck with it. But now you've got clients."

"Not too many," Dennis said. "And this isn't really a client I'm seeing tonight. At least, not a paying one. Just an old friend who wants some advice. You know the Swensons who live over on Hill Street?"

"SURE," said MacCarthy. "Losh, yes! Know them well. The old lady and her two sons—Oscar and Ole. They've lived in this district ever since I can remember. I often drop in and see the old lady now that the boys have moved away. She likes to gossip with me, though I don't know why, since I can't understand more than half she says, her being a Scandahoovian."

"She's a grand person," Dennis stated. "She always sat up late on cold nights with a pot of coffee boiling on the stove waiting for me to go past on my last round, and I'd sit and talk over my law lessons with her and Oscar. Neither one of them understood a thing about it, but they'd always listen very politely."

"So that's where you used to hide out."

Dennis nodded, grinning. "Lots of times. And don't tell me you didn't know it. You used to hide out there yourself when you walked this beat. Oscar called me up tonight and told me he had a problem he wanted to talk over with me. I told him I'd come down. I wanted to see his mother

again. But what's this you've got here? What about this roadster?"

MacCarthy turned toward the smashed car, his broad face darkening with anger. "The murdering young devil! He's in for it this time whether the boys corner him up in that alley or not! He'll not buy his way out of this!"

"You know who he was?" Dennis asked, surprised.

"Hah! You're right we do? Every cop in town knows that roadster and that crazy get-up of his! Him and his top hat and his yellow overcoat."

"Who is he?"

"Dick Roberts," said MacCarthy bitterly. "Young Dick Roberts, the millionaire playboy. He's since your time, I guess. There were still a couple of colleges that would take him in when you were a cop. But no longer. They've all fired him out."

"Dick Roberts," Dennis repeated. "You mean he's the son of old Mathew Roberts, the banker?"

MacCarthy nodded. "He is, and it's a lucky thing for him, too. If it wasn't for his father's money and influence, he'd be in jail long since. Him and his tricks and his practical jokes. He won't think it's funny this time when we get him."

"What were you after him for—speeding?"

"Worse than that," said MacCarthy. "We were over on Stone Street, cruisin' along when he went by us goin' the other way like a bat out of hell. We turned around and took out after him. We saw him throw this poor devil out of his car, and he must have been goin' better than sixty, too!"

"He threw someone out of the car?" Dennis queried.

"He did. We saw him do it. We saw him plain, and he won't buy his way

around it. The poor devil hit the pavement like a bundle of rags. Drunk he was, no doubt. But that didn't save him from breakin' his neck. We stopped just long enough to see that, and then we took out after him again. He'd have slipped us if he hadn't cracked up here. That roadster is faster than lightning. But that was murder, Harley."

"It was," Dennis agreed. "And it explains a few things that had been bothering me. When he cracked up here, I ran forward to help him. I thought certainly he'd be hurt—and badly. But he wasn't. He shot at me."

"WHAT?" MacCarthy exclaimed incredulously. "Are you sure, man? Why, he's not the kind to carry a gun!"

"Look," Dennis answered. He pointed down at the sidewalk near his feet. There was a bright leaden smear the size of a silver dollar on the cement. "That was his second try. It didn't miss me more than a foot."

"Losh!" MacCarthy said blankly. "Why, the young fool must be mad! Did you get a good look at him?"

Dennis shook his head. "I wasn't close enough, and it's too dark here. I saw the top hat and the yellow overcoat."

"That's enough," said MacCarthy. "That's better than seein' his face. Nobody else would wear such a crazy get-up."

The other two policemen came out of the alley mouth, walking now and talking together in low tones. They came across the street toward Dennis and MacCarthy.

"Well?" MacCarthy queried impatiently.

One of the policemen shook his head. "Not a sight of him. Not even a sniff."

He looked at Dennis. "Sure you saw him duck in that alley, mister?"

"Yes," said Dennis.

MacCarthy said angrily: "Of course, he's sure! He's not a dumb head such as some young sprouts I could mention who haven't worn the shine off their uniforms yet! He was a cop while you two were still playing marbles. Did you go clear through the alley, or did you sit down as soon as you were out of my sight and talk it over?"

"We went clear through," the second policeman said.

"He had too much of a start," Dennis told MacCarthy. "I could have chased him, only I didn't want him to try any more shooting practice on me. He's too good."

"I'd like the chance to have him try it on me!" MacCarthy snarled. "I've taken care of tougher ones than him in my day. Come on, we'll go back and see about the poor devil he dropped out. The ambulance should be there by this time. You'd best come along with us, Harley. It's on your way, anyhow."

II

THE ambulance was backed up against the curb, and its spotlight made a blood-red streak across the slick pavement. There was a crowd close around it that swayed and pushed and muttered in low, stifled tones. MacCarthy shouldered his way roughly through into the little cleared space directly behind the ambulance. Dennis followed him.

There was a stretcher lying on the sidewalk, and two men in white uniforms knelt beside it. They were arranging a white sheet carefully around a limp, still form. A third man, standing beside them, turned slowly when MacCarthy appeared. He nodded a wordless greeting.

Dennis recognized the third man instantly. It was Lieutenant Meegan of the Homicide Squad—thin, tall and stick-like in a long overcoat with a high collar pulled tight around his throat. His hat was down over his eyes, shading his thin, prematurely lined face. His lips were thin and bloodless, twisted bitterly down at the corners. He stood with his hands in his pockets, his shoulders hunched uncomfortably. He listened to MacCarthy's report, nodding silently now and then, showing no surprise, no emotion at all. When MacCarthy mentioned Dennis' name, Meegan turned to look at him, spoke for the first time:

"Hello, Harley. Good to see you again. This is a nasty business we've got here."

"Dead?" Dennis asked, nodding toward the still form on the stretcher.

Meegan nodded. "Yes. Stabbed."

"Stabbed?" Dennis repeated. "I thought Mac said his neck was broken when he fell from the car."

"It was," Meegan said. "But he was dead before that. Quite a while. Been stabbed in the back."

"Have you identified him?" Dennis inquired.

Meegan nodded again, then jerked his head sideways. Dennis looked in that direction and saw the two figures huddled close against the side of the ambulance. He stared for a second in incredulous dismay, then stepped forward quickly.

"Mrs. Swenson!"

She was a small, pathetic figure bent and withered with age. She wore a black shawl over her head, and she was holding both work-worn hands in front of her face, weeping in silent misery. Her son, Ole Swenson, was standing beside her, holding her close against him. He had a gaunt, thin face

that was twisted with incoherent anguish now.

"Ole," said Dennis numbly. "What is it? What's the matter with your mother?"

OLE Swenson swallowed audibly. "That—that's Oscar there." His voice broke on the last word. "They—they come and told us, and—he was lyin' there—on the sidewalk." He sobbed once, catching his breath with a sudden gasp.

Dennis reached out his hand and touched Mrs. Swenson gently on her thin, bowed shoulder. "I'm sorry," he said, his voice thickened with the ache in his throat. "Sorry, Mother Swenson."

Her wrinkled hand, wet with her tears, fumbled for his, pressed it.

"You take her home," Dennis said softly to Ole. "I'll take care of everything that's to be done here."

"Thank you," Ole said in a dull voice. He turned slowly, whispering to his mother.

MacCarthy went past Dennis to fend a way through the crowd for the two of them. Dennis watched the three of them go until the crowd closed behind them and hid them. Meegan spok softly from behind.

"You know him, huh?"

Dennis nodded. "Yes. His name is—was Oscar Swenson. I was coming down here tonight to see him."

Meegan looked at him sideways. "So? What about?"

"I don't know. He didn't say. Just wanted to see me about something that was troubling him."

"He'll have no more troubles," Meegan said softly. "Know where he lived?"

"Yes" Dennis said "He didn't live at home. He was married. He was resi-

dent janitor at the Raleigh Court Apartments. He lived there."

Meegan stood very still for a second, then turned his head slowly. "Raleigh Court?" You sure about that?"

"Yes," said Dennis. "Why?"

"Lola Lorraine lives at Raleigh Court," Meegan answered.

"Who's she?" Dennis asked.

Meegan moved his gaunt shoulders. "She's a night club entertainer—and a good one. What they call a torch singer. And young Dick Roberts is carrying the torch for her. He's crazy for her. Follows her around like a sick puppy."

"I see," said Dennis.

"Now there's your motive," said Meegan. "Tied up in that connection somewhere. That's what was bothering me. Why should young Dick Roberts want to murder a poor, harmless devil like Oscar Swenson? But if that girl is mixed up in it some place. . . ."

"Yes," said Dennis thoughtfully.

III

THE man was standing at the end of the long hall in front of the door of Harley Dennis' office. Harley Dennis saw him as he stepped out of the elevator, and he knew who the man must be although he had never before seen him.

He was a thick-set man, past middle age, and even standing there now, he had the air of a person who is used to giving orders and having them obeyed. He had a square, ruddy face, and his hair above his temples was thick, silvery grey. His eyes were blue, wary and hard. There was courage and the will to fight in the set of his shoulders, in the way he held his head.

"Harley Dennis?" he asked, as Dennis approached him.

Dennis nodded. "Yes."

"I'm Mathew Roberts," he said.

"Ah," said Dennis. "I thought so. You were waiting for me?"

"I have been," said Mathew Roberts. "For half an hour."

Dennis smiled. "I'm sorry. I'm a little late this morning. I had a good many things to do last night, and I didn't get time for much sleeping. Won't you come into my office?" He stepped to the door.

"Yes," said Mathew Roberts.

Dennis unlocked the frosted glass door. His offices were two small rooms. As yet he could not afford to hire a full time secretary. When he needed one he used the services of the public stenographer in the building. He led the way across the small waiting room, opened the door of his private office.

"Step inside."

Mathew Roberts went in the room and seated himself in the chair beside Dennis' cluttered desk. He sat solidly erect, unmoving, and watched Dennis take off his coat and hat, hang them on the stand beside the door.

"You know why I'm here," he said flatly. "I don't need to tell you that, do I?"

"No," said Dennis, sitting down behind the desk. "You're here because of what happened last night."

Mathew Roberts studied Dennis for a long moment in a calculating way; his hard blue eyes narrowed.

"You know what I am, too, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Dennis easily. "I know you're one of the richest men in this city—in this state. I know you own every kind of property a man could think of—and then some."

Mathew Roberts said: "Right! I've got plenty behind me. I'm not afraid to fight. I've done a lot of it."

"I know," said Dennis.

"I make a bad enemy for any man to have."

"So?" said Dennis politely.

Mathew Roberts leaned forward. "I want you to work for me. All the time. You can draw up your own contract and name your own figure. I've got plenty of work for a lawyer to handle."

Dennis shook his head. "No, thanks."

"Why not?" Mathew Roberts demanded bluntly.

"I'd like the job, of course. There's no lawyer in town who wouldn't. But not the rest that goes with it."

"What rest?"

DENNIS smiled. "I don't need to tell you that, do I?"

"No." Mathew Roberts' thin lips clamped tight after he had said the word. "The rest is that I want you to forget what you told the police you saw last night. All right, then, how much do you want to do that?"

"Nothing," said Dennis. "Because I'm not going to forget."

"Ah!" said Mathew Roberts, and he sat back straight in his chair. "So that's the way it is! You think you can buck me, do you? You think that whoever is behind you is bigger than I am."

"I haven't anyone behind me, and I'm not trying to buck you. All I want is to protect the interests of my clients."

"Clients?" Mathew Roberts repeated, raising his eyebrows. "Ah, I see. And just who would they be?"

"Oscar Swenson, and his mother, and his brother."

"Them!" Mathew Roberts exploded contemptuously.

"Yes," said Dennis.

"Bah! Do you take me for a fool? You're not interested in them. You care any of the rest of them. You don't care

a snap of your fingers for those poor devils. It's me you're after! *Me!* You and all the rest of the pack of yapping hounds that run with you. Oh, I know! You're clever and you're hard. I knew when I saw your name in the paper that you were the one to deal with. You thought this business up, didn't you?"

"I did not," said Dennis.

"Oh, you're clever!" Mathew Roberts continued, ignoring him. "How you arranged this, I don't know. Or how you even thought it up. But someone paid you to do it, I know that. Some of my enemies. I've got plenty of them. No man in my position could help but have them. But I've always fought them fair and square with no underhand monkey work about it. They're afraid to fight me that way. So they strike at me through my son!"

"Your son has caused you a great deal of sorrow, hasn't he?" Dennis asked softly.

Mathew Roberts' face seemed to relax for a second, and he suddenly looked older and beaten. "Yes. I don't know. I've tried. His mother died when he was very young. I tried to do everything for him—give him what he wanted. . . ."

"Perhaps you gave him too much," Dennis said.

Mathew Roberts moved his thick shoulders. "It's easy to say that, looking back. But at the time—how did I know? He's always been wild and hard to handle. But he never did anything bad, not really bad. Just foolish, senseless things. Now this. . . ."

"I'm sorry," said Dennis.

Mathew Roberts looked at him. "Are you? I think maybe you are. I think maybe you know a little of how I feel now."

"I think I do," said Dennis.

"Then do as I ask. Tell the police

that you have forgotten what you saw last night. Nobody will ever touch you for it, I promise you that. And you'll never regret helping me."

"No," said Dennis.

Mathew Roberts' big hands clenched into lumpy fists. "Then save your sorrow for yourself! You'll need it!" He stood up. "Oh, you'll need it! I'll smash you, do you hear? I'll smash you!" He strode across the office, and the door slammed thunderously after him.

Dennis sat still in his chair for a long moment, watching the door. He shook his head slowly, sighing. Then he opened the drawer of the desk. There was a holstered police revolver lying in it. Dennis took the revolver out of the holster, slid it into the waistband of his trousers, pulled his vest down to hide it. He stood up and walked over to the stand and got his hat and overcoat.

IV

THE Raleigh Court Apartments was a tall, graceful brick building with four towers on its top that needled up thinly, black and small against the blueness of the sky. Dennis pulled his battered coupe in at the curb across the street, got out. As he started away from the coupe, the brass-trimmed doors under the striped canvas canopy of the apartment building swung back, and Mathew Roberts came out.

He didn't see Dennis. He was staring blindly at the ground in front of his feet, his head bent forward. He looked like a man whose world had smashed to bits around him. His face was a haggard mask, and his greyish lips moved in little twitching motions, without sound. His big shoulders were slumped, and he walked with his knees bent weakly under him, stumbling.

Another man came out of the doors behind him and walked close to him. He was a short, fat little man with a strangely dished-in face. He waddled along clumsily. He was talking emphatically to Mathew Roberts, gesturing with both hands to illustrate what he was saying.

While Dennis stood there, watching them curiously, the two got into a sleek black limousine that was parked farther down the block, and it drove slowly away. Dennis didn't move for a moment, staring thoughtfully after the limousine. Then he turned, walked on past the front of the apartment house, and went down the little alley that ran along the south side of it. He walked the length of the building, around to the back.

There were two narrow little cement steps leading up to a back door, and a man was sitting on them, lounging lazily in the sun with his legs stretched out in front of him and his eyes closed. He opened his eyes when he heard Dennis' footsteps and watched him, silent and tensely wary.

"The Swenson apartment is in the back here, isn't it?" Dennis asked him.

The man nodded once. "Right there." He jerked his thumb over his shoulder to indicate the windows over his head. "There ain't nobody home."

He shifted nervously on the steps.

"Isn't Mrs. Oscar Swenson there?"

"No." The man straightened up. He was thin and small with a white, pallid face that was sprinkled with brown freckles. His clothes were a poor fit, made of cheap rough material, but they were pressed and clean. His colorless hair was short, roughly cut.

"Are you sure she isn't home?" Dennis said.

"Yeah. I been waitin' here for her for an hour."

"I'll wait, too," Dennis said. He sat down on the steps.

The man watched him uneasily. He moved nervously on the steps. Finally he cleared his throat with a nervous little cough and stood up.

"WELL," he said uncomfortably. "Well—I guess I better trot along. I can't be waitin' here all day. I guess she musta gone to some friend's house." He started to sidle away, watching Dennis out of the corners of his eyes.

"Sit down again," said Dennis.

The man stopped tensely. "Huh?"

"Sit down," said Dennis.

"Say! What do you think—"

Dennis put his right hand inside the front of his coat. "Come back here and sit down."

The man swallowed with an audible gulp. "Say, now. Listen here, mister. I ain't done nothing. You ain't got no right to go threatenin' me." His voice was a thin whine. He moved slowly and reluctantly back and sat down on the edge of the lower step, as far from Dennis as he could get.

Dennis watched him narrowly. "How long ago did you get out?"

"Huh? I don't know what you're talkin'—"

Dennis moved his shoulders impatiently. "You don't have to lie to me. I'm not going to arrest you. I'm not a cop. But I know a prison hair cut and prison clothes when I see them."

The man swallowed again. "You ain't—a cop?"

"No."

The man moistened his lips. "You got a copper look to you."

"I used to be one, but I'm not now. I'm a lawyer—the Swensons' lawyer."

The man blew out his breath in a long sigh. "Oh! Well, why'n't you say

so, then? You had me goin' there for a minute. Sure, I got out just three days ago. Just come into town this mornin'—ridin' a freight."

"State penitentiary?" Dennis asked.

"Yeah."

"Are you out on parole?"

"Nope. No, sir! I done all of my bit."

"Why were you waiting for Mrs. Swenson?"

"She's my sister. My name's Tracy, same as hers was before she married Oscar."

"You knew he was murdered last night?"

Tracy nodded, his pallid face drawn and frightened. "Yeah. Yeah, I read about it in a paper I picked up this morning. That puts me in a nice spot, don't it? The cops are gonna be tough when they find out I'm an ex-con. They'll claim I did for Oscar. Now, hell's bells, wouldn't that be a screwy play on my part? I'd know damned well if I done it I'd be the first guy they'd suspect. But you can't tell a cop anything like that. Besides, I liked Oscar. He was a stiff-necked cuss, so honest he wouldn't pinch a penny if you cut off his right arm, and he sort of disapproved of me bein' a jail bird, but he'd 'a put me up on account of Florence—Mrs. Swenson."

"I see," Dennis said slowly.

Tracy swallowed hard. "I almost did a fade when I seen that paper. But hell, I ain't got no place to go and no dough to get there with! And then—I figured maybe Florence would sort of need somebody around—even if it was only me."

There was a muffled rapping sound somewhere above and behind them. A voice called: "Mrs. Swenson! Mrs. Swenson!" and then the rap was repeated.

4D—26

Tracy straightened up with a jerk. "What's that?"

"SOMEONE knocking on the door of the Swenson apartment," Dennis said. "Come on. We'll take a look."

"Well, no," Tracy said uneasily. "I gotta be gettin' along now. I got some things to do—"

Dennis jerked his head. "Come on. Ahead of me. Didn't you hear me say that *we'll* look?"

Tracy sidled up the steps, pushed the door open hesitantly. There was a short back hall that ran in front of the door of the Swenson apartment, gloomy and dark now, heavy with the stale odor of old cooking. Lieutenant Meegan was a thin, stick-like shadow standing in front of the apartment door, his hand raised to knock on it again. He turned quickly when he heard them.

"What—Oh, hello, Harley! What are you doing here?"

"Same thing you are," Dennis said. "Looking for Mrs. Swenson."

Meegan's eyes were narrowed on Tracy. "Where'd you pick up this stir bug?"

Tracy was on the defensive instantly. "You got no right to say that about me! I served my time—all of it! I got just as much right as anybody to be here! I got more right!"

"He's Mrs. Swenson's brother," Dennis explained. "He just got out of the state pen. Only arrived in town this morning. I found him outside waiting for Mrs. Swenson. He says she hasn't been around since he's been here."

"Sure of that?" Meegan asked Tracy.

"Yes, I'm sure! And you ain't got no right to go talkin' to me like that! I'm just as good as—"

"Give it a rest," Meegan interrupted irritably. "I don't know who you're as good as." He looked at Dennis. "This is a hell of a note. I want to get hold of Mrs. Swenson. I haven't had a chance to talk to her yet. I've been looking all over town for that damned Roberts kid."

"Did you locate him?" Dennis asked.

Meegan shook his head. "No. Not a trace. I've got plenty of men on it, though. They'll turn him up sooner or later. He's too well known to keep under cover for long. I wonder where Mrs. Swenson went. The desk clerk said he thought she was in her apartment. Hadn't seen her go out, anyway."

"She could have gone out the back door," Dennis suggested.

Meegan nodded absently. "Yeah. I suppose she did. Probably went to some friend's house to dodge the reporters. Well, I've got to get hold of her. I'll open it up and see if she left any addresses or telephone numbers around." He produced a ring of weirdly shaped keys from his pocket, began to try them in the lock of the door.

"Here!" Tracy protested. "You ain't got no right—"

"Shut up!" Meegan said. He went on trying the skeleton keys, one after the other. The fourth one turned the lock, and he pushed the door back. Dennis and Tracy were close behind him.

He took a step forward and then stopped short, half way through the door. His thin back stiffened. After a second he relaxed and said very quietly:

"All right. Come on in. Be careful and don't touch anything."

Tracy and Dennis pushed through the doorway. There was another door diagonally across the room from them. Through it they could see a bed and

the woman lying across it, face down, so very still and quiet and limp.

Tracy whimpered.

HER hair was a thick, ash blonde, and it was tumbled down loosely over her face. One rounded white arm hung over the side of the bed, lax fingers just touching the floor. She had been pretty in a plump, mature way. She was quite dead now. She had been stabbed in the back, and her blood made a red, jagged stain like an outspread hand on the bed cover beside her. Tracy stared dumbly at the figure.

"It's Florence!" Tracy mumbled. "It's Florence, and—and she's dead." He swallowed and then repeated numbly: "She's dead."

There was a small round object on the carpet beside the lax fingers. It glittered a little, catching the light. Meegan knelt down slowly, examined it without touching it. He looked up at Dennis after a second.

"See what it is?"

"A button," said Dennis. "A big pearl button."

Meegan nodded once. "Yeah. Exactly the kind young Roberts wears on that camel's hair overcoat of his. She grabbed it when she fell. Then, when her fingers relaxed, it dropped on the floor." He stood up slowly. "That damned young maniac."

"My—sister," Tracy said. The freckles stood out like brown splotches against the pallid whiteness of his face.

Meegan coughed. "Come on! I'll have to go and report this."

Tracy looked at him. "Could I—just stand outside the door in the hall? You can lock it. I won't come in. I just want—want to sort of stay there. So there'll be somebody—so she won't be all alone. . . ."

Meegan nodded. "But see that you

stay there. I'll want to talk to you later."

"I—haven't any place to go," Tracy whispered. "No place at all. She—was the only relative I had."

v

DENNIS waited in the tightly ornate little lobby while Meegan made his telephone call to headquarters.

"I'd like to talk to you a minute," he said, when Meegan had hung up the receiver.

"Right," said Meegan. He jerked his head, and they moved out of earshot of the avidly curious desk clerk. "And what about, Harley?"

"Mathew Roberts came to see me this morning."

"Ah," said Meegan. "Did he, now?"

"Yes. He thinks this whole business is a scheme his enemies have cooked up to strike at him through his son. He thinks the whole thing is a frame-up."

"So?" said Meegan. "And do you think so, too, Harley? Do you think anybody could buy MacCarthy or me?"

"I do not," said Dennis. "I know they couldn't, but Mathew Roberts thinks I'm part and parcel of the scheme. He thinks that, and he means to strike back at me. He can make plenty of trouble for any man."

"I know that," Meegan agreed. "He's making plenty for me right now. He's pulling every string he can lay hand to."

"So I'm in this," Dennis told him. "I was in it before, on account of the Swensons. But now I'm in it on account of myself. So I want to know what's going on."

"Fair enough," said Meegan. "And I'd like your help. I'll need all I can get before I'm through with this. You know just about all I know. Like I

said, young Roberts is crazy for this Lola Lorraine. She lives here. Mathew Roberts owns this apartment building."

"He does?" Dennis asked, surprised.

MEEGAN nodded. "One of his banks held a first and second mortgage on the place. They foreclosed and took it over. Do you begin to see the connection, Harley? It all works in so nicely. Mathew Roberts didn't like his son going with Lola Lorraine. The boy meant to marry her, and that was an idea Mathew Roberts wouldn't stand for at all. He tried to buy her off. I know that. But it didn't work. I think she loves the young fool. He'd straightened himself up considerably since he had been going with her—until this last business."

"And still Mathew Roberts wouldn't consent to their marriage?" Dennis inquired.

"Not he," said Meegan. "He's a stiff-necked one. Proud of his name and all that. He couldn't see Lola Lorraine coming into the family, although I don't know why he should be so particular. Certainly that son of his is no prize, and if the girl could handle him she could do more than Mathew Roberts could. But anyway, he didn't want it. I think he hired the Swensons to spy on the girl. And I think they must have done something that annoyed or frightened her, and she told young Roberts about it. I think he went crazy mad at the thought. Probably he didn't think of his father being behind it."

"It could have happened that way," Dennis said slowly.

Meegan moved his bony shoulders. "No matter. He did it—we're sure of that as we can be of anything." He hesitated thoughtfully. "I'm going up now to talk to Lola Lorraine. Would you like to come along, Harley?"

"Yes," Dennis said. "I would."

"Have you ever seen her, Harley?"

Dennis shook his head. "No."

"You won't forget her for a while," Meegan said slowly. "I've seen her and heard her sing. I'm not a very romantic man—but she does something to you. It's no wonder a crackpot like young Roberts would go mad over her." He shrugged. "Well, you'll see for yourself. Come on!"

VI

THEY got out of the elevator and went down a long hall with bright painted walls and ceiling and a green rug that was soft and thick and springy under their feet.

"This is it," Meegan said, stopping in front of a cream colored door. He rapped sharply with the bronze knocker.

There was a long wait, and Meegan was reaching up toward the knocker again when they heard the quick, hurried tap of high heels from inside the apartment, and the door opened very slowly.

"Miss Lorraine," Meegan said. "I'm Lieutenant Meegan from the police. I'd like to speak to you."

She was small. She would come no higher than Dennis' shoulder. Her hair was a gleaming blue black pulled tightly over the delicately rounded outline of her head, knotted at the back of her neck. Her small features were perfectly shaped, and yet they had more than the blank beauty of perfection. There was flame and feeling and force back of them. Her eyes were liquidly black, and they were wide now, with the glaze of terror in them.

"Please—" she said. Her voice was throatily low and soft. "Please—a little later. . . . I can't talk—now—"

"I'm sorry," Meegan said. "The police wouldn't get far if they waited

until people felt like talking to them." He pushed the door back with the pressure of his knee.

She tried to hold it. "Please!" she said, and her soft voice was thickly choked. "Please, you must—"

It was a long, low room with a cream colored ceiling and expensively heavy drapes. Dennis stepped inside behind Meegan, and then he saw the door across the room from them closing slowly.

There was just a slight movement—a ripple of fuzzy yellow cloth and then the thin blued gleam of a gun barrel.

"Look out!" Dennis shouted, and threw himself headlong at Meegan.

There was a whip-like report, the smacking thud of a bullet hitting the wall, a thin drizzle of blue vapor. Dennis and Meegan landed on the floor in a tangled sprawl. Another report cracked out, and Dennis felt the rug twitch gently under him. Then the door across the room slammed shut, and Lola Lorraine screamed in a sharply hysterical voice.

Dennis rolled free of Meegan, got to his feet. He jerked the police revolver out of his waistband, made for the door.

"No!" Lola Lorraine shrieked at him. She threw herself in front of him, tried to snatch the revolver from his hand.

Dennis thrust her aside, jerked the door open. It was a bedroom, and directly across from him there was a window. The curtains were pulled back a little, and through the open space between them Dennis saw the glossy gleam of a top hat, saw two eyes narrowed darkly, glaring.

HE threw himself sideways, against the wall. The curtains at the window billowed in with the blast of the

gun. Dennis felt the bullet flick a loose fold of his coat.

He fired back, but there was nothing at the window then. He lunged forward, leaned recklessly out. He was looking down a fire escape, and he was just in time to see the skirts of the fuzzy yellow top coat drag across the platform below and disappear through the window of the apartment underneath.

He swung out on the fire escape, and he heard Meegan yell an incoherent warning behind him. Dennis' feet pounded on the slippery iron rungs. From the apartment below there was the thundering bang of a door slamming.

Dennis reached the platform, kicked the curtains aside, slid through into the apartment. He was in a bedroom, and he ran across it, through an open door, reached the outside door of the apartment. It was closed. The knob slipped in Dennis' sweaty fingers, then caught and turned. He jumped out into the hall.

It was empty. There was no one in sight either way. Dennis started toward the front of the building, heading for the stairs, and then there was a quiet little snick behind him. He whirled around. The door through which he had just come had closed very softly, and now the bolt clicked.

Dennis jumped for the door, slammed his shoulder against the panel. The door was thick, and it didn't give in the slightest against his thrusting heave.

Footsteps hammered on the stairs behind him, and Meegan came running down the hall.

"What—" he said breathlessly. "Where'd he go?"

"He tricked me," Dennis said bitterly. "He slammed this door, and I

thought he'd gone out through it, but he hadn't. He was hiding in the apartment." He thrust again at the unyielding door with his shoulder.

"Wait," Meegan said, taking his ring of skeleton keys out of his pocket. "I'll get it open." He worked the keys in the lock. One of them grated, caught suddenly, turned the bolt.

Meegan kicked the door open and ducking low, jumped inside the apartment with Dennis close behind him.

IT was empty. The two of them ran across the living room, through the bedroom to the open window. Leaning out, they stared down the fire escape. The bottom flight of the stairs was in the form of a counterweighted suspension ladder that swung up out of the reach of stray prowlers when it was not in use. It was swaying gently now. It had been used in the last few seconds, but there was no sign of the top-hatted killer anywhere.

"Slipped us again," Meegan said. "He was hiding out in Lola Lorraine's apartment. Somebody will walk a beat in the fog belt for this! I sent two of my men to search that apartment this morning. The young fool, he's still running around in that crazy get-up of his, and yet we can't lay hands on him! I'll be back in uniform myself if I don't land him pretty soon."

He was silent for a moment, breathing hard, his dark face flushed with anger. "I know. I'll jail that girl as an accessory. Maybe that'll bring him around."

"I don't think it will," Dennis said. "And I don't like the thought of the girl suffering any more."

"Do you think I like it?" Meegan demanded. "She's not to blame for that young maniac's actions. But what else can I do? She was hiding him while

the police turn the town upside down looking for him. Do you think I can let that pass?"

Dennis shook his head slowly. "No. I guess you'll have to do it."

"Fough!" Meegan exploded. "This police business! It's a lousy job! You're lucky you're out of it. You see so much misery and heartache and sorrow that a man begins to think there's nothing else in this world."

VII

HALSTEAD and Main was the city's busiest intersection, and now, at the rush hour late in the afternoon, it was a prolonged seething bedlam. Pedestrians and autos surged this way and that, guided by the clang of traffic signals, the shrill piping of a policeman's whistle. Motors made a battering sustained roar, and the air was heavy with gasoline fumes.

Dennis came down Halstead slowly toward the corner. He kept against the building fronts, out of the rush of hurrying office workers on their way home. He reached the corner, stopped and lounged there lazily with his back against the smooth granite wall of a towering office building.

There was a man about a yard away from him. He was only half a man, actually. He had no legs, and his torso rested on a little wooden platform that had small wheels under it. He could propel himself along on the platform, if he wished, by pushing with his hands on the sidewalk.

He was not moving now. He was sitting quietly. He looked forlorn and cold and lonely. He wore an old coat that was much too large for him, patched at the elbows, with a safety pin holding the collar up around his throat. He was bare-headed. His battered hat, half filled with lead pencils, rested be-

side him. The moving legs of the people passing in front of him made black scissor-like shadows across his face. Often a pair of the legs would stop, and a coin would flip down into the hat. The man never looked up when that happened. He merely ducked his head, muttered a wordless thanks.

Dennis stood where he was for a long while, watching him. He didn't speak, made no move to come any closer. Finally the legless man's head turned slowly, a little at a time, until he could see Dennis' legs.

"Hello, Dropper," said Dennis.

The legless man raised his head slowly until he was looking up at Dennis' face. His upper lip lifted in a soundless snarl that showed a yellow stubble of broken teeth.

"You," he said, and swore nastily.

Dennis smiled. "Always ready with a cheery greeting, aren't you, Dropper? Haven't you missed me?"

The man Dropper had a welt-like purple scar that ran down one bloated, red veined cheek in a diagonal streak. His face was a puffy vicious mask, and it was plain why he did not look up at the people who gave him charity. His eyes, red shot and protruding, held a blank, cold cruelty.

He said: "You're not a cop, any longer. You leave me alone!"

"You've got such a fine personality," Dennis said. "I was just wondering how you were getting on. What are you making now, Dropper? Two hundred a week?"

"No!" Dropper snarled. "I'm a poor cripple, and I can't—"

"Don't come that on me," Dennis said shortly. "I believed it once—before I found out how many bank accounts you have and how many generous fools pass a corner like this in the course of a day. You never did a day's work

in your life, Dropper, except when you were in prison. You even lost your legs when you were trying to blow a post office safe and the charge went off too soon."

"IT'S a lie!" Dropper said thickly. "I'm a poor cripple with never kith nor kin to take me in and care for me, and I have to sit here in the cold and wet all day long to get a few pennies to buy food and clothes—"

"Save that," Dennis ordered. "Save it for some sucker who'll believe you. I won't. I want some information."

The wooden platform creaked as Dropper moved his stumpy body. "You'll get none from me! You're not a copper now!"

"No," said Dennis. "But I know a lot of them. I know a few that would be interested in you and your bank accounts."

Dropper swore again, vehemently.

"All right then," Dennis said. "Listen to this! I'm looking for a crook in this town. He's a short, dumpy man with a dished-in face. He waddles like a duck when he walks, and when he talks he uses his hands all the time, making gestures. Who is that man, Dropper?"

"I don't know."

"Yes, you do," Dennis contradicted. "You know, all right, or you'd have taken a little time to think it over. Who is he? Tell me, or I'll have you run out of this town in twenty-four hours. I would have long since, if you want the truth, except that you'd just go somewhere else and keep up your begging."

Dropper's lumpy face was purple with rage, and the words came reluctantly in a strangled gasp. "His name is Harold Rose. That's the one he uses the most."

"Harold Rose," Dennis repeated. "now we're getting somewhere. You could just as well have said that in the first place and saved both of us some time."

"He's bad," Dropper said. "He's a killer. And I hope—I hope . . ."

"You hope he gets me," Dennis finished, grinning. "Keep on hoping, Dropper. You never can tell. Where can I find him?"

"Seaside Hotel, I think."

Dennis straightened up. "Thank you, Dropper. You're very efficient these days. I'll recommend your services to some of my friends, if I think about it. Now, good-by."

Dropper glared up at him with reddish eyes.

Dennis took two steps away and then turned and came back. "Dropper," he said softly, "it would be very unfortunate if Harold Rose learned I was looking for him before I got around to telling him myself. There is only one person who could tell him that."

Dropper was silent, staring at him.

"You," said Dennis. "Don't do it, Dropper! Don't tell him. Do you remember Carlie Ray? He cracked a bank safe once, and you're the one that told the police about it. Carlie Ray is getting out of the pen pretty soon, and there's a letter in my safe addressed to him. I mentioned your name in it, Dropper. It'll be delivered to Carlie Ray if anything happens to r.a.e."

Dropper's face sagged whitely, and he made a sick noise in his throat.

Dennis smiled. "Yes, Dropper. Good-by, again."

VIII

IT was dusk now, and the lights in the building where Dennis had his office stretched in yellow sparkling

rows, zig-zagging upwards. He parked down the street a short way, and as he walked toward the front of the building he noticed the police squad car standing in the loading zone directly before the entrance. Lieutenant Meegan came out of the building at the same instant and saw him.

"Hello, Harley," he said in his toneless voice. "I was looking for you. I want some help."

"What can I do for you?" Dennis asked.

Meegan's face was drawn and weary. "We haven't turned up young Roberts yet. Haven't found a trace of him since we saw him this morning at Lola Lorraine's apartment. I'm pretty sure some of his friends are hiding him out, but that doesn't do me much good. He has plenty of friends."

"How about Lola Lorraine?" Dennis asked. "Did you arrest her?"

Meegan nodded gloomily. "I had to, man! But it didn't take. Mathew Roberts has some friends in this town, too. I'm finding that out. His lawyer got the girl out as soon as I got her in."

"Mathew Roberts' lawyer?" Dennis asked.

"Yeah. This case has put me in a bad pocket, Harley. It's open and shut murder against that boy, and yet I haven't made a yard's progress on the case. You can see the nice spot I stand on. If I get the boy, then Mathew Roberts will be after me the rest of my life! He's one man that never forgets. If I don't get him, the newspapers are going to start hinting about rich man's son, and I'm going to lose my job."

"Maybe it'll work out all right," Dennis comforted him.

"I don't think so," Meegan said gloomily. "But all a man can do is go

forward as best he knows how. That's what I'm doing. This business can't go on like it has been. It's too much. I'm sure Mathew Roberts knows where his son is hiding. I'd like you to go out to his house with me and talk to him. Maybe we can talk him into surrendering the boy. It's the only thing for him to do."

"It's a good idea," Dennis agreed. "And I'll go with you, of course. Although I don't think it'll do much good."

"We can try," Meegan said. "Come on! We'll ride in the squad car."

They went across the sidewalk to the police car. There were two plainclothes men in the rear seat. They had a collapsible checker board on their knees, and they were leaning over it in silent concentration. The uniformed driver peered interestedly at the game from the front seat.

"In front, Horgan," Meegan said, opening the door.

The two detectives folded up their game, and one of them got in the front seat with the driver. Dennis and Meegan squeezed in the back seat with the other one.

"Mathew Roberts' place," Meegan said, and the big car pulled away from the curb, threaded its way into the traffic.

Meegan shook his head slowly. "It's a nasty business, any way you look at it. You take young Roberts, with his top hat and his yellow overcoat. I've met him—sort of liked him. I always figured he was heavy on money and light on brains, but harmless. And now look at what he's done. Look at the lives he's spoiled. The Swensons, that poor stir bug of a Tracy, his own father, Lola Lorraine. Tragedy and death and heartbreak for all of them. It's not a nice thing to think about."

IX

MATHEW ROBERTS lived on Crocker Drive in the exclusively old and aristocratic section of the city. It was an immense house with steeply angular gables set back from the street, shielded from contact with the ordinary public by a ten-foot iron picket fence and high, thick shrubbery.

There was a private policeman in a natty brown uniform on guard duty at the big bronze gate. He squinted suspiciously against the glare of the headlights on the squad car, trying to see its occupants.

"Police," Meegan called to him. "Open it up!"

The guard grumbled to himself, finally opened the gate slowly and grudgingly. The squad car rolled through, and gravel tapped under the fenders as it swung around the curve of the drive, stopped under the overhang of a porte-cochere.

Meegan got out and jerked his head at Dennis. "Come on. Bishop and Horgan, come on too."

The two detectives got out and followed Dennis and Meegan up on the narrow vine-shaded porch. Meegan pressed the bell that made a soft, long chime somewhere inside the house. A uniformed butler opened the door.

"I'm sorry," he said pompously. "Mr. Roberts left instructions that he was not to be disturbed—"

"Police," Meegan said bluntly. He nodded to Bishop and Horgan, and those two, working together with practiced ease, shouldered the door open, thrusting the butler back.

They went into a long, high-ceilinged hall with dark paneled walls that stretched up gracefully into the shadowed curve of the ceiling.

The butler barred their way. "Mr.

Roberts gave me definite instructions that he was not to be disturbed! You can't see him! If you'll wait, I'll ask—"

"We'll ask him ourselves!" Meegan said.

Bishop and Horgan shunted the butler gently to one side, and Meegan walked along the shadowed dimness of the hall toward an open door that shot a yellow rectangle of light out across the deep richness of the rug. He stopped in the doorway, and Dennis looked over his shoulder. Bishop and Horgan crowded behind.

The room was a study with book-lined walls and big chairs made of soft, sleekly shining leather. There was a big stone fireplace at the far end with a gaily colored screen beside it. Mathew Roberts was standing before the squatly massive center table with his back to the door. His face stared whitely at them over his shoulder, and all the time his hands, concealed in front of him, were working frantically with a brief-case on the table.

"Mr. Roberts," Meegan said. "Sorry to break in on you unexpectedly this way, but Dennis and myself want to have a little talk with you."

Mathew Roberts' voice was thickened with rage. "I can't see you now! Wait outside, an—"

The brief-case slipped out of his hands, fell on the floor. Its flap was only half fastened, and it snapped open. Two tightly wrapped packets of yellow bills fluttered on the rug. There were more yellow packets in the brief case. It was full of them.

"Money," Meegan said unbelievably.

MATHEW ROBERTS stared at them, and his colorless lips twitched a little.

Dennis spoke softly to Meegan. "Arrest him."

Meegan's head jerked around. "What?"

"Arrest him—now!"

Meegan stared at him incredulously. Dennis nodded. Meegan drew a deep breath, then, and his dark face seemed to tighten, grow thinner and more determined.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Roberts," he said in an even voice. "I'll have to ask you to accompany me to the station."

"What!" Mathew Roberts exploded.

"Why, you—you—"

Meegan nodded to Horgan and Bishop. "Take him!"

Mathew Roberts' voice choked in his throat. "You—you don't dare do that!"

"Yes!" said Meegan. "I do dare."

Bishop and Horgan came forward and caught Mathew Roberts by both arms. He struggled futilely in their expert grasp.

"Meegan!" he said breathlessly. "I'll break you for this! I'll hound you out of this country! You can't—"

Meegan watched him steadily, unmoving. "Take him away, boys," he said at last.

Horgan and Bishop took Mathew Roberts out of the room, and his voice resounded in long echoes in the hall, shouting incoherent threats. The sound faded suddenly as the front door closed with a hollow slam.

Meegan looked at Dennis. "I went a long way with you that time, Harley! He'll do what he said. He'll break me."

"I don't think so," Dennis said.

"I've got no charges against him," Meegan said. "I've got nothing to arrest him for. It's no crime to put money in a brief-case."

"I know," Dennis told him. "Come

on." He stepped toward the door into the hall.

"Wait," Meegan followed him out into the hall. A little away from the door Dennis stopped and put his hand on Meegan's gaunt shoulder and nodded for him to be quiet. There was no sound for a moment, and then leather creaked faintly in the room they just left, and there was a sharp metallic click.

Meegan's thin body jerked, and he started for the door. Dennis held him back, shaking his head silently. Meegan halted, breathing hard. A window slid open inside the study. There was a little scrambling sound, and then silence.

Dennis let go of Meegan's shoulder. Meegan made the door into the study in two long strides, halted there, staring. The brief-case and the two fallen packets of yellow bills were gone now, and the heavy drapes in front of one of the windows moved and stirred slightly in the light breeze.

"Now follow her," Dennis said softly.

Meegan swung around. "Her?"

"Lola Lorraine. She was hiding behind the screen. I saw her foot move under it. That's why I wanted you to arrest Roberts. They were getting ready to deliver the money. I knew Mathew Roberts was too clever to let anyone follow him, but she'll be flustered and nervous now and won't notice you."

Meegan drew a deep breath. "I get it. The money is for young Roberts! She's going to take it to him, and if I follow her now she'll take me to him!" He ran across the room, jerked the drape aside.

"Watch out," Dennis warned. "He's a killer."

Meegan turned to look over his

shoulder. "So am I," he said softly, and vaulted through the window.

X

THE Seaside Hotel was a narrow building of faded red brick, squeezed in between a beer parlor with a glaringly bright neon sign and a pool hall where young men in suits with pinch-waisted coats and padded shoulders lounged lazily watching passers-by with furtively curious eyes. It was not a pleasant place nor a pleasant hotel, and Dennis kept his right hand in his coat pocket, grasping the square butt of the police revolver as he pushed through the double doors.

There was a narrow entry hall, strong with the smell of old tobacco and moldering umbrellas, that widened out into a small lobby. A big desk slanted across the corner opposite the doorway, and a bespectacled clerk in a green eye shade was bent nearly double over it, adding up accounts in a leather-bound ledger.

"Harold Rose," Dennis said.

"Room one-twenty-eight," the clerk answered without looking up. He jerked his head to indicate a door near the end of the desk.

Dennis went through the door and down a long narrow hall. The lights were brighter here, and they showed stained wall paper that had bubbled away from the rough plaster underneath it in long, greyish ugly streaks. Dennis located the door numbered 128 and knocked on it softly. There was a faint stir of movement inside the room, and then a muffled voice said:

"Yeah? What do you want?"

"Jack sent me," Dennis said, and his thumb curled around the hammer of the police revolver in his coat pocket.

The door opened a crack, and the dish-faced man that Dennis had seen

with Mathew Roberts peered out suspiciously. His eyes were small and glittering, brightly cruel under the bulge of his brow.

"Huh? Who'd you say sent—?"

Dennis let the muzzle of the police revolver poke into sight over the top of his pocket. "Back up," he said. He shouldered the door open, pushed inside the room.

"Here!" said the dish-faced man.

"Here! What the—"

"Is your name Rose?" Dennis asked.

The small cruel eyes blinked at him. "Well—yeah. That's me. Harold Rose. So what?"

Dennis closed the door softly behind him. "I'm looking for a friend of mine. He's a young fellow, and he always wears a top hat and a yellow camel's hair overcoat. His name is Roberts."

He watched Rose closely as he spoke.

This was one of the Seaside Hotel's "apartments"—actually just two ordinary rooms with a connecting door between them. That door, on Dennis' right, was half open now, and as Dennis spoke, Rose swung half towards it and then back again. He had started to smile, but only the muscles around his mouth moved. His eyes were squeezed up into small calculating slits.

"Why, sure!" he said in a casually amiable voice. "That makes it different. I didn't know what the hell, you pushin' in that way, but any friend of Dick Roberts is a friend of mine, and if you'll just wait—"

He had been backing up slowly as he talked, and now suddenly he whirled and dove for the dresser at the side of the room. He knocked a picture on it aside, came swinging around catlike with a short-barreled automatic in his hand. His white face was a coldly snarling mask.

DENNIS jumped forward at the same instant Rose moved, jerking the police revolver free of his pocket. He swung it in a swishing half circle, and the heavy barrel caught Rose squarely in the temple just as he got his automatic up level with Dennis' chest.

Rose's bulging head flipped sideways under the force of the blow, smashed with sickening force into the edge of the dresser. His glittering eyes were suddenly wide and blank and surprised. He fell straight forward, hit a chair, and half turned in the air. He landed flat on his back, sprawled full length. The automatic skittered out of his hand.

Dennis stepped on it, watching Rose alertly, the police revolver half raised to strike again. Rose didn't move. After a moment, Dennis knelt down beside him. The blow from the police revolver had broken the skin over Rose's cheekbone, and blood made a dark shining streak across the paleness of his face. He was breathing faintly.

Dennis stood up and walked to the door of the other room. He pushed it open and looked inside, and then he sensed motion behind him. He spun around.

There was a figure blackly outlined against the window, peering in at him. Dennis caught the sleek, dim gleam of a top hat, the sheen of a gun barrel pointing through the glass at him.

A big china water pitcher sat in a cracked china basin on the stand beside the door. All in one hurriedly awkward motion, Dennis picked it up with his left hand and hurled it straight at the window.

The top-hatted figure's gun smashed out, and the bullet hit the wall just over Dennis' head and showered him with a thin mist of plaster dust. In

the same split second, the big pitcher crashed through the glass of the window, thudded into the chest of the man in the top hat. He gave a strangled scream and toppled backwards out of sight.

Dennis jumped for the window. He was looking out into an alley with black-windowless walls that was like some dimly lighted trench. There was a street lamp at the end, and its feeble glow showed the gleaming top hat rolling slowly in the mud, showed the man who had worn it, awkwardly bulky in the folds of the camel's hair overcoat, running headlong toward the alley mouth. A shining brief-case dangled from his left hand.

A thin, flat voice called: "Stop!"

It was Meegan. He was standing in the entrance of the alley, thin and gaunt, blackly outlined by the light behind him. He was bent forward a little bit, his heavy revolver leveled waist high.

"Stop, Roberts!" he said again.

The man in the yellow overcoat swung sideways, ducking close to the black wall, and the short automatic in his right hand jerked up, cracked sharply.

Meegan fired twice, slowly and deliberately. The boom of the heavy revolver echoed hollowly, and the man in the yellow overcoat spun away from the wall, tripped, smashed down limply in the mud on his face.

Meegan came walking cautiously into the alley, revolver leveled in front of him. He was watching the window through which Dennis was looking.

"Don't shoot," Dennis said.

MEEGAN stopped short. "Well," he said. "You! I had a feeling when I saw that water pitcher come sailing through the window. I had a

feeling you'd be on the other end of it."

Dennis slid through the window, dropped into the alley. "Is he dead?" he asked, bending over the still figure flattened in the mud.

"He is," said Meegan. "Unless his heart can beat with an ounce of lead in it. I gave him his chance, but he wanted it this way. I followed Lola Lorraine. She met him and gave him the money in a vacant lot on Treadwell Street. Before I could get close enough to lay hands on him, he saw me. The rat held the girl in front of him and took a couple of shots at me. Look!" He took off his hat, poked his forefinger through a hole low in the crown. "Then he beat it. I chased him half way across town before I holed him up in this alley."

"I was pretty certain this would be the other end of the trail," Dennis said, "but I wasn't sure enough to take the chance."

"How'd you find this place?"

"I traced it through his partner—a man named Harold Rose."

"Rose?" Meegan repeated. "Where'd he come from? How'd he get into this?"

Dennis nodded toward the limp, flattened figure in the mud. "Rose was his cell mate. In the pen."

"Pen," Meegan repeated blankly. "What're you talking about? Young Roberts never served a day in jail in his life."

"This isn't young Roberts. Didn't you know that?"

Meegan drew a deep breath. "No," he said slowly. "No, I didn't know that."

Dennis leaned down and turned the limp figure on the ground over on its back. The white mud-stained face of Tracy stared lifelessly up at them.

"It's Tracy," Meegan said in a dull, incredulous voice.

"Yes," said Dennis. "He was behind it all. He killed both the Swensons' and he shot at us in Lola Lorraine's apartment. He was very clever about the whole business. He knew he would be under suspicion because he was an ex-convict, so he appeared on the scene right at the first, apparently in a very innocent way. He had just killed Mrs. Swenson when I found him waiting for her, as he said, in back of her apartment. When we left him there with her body, he slipped down to the basement where he had hidden the top hat and coat and took the express elevator up to Lola Lorraine's apartment and was waiting when we came in. He wanted to scare her into keeping quiet when we talked to her."

"She tried to protect him."

Dennis nodded. "Surely. On account of young Roberts. She knew that if Tracy were captured, Rose would kill young Roberts before he skipped."

"Where is young Roberts?"

"In Rose's hotel room, there. He's lying on the bed—doped. That's where he's been all the time."

MEEGAN swallowed. "You mean to tell me the fellow that has been running around wild in the top hat and overcoat has been Tracy and not young Roberts?"

"That's right," Dennis said. "You see, Tracy didn't just get out of prison. He's been in town for quite awhile. That's what made me suspicious of him first. He said he'd ridden the rods in this same morning. I knew he hadn't. He was too clean—too rested. I looked up and found there'd been no prisoners released from the state penitentiary when he said he'd been released. Ac-

tually he had been hanging around for some time, living with Rose and looking for some easy money. He used to go around and see the Swensons once in a while, probably to try to borrow money. They were afraid of him, and they had good reason to be. He heard about young Roberts and Lola Lorraine and figured that would be a good spot to try a little blackmail."

"I see," said Meegan thoughtfully. "He tried to put the buzz on Lola Lorraine; is that it?"

"Yes. She told young Roberts. He's a crazy kid, and he went and hunted up Rose and Tracy himself instead of telling the police, meaning to have it out with the two of them. They were too much for him. They beat him up, doped him, and hid him here. The Swensons knew something about Tracy's attempt to blackmail Lola Lorraine, and he killed them to prevent them from squealing. He probably knew that Oscar Swenson was going to consult me about the mess."

"The money?" Meegan inquired, touching the brief-case with his foot.

"Ransom for young Roberts," Dennis said. "Tracy had old Mathew Roberts between the pincers. He told Mathew Roberts that if he didn't pay up, the son would be killed and it would be made to look like suicide. Tracy had framed the Swensons' deaths on young Roberts so thoroughly that everyone would think young Roberts had murdered them and committed suicide in remorse. Mathew Roberts was frantic with fear for his son. He didn't even have a chance to clear the boy's name until he got him free of Rose and Tracy."

Meegan looked down at Tracy's body. "I'm glad I shot straight." He shook his head slowly. "I can't get over—killing his own sister."

"She wasn't his real sister," Dennis said. "I found that out by looking up the records of birth and marriage licenses. Tracy's father married Mrs. Swenson's mother when both Tracy and Mrs. Swenson were about twelve years old. Tracy's father is in prison now, serving a life term for killing Mrs. Swenson's mother, altogether a nice family."

Meegan shuddered.

"Not a nice thing to think about," said Dennis.

"It'll be hard to prove," Meegan said slowly.

Dennis shook his head. "No. Rose is lying back in the room there with a dent in his skull. He'll live, though, and he'll talk. Tracy was the brains of the combination."

There was a pressing, muttering little crowd of onlookers gathered at the mouth of the alley. They stared curiously, but none ventured out of the comforting circle of light from the street lamp.

Dennis smiled faintly at Meegan. "There's one nice thing to be thinking about when it's all over, after all. From the way Lola Lorraine and Mathew Roberts have been working hand in glove together to save young Roberts, I don't think there'll be any more objections made to their marriage. And I'll bet we're invited to the wedding. Perhaps as the guests of honor."

"Do you think so, now?" asked Meegan, pleased. "Then I'll get a chance to wear my dress suit!"



With nine-tenths of the police
force lookin' for us, we get
honorably escorted by the other
tenth



One Thing After Another

By Milo Ray Phelps

Author of "It Takes a Crook," "All Under Cover," etc.

I'VE been in a lotta tight places in my time, but even a cockroach would be cramped in the hole me and Fluffy McGoff was in back in Michigan. McGoff, you know, is my woolly headed, absent-minded partner, and he's just pulled a fast one while robbin' a local loan office. Reachin' for the light button, he pokes the burglar alarm instead, and we get away from there with the bullets bouncin' around us like rice at a weddin'. Cut off from

our car and our roomin' house, we have to take what we can find, which in this case is a tool house in the public park.

Here we've been holed up for two days with nothin' between us but a balonic sausage and a growin' peeve. And now even the sausage is gone.

"If I ever get outa here alive, Fluffy," I glare, "I'm gonna knock you so cold you'll have frost-bite."

"Aw, that was a easy mistake to make," he squirms. "It's nothin' to get

*It's an Unjust Conspiracy, That's What It Is; Nothing Ever Works Out
Right for Fluffy McGoff*

so sore about. And we'll get outa here all right."

"With all the roads closed, every cop in town lookin' for us, and that grass gettin' longer all the time?" I laments. "Do you realize the gardener's liable to come any minute for this lawn-mower? Besides, we're outa grub again, and you'll never make it to that delicatessen a second time."

"Sure I will," he maintains; "soon as it gets a little dark. You said I'd never make it the first time. You're always too nervous, Sam; that's the trouble with you."

That's McGoff. Nothin' ever troubles him but a haircut. I sinks down with a sigh on a bundle of rose stakes, and he goes on watchin' for the night to thicken up. Finally he decides it's dark enough, and he'll be goin'.

"And this time I'll bring cheese and pickles." He tries buckin' me up but it don't work.

"Well, don't bring no more newspapers," I growls. "If we'd never read how hot they was after us we mighta been outa here by now. Honest t' gosh Fluffy, every time I think of you pressin' that alarm button. . . ."

"I know," he mumbles, apologetic. "But mark my words, we'll get outa here."

"Yeah, feet first," I flings after him. Then I settle down in the dark to wait.

And how I wait! The way I figger, cheese and pickles should take no longer than balonie, and he was back with that in half an hour. But two hours passes with no sign of him, and I'm in a cold sweat. All I can think is that they've picked him up. And if they're pryin' into his private life over at headquarters, this is no place for me.

I'm just considerin' which direction to fade into when here he comes, all outa wind.

"Follow me quick, Sam!" he pipes, snatchin' up his burglar tools.

Naturally I think the place has been spotted, and take after him. Then I infer he's found another hideout, and follow him trustin'ly out of the park and off down a side street. But pretty soon I notice the jaunty way he's amblin' along, and get suddenly anxious. It's always a bad sign when McGoff gets too cocky.

"Hey, what's up? Where are we goin'?" I demands.

"I'VE found a way to get us outa town as slick as a whistle," he chuckles. "There's a caravan leavin' for the west."

"A what?"

"You know, a bunch of new cars from the factory. They couple 'em two-by-two and drive 'em out to save freight."

"But you can't board one of them things!" I explodes.

"I can this one," he chirps. "It's like this: On my way back to the park I passed this factory, and seen these cars all lined up to start. Some guy they was countin' on hadn't showed up. So I hunted up the boss, a big dumb Irishman named Murphy, and he took me without a murmur."

"Well of all the luck. . . . But will it work?"

"Sure it'll work. I'm drivin' the end pair. All you gotta do is climb the fence where I show you and crawl into the last car."

But by now we're approachin' the plant, and down by the gate I spot a score of cops on motorcycles.

"Never!" I points. "It was a good scheme, Fluffy, but they've thought of it. Every one of them guys has our description, and . . ."

"Naw. They ain't lookin' for us,"

he squeaks irritably. "That's our escort."

"Our *which*?" This is gettin' too deep for me.

"Our escort. There's a strike on, and they're seein' us safe outa town. Shut up now, and do as I tell ya. Here's the place. Up you go."

He boosts me up a dark spot in the wall, and goes amblin' on toward the gate, bold as brass. All at sea, I look down inside, and there, sure enough, is a long line of cars, with the last pair directly under me.

"Well I'll be blowed!"

Droppin' into the deep shadow of the wall, I curl up on the floor in the end sedan. There I huddle, almost afraid to breathe, and pretty soon I hear motors startin'. Then the door opens and McGoff pokes his head in.

"What'd I tell ya?" he whispers. "Here's a robe, and some lunch. So long. I'll be seein' ya."

Well, that next hour will remain one of my fondest memories. With nine-tenths of the police force out lookin' for us, we file through the gate and go throttlin' past 'em safely guarded by the other tenth. It's one of them happy things you dream about. I can't help peekin' out now and then, I get such a kick out the cops on all the corners and the two grim-jawed huskies ridin' either side of me. And when we reach the highway and pass a barricade of specials overhaulin' private cars, I nearly choke on my sandwich. Ten miles out, the escort sets us adrift, and I lay peacefully down to slumber. For once in his life McGoff has put one over.

But if you think that's the end, you don't know Fluffy. I'm just blissfully smugglin' a cargo of rum (while the Navy stands by holdin' off the Coast Guard), when the car stops and I wake

up with a start. While I'm tryin' to identify my surroundin's the door opens.

"Pst! Hey Sam, come on and ride up front."

"Say, you ain't supposed to stop like this," I cries. "You wanna gum the works?"

"Aw, I can easy catch up," peeps Fluffy. "Come on. I'm gettin' lonesome"

"If you ain't gettin' one thing it's another," I snarls.

But while we're arguin' the lights of the cavalcade is thinnin' out in the distance, so I join him up front.

"Did you ever see anything like the way we come past them cops?" he elates as we get rollin' again.

"I gotta hand it to you, Fluffy," I admits. "Only my memory ain't as short as yours. You got us out all right, but it was also you that got us *in*, and I'll be a long time forgettin' it. And if I ever pull another job with you I'm gonna have you muzzled, and on a leash."

His puddin' face relaxes mournfully. He goes into a glum silence for a long time, and then tries again:

"But I can open anything that's got hinges, Sam, and I got a good imagination. With your brains and my abilities . . ."

"We've been through all that. What's the schedule of this outfit?"

"We don't go far tonight," he offers. "Ordinarily we drive from sun to sun; this late start was just on account of the strike. But as I was sayin', I've been doin' some thinkin', and this job has give me a great idea."

I turns and squints at him critically. Some of the fluff he mistakes for ideas wouldn't even make pillows, and sure enough, he's got that vacant, happy look on him that always spells trouble.

"You don't tell me." And I stiffens.

"Uh-huh," he continues hopefully. "You probably ain't noticed it, but this job has amazin' possibilities."

"Sure. If you don't pull a Katzenjammer it will possibly get us safe outa Michigan. Look out!—they're stoppin'. I gotta scam."

THE cars drew up beside an auto camp on the outskirts of a city. I blend into the darkness; then hoof back to the nearest farm and hunt me up a haystack.

I'm up with the first cock-crow, and dawn finds me back under my rug in the end sedan. The caravan is right on schedule. Almost at once I hear motors startin' up, and then my door opens a crack.

"Mornin' Sam," greets McGoff. "Hey, sneak up front when I stop—I got some breakfast for ya."

What a guy! With my stomach rejectin' them raw carrots I just sent down, that's got a strong appeal. We start movin'. I get hungrier and hungrier, and find myself almost forgivin' this dizzy dodo.

At length the car starts slowin' down and eagerly I stick my head up. We're in the city. A dozen blue-coats line the curb, holdin' back a crowd of spectators clustered around a busted store window. The nearest one ain't four feet from my nose, and one look sends me back under cover like a turtle. The joint is a jewelry store, and that glass was removed with a brickbat.

"The competition these days is a fright," I mutters. "You're not only duckin' from your own crimes, but from everybody else's. And if that bull happened to lay eyes on me . . ."

But slowly we crawl past the obstruction, and pretty soon we're on the open road and I breathe again. Then Fluffy

shoves on the brakes and I sneak up front. Hunchin' down on the floor I wade into a dozen doughnuts and a thermos fulla coffee. There's nothin' mean about Fluffy, I'll say that for him.

"How you feelin' this mornin'?" he opens brightly.

"Not bad. Say, did you note the disturbance back there?"

"Uh-huh. And did you note the way we slid past it? I bet that window-cleaner wishes he was in our shoes."

"Yeah. That's a dumb crime unless you've got a good hideaway."

"Or a slick exit," says he. "As I was tellin' you, this setup of ours has got amazin' possibilities. Now you take last night; if we'd had that loot with us we'd 'a' come safe by them cops just the same."

"But we *didn't* have it."

"But supposin' we had," he argues. "Here we're headed clean across the continent, stoppin' at eight or ten cities, with a perfect exit awaitin' us every mornin'. Look under the seat there Sam, and you'll see what I mean."

"Huh?" With sudden alarm I chokes on a doughnut and yanks up the back seat. There, scattered amongst the tools, is enough watches, rings and other jewelry to start a hock-shop.

"*You!*" I explodes. "Gosh a'mighty Fluffy; you can't do that."

"No?" he smirks. "I already done it."

"I mean you can't keep it up," I cries. "You couldn't drive all day and prowl all night, and get away with it."

"Why not?" he squeaks, gettin' irritated. "That didn't take long. This is one chance in a lifetime I tell you. It'd be a crime to pass it up."

"But you ain't the type for fast stuff. Even when I'm weeks plannin' things for you, you manage to bawl 'em up."

"I done all right last night," he insists.

"But as soon as a string of busted windows began to move west at the same rate as this caravan, somebody would catch on."

"We won't pull all window-cleanin's," says he. "With you helpin' me, we can vary it. Next we'll do a stick-up, then a safe-blowin' maybe, and then . . ."

"A forgery I suppose, or a little arson!" I cracks. "Nix. This thing is givin' us transportation — that's enough."

But once Fluffy gets an idea there's no budgin' him, and you must admit he's got somethin' here. He keeps harpin' on it till I finally have to give in to shut him up.

"All right, I'll try it," I concedes. "But the minute I see it ain't workin' out, I'm done. Understand?"

"**A**TTA boy, Sam!" He claps me on the back. "And it's bound to work out, if we play it smart. Hey, take the wheel for a while, will ya? While I get a little sleep?"

"Is that smart?" I protests.

"Aw, it's plenty safe," he yawns. "They won't pull up till noontime, and then you can call me."

He climbs over the seat, and in two minutes he's sound asleep on the floor. And there I am under the wheel in a cold sweat. But as the mornin' wears on and nothin' happens I calm down a little. After all, this is a sweet setup, and worth some anxiety. I wake him at noon, doze the rest of the day myself, and by night I'm pretty near as sold on the proposition as he is.

Well, to cut a long ride short, we knock over a street carnival that night for a cool five hundred, and get away slick. Next we do a second-story job

and a safe-openin', and then stick up a movie house for a couple of C's. By then we're nearin' the Rockies, with a neat haul tidied in a canvas bag under the seat, and Fluffy's head swelled up like a balloon.

"Take the helm, Sam," he orders, as soon as we've passed the movie theatre next mornin'. "I need a nap."

And he pulls up to the curb.

"Say, do you know you didn't come up yesterday for anything but meals?" I snaps. "And I was five minutes gettin' you awake?"

"I was tired," he grunts, already half asleep in back. "You're always growlin' about somethin', Sam. Gosh, things is goin' good."

"Too good. Success is goin' to your head. Do you realize the jig is up if Murphy ever catches me drivin' this thing? Like I've said before, I think we've played this far enough and it's time we lammed."

"Walk off and miss that mornin' line-up of wild-eyed cops?" he pipes. "Not me. All my life I've dreamed of somethin' like this. Why I wouldn't leave this outfit for anything. Besides, we've done only small stuff, and we oughta pull some swell big job for the windup."

"You'll pull some swell big brodie and wind up in the jug, that's what," I barks. "Look at you last night, startin' out to rob that same carnival again."

"How did I know they'd passed us? I was asleep."

"That's what I'm sayin'; if I don't keep watch over you every minute . . ."

He interrupts with a gentle snore, and I swallow the rest. But it don't set well, and I resolve to have it out with him after lunch. It strikes me he's chestier than ever when he comes swaggerin' back after this lay-over. He takes the wheel, and as soon as we're

out of town he turns around with a broad grin.

"Here y' are Sam. Stick these away." He pulls a hand out of his pocket and tosses me a dozen rings and a wrist watch.

"Now where'n hell did you get them?" I explodes.

"Off a near-sighted jeweler," he grins, "while he was tellin' me how much it would cost to fix my watch."

"You mean just now? In broad daylight?" I howls.

"Sure. I'm ashamed of you, Sam. We've been out five days, and you never once thought of utilizin' the lunch hour."

"Listen. This ain't a bit cute," I fumes. Anxiously I scan the road behind for pursuers, and then hastily claw up the back seat.

"Hey!" I yowls. "Did you move this stuff?"

"Huh? What stuff?"

WHY our loot—the stuff we had ditched under here."

"Gosh, ain't it there?" He whirls around with his mouth open, and the car heads for the nearest 'phone pole.

"Look out!" I grab the wheel just in time. "Wake up and watch what you're doin'. Now answer me—did you move that stuff?"

"No." He shakes his head. "But, now you mention it, it seems to me I was."

"You was what?"

"I was gonna move it. Stop shakin' me, I'm tryin' to think." He screws up his puddin' face in the agony of thought, and then gulps: "Gosh, now I remember, Sam! Last night after you left they drove six cars in to an agency, and ours was one of 'em. Murphy told me about it at noontime, but it skipped my mem'ry, and . . ."

"Leave it to you!" I blows up. "Of all the rattle-brained, dunder-headed . . ."

"We can easy get it back," he pipes. "The car will be right there at the dealer's." And, slammin' on the brakes, he starts turnin' around then and there.

"Nix!" Again I grab the wheel. "Use your head. You've gotta stay part of this parade."

"Yeah. That's right, ain't it?" he blinks.

"Sure it's right. And now maybe you won't be so cocky. I'll go back and try to get it, and pick you up later. And see that you tend strict to business in the meantime. Understand?"

"I getcha Sam," he mumbles, completely deflated. "You see how it was . . ."

"Let it pass!" I drop off the runnin' board and start back down the highway, fit to be tied. I thought I'd been through all the trouble there was with this ape, but havin' to steal the swag twice is a new one.

I finally catch a stage, and about dark I arrive back at the city where we dropped the six cars. Locatin' the agency, I get our sedan spotted and everything lined up before it closes, and by eight o'clock I'm boardin' a stage west again, with our precious swag safe in a handbag.

It'll be almost mornin' before I overtake the caravan, but I find I can't sleep. This last episode has unnerved me. Of course the setup has still got possibilities, and I'm even sold on a rich cleanup for the finish, but it's evident I've gotta take over the reins and make everything fool-proof from now on. I turn it over in my mind all night, and by the time we pass the caravan strung out along the roadside I've got it all figured out.

When I alight at the stage depot in

the town beyond it lacks a few minutes of four, or about an hour of sunup. So I lose no time in gettin' back down the highway to that auto camp. The string is still some ninety cars long, and tonight they've double-parked some of 'em along a broad shoulder of the road. While I'm studyin' 'em over to make no mistake in the plan I've worked out, there's a rustle in the bushes behind me and a hand drops on my shoulder. My heart gives a leap, and I'm all ready to bolt when:

"Hello Sam," peeps Fluffy McGoff.

"Gee, I'm glad to see you."

"What'n hell are you doin' up at this hour?" I whirls around. "Didn't I tell you to tend strict to business?"

"THAT'S what I'm doin'," he beams. "I just clipped a chain store for a hundred berries. Here, have a candy bar."

"I mighta known it!" I moans. "Where's it at? The money, I mean."

"Under the seat in that blue coupe. They delivered the car we had today, and that's ours for tomorrow. At least I think that's the one Murphy said. . . ."

"Just what I was afraid of!" I rasps. "You'd have this loot scattered from here to Frisco."

"Didn't you get that sack back?" he gasps.

"I did. And no more is goin' astray. From now on I'm tak'n' charge of it, and it's gonna be where it will ride safe to our destination. Now get under cover. And don't forget my breakfast again like you done this mornin'."

"Okay, Sam." He waddles off in the grayin' dawn, and I fish his haul outa the blue coupe and proceed with my business.

I'm safely outa sight in the turtle-back of Fluffy's car when the column gets movin', a little after daylight. This

is one of those coupes you can load from either the front or back, and presently McGoff pulls the seat aside and hands me my breakfast.

His mood this mornin' is humble and apologetic, but very communicative. He rattles for an hour about this and that—mainly what a soft job Murphy's got, drivin' back and forth across the country in his custom-built car—and then comes to the point: We're makin' Salt Lake tonight. That's the last big town before we hit Frisco, so how about pullin' our big haul there and then coastin' the rest of the way?"

"That's all right with me," says I.

"Swell!" He's relieved. "Let's pull it on the main stem, huh Sam?—so we can drive by the cops in the mornin'."

"We can do without that," I sighs. "The important thing is a fat haul, so I can lay off for a while before you give me nervous flustration. Lemme sleep now, and I'll relieve you later on."

After lunch I take the wheel. He wriggles through into the back and heaves a tired sigh. Then, suddenly: "Hey! Where's my burglar tools?"

"Safe and sound," I informs. "Where you can't grab 'em at a moment's notice, and where the police won't find 'em in case we get overhauled. You got any objections?"

"Not at all. A smart idea. You got a good head on you Sam; I always said so."

That's the last I hear of him till he starts snorin'. Pluggin' in the seat cushion I tune him out, and then settle to the long monotony of tailin' the car ahead across the great salt desert.

Twice durin' the afternoon I try rousin' him, but he keeps pleadin' for forty more winks because we've got a big night ahead. Everything is quiet, so I let it pass, and then darkness overtakes us and it doesn't matter so much.

I let him ride till the lights of the city begin to show up in the distance, and then start in on him again.

"Wake up, Fluffy!" I bellers through the openin'. "We're gonna pull up in just a little while now."

The words ain't out of my mouth before the car ahead slows to a stop. I poke my head out the window and discover the column is pullin' up at a camp a-way this side of the city.

"Fluffy!" I bawls. "Hump yerself. You hear me?"

NO response. And the next minute I see Murphy's big car come zoomin' up the line. That leaves only one thing for me to do—kill the engine, plug in the cushion, and take to the ditch by the roadside. So I do it.

"Hey, McGoff!" husks the big Irishman, pullin' open the door. "Swing outa line and . . ." He stops short with his head in the empty car. "Damn that guy anyhow! Every stop he packs an extra meal off with him, and he can't wait till the car stops before he's boltin' for the cook-house. No wonder he's fat in the head!"

"Oh, Jones!" he calls to the driver ahead. "Swing outa line with this pair, and follow me."

Jones climbs in the coupe. Murphy idles down the line pickin' out some more sets, then these roll away after him into town.

"Hell on wheels!" I ignites. "If it ain't one thing it's another. Sure as shootin' Fluffy'll wake up at the wrong time, poke his head out and ask what day it is!"

But one thing is sure; tonight's game is cancelled. If I get Fluffy safe outa this mess, we've played our luck far enough.

Well, it's a long walk into town, and then I'm forever locatin' the dealer that

got that coupe. It's nearly midnight before I spot it through the window of a big uptown agency, and then find where an entrance can be made.

Droppin' cautiously to the floor inside, I see a few night lights burnin', but apparently nobody around. I creep over to the coupe and lift up the back. It's empty.

"Now what?"

But before I can decide there's a rattle of wheels behind me and I whirl around to see McGoff waddlin' dreamily along with a hand truck.

"What tha hell! Are you sleep-walkin'?"

"Huh?" He gives a start. "Oh hello, Sam! Say, don't this beat anything you ever seen?"

"It sure does. How long you been awake?"

"'Bout an hour. At first I couldn't guess where I was. Then I doped it out and figgered you'd be along pretty soon. So I've got everything all lined up. You're just in time to gimme a hand with the safe."

He ambles out to the front office and I follow him, too muddled for words.

"There it is . . ." He points. "And I know there's money in it because these people carry their own contracts."

"But see here now, Fluffy." I finds my tongue. "You ain't got your burglar tools."

"Don't need 'em. They got enough stuff around here to open Grant's Tomb," he beams. "There's a dark-room out back that they use for testin' headlights. We simply roll it in there and open it with their torch outfit. I never seen anything like it. A perfect entrance, a perfect getaway, and perfect accommodations. And it's even on the main drag, Sam!"

Anxious as I am, I have to admit this is the neatest prospect I ever witnessed.

"But I seen you melt open a safe once," I protests, "and it took you all night."

"Not this one," he sures me. "This'll wilt down like candle wax. Come on, gimme a hand."

We rock it onto the hand truck, and then grunt it out back and into the dark-room. Then he wheels in an acetylene outfit and pulls off his coat.

"Now all you gotta do is give me hicky—just in case," says he, adjustin' a pair of goggles.

So I go out and take a careful look around. All is serene. But the only way to avoid trouble workin' with McGoff is to foresee it, and the big hole in this setup is we're at least five miles from our getaway. What we need is a car handy, in case of a surprise. So I busy myself sawin' the lock off the side door; then gas up a light delivery and head it in that direction. I'm the cautious, methodical type that likes to see everything in order, and this little precaution makes me feel a lot better. I take another walk around, and then look in on McGoff.

HE'S stripped down to his undershirt now, and the place is a furnace, and blue with smoke. But there's triumph on his streamin' countenance.

"She's—comin' great—Sam," he coughs. "I think I could—pry 'er open right now."

"Then lay off a minute," I chokes. "No need to kill yerself."

He waddles out after me, exhausted, but happy as a kid, and stands moppin' his drippin' brow.

"I just wanted to show you I could open it in jig time," he pants. "That I ain't such a dub as you take me for."

"I never said you wasn't a good peerman, Fluffy," I objects. "All I ever said was . . . Say! What's that?"

"Huh? What's what? What the—"

"I thought I heard a noise—like somebody mumblin'."

"May be that watchman," says he.

"What watchman? You never said anything about a watchman."

"Aw, he's all right," he peeps. "He gimme a little trouble at first, but I rapped him on the head and shut him in that closet over there."

"Closet!" I jumps. "Ye gods man, that's a *phone booth!*"

Leapin' forward, I grab a crowbar loose from the handle and fling open the door. But the damage is done. The watchman is on his feet, with the receiver down, frantically pourin' out his troubles to headquarters.

Pryin' him loose, I howl to McGoff: "Cheezit! Get your clothes on and climb in that delivery car. She's all set to roll."

He makes a dash for the dark-room, and I return to the watchman.

"Get in the back of that coupe before I brain ya!" I barks, brandishin' the crowbar. But he's so scared I have to drag him over and then hoist him in.

At last I get the lid down on him and safely locked. Then I run up the heavy metal door, climb in the car and get the engine goin'.

"Fluffy!" I yelps.

No answer. I leap over the tail board and jerk open the door of the dark-room.

There he is, still in his undershirt, frantically pryin' at the safe.

"Didn't you hear me? The jig is up!"

"Don't bother me, Sam," he grunts. "Can't you see I'm busy?"

"Bother you! Why I'm tryin' to save yer hide. He's phoned for the police I tell you."

"Yeah. But I'll have this open any minute now . . ."

"But that's when they'll be here! For the last time; are you comin' or ain't you?"

"Listen," he pants, still pryin' away; "you wait for 'em Sam, and then lead 'em off somewheres. With you gone and the safe missin' they'll never think to look for me here, and . . ."

"Nix!" I blows up. "Already I'm a sucker, and I'm damned if I'll be a red herring!"

But that's just what I am in the end. Vaultin' into the car I go roarin' out the door just as a squad car turns the corner. At once they take me for the fleedin' burglar and open fire.

AS soon as I can stop turnin' corners to divert fire I head for the open. There I pick up a lead on 'em, and am finally able to ditch the car and take to my heels. But now I'm miles from safety, havin' taken the wrong direction to throw off suspicion, and frantically I dodge cops and radio cars the rest of the night, workin' my way back to the caravan.

Sunrise is just messin' the eastern sky when I come limpin' up and hide away in the back of today's coupe. As to what's happened to McGoff, your guess is as good as mine. All I know is, our loot is progressin' via this outfit and I'm progressin' with it.

Naturally I'm anxious when the car starts, but presently the seat moves aside and McGoff sticks his head in.

"Hello, Sam!" he chirps. "Just checkin' up on you. Say, you sure led them guys away slick. I was another twenty minutes gettin' that thing open, but then I got away clean."

"In a taxi I suppose."

"Uh-huh. How'd you know? There wasn't as much in it as I expected," he regrets. "Only a couple of hundred. And I forgot your breakfast again."

"That's quite all right," I sighs. "All I want is some sleep. Could you give me a little quiet, please?"

But now we're in the city, and instead I get a play-by-play account of the passin' scenery.

"It's too early yet for the traffic squad," he informs. "But we just passed a motorcycle cop, and there's two harness bulls up ahead." Then, a moment later: "Wow! We're approachin' that agency, and there's a couple squad cars out front. You'd oughta poke your head out and see this."

"I don't want to see it," I growls "And you watch yer step up there. Un derstand?"

"Aw, nobody's gonna bother this parade," he chuckles. "And you're missin' a swell sight, Sam. There's your delivery car, with a half a dozen cop-around it. Gee, it's all shot to ribbons!"

"You're tellin' me?"

"And there's two dicks examinin' that door you sawed open. Boy, we sure put it over."

"Yeah, all over the map! Now lay off, will ya?"

Gradually he pipes down, I doze off, and the next thing I know he's pokin' me up with a ham sandwich.

"Is it that time?" I struggles awake.

"Yep. One o'clock Sam. And how's about takin' the wheel?"

"Not on yer life!" I protests. "We got through last night by a miracle, and we're takin' no more chances. That's where you belong, and that's where you stay."

"But I spent a hard night."

"So did I. You rode home and went to bed, and I walked all night." Grabbin' the cushion from the back I plug it into the hole and drop off again into slumber.

There is only one sound on earth like

that which awakens me—the long-drawn, terrifyin' scream of an approachin' siren. With a bound I butts the cushion aside and scrambles up front.

"Did you hear that?" I gives a quick look around and my heart drops into my shoes. It's dark. In front of us is a series of headlights strung out around a long curve in the highway. In back is the single light of a motorcycle, with the three beams of a police car right behind it.

"Sufferin' salted sunfish!"

"Huh?" blinks Fluffy. "'Smatter Sam?"

"Matter? Why *look* at us!" I wails.

While he's sittin' there with his mouth open, the motorcycle thunders alongside and crowds him to a stop.

"Hey! What's the idea?" he splutters indignantly. "You can't interrupt me. I'm a caravan and . . ."

BUT at that junction the police car rolls up and out leaps Murphy, wild-eyed and frothin' at the mouth.

"That's him!" he cries. And rushin' forward he hauls Fluffy out the door by the collar. "Try to run out on me, will ya? I've been six hours locatin' you."

"Why I ain't tryin' to run out on you," gapes McGoff.

"Then what're you doin' off here?"

"Off where?" Fluffy gazes around in bewilderment. "I been followin' along just like always; a steady thirty-five, with forty feet between cars, and . . ."

"Who's this mug?" demands a cop, draggin' me out.

"Him? Just a hitch-hiker. He was thumbin' his way to Reno, so I . . ."

"Well, I'll be damned!" Murphy throws up his hands. "I wouldn't believe it of any one else in the world—he turns to the waitin' cops—"but this guy has forgot everything I've told him

since we left Michigan, and I bet he could do it."

"Then there's no charges?" grumbles the sergeant.

"No. I'll settle this outa court, right here and now" Juttin' his jaw out he squares up to McGoff. "See if you can remember this—you're fired!" And he lands a haymaker on Fluffy's chin that sends him spinnin' across the road and head over heels down an embankment.

That gives some cop the idea of bootin' my pants in the same direction. Me and McGoff land in the same heap, and by the time we struggle up the bank they've all rolled away into the night.

"Wow!" Fluffy gazes after 'em. "That guy packs an awful wallop." Then he whirls on me: "You didn't hide that stuff any better than I did."

"The hell I didn't!" I explodes. "It's still there."

"Then how is it they come swoopin' down on us?" he demands.

"Ain't you figgered that out yet?" I howls. "Why for car theft. You got to day-dreamin', you lunkhead, and lost the caravan. For the past six hours you've been trailin' a string of trucks!"

"Well fer gosh sakes," he blinks. "How did I ever come to do a thing like that. Then where's the loot, Sam?"

"Under the upholstery in Murphy's car. You wanna go ask him for it?"

"Gosh no!" he jumps, caressin' his jaw.

"Then don't let me hear no more about it," I snarls.

"Okay, Sam." His head sinks down between his shoulders, and he's ploddin' after me down the road. But we ain't gone a mile before he brightens:

"That's still a good idea, though. Some day we'll take another crack at it, huh, Sam?"

"Sure," I snorts. "Start you off on a tow-rope and it might work out slick!"



Caught by a Heelprint

"HERE COMES A COP!" SHOUTED ONE OF THE VICTIMS OF A HOLD-UP. THE SCENE WAS EAST 105TH STREET, NEW YORK, ON THE MORNING OF APRIL 5, 1926. THE COP, APPEARING UNEXPECTEDLY, WAS CHARLES H. REILLY. HE HAD NO CHANCE TO DRAW HIS GUN. THE BANDIT, COVERING FOUR COWERING MEN, WHIRLED AND DRILLED THE POLICEMAN.



AS REILLY FELL, KILLED INSTANTLY, THE BANDIT AND HIS INTENDED VICTIMS SCAMPERS AWAY. ON AN ALARM FROM A RESIDENT, DETECTIVES ARRIVED FROM A NEARBY POLICE STATION. THEY FOUND THE STREET DESERTED. THE TIMID RESIDENTS WOULD ADMIT LITTLE KNOWLEDGE OF THE SHOOTING BUT INVESTIGATORS FOUND FOOTPRINTS MARKED IN BLOOD LEADING TOWARD THE EAST RIVER.

THIS CRIMSON TRAIL LED INTO A TENEMENT AND UPSTAIRS TO A ROOF, THEN DOWN THROUGH ANOTHER TENEMENT, OVER A BACK DOOR, THROUGH A YARD, OVER A FENCE AND FINALLY BY WAY OF THE STREET INTO A HOUSE ON FIRST AVENUE. THERE THE TELL-TALE STAINS WERE TRACED TO A ROOM ON THE THIRD FLOOR. NO ONE ANSWERED THE KNOCK. THE DETECTIVES KICKED THE DOOR IN AND ENTERED WITH DRAWN GUNS. — A MAN AND TWO WOMEN WERE INSIDE. IN A BACK ROOM WAS A SWARTHY MAN, BLEEDING PROFUSELY FROM A WOUND IN HIS LEG.

Coming Next Week—

ILLUSTRATED CRIMES

by *Storkie Allen*



...THE WOUND HAD EVIDENTLY BEEN CAUSED BY A WEAPON HELD CLOSE TO THE MAN'S HIP, POINTED DOWN AND ACCIDENTALLY DISCHARGED WHILE BEING STUFFED INTO HIS COAT POCKET.



THE WOUNDED MAN AT FIRST DENIED HAVING BEEN NEAR THE SCENE OF THE FATAL HOLD-UP. THEN HE ADMITTED HE WAS THERE BUT SAID HE HAD BEEN HIT BY A STRAY BULLET. IN BELLEVUE HOSPITAL THIS MAN WAS RECOGNIZED AS PETER HESLIN, EX-CONVICT, WHOSE RECORD SHOWED SEVEN ARRESTS!

ON THE FRONT STOOP OF THE HOUSE IN WHICH HESLIN HAD ROOMED WAS THE IMPRINT OF A RUBBER HEEL, OUTLINED IN BLOOD. IT MATCHED THAT ON HESLIN'S SHOE! THIS STEP WAS REMOVED AND USED AT THE TRIAL AS EVIDENCE. MEANWHILE POLICE LOCATED THE FOUR MEN WHO HAD BEEN WAYLAI'D JUST BEFORE THE MURDER OF REILLY. ALL IDENTIFIED HIM AS THE KILLER. A JURY CONVICTED HIM. HE WAS ELECTROCUTED IN SING SING.



The \$3,000,000 Job



Manager Gratz swung toward me, ready to shoot

Midsummer Murders

By Donald Barr Chidsey

Author of "Blood Won't Tell," "The Prize Dumbbell," etc.

*In a House Full of Hate and Intrigue and
Terror, Sergeant Ralph Felt Murder in the
Making and Trusted One Man Alone—
Himself!*

PART II
**What Has
Happened—**

SERGEANT GEORGE RALPH, Sherlock Holmes of the Newark Homicide Squad, was waiting for the rain to stop when the brown-eyed, terrified girl bumped into him. Before he could say: "Ah, yes or no," she had disappeared.

A hunch sent Ralph to the second floor of the hotel, whence the elevator operators claimed the frightened girl had come. Inside Room 2-L, sprawled in a spreading

pool of blood, lay the widely famous corporation lawyer, Chauncey R. McCabe.

While Ralph was examining the body, a man stole up behind him, from the bathroom of the suite, and tried to wrap a chair around his neck. The man then escaped easily.

Sergeant Ralph was on the spot now. His last couple of cases had soured on him. And now he could give almost no descrip-

This story began in Detective Fiction Weekly for June 19

tion of his assailant, undoubtedly linked somehow to McCabe's murder.

Subsequent investigation reveals that the murder suite had been rented on a temporary basis by a Mr. Arthur Bates. There is no trace of him. Fingerprint findings are particularly useless. The only valuable clues are a cigarette case, thin, silver, with some kind of Indian design on it, a crushed-out, straw-tipped Melacha cigarette, rouge-marked, and a number of pieces of paper—remnants of a letter in a woman's handwriting.

On the way to headquarters, where he is going to examine McCabe's briefcase, Ralph is jumped by a young chap named William Westwall, who claims he had a similar briefcase stolen only minutes before. After a thorough investigation, Ralph has to have Westwall released.

He is setting the torn letter together when a man ambushes him in headquarters, forces him at gun point into a metal clothes closet and leaves him locked inside. When Ralph is finally released, the man and the papers have vanished, and the newspapers are ready to roast him.

Ralph has only one flimsy clue from the scraps of paper, the name: "Hollingshed," which, after much search, turns out to be the name of a swank summer resort. Ralph decides to pursue his investigations at the resort.

It is clear from the beginning that he is not very welcome. The first surprise comes when he finds Mildred Grove, the brown-eyed girl, still frightened, daughter of the hotel owner. The second surprise is a note, pasted up from newspaper clippings, saying:

**ALL KNOW DETECTIVE
GO NOW IF WISH GO ALIVE**

The third surprise comes when he finds, in the phone booth, a scrap of the letter which was stolen from headquarters in Newark.

Dinner with the hotel guests—Gratz, the manager; Ellis Lapham, the millionaire sportsman, Alvin T. Swainton, a vacationing broker, a vague Dr. Himbaugh, a

gushy Mrs. West who smokes straw-tipped Melachas; and a dour individual whom Ralph has christened Sour-Puss—a drab affair.

The fourth surprise comes early the next morning, around three o'clock, when Ralph awakens with the certainty that someone is in his room, and, reaching beneath his pillow for his gun, discovers that it is not there!

CHAPTER VI

Complications

NOW I'm not the kind of a cop who reaches for artillery every time an automobile backfires near him. Ordinarily, I'd rather use my fists. But I figured that in the Hollingshed, a man's fists wouldn't be enough. There was a tingle of murder in the air.

It wasn't as though I was the least bit groggy. I wasn't imagining things. I *knew* that there was somebody in the room with me. I remembered exactly where I'd left my pistol; it wasn't there.

Pretty soon I heard a small, creaky, leathery sound. Somebody over near the bureau was working on my suitcase.

I must have moved a little then. I heard a sharp gasp. I was lifting myself on one elbow, and my right hand still was under the pillow, when a terrific beam of light smacked me in the eyes.

I can't tell you *why* I knew the guy was going to start shooting. There wasn't any click of a cocked hammer, or of an automatic's safety catch, or anything like that. But anyway, I rolled off that bed as fast as I could roll—and at the same time, the flashlight was snapped off and there were three crashes.

I hit the floor, kept rolling. I didn't stop until I struck a wall.

The echoes chased back and forth and up and down, having a lot of fun all by themselves. But there was another sound. My visitor wasn't lingering to check the results of his marksmanship. He'd gone through one of the open windows, and I lifted my head in time to see a blurred shadow vault the rail. I went after it.

I might have been killed, and it would have served me right if I had been. I must have made a perfect target as I vaulted that rail. What saved me, I suppose, was the fact that my visitor didn't think I'd be foolish enough to chase him.

I didn't go over at the exact place the shadow had gone over. It was wet again—there'd been another rainstorm while I slept—and I didn't want to spoil any footprints.

When I hit the earth, and stopped to catch my breath, I realized what a bad spot I was in. With the white building behind me, and a spread of clear drive and lawn in front, I was bathed in the rays of an early dawn. Anybody could have given me bullets there. The best thing for me to do was get under cover, and the nearest cover was a clump of boxwood about thirty feet away, so I ran for that.

Then I got lost. Twice I thought I heard somebody slipping and sliding through the wet underbrush—once just ahead of me, and once a little on my left—but each time when I stopped and listened hard, I wasn't able to hear the sound again.

It was black as pitch in the woods, and wet, and chilly.

More by accident than anything else, I stumbled out into the private road which led from the highway to the hotel. And there, a .22 automatic in his fist, stood Manager Gratz.

Seeing me must have been a shock

to him. He swung around, mouth open, eyes popping half out of his head; and if I hadn't yelled my name promptly I think he would have let fly out of sheer nervousness.

"Oh," he said. "It's you?"

I said: "What's the big idea?"

"I heard shots, went to my window, saw somebody racing across the lawn. My room's on the veranda, same as yours, except it's over at the other end. Well, I grabbed my gun and ran out for a look. What was it?"

I told him, all the time wondering whether it was really news. Gratz was wearing a dressing robe with the collar fastened around his neck. He had on bedroom slippers, but ordinary pants and socks.

"I guess he got away, whoever he was," I remarked carelessly.

"Some tramp, I suppose."

"Yeah, probably some tramp."

But tramps don't carry guns. Those shots had been high and thin, sharp like a whip cracking. A .22 would sound like that. I reached for the .22 Gratz held.

"Nice gat," I said. "Yours?"

"Oops!"

He slipped in a puddle, and fell. The hand holding the gun went into another puddle, getting the barrel wet. I had wanted to know whether that barrel was warm, but now I wasn't going to find out.

It was a funny business, all around. If I'd had the time I think, I would have taken Gratz back into the woods somewhere for a little work-out. But just at this moment, Swainton and Lapham and the bellboy-waiter came charging across the croquet ground, tripping over wickets and all yelling at once.

Nobody seemed to know much. I told my story two or three times and tried to laugh it off, and the rest agreed

that it must have been a tramp. It was a shame, they said. And Gratz said he'd see to it that I got another room, where I wouldn't have any windows on the veranda. That is, if I still cared to stay?

Swainton, who even in peach pajamas continued to look like a bishop, cried: "To think that anything like that should happen here! The last place in the world anybody would expect to have any excitement!"

I felt like saying "Oh, yeah?" but I didn't say it. We went on into the hotel, and found the rest of the outfit standing around looking scared. Mrs. West was a mess without her make-up. Mildred Grove looked as nice as ever, though even more frightened. Dr. Himbaugh peered this way and that through his glittery nose-glasses, and grunted questions in a throaty German accent. The truck driver looked just dumb. Mr. Beacon from Philadelphia acted as though he thought the whole scene had been staged by some malicious persons just to make him lose sleep.

Swainton suggested: "Couldn't Smith fix us up some coffee and sandwiches? It's practically daylight."

SMITH, the truck-driving cook, shuffled back toward the kitchen. Mrs. West started for her room, murmuring something about cigarettes; the first flush of excitement was subsiding, and she was beginning to realize how terrible she must look. I shivered, and said something about getting some clothes on, and that I wanted to take a look and see how close the tramp had come to hitting me. Miss Grove had moved over toward one of the front lobby windows, and I went to her, stopping as though on my way to my room.

"Whoever that was, he meant to kill me," I said in a low voice. "Haven't we had enough murder? Why don't you tell me who it was?"

She wouldn't look straight at me. "I—I don't know. It—it must have been a tramp."

"It wasn't any tramp. You know that."

"That's what they all say. A tramp."

She looked up. "I honestly don't know who it was," she said.

"But you can give a pretty good guess, can't you?"

She gasped a little, looked down. She leaned against the wall.

"It—it—I think it was—"

Then Ellis Lapham was standing there, all cheeriness.

"Mind if I go along with you to your room, old man? I never have seen a place where somebody tried to commit a murder."

There certainly wasn't anything sociable about the look I gave him. But he didn't seem fazed.

"You see, it's been raining," he went on, "and I figure that if a tramp came in he must have left some kind of footprints."

"Smart," I growled.

The girl said: "Excuse me. I must see that Smith gets those sandwiches made up." And she went away.

Lapham linked his arm into mine. "Come on. I've always wanted to see how I'd be as a detective. Imagine an attempted murder out in a nice quiet place like this!"

I said: "Imagine it."

We went to my room, and found Gratz there, bending over the bed. He straightened, gave an embarrassed smile. The neck of his dressing robe was a little open, and before he had a chance to close it I caught a glimpse of collar and tie.

"I was just looking around. Looks as though he'd shot right at you while you were lying in bed there, as you told us."

"You didn't touch anything?" I asked.

"Oh, no! Not a thing! I suppose you have to leave a place like this just as it is—I mean, until the police come?"

"You're going to call the state troopers then?"

"Well, to tell the truth, Mr. Ralston, I should like to avoid calling them. It's up to you, of course. You're entitled to an investigation. But it would certainly hurt the hotel's reputation."

"As far as I'm concerned," I said, "there doesn't have to be any investigation."

"I'm glad to hear you say that!" He edged out. "The sandwiches and coffee ought to be ready pretty soon."

"We'll be there," I promised.

WELL, there weren't any wet footprints in the room, naturally. I hadn't expected any. This "tramp" hadn't come in from the outside.

What I had hoped to find were some shells from an automatic. But these weren't there. Of course, I might have been wrong. It might have been a revolver which was fired at me. On the other hand, Gratz could have pocketed three shells before Lapham and I came in.

There were three bullet holes in the bed, so close together that they were almost one. The bullets had gone clear through the mattress, through the springs, and into the floor. I managed to prize one of them out, but it was too badly mashed to be of any use to a ballistics man.

"Funny about there being no wet marks," Lapham muttered.

"It's a scream. Let's go outside."

My care in vaulting the rail away from where the gunman had vaulted it, had been wasted. The ground below was well trampled.

"We came running out here," Lapham explained. "Smith and Mr. Swinton and myself. Stupid of us, wasn't it?"

I thought: "Was it?" But I didn't say anything.

Poking around, I kicked over several chunks of grayish rock which looked to me like willemite. I'm no geologist, like my friend Dr. Hausmann of Elizabeth, but it happens that Doc Hausmann is an amateur criminologist too, and a pretty smart old fellow, and once he showed me how you can use powdered willemite instead of anthracine when you wanted to find out certain things. Anthracine's hard to get around here, he had said, but there's tons of willemite and franklinite all over this part of the state. I figured that whoever it was who'd wanted to look into my suitcase would still want to look there, and would try again; and if I couldn't learn who it was any other way, maybe I could get scientific about it? Anyway, I slipped a chunk of this willemite into my pocket. Lapham and I went back to the lobby.

We had a kind of nice little party there, all very informal and everything. The bathrobes and dressing robes and negligees were gone now. Mrs. West had fixed herself up hastily but well: she was still putting the finishing touches on, and I made some excuse to handle her lipstick and learned that it was a Senac's extra light, like on those Melachas.

I would have liked to ask this Mrs. West just where she was Monday afternoon about the time Chauncey R. McCabe got his. I would have liked to ask all of them that. But there wasn't

any use. The minute I started getting openly inquisitive, they'd become clams. And I had to keep reminding myself that I was out of my territory here, that I had no real authority, and that my evidence so far consisted largely of hunches and possible coincidences. Also I had to remember that I didn't have a gun. Maybe that was even more important.

Well, we chatted along pleasantly enough, while dawn oozed through the windows and the little birdies began to tune up in the trees outside—oh, yes! we were pleasant enough!—but there was a killer in our midst. I was never more convinced of anything in my life.

Gratz said after a while: "I hope your adventure isn't going to turn you away from us? You still want to remain, Mr. Ralston?"

He was hoping that I'd say no. But I disappointed him.

"Oh, I'll stick around," I tossed off. "What's a little thing like a few bullets among friends?"

He said: "I'll have the boy move your things up to Room 122. It's on the second floor and looks out over the valley. There's a little balcony, but no fire escape or anything. And no veranda. Ha-ha!"

I said: "Ha-ha! That's fine. I'll go along with him."

Room 122 was in fairly good shape. That Neanderthal specimen who was supposed to be a bellhop opened both windows and made up the bed and scrubbed out the bathroom.

"You don't have to stay here," he said. "I'll fix things up."

"That's all right," I said. "I got nothing else to do."

When he'd gone at last, I crushed the willemit until it was a fine powder, light gray, almost white, and this I sifted over the straps and lock of my

suitcase. Not that there was anything in that suitcase I was afraid to let anybody have a look at. It was just that I wanted to know who did the looking.

American detectives don't very often use anthracine. Most of them have never even heard of the stuff, I guess. English detectives use it, but our cops over here don't go in much for fancy scientific wrinkles. We're kind of slow that way. Our idea of detective work, as a rule, is to find out from stool pigeons who it was who most likely pulled a given job, and then to pick up that person on an open charge—which means no charge at all—and take him into a backroom and cuff him around until he cracks with a confession. The trouble with the system—aside from the fact that sometimes you pick up the wrong guy—is that it doesn't work when the suspect is somebody with pull.

But about this anthracine. You scatter it so thin that it can't be seen, and anybody who touches that object afterwards is sure to have some of it stick to his hands. He won't feel it, and he won't be able to see it, but it'll be there. Even if he washes his hands, unless he's careful, some of it will probably stick between the fingers or else it'll get on the bottom part of his coatsleeves. Then you get him to put his hands underneath an ultra-violet lamp and the powder nobody could see before stands out as bright as that much gold dust.

As I say, I don't ordinarily go in for scientific things. But this wasn't an ordinary case.

Afterward I washed my hands and wrists thoroughly and went out on the balcony for a breath of air.

IT WAS a grand day, all chirrupy with summerlike things. From this balcony, which was on the second floor, I could look out over a whole succes-

sion of frolicsome hills tumbling over one another like a lot of bear cubs at play. Most of them were covered with trees, or at least with bushes. There were very few open clearings, and no fields at all. Far away, I could see a column of smoke wavering in the morning air, and my ears caught the distant boo-oo-oot of a railway whistle, but otherwise this might have been the same country it was when the painted redskins had it to themselves. No billboards, no gas stations, no automobiles, no telephone poles. It was the peaceful landscape you ever did see.

Maybe that was why the man, when I spotted him, grabbed my attention instantly. He was about half a mile away. He seemed sort of tall and young, and it looked as if he was giving a not very good imitation of those same redskins who had stalked things back and forth across this countryside in the days before the white men came. He'd dodge from tree to tree, from one clump of bushes to another, nervous as a rabbit. He was coming nearer the Hollingshed all the time, but he certainly was cagy about it. After a while he got to a place that seemed to satisfy him, and he crouched there, raising a pair of binoculars to his eyes.

Not wishing to be squinted at, I stepped inside. When I looked out again, a few minutes later, the young man was gone.

Now a thing like that makes a guy do a lot of wondering. I wouldn't be a cop, I suppose, if I didn't have about sixteen times as much curiosity as any normal human being. Whenever I see a guy doing something funny I want to know why. Even if it's none of my business, I still want to know why. So now I went downstairs.

The telephone booth reminded me that this would be a good time to catch

Haggerty at his office, before I went chasing young men with field glasses. Somebody was in the booth: I didn't peer to see who it was. The lobby was deserted, otherwise. I needed change, so naturally I looked around for Gratz. He wasn't at the desk, and I poked into the little cubbyhole in back there, expecting to find him. He wasn't there either. But I saw a pair of telephone earpieces, like a line man might use. They looked as though they might have belonged to an old-fashioned radio set, but there wasn't any radio there, only a tiny switch.

Well, you know how I am. Right away I had the earpieces on and was throwing the switch.

"That's okay then . . . I'll ring you again some time tomorrow. I think we're going to have trouble here soon. 'Bye."

This was all. Just the tail-end of a conversation, and then somebody hung up a receiver. I stuck my head out of the little office in time to see Dr. Himbaugh emerge from the telephone booth.

So that wire was tapped! It was an interesting discovery. But even more interesting, to me, was the fact that in the voice I'd just overheard there wasn't the slightest suggestion of a German accent. It had been Himbaugh's voice too. But no accent.

I decided that it would be a good idea to try to learn something more about this Dr. Himbaugh who expected trouble here soon.

I also decided that it would be a good idea to make future telephone calls from the general store at Mahatiqua.

Swainton approached me, saluting. "What about a little croquet, Mr. Ralston? It's a beautiful day for it."

"Yeah, swell croquet weather," I agreed, "but first I want to take a little

walk. Nice country around here. I want to see some of it."

So I went out. . . .

CHAPTER VII

Rolling Arsenal

IN SPITE of a careful looking-around, I didn't find the young man with the field glasses. I was wondering about this as I found the highway and walked to the general store.

The graybeard of Mahatiqua looked just as dusty and disconsolate as he'd looked the previous day, and just as unsociable. But he did manage to show me the telephone, and to ask me how I liked it up at the Hollingshed.

"They never come down here, none of them people," he complained.

"None of them at all?"

"Well," he said, "that red-haired woman was in the other afternoon. Day it rained so much. I thought she'd never clear out. She'd just get fixed to go when it'd start to rain again, so she'd stay."

"You don't mean Monday, do you?"

"Yes, it was Monday."

"See any of the others that afternoon?"

He shook his head very slowly, very sadly. He seemed almost about to burst into tears.

"Well, was the red-head here long?"

"Oh, I'd say maybe an hour and a half. She was here until about four. Somebody brought her in a car. Didn't see who it was. But I heard her laughing and all, and she was saying something like 'I got plenty up above anyway,' and she said she'd walk back for the exercise. And then she came in here, and what d'ye spose she bought?"

"I give up. What did she buy?"

"A couple of three-cent postage stamps!"

All this information he'd passed as though he thought it was a great shame that there were people like Mrs. West and me in the world. But he'd helped me a lot. For his story, I was thinking as I put coins into the box, gave Mrs. West a perfect alibi. Chauncey McCabe had been killed a few minutes after four o'clock Monday afternoon.

It was too bad that the graybeard didn't know who had been in that car. He hadn't even taken the trouble to look outside. He did remember, however, that the car had been driven off in a southerly direction—away from the Hollingshed Inn road, toward Newark.

You could just about make it from Mahatiqua to Newark in one hour, if you drove like hell.

Cap Haggerty was all excited, bless his heart.

"Say, this business gets bigger every minute, George! I wish to hell you'd come back here where you belong! People are saying—"

"Skip that part," I suggested. "What's new?"

"Well, you remember we sent a few lifted latents to Washington, hoping the Battley files might show something? Well, they did!"

I said "So?" and whistled a little to myself.

Haggerty blurted: "And it's Henny Jameson!"

Well, no wonder Hag was all het up. I whistled more.

I said: "Thought he was supposed to be in Mexico, or some such place?"

"He'd simply dropped out of existence! This is the first time anybody's turned up anything definite on him in almost a year. The federals had been looking for him in Mexico, and then in Canada, and even over in Europe. And now he pops up here!"

"Anybody seen him around?"

"Not unless he's Arthur Bates. There's a chance he is. We've been working everything we know to get something more about Bates. But the general description of Jameson applies to him, to a certain extent. Jameson's a younger man, but he was pretty clever about changing his appearance. He had to be, to keep out of jail all these years! We haven't got his mug, but Washington's rushing copies by plane."

"And if it does turn out to be Bates, where are you even then?"

"Well, where are *you*, if it comes to that?"

"Oh, I'm getting along," I chirruped.

"Listen, George. There's plenty trouble across the alley about you taking a powder on us the way you did, and I'm covering you with everything I got but I can't hold out much longer. I don't know where you are and what you're doing, but when this case breaks it's going to break right here in Newark—and I certainly wish you'd be on hand for the occasion!"

"Maybe it'll break out here. You never can tell about murder cases. Henny Jameson, eh? Well, well. Not the ones on the knife?"

"No. Those were smeared. This was off that cigarette case we found. Just one print. It was mighty weak, too. Sonny had to use iodine fumes to bring it out. Then he lifted it with a gelatine sheet."

"What possible connection could Henny Jameson have had with Chauncey McCabe?"

"I don't know. Unless maybe Henny was planning a snatch."

"Does Henny go in for snatching too?"

"I guess he'd go in for anything, if it was big enough. He only touched the big stuff, but he isn't any specialist.

Kidnapping, bank jobs, extortion, stolen crates, arson, even a little murder now and then. In fact, *especially* a little murder now and then."

"A very hot number."

"Yeah, and here we are running all over the place looking for him—and you're out somewhere sitting on your spine, you—"

"Temper, temper, Hag! Always count ten first! Anything new on that Westwall kid, from Montclair?"

"Not a thing. I wish you'd come in."

"Can't. I got a date to play croquet. Call you tomorrow."

As I started out of the store, a big moving van rumbled past, coming from the direction of the Hollingshed. "Collins Moving Service, Hackensack, N. J." There was something odd about that vehicle. . . .

I asked Gray Whiskers: "That go by here very often?"

"Used to pass three-four times a day. Ain't seen it much lately. I suppose they're using it to cart stuff up to the hotel. They never stop here," he added, as though this fact had some sinister significance.

But still I wondered about the truck.

I was wondering about a lot of things, if it comes to that.

The highway was deserted, and I walked slowly, trying to put this and that together. I decided that what I most wanted to do right now, outside of having a good quiet talk with Mildred Grove, was to have a good quiet talk with Gratz. It didn't have to be so quiet, at that, provided there wasn't anybody else around. Gratz probably was the man who had shot at me; and while I might wisecrack about that business from time to time, when it comes right down to it I've got to admit that I don't like having guys sneak into my room at night and shooting at me.

Yes, I decided I'd contrive somehow to have a little talk with Gratz. Somewhere out in the woods. It would help a lot.

I was about half a mile from the store and maybe the same distance from the Hollingshed's road, when I came upon the wreck. The ground fell away sharply to the left, almost like a cliff, and the side of the highway there was protected by a whitewashed fence. Ten or fifteen feet of this fence had been ripped out, and the bushes beyond were badly torn. I ran over there and looked down. The drop was maybe thirty-five feet, and it ended in a rocky stream. In the middle of that stream, upside down, its wheels still turning slowly, was a popular coupé.

Well, I ran down that slope so fast that I almost did a couple of somersaults myself, the way that coupé had done.

Gratz was at the wheel. His eyes were closed, and his mouth was shut, but blood was struggling to get between his lips. It wasn't pretty. The man's whole chest had been crushed in by the steering wheel.

"How'd you ever manage to plow through that fence, man? You must have been going like mad! Here, let me try to—"

He opened his eyes a little. I think he recognized me, but I'm not sure. He moved his lips, and blood tumbled out.

". . . pushed. . . . They pushed me through . . . murder . . ."

Then, very quietly, he died.

A LITTLE earlier there hadn't been a car in sight, but now it looked as though half New Jersey was stopping.

I didn't want any part of it. I didn't want a lot of troopers asking me questions, and a coroner demanding my

name and occupation and reason for being here, and all the rest.

Gratz had been murdered. Somebody had pushed him and his car right through a stout wooden fence and over a bank. It must have been a tremendous shove. The van? It had passed this place only a few minutes earlier. But how could such a cumbrous vehicle push a coupé off the road? Even supposing that Gratz had lost his head, his car must have been much faster than the van. He could have sped away.

I slipped off quietly. A trooper arrived on a motorcycle just as I reached the highway, but he didn't do anything to stop me. There must have been twenty people there by that time. Even old Gray Whiskers had wheeled out an astounding antique and was sitting in it and gazing down the slope.

Pretty soon I was off the highway and trudging up along the private dirt road toward the hotel. It was a narrow road, and full of twists, and naturally my feet didn't make any noise on the soft earth; so that I came upon William Westwall rather suddenly.

He had binoculars in a case at his side, and a gun in his left hand, and he was looking at the gun as though he'd never seen one before in his life.

"Careful," I warned. "I keep that thing filed down pretty fine."

He looked as if he wanted to run, then changed his mind.

"Is—is this yours?"

"You ought to know. You're the one who stole it, aren't you?"

"I just found the thing! In the woods back there!"

"You tell nice stories, kid, but after a while it gets so I don't believe 'em." I reached out my hand. "Give it back to me."

He was uncertain what to do. I could see that.

"If I do give it to you," he said, "what will you do?"

"Put it in its holster where it belongs, and then arrest you."

He flared: "You've got nothing against me!"

Well, he was right, at that. I hadn't booked him, Monday night. There was no official accusation against him, and no warrant, so you couldn't call him a fugitive. I might make a charge of assault, or of interfering with an officer in the performance of his duty, but I'd have a time explaining why I hadn't made such a charge in the first place.

"There's a law against carrying guns in this state," I reminded him. "There's also a law against possession of stolen goods."

He was getting his nerve back. He wasn't cocky, he was still a little flustered, but he was not going to have anything put over on him.

"Maybe you'd like to have it a matter of record that your gun was stolen from you," he said. "Is that it?"

Well, he had me again. Naturally with all the professional black eyes I was getting these days, I wasn't anxious to give the boys just that much more to giggle about. There's nothing that makes a cop look so foolish as to have his gun stolen.

What's more, I wasn't at all sure that Westwall wasn't telling the truth when he said he had found the gun in the woods near here. Gratz might have thrown it away, fearing to get caught with it.

"Were you here last night?" I asked.

"No, I wasn't. I came about seven o'clock this morning. I'm staying at a little hotel over near Netcong, if you must know, and I came here to take a look at the Hollingshed, which I'd heard about."

"Is that why you're carrying field

glasses? Why not just go up and look at the place with your naked eyes?"

He didn't answer this.

I asked: "What are you really doing here, Westwall?"

"That's my business."

"What interest did you have in Chauncey McCabe?"

"Absolutely none."

I thought the man was lying, but I wasn't sure.

"Why did you slip the man who was trailing you out of Newark?"

"This is the first time I knew that anybody was trailing me!"

This time I was sure he was lying, but I didn't tell him so.

I asked: "And most of all, what are you doing snooping around here with a pair of binoculars, and picking up detectives' revolvers?"

"I told you, that's my business. It's my private affair." Suddenly, with a stiff gesture, he handed me the gun. "If you want to arrest me, go ahead. If you want to take me to a police station and question me about some crime, go ahead."

I WOULD have liked to talk more with him, talk quietly, amicably, try to reason with him. But he turned away. He was sore. He walked into the woods, not looking back once. I could see that he was holding himself stiff and firm, and was determined not to cooperate with me. It would take a long while, probably, to argue him out of that attitude. I was standing there, slowly putting the gun back into its holster, and wondering whether to follow him or not, when I heard the moving van coming back up the hill. A wheezy, heavy engine. I stepped into the bushes to let it pass. And as it passed I saw something which made me forget all about William Westwall.

The right front fender and right side of this van had been scraped recently. Black paint had been scraped off by some other car, and blue paint had been scraped on.

Gratz's coupé was blue. Just that shade of blue, too.

So I went after the van, instead of after Westwall. . . .

The Hollingshed seemed deserted. Nobody was on the veranda. Nobody was around back. The big garage was locked, but the moving van was in front of it. Right away I began to learn things.

In the first place, this moving van had pneumatic tires instead of the solid rubber tires you'd naturally expect on a vehicle built to carry heavy loads. They were good tires too, and new.

The scrapes on the fender and side were clear. It was perfectly obvious that the van had recently sideswiped a small blue car.

I lifted the hood—and got a shock. It was like lifting the lid of an ashcan and finding it full of diamonds. Here was an engine that had never been meant for this truck, or for any other truck. It was a keen, strong thing, a deep V-type, apparently a special job built to order for some inter-state bus firm. It had a complete double ignition system—two generators, two coils, two condensers, two distributors, even two batteries. A switch on the instrument board controlled each, and it was possible to cut out a block of cylinders without moving from behind the wheel. That naturally would make the engine sound and seem wheezy and slow. But in fact, running with both blocks in operation, and not too much of a load aboard, this engine probably was capable of driving the van at seventy-five or eighty miles an hour, maybe even faster.

I got a few moreshocks when I climbed into the van itself. It was sheathed with steel! And the whole back, instead of being broken into a tailboard and an upper swinging section, was one big piece, and could be dropped like a drawbridge by means of a windlass operated from the driver's seat. The inside of that back, incidentally, was cleated like a runway. The driver's seat was enclosed in steel and glass, and the glass looked sort of funny to me. I tapped it with the butt of my gun. I tapped harder. Then I hauled off and gave it a good clout. All I got was a fine milky stain. Bullet proof! There were loop-holes in the back and on the sides. And in a compartment above the driver's seat I found six tear gas bombs, a couple of Colt .45 automatics with four extra clips, and a nice sleek shiny Thompson sub-machine gun.

Why, this thing was a regular fort on wheels!

I swung to the ground, a little dizzy, not yet certain what to do about all this. I found myself face to face with Smith, the *châuffeur-chef*. He was placing a can of paint and a paint brush on the running board, and his right hand started for a hip pocket.

He said, low: "What the hell do you think *you're* doing here?"

CHAPTER VIII

Enter Arthur Bates

THIS man Smith was tough, but he wasn't as tough as I am. I'm not saying this to boast—just stating a fact I know to be true. It's my business to know things like that. Normally, Smith wouldn't have dared to get nasty with me. And his confidence now was based on something more than the gun in his pocket: it was based on a belief that I didn't have a gun.

"This truck is private property," he snarled.

I snicked out my police special .38, and twirled it once, just once, on my forefinger.

"So is this, heel."

He couldn't have looked more dumb-founded if I'd taken a bowl of goldfish out of my watch pocket.

I put the gun away and walked off. I was pretty sore; and if I'd let myself go I would have started to push him around a little. On this job, I had to keep reminding myself that I wasn't just a regular dick. If you've been a cop long enough you get so that when you meet up with a punk like Smith, and he has the gall to act disagreeable, you start giving it back to him with plenty interest. It's a habit. In fact, it's a regular frame of mind you get into.

But I wasn't dealing with ordinary criminals here, and I didn't dare to behave like an ordinary detective.

For instance, I could have pinched Smith, walked him down to the highway and turned him over to the troopers who probably were still working on the wreck of Gratz's car. But what would that get me? Smith wasn't the man I wanted. There were real brains behind this lay-out, and Smith was a no-account underling, like that bellhop-waiter. He might know something, and he might spill it under pressure, but it wouldn't be enough to count. Even supposing that we could establish the fact that he had been driving the truck—and I couldn't swear to this because I hadn't noticed him at the wheel—and even supposing that we could prove that the truck had scraped the coupé, as we probably could by an analysis of the paint and so-forth—even so, where were we? The best that could be hoped for then was that Smith would get a

stiff jail term on a conviction of manslaughter or else driving away after causing an accident. He deserved that jail term. But how would that help to find the murderer of Chauncey R. McCabe?

Understand, it was against all my instinct to walk away from this mug! Not that I was afraid of anything he'd do when my back was turned. It was just that all my training and all my experience was shouting at me to pick the punk up and shake his back teeth loose until he told me things. But I couldn't do that. I was out after something bigger.

Still boiling a little, inside, I strolled around to the front of the hotel and found Swainton knocking croquet balls back and forth.

"All set for that game?"

I said: "Sure. Deal me in."

He certainly was good company, Swainton. He laughed and frisked around, and he got a stupendous kick out of it. He beat me, too. Beat me badly. But then, he'd had a lot more practice. I was getting better all the time, when the gong rang for lunch.

We were all pretty hungry, breakfast having been so early. I sat with Swainton. Nobody said a word about Gratz, or why he wasn't there. I wondered whether the troopers hadn't got him identified yet.

Beacon sat by himself, glowering at his food as though he thought it had played him a dirty trick. Dr. Himbaugh sat with Ellis Lapham, who looked tired. Himbaugh talked a little, peering at Lapham through his thick-lensed glasses. Mrs. West ate with Mildred Grove, and neither of them opened her mouth. When the meal was finished I sauntered over to their table.

"Friend Gratz away for the day?"

"He went to New York on some

business." Mildred didn't look worried about this, though I thought I caught a funny expression on Mrs. West's face. "I'm the manager just now."

"That's fine. Lots of business? Any new guests?"

"Why, no. It's still a little early in the season."

I said: "Just thought a friend of mine might have shown up. Young fellow named Westwall, from Montclair."

Mrs. West only looked puzzled, and a shade annoyed, as though she suspected me of making a wisecrack she couldn't understand; but Mildred Grove went absolutely white.

"That—that would—be very nice," she managed to say at last.

IT WAS a lovely afternoon, and we all sat around on the lawn watching the croquet. Swainton took on one after the other and beat us all, even me. Dr. Himbaugh sat beaming, peering through those spectacles of his, and muttering little German phrases when he got excited. Miss Grove sat with Ellis Lapham. Beacon sat near me, saying nothing. Beacon was a glum guy for sure. I couldn't figure him. He had a copy of the *Star* and when I saw he wasn't reading it I borrowed it from him.

"Want to read about that McCabe murder case," I explained.

"I never cared for murders," Beacon said.

And I actually did read the whole story about the McCabe case, more than three columns of it, but I didn't learn anything new.

And yet that paper did teach me something, in a sort of way. Himbaugh, who was next to me, borrowed the second section of it and spread this over his face when he stretched out for a

nap. His glasses had fallen off and were dangling from the ribbon around his neck. Somehow they struck me as queer, those glasses. I picked them up, being careful not to disturb Himbaugh, and held them against the newspaper.

They didn't magnify at all! They were ordinary window glass!

The others hadn't seen me do this. When I looked up, Mildred Grove was just admitting defeat to Bishop Swainton, and was handing her mallet to Lapham, who was going to take the next crack at the championship. I heard her say something about feeling like a little stroll, and saw her start off for the entrance of the private road.

I thought: My chance.

I got up, yawning, mumbling something about how I'd go to sleep if I kept sitting in that comfortable chair, and started to amble away to the right. As soon as I got into the woods, out of sight of the others, I swung to the left and started running hard. Pretty soon I came out on the dirt road. There wasn't anybody in sight, up or down. Thinking that maybe I'd come out too low, I walked back up toward the hotel. I didn't see her. Puzzled, and not wishing to expose myself to the group on the lawn, I turned and went back down the road all the way to the highway. But I saw no sign of Mildred Grove.

The only possible explanation was that she had ducked into the woods once she got out of sight of the men on the lawn.

I returned the way I had come. Mrs. West smiled, and I sat next to her. Himbaugh, who had awakened, talked to us about a game they played in Germany, which he said was something like croquet only different. I didn't believe there was such a game, but never having been in Germany I wasn't in any position to call him a liar. After a

while he went back to the hotel; Lapham having been defeated, Beacon was persuaded to play the ever-victorious Swainton; and I sat alone, thinking about things.

When it got close to dinner time I went up to my room. As soon as I stepped inside I sniffed fresh cigarette smoke. Everything else seemed the same. The suitcase might have been opened, but I couldn't be sure, since the powdered willemite was spread so thin that I couldn't see it in an ordinary light. I had left the suitcase locked, of course, but it was the kind of lock any kid could have opened with a hairpin.

The balcony? I looked out there, but didn't find any cigarette butt. A butt might have been tossed over the edge of the balcony to the ground below? Excepting the bathroom, that was the only place it could have been thrown. I changed my shirt and went out for another little stroll; and under my balcony I found a cigarette butt.

It was out, but still warm. It wasn't a Melacha but it did have lipstick on it.

When I went back into the hotel practically the whole crowd was standing around waiting for the gorilla to wham the dinner gong, and I thought it would be a good chance to see what I could see under the sunlamp in the lobby.

I wasn't at all sure it would work. Dr. Hausmann had used an iron-arc with a black ray screen, but this thing in the lobby was an ordinary commercial selenium lamp. Still, it was certain that willemite was fluorescent under the ultra-violet.

"I see you've got a sunlamp over there," I said to Mildred Grove.

"Yes," she smiled. "It belongs to Mrs. West."

"I use it sometimes on rainy days," the West one put in.

I said, still casually: "Ever see how funny your hands look under one of those things, if it's dark enough in the room?"

I strolled over to the lamp, which was in a dim corner, and snapped it on. I held my hands under it. The beam made them a gorgeous purple, and made the nails almost black.

It's the kind of thing people just can't resist; if you've ever seen it you'll know what I mean. Pretty soon Swainton was by my side, sticking his hands under the ray and chuckling at their appearance.

"Weird, isn't it?" he said.

"Isn't it fascinating," I said, very loud.

Mrs. West came over, Ellis Lapham with her. She smiled and shook her head when I invited her to see how her hands looked under the lamp. It was an old story to her, she said. Lapham stuck his hands under, and like Swainton's they were clear of willemite. Beacon sidled over, squinting suspiciously. Miss Grove talked him into doing it.

"See, it's perfectly harmless," she said, holding her hands under the light.

I almost gasped out loud. For there was a luminous sheen of yellow over the girl's hands—thin, looking almost like gold dust at first, but then you saw that it had a faint apple-green tinge. Anyway, it was bright. It was fluorescent.

"I wonder what that stuff could be," she said absently.

Beacon tried it, timidly, reluctantly.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" he said, and sniggered a little.

"Vass iss all diss?" asked Himbaugh, coming up to where we were clustered around the lamp.

We told him, and without hesitation he thrust his hands under the lamp. You just can't resist it when you've

seen somebody else do it. Himbaugh's hands were dark purple, like the rest, while the nails were almost black; but to me, who was looking for it, there was no mistaking the glitter of willemite.

Just about that time the dinner gong rang.

WELL, we all said we were going to bed early this night, having been up since before dawn, and as far as I'm concerned I actually did. Along about nine o'clock I went up to my room, got undressed, got into pajamas, and climbed into bed and turned out the light. There was just a slim chance that somebody might be outside watching me through binoculars, or somebody might be in the hall, listening.

It was a peculiar sort of night, sultry, sticky, close. The sky seemed to be doing its best to promote a thunderstorm, which the air craved intensely. Considering the fact that there wasn't a trace of breeze below, it was odd the way the clouds scooted across the zenith as though they were mad at something. Lying in bed, I watched them. The moon came and went, very bright when the clouds gave it a chance to shine at all, utterly invisible when the clouds were over it. The result was a sort of on-again, off-again business, as though there was a loose connection in the celestial lighting system which was intermittently broken and restored by tiny jars. Now and then the thunder muttered thin things, fierce but far away, and heat lightning would flash.

After about an hour of this, I got up without turning on the light. I dressed again. I went out into the hall. It was empty.

There were several things I wished to do, but the first and most important was to get in that confidential talk with

Mildred Grove. Her room was down at the other end of the hotel, on this same floor. I had seen her go there, about the same time that I retired, but I hadn't been able to speak to her then because Ellis Lapham was around. His room was opposite hers. Next to Lapham's room was Dr. Himbaugh's.

There was a light in Mildred's room, and she was moving around, but before I had a chance to knock I heard Dr. Himbaugh coming up from downstairs. I ducked into a linen closet, leaving the door open an inch.

Himbaugh's glasses weren't on his nose, but hung from that ribbon; and yet he wasn't peering or squinting. When he got in front of his own door he looked right and left, and then drew a shiny little .22 automatic. He clicked off the safety catch. Then, holding the key in his left hand, the gun in his right, he unlocked and opened the door. He stepped quickly to one side as he did this. He wasn't taking any chances.

But what could Himbaugh be so worried about?

He reached in carefully with his left hand, snapped the light button just inside the door, and eventually entered.

This thing was getting stranger and stranger all the time. I came out of that linen closet shaking my head, and frowning. I had the hall to myself now, and I went immediately to Mildred Grove's door.

The transom was dark. I knocked very quietly. Then, when I got no answer, I knocked a little louder.

Now I was getting fed up with all this gumshoeing around, and it still seemed to me that my best bet lay in seeing Mildred Grove privately. I didn't dare knock any harder—Himbaugh might hear. So I decided to go outside and enter, if possible by a window.

That isn't what you'd call a nice way for a guy to go visiting a girl, ordinarily. But I couldn't afford to think about being nice.

The lobby was deserted, enormous, and utterly dark. Once, while I was crossing it, lightning flashed silently, and all the chairs around me, swathed in white dust covers, seemed to leap out of nothingness. It was an eerie place.

I didn't make a sound, myself. I was wearing tennis sneakers because I had expected to do quite a bit of prowling this night.

The front door was unlocked.

The two windows of Mildred Grove's room were dark. They were just off the east end of the veranda, and the balcony upon which they opened was only a few feet from the veranda roof. At that end of the veranda there was a strong white lattice, meant for roses, which, like so many other things at the Hollingshed, never had been installed. It was just like walking up a ladder.

The step across to the balcony was a little bigger than it had looked from below. But I made it easily enough.

Very softly, not wishing to scare her any more than was necessary, I called: "Are you in? It's me. Mr. Ralston."

No answer. I called again. It didn't seem possible that she wasn't in there. I had seen her go in, had heard her moving around there only a few minutes ago, and had been watching the hall in the meanwhile. The only way she could have left was by one of the windows.

I called again, and still got no answer. Then I climbed in through the nearer of the two windows. They were both open, but unscreened.

The room was empty, and so was

the bathroom. But somebody had been there a little while before. I smelled cigarette smoke. I didn't want to take a chance striking a match, so I prowled in the dark, feeling things. I found one cigarette butt, crushed out but still smoking a little. It was the same brand as the butt under my window—and there was lipstick on it.

SOMEHOW that hit me harder than anything else. It made me feel a little sick. I was willing to admit that I'd been a dumb cluck all through this case, and that I'd messed it up from the very beginning. But it was a terrible poke between the eyes to realize that I had made a fool of myself over Mildred Grove too. That was a little too much.

You see, I had staked everything on my faith in that girl. For some reason I didn't understand she was afraid to confide in me. That was all right. She had left a message in my bedroom, warning me to go away. All right again: she'd been afraid I would get killed. Even the evidence of the powdered willemite, though it puzzled me, I was willing to ignore. After all, it wasn't conclusive. Mildred might have got willemite on her hands in some other fashion.

But this empty bedroom—and then this cigarette butt! She had told me that she didn't smoke.

Well, I thought to myself, that's the last time I trust a woman. Any woman. I'd have been better off, I told myself, if I'd pinched her in the first place, as soon as I'd come to the Hollingshed.

It hurt. It really hurt.

But after a while I snapped out of it, and I prowled into the bathroom. I had scarcely got to feeling around in there when I heard somebody jump from the roof outside to the balcony,

I went to the bathroom door for a look. There was a man on the balcony. I couldn't see his face.

"Mildred?" he whispered, in a voice strange to me. Then again, a little louder: "Mildred?"

Getting no answer, he stepped in, just like I had done myself. He went to the bureau, started to open one of the bureau drawers—

It must have been that he simply *sensed* my presence, because I'm certain that I didn't move or make any sort of sound. I had wanted to watch him for a while, see what he'd do. But when he whirled around suddenly I jumped out of the bathroom and jammed a gun against him.

"Up, sweetheart!"

I heard him gasp, a jerky little sound deep in his throat, and I could see his eyes gleam. But he raised his arms fast enough.

"Who are you?"

"Who are *you*?" I countered.

"Well, first, who are *you*?"

"Oh, no! It's first who are *you*. On account of I'm the one who's holding the gun, see?"

It was straight logic, and I guess he got it.

"I'm not going to tell you who I am," he said stiffly.

I said "No?" I was doing a lot of guessing, but it didn't help much. All I could see was that I had a middle-aged man here and that he was wearing a dark business suit and no hat. The lightning wouldn't oblige, and finally I got impatient and decided to risk the lights. I felt for and found the button, and pushed it.

"So you're not going to tell me who you are, huh?"

Here was a man of maybe forty-five, a rather nice-looking man, nicely dressed. He needed a shave, and his

hair was mussed, and his shirt was dirty, but still he looked neat and clean somehow. He had brown eyes, a small nose, iron-gray hair. . . . There was something vaguely familiar about his face.

"So I'll have to guess, huh? Well, that shouldn't be so hard." I tapped his chest with my left forefinger. "You're Arthur Bates."

He gasped again, loudly this time. And I knew that I was right.

I said: "Well?"

"I'm not denying anything or affirming anything. Are you a policeman?"

"I'll ask the questions, not you."

"Well, I'm not denying anything or affirming anything," he said.

"Not now maybe. But you will when I get you to a station house."

"You *are* a policeman then! I thought you looked like one."

I didn't care for that crack, but I let it pass. I started to prod him toward the door. There was a warrant out for him, I knew, and I wasn't taking any chances this time. He was certainly Arthur Bates—his expression had told me that much—and in a little while I was going to get some action out of him. I was glad of that. I was getting pretty sick of dodging around corners and sneaking through windows.

"Outside, Bates. And if you try to make a break for it I'll bust one of your legs with a slug."

Then suddenly, out of a clear sky, I realized who this man was. It came to me just like that. I can't explain it.

I stopped, staring at him.

"Oh," I said slowly, nodding my head. "Now I begin to understand."

There had seemed no reason why we shouldn't leave this room by the door, instead of by the window. We were standing near the door. I hadn't even thought of the windows, didn't

even look toward them. Which was my mistake.

I heard a step behind me. I started to turn—but I wasn't fast enough. I never saw what it was that hit me. But I felt it! It felt like something just pressed quietly across the back of my neck. It didn't hurt much, then.

I remember hitting the floor with my knees. I remember starting to curse. Then a flock of blackness swarmed all over me.

CHAPTER IX

The Secret of the Garage

I DON'T think I was out long. The room was dark when I came to, and I went for the light button before I did anything else. I was alone. My gun was gone. And did I feel terrible!

I went to the window, went out on the balcony. There was no light anywhere, not even the light of the moon, for the clouds were thickening and getting closer together. There wasn't any sound.

I went back, went into the bathroom, swabbed a throbbing head with cold water, and then left. I left by the door, like a gentleman.

Well, now here I was right where I'd started from, except that I was plus a headache and minus a revolver. What I should have done, of course, was go right down to the lobby and ring up the state police. That was my clear duty. But there were a couple of things I wanted to do first. By this time I was getting kind of used to the business of playing a lone hand.

First I searched the grounds. And didn't find anything.

Then I went to the garage. I'd been convinced all along that this garage held some important secret. They guarded it so carefully! The van was

kept in there. Gratz's coupé must have been in there before he drove it to his death. But my own car was denied admittance.

Incidentally, I noticed when I passed the smaller garage that my car had that to itself now. The tired-looking roadster was gone.

The big garage was well built, of concrete, and it had no windows except some small ones of wired, opaque glass high up in the doors. But I knew it had skylights. I had been able to see them from a window on the second floor of the hotel.

So I went around to the back of the garage, and I found a strong stick which I propped against the building, and by stepping on this and stretching hard, I was just able to reach the edge of the roof. It was a pretty tough job pulling myself up; I scratched my face badly, and tore my pants; but finally I got there.

There were three skylights, and I went to the nearest one and tugged at a corner of it.

It was pitch-dark down there, and I didn't like to drop without knowing what I was going to land on. I waited for a little while, hoping there would be another flash of lightning. But I didn't dare wait very long, because I could be seen by anybody at a second floor back window of the hotel. The lightning just wouldn't come, so finally I lowered myself into the hole, hung by my hands for a moment, and then let go.

I landed on concrete between two large automobiles.

Then, of course, just in time to be too late, there was a nice big flash of lightning. The thunder muttered too; a little nearer. It seemed as though the rain would simply *have* to start any minute now.

I hadn't been prepared for the lightning flash, and when it was gone the place seemed even darker than before. Both arms outstretched, I started to walk around.

There were a lot of automobiles. Big automobiles. My hands slid over huge polished fenders, along the tops of high hoods, around radiator caps. Once more the lightning flashed, and I saw that I was in front of an Hispano-Suiza. On one side of me was a Lincoln roadster, on the other side a glossy Cadillac V-16.

Then darkness again.

There was a mumble of thunder, ending suddenly, as though stamped out. And through the silence which followed I heard a single quick footstep in front of me, not fifteen feet away.

After that the silence was complete. Whoever was in this place with me knew that I had heard him.

I fumbled for and slipped behind a limousine. There was no way of telling when the lightning would flash again, and when that happened I didn't want to be a target. It gave me a funny feeling to be in a place like this and know that somebody was there with me. My comfort was that the other guy, whoever he was, probably felt the same.

That one brief scuffling footstep was all I did hear. Presumably the other guy had started to move somewhere while the thunder was doing its stuff, but the thunder had ended too soon for him.

He must have heard me come in, of course.

I thought of Smith and of that bell-hop-waiter; but I remembered that neither of them actually slept in this garage; they had regular servants' quarters just off the kitchen, in the hotel itself.

Who else could it be?

AFTER a while I began to move around very cautiously, an inch at a time, feeling my way along the sides of cars and placing each foot with care. I didn't make a sound.

I certainly would have liked to have my gun back! That empty holster under my left arm felt bigger and heavier than the gun itself had ever felt there.

Now I was underneath the middle skylight. The faintest drizzle of touch came through it, just enough to touch the glistening row of hoods polished like mirrors in a palace.

I slipped along the side of a limousine. I was rounding the trunk, at the back, when I stopped, tense, breathless.

The old instinct again. I didn't hear anything, didn't see anything, didn't actually feel anything—but I was compellingly conscious of the fact that I stood within a few inches of another human being. I didn't know whether he was in front of me or in back, on the right or the left, but I knew that he was there, very close. That's why I stopped.

Then the lightning flashed, and there was a terrific peal of thunder.

The other guy got the break. He had just rounded the rear of a car directly behind me, so that when the lightning flashed he was in a swell position to sock me across the back of the head.

And that's just what he did. Or at least, that's what he tried to do. I rolled my head to it, ducking, and the blow slashed off my left ear. It made my ears feel like they sometimes feel when you dive too deep into water; but I guess it really didn't hurt me much.

I spun on my heel and lashed out right and left.

My right hit something which might have been a shoulder, and it brought a startled grunt. My left missed entirely,

almost throwing me off balance: in fact, if I hadn't lunged right into the guy I couldn't see, I would have fallen then and there.

Well, we had a sweet fight of it. It lasted much longer than any good fight should, because of the fact that we both missed so much, not being able to see one another.

A wild one caught me in the mouth, and it hurt. This man had plenty of steam in his punches. Two others missed me; and we closed in again.

"Whoof!" he breathed.

Something was clouting me on the back of the head. Something metallic and rather heavy, but it didn't feel like a gun. I couldn't break away—the guy was holding me close to him by this time—and so I hooked a leg around behind his legs and spilled him. We went down hard, caroming off a running board. I was on top.

He was a powerful brute. And all the time he hadn't made a sound, out-

side of a few involuntary grunts. He seemed to be just as anxious to be silent as I was. Which somehow made the fight all the more bitter.

Yes, he was powerful, and slippery too. But finally I managed to get a good grip on his hair, so that I was in a position to wham his head up and down against the concrete. I gave a couple of experimental whams, and it must have showed him how things stood. He quit struggling. He wasn't out, just sensible.

"Drop whatever it is you're holding," I whispered.

Something fell with a clatter at my side. It was the thing he'd been hitting me on the back of the head with. I kept my right hand firmly entangled in the guy's hair, and snatched with my left. I got the thing, which turned out to be an electric flashlight.

"Okay, let's have a look at you," I panted, and switched it on.

I was sitting on Dr. Himbaugh!

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

Wire Tappers Tell of Graft

EDWIN N. ATHERTON, former G-man investigating charges of corruption in San Francisco, caused a sensation recently when he told a grand jury that during nine months his operatives, by tapping telephone lines, recorded all calls to and from a big bail bond house.

This bail bond house was "the fountain head of corruption," Atherton said. He indicated that sources in police headquarters systematically advised the underworld of impending police raids. A police captain summoned by the grand jury denied that he had ever tipped off raids. Atherton said phonograph records had been made of the conversations by wire tapping.

This investigation is paralleled by similar inquiries in a dozen American cities in the last few years. Political economists blame the entanglement of police administration with politics, and point to the records of Canadian law enforcement units, which are removed as much as possible from political domination.

—Michael O'Hara

An Assassin in the House



By Dugal O'Liam

Author of "A Saga of Two-Gun Morgan," "The Clue of the Broken Spring," etc.

A Double Murder Attempt Was the Significant Clue to the Slaying of the Tired Physician

THAT afternoon in June of 1931 had been a busy one for Dr. George E. Deely. An endless stream of patients had moved through his Brooklyn office, some of them wealthy, some of them knowing the pinch of poverty, for Dr. Deely never refused aid to even the lowliest, and because he didn't, he was respected and beloved even above the usual successful physician.

Dr. Deely was tired, but he refused to allow his patients to see his weariness. They would lose faith, he told his nurse, and then it would be

more difficult to help them. Better that he forced himself to the absolute limit of human endurance than that they lose faith. So he worked on, and the ailing and afflicted crowded in, and he grew wearier and wearier.

During this busy afternoon his former nurse kept an appointment for a consultation with Deely. Lois had once been Dr. Deely's nurse and he was still her doctor. In fact, to her he was more.

He still was her personal charge and concern and she never forgot that his health and well being were her responsibility. So it was that when she



saw him on that Monday afternoon, saw his tired eyes and white hands, long veined in weariness, she charged him with digging an early grave for himself and demanded that he prepare for a long vacation, or even retirement.

"Retirement?" Dr. Deely laughed. He was wealthy, almost rich, but the thought of retirement was taboo to him. "What if I should retire? What would I do? I would die, that's what I'd do. If I didn't have my work, I would have nothing to live for. These people and their troubles are my life. Your illness is my interest in you."

Lois smiled, but she was adamant. Dr. Deely grew more weary than ever resisting her demands that he leave his office as soon as possible, either for a sabbatical year or forever. In the end he saw her to the door with laughing insistence and prepared to retire to his study on the floor above his parlor floor offices. It was a habit with him. When the long day of work was done, he always found the time, and the energy, somehow, to study his medical books.

Arthur Lindaris, the butler, found him in his library. Lindaris had but recently come into Dr. Deely's employ. He was a man with excellent recommendations, he was an excellent butler, he was dignified and polite, and his wife, who had come to work with him, was an able housekeeper. They were an English couple, although their name suggested Swiss antecedents and their references had been unquestionable. Already Dr. Deely had learned to trust them implicitly, a compliment he seldom accorded any new servants.

"May I remind you, sir," Lindaris said, "that you have a dinner party in your apartment tonight?"

"A dinner party?" Dr. Deely looked startled. "Oh, yes, I'd almost forgotten it. I must hurry and dress."

"Your clothes are laid out, sir," Lindaris said. "Will you have cocktails before dinner?"

"Yes, of course," Deely said. "Cocktails for four."

Hurriedly he dressed and as he finished, the guests, a fellow physician and his wife and daughter, arrived. He met them in his living room and cocktails were served. Lindaris served with the true dignity of the British butler. If anyone had expected to see a duplication of the Hollywood butler, who furnishes the comedy relief for all staid occasions, they were disappointed. Lindaris was polite, deferential and efficient and his cocktails were of a superior grade.

The party picked up after the serving of two rounds of the Lindaris cocktails. Dr. Deely shook off his apathy. The daughter of his friend was brilliant and exciting. Fifty-four years old and a confirmed bachelor with no romantic interest in women, Dr. Deely yet was an excellent raconteur and fascinated young girls as well as older women.

THE dinner had scarcely been served when the telephone rang. Lindaris answered it. Dr. Deely could hear him talking. "Yes, Dr. Deely is all right. He's at dinner. Yes, with friends. Yes, he will stay in tonight. Yes, he will get his rest. Thank you, Ma'am."

Lindaris explained that a lady had called, that she had inquired about his health and had been insistent that he go to bed early. Deely smiled and his guests laughed appreciatively.

"She worries so much about your health," his guest said, "that she makes herself ill and then has to come to you for treatment."

"She's a faithful one," Deely said.

"It's almost a ritual with her to worry. But she never went so far as to telephone me at night to inquire about my health. After all, am I becoming so decrepit looking as all that?"

"You're in the full bloom of health and youth," said the man's wife. "I could pass you for my brother any time, believe me."

"I hope you never have to," Deely said, and the liqueurs came and Lindaris deftly lighted cigarets around.

The guest long a friend of Dr. Deely, took his family home early. For all his pretending to be amused at the lady's concern, he, too, knew that his friend was overworking himself. Nor was Dr. Deely unduly insistent that they remain longer when, at shortly after ten o'clock, they prepared to leave.

After the guests had departed, the Deely house was suddenly still. Dr. Deely's chambers were in the rear of the third floor of his house. They gave out onto a small patch of garden, overlooked by French windows. There were two floors between the garden and the chamber windows and there were no trellises to offer ingress to his home when he kept the windows open.

Deftly Lindaris helped him prepare for bed, laying out fresh pajamas, throwing a robe over the bed, setting his slippers, preparing the shaving materials for the morning. Then, as Deely slid wearily beneath the covers, the butler slipped from the room, stopping to peer anxiously through a final narrow crack of the door before he closed it tightly and tip-toed to his quarters on the top floor.

Midnight came and an extension telephone on the night table beside Lindaris' bed jangled. Sleepily Lindaris answered.

"Is Dr. Deely all right?" the lady demanded.

"Quite all right, thank you, Ma'am," Lindaris said.

"Has he retired?"

"Yes, and fast asleep, I'm certain, Ma'am."

"Are his windows open so he can get some air?"

"He always sleeps with his windows open, Ma'am."

"And you locked the house, I hope."

"Indeed, Ma'am, as he always insists."

"Very well, then. Good night."

"Good night, Ma'am."

Lindaris dropped off to sleep again. He, too, was weary after the long day and the special preparations for guests. Two hours sped by and then the telephone jangled again, insistently. Lindaris removed the receiver as soon as he awakened, listened for Dr. Deely's voice. He did not answer and Lindaris said, "Hello!"

There was no response. He said "Hello," again. Still there was no answer. Then he heard a slow, cautious clicking on the wire as of someone stealthily replacing the receiver. Momentarily he considered the strange action, then dropped off to sleep again.

MORNING came and Mrs. Lindaris was the first to rise. She went to her kitchen to prepare the doctor's breakfast. To reach the kitchen she had to pass the door to the doctor's living quarters. She listened at the door, heard no sound, then passed on into her kitchen. Half an hour later she returned to the hall that led to his chamber door. She had orders always to awaken him between 8:15 and 8:20 a. m. It was now 8:20.

She rapped sharply on the door and waited. There was no answer. She rapped again, listened. Still there was no answer. A third time she rapped.

The doctor had been tired. He probably was in a sound sleep. He might even have taken some mild sedative, as he sometimes did, before retiring. That would account for his sound sleep.

Again there was no answer and she took a key from her pocket. She slid it into the lock and turned it. Then she pushed on the oak door and it swung in. She stepped inside, partly blinded by the bright rays of the sun streaming through open windows. She stood blinking for a brief moment, then half turned, uttered a muffled scream and fell across the threshold into the hall in a dead faint.

Lindaris, raising the shades in the front of the hall, heard her body fall. He ran back along the hallway and found his wife, pale and motionless, lying in the doorway. He picked her up and put her on a hall sofa, then ran for water. Two sips of cold water and she recovered, to mumble inarticulately and point toward the doctor's bedroom.

Lindaris ran into the bedroom, stopped short. There, in the middle of the room, lay the body of Dr. Deely. His throat had been slashed and great, blue bruises showed on his white face. His left leg was doubled back under him crazily, as if it had been broken, and one hand was twisted beneath the body. A strand of light wire, torn from a radio aerial, was looped about his neck below the gash from which his life blood had drained.

The room was chaos. Chairs had been overturned, the rugs torn up, the bed knocked crosswise in its alcove, one of its four high posts broken off and the end used as a club to beat the purple welts on the face. There were, too, three knife wounds on the body in addition to the slashed throat, one in the chest and two in the neck.

This was the condition of the body

and the room when Detective Henry Senff arrived from Brooklyn headquarters in response to Lindaris' call. With him came Detectives Jim Diamond and John O'Hagan, veterans of the homicide squad and all three acquaintances of the dead physician.

Senff studied the room minutely. O'Hagan and Diamond examined the windows, still open to the morning sun. Senff began opening drawers in the three chests in the room. Lindaris followed him, offering suggestions.

"He often kept some jewelry in the right hand top drawer of that chest," Lindaris said. "It may be there now, if you cared to look, sir."

Senff went to the indicated piece. He pulled open the drawer. The doctor's valuable platinum wrist watch, two diamond studs worth more than a thousand dollars, a platinum tie clip and a pair of diamond and platinum cuff links lay untouched in the drawer. Senff left them in the drawer and stared at the body. On the left hand was a huge diamond ring set in platinum, worth between fifteen hundred and two thousand dollars.

"THERE'S close to five thousand dollars worth of valuables that weren't even touched," Senff said. "No professional robber did this job. How about his wallet?"

"He kept that in his suit pocket," Landaris said. "I never touched it except on specific orders to move it from one jacket to another."

"You seem to know quite a bit about his personal habits, especially where valuables are concerned," Senff said.

"I consider it part of my duty, sir," Lindaris bridled.

"How long have you been working for Dr. Deely?"

"Seven weeks, sir."

"Congratulations," Senff said. "You learn rapidly."

"I also consider that a part of my job, sir."

O'Hagan had been scrutinizing the window sills minutely. He called Senff over and they walked from one window to the other. They leaned out and peered down, then up, always careful not to touch the sills. Then they studied the sills again.

"Nobody came across these sills last night," O'Hagan said. "See these rain spots in the dust on the outer sills. It rained a little about eleven o'clock. Just a slight shower. These sills haven't been disturbed since that time."

"Wait a minute," Senff said. He turned again to Landaris. "What time did you say Dr. Deely went to bed? Think hard on this one, because it may mean a lot to you."

"Anything that will help solve this crime means a lot to me, sir," Landaris said coldly. "His guests left at about half after ten and he came immediately to his chamber here. I helped him prepare for bed, laid out his morning things and went up to my room. When I reached there it was eleven seven and a half, sir."

Senff smiled admiringly. "Such perfection is to be complimented, Landaris," he said. "When I want a butler—or can afford one—I'd like to interview you."

"Thank you, sir," Landaris bowed stiffly. "And now, sir, if you will excuse me, I must go to the market."

"Hey, what's that?" Senff exploded. "You're going nowhere, my limey friend. You're staying right here in this house and so's your wife, until we get through with this case. Did you think American police were that dumb?"

"No, indeed, sir, but I assure you I was coming back."

"Sure, and so was Judge Crater."

Two blue coated patrolmen came up the front stairs and down the hall. They reported to Senff. "There's two more men in front of the house," one said. "Nobody's to come in unless they know the house."

"Good," said Senff. "In the meantime, get two other men down here to watch the back of the house and let no one go out unless they have permission from me. Also, one of you keep an eye on the butler, here. I may need him at any moment and don't want to have to go down to the docks for him."

"Sure," grinned the patrolman, "I getcha."

At nine o'clock, while O'Hagan and Diamond were examining the rear wall of the house to determine if anybody could have swung from the roof by a rope and then into the room without touching the sills. Dr. Deely's secretary arrived for work. By that time reporters were crowding onto the scene and cameramen were storming the house and battling with the patrolmen assigned to keep them at bay.

DOCTOR Deely never had an enemy in the world," the secretary insisted. "If he was killed, somebody did it for money."

"Maybe you can tell us what became of his wallet, then," Senff said. "Landaris said he carried a wallet, but we weren't able to find it."

"He did carry a wallet," the girl said, "and when he left the office last night, he had a little more than fifty dollars in it."

"Would you mind telling us how you knew that?" Senff said.

"Because I gave him fifty dollars out of the office cash and he had three or four ones in his purse when I gave it to him. The rest of the cash I dropped

in the night deposit tube in the bank as I went home."

There was a commotion at the front door shortly before noon. One of the patrolmen threw the inner door back and called to the secretary. He had a smallish man, yellow-faced and almond-eyed, by the arm. The youth had his hat in his hand and was bobbing his head rapidly. The girl went into the hallway and saw the youth.

"Gavino!" she said. "How did you know?"

"The newspaper, she say doctor kill. I am so woe I come. Oh, Missy, I am so woe I hope it not true."

"I'm afraid it is, Gavino," the secretary said. "Do you want to come in?"

"Can please?" the Filipino said. "Is sick with woe Gavino?"

She turned to the patrolman. "May he come in?" she said. "He was Dr. Deely's butler for two years and you can see he's terribly upset."

"Ask Detective Senff," the bluecoat said. "He's in charge here."

The girl ran up the stairs to the chamber floor. She came back in a few minutes, Senff at her heels. He signaled the patrolman and he released the Filipino; he stood in the hall with his hat in his hand, his face lugubrious in alternate fear and sorrow.

"Can see doctor?" he asked, tremulously.

"I'm afraid not now, son," Senff said. "You wouldn't want to see him now."

"Much woe," Gavino said.

"Come in here." Senff led the Filipino into the office suite and into Dr. Deely's consultation room. He told the youth to sit down. Gavino Demair sat down gingerly, on the edge of the chair, crushing his hat in his trembling hands.

"Why did you leave Dr. Deely?" Senff said.

The Filipino began to whimper spasmodically. "Very bad boy," he said. "Take doctor's car for joy ride when get too much very good whiskey. Doctor very mad so Gavino and Senaca so ashamed they go away."

"Who's this other one?"

"Senaca work here, too. We both very bad boys and so ashamed when doctor have to scold, we go away, never come back. So much woe!"

"Did you quarrel with the doctor?"

"OH, never so. He scold us nice and we so ashamed we do wrong for doctor, we no face him any more. Lose face, see, so no can look at him. So, lose face, we have to go. No can stay when doctor who been so good can no more trust."

"Where's Senaca now?"

"Working in New York. Poor Senaca, he will be so woe when he know."

Senff regarded the stricken Filipino briefly, then left him. Gavino followed the detective to the reception room. He stayed to talk to the secretary as Senff stood momentarily in the door. The detective turned for one more question.

"Did Dr. Deely ever have any trouble with anyone while you worked for him?" he asked. "I mean, did he have any enemies?"

"Enemy?" The boy's eyes were stricken. "Never no enemy for him. Never mad at anybody, nobody ever mad at him. That reason Senaca and Gavino ashamed to stay here."

Senff went back to the third floor and Gavino stood disconsolately looking after him. The secretary put her hand on his shoulder and spoke to him sympathetically.

"There's nothing you can do here, Gavino," she said. "Why not go on home and let me send you a notice of the funeral?"

"Okay, I go, but send funeral," he insisted. He gave the girl an address and went out the door and down the steps as the girl signalled permission for him to pass to the patrolman.

A patrolman entered the house with the early editions of the afternoon papers under his arm. He asked for Senff and the girl directed him to the third floor. Senff was there, talking to the medical examiner. The medical examiner went to the telephone at the bedside to call an ambulance.

"The slashed throat was enough to have caused death," he said, "but he made sure by tying the wire around the throat. It's a clear case."

Senff shrugged. The patrolman handed him the papers. He walked to the window and read the early reports of the Deely murder. He glanced down through a column of conjecture, then absently turned to the last page of the first section. His eyes ran over the pictures there. There was a group of photographs of a visit to a night club of a playboy prize fighting champion. The fighter, training for a championship fight, was shown in various dancing steps and between two blondes, arms about their half nude shoulders, yielding drawn cheeks to their amorous lips.

Senff looked at the pictures and smiled. Then he studied one of the shots more carefully. He gazed at it and pursed his lips. He looked again, scratched his head thoughtfully. Then he put the paper down in a chair and walked back to the body, leaning over it to scan the wound on the neck.

O'Hagan and Diamond came in one of the windows then. They had come up a ladder from an extension of the first floor.

"Nobody ever swung down from that roof," they said. "There's not a sign up there anywhere. The roof has

been newly tarred and there wasn't a footprint in sight. You can forget about that angle right now."

"Then," Senff said, "it's an inside job. Someone had to have a key and who could have a key except the servants?"

"You aren't accusing Landaris, I'm sure," O'Hagan grinned.

"I'm accusing no one at the moment," Senff said.

There was a new commotion downstairs. The secretary's voice came from the hall, joined by another feminine voice, high pitched in hysteria. Now the secretary's voice joined with that of the patrolman on duty there, calling to Senff. The detective took the descending stairs three at a time.

"It's a lady, a very good friend of Dr. Deely's," the girl was explaining. "She wants to come in."

"IF we let all his friends in here, we'll never be able to move ourselves," Senff said.

"But she used to work for him," she insisted. "She was his private nurse."

"Fine, let her in," Senff ordered and the visitor, white-faced and red-eyed, sagged into the reception room and sank on a bench.

"If you'll step back here, I'd like to talk with you," Senff said. "Maybe a little drop of brandy would brace you up?"

"You'll find some in Doctor Deely's cabinet in his consultation room," the secretary said.

The brandy revived the visitor. Senff stood before her and waited for her to speak. She only muttered her shock at the news and settled back in the chair to look up at him.

"Why did you twice call here last night to ask about Dr. Deely?" Senff asked.

"Because he is my dearest friend and he was killing himself with overwork," the woman said.

"So you had to make sure he was in bed, that the garden windows were open and that his door was locked," Senff said.

"Of course," she came back. "What could be more natural? I wanted to make sure that nothing upset him."

"Or interfered with your plans?"

"Plans? I had no plans. I worked for him for many years until my health gave way. I knew he was working himself to death and I knew that there were too few like him to spare any one. When I came to see him yesterday, he looked so tired I was alarmed. I had done the same thing before—called at night to see that he was all right. Isn't it funny that he never was killed before after I'd called?"

Senff smiled. "I'm sorry to have been so abrupt," he said, "but it's the penalty of being an officer. I have absolutely no doubts about your story, and I sympathize with you in your loss. Now, what do you know about the Lindaris couple?"

"Only that they seem to be fine servants, that their references were of the best and that they have been kind and faithful to Dr. Deely."

"Did you have anything to do with hiring them?"

"I believe Dr. Deely did show me their references and ask my opinion. I called some friends who have had more experience than Dr. Deely with such matters and they made a recheck and gave both a clean bill of health."

"Thank you," Senff said. "And now about the Filipino. He was working here when you were with Doctor Deely, wasn't he?"

"Yes, two of them. They were good boys, but foolish. Dr. Deely was fond

of them and they were as devoted to him as puppies. He wouldn't have fired them for their escapade with his automobile—you heard of that, of course—"

"Yes, I did."

"Well, he wouldn't have fired them, but they were so ashamed that they left voluntarily, as I understand it."

Baffled once more, Senff told the former nurse that she was at liberty to leave and went back to the third floor. The ambulance men had come and were preparing to remove the body. Senff watched them dully as they lifted it, noted the bruises once more, looked about for the knife that had brought death. There was no sign of it still, only the broken bit of the bed post, already carefully wrapped in a handkerchief to preserve fingerprints.

Absently he looked down at the newspaper still lying in the chair where he had dropped it. Suddenly he picked it up and stared hard at a photograph showing the fighter leaving the club, accepting his hat and coat from the check girl and rewarding her with a large bill and a chuck under her pretty chin.

Standing beside the girl, outside the counter, hatless and foolishly grinning, was a youth, a dark, slim youth with slick black hair, the exact picture of Gavino.

SENFF flew down the stairs to the reception room. Miss Callahan stared at him in surprise. He strode to her desk, leaned over.

"Did Gavino say he was working?" he demanded.

"No, he didn't," the girl answered. "He said the other was working, but that he hadn't found anything."

"Did he have any money when he left here?"

"I'm afraid not. He was inclined to like to play. He was an easy mark and, while he never borrowed, I have an idea he was pretty generally broke."

"Then he wouldn't be likely to have money enough to hang around a night club, would he?"

"Of course not. How absurd!"

Senff cleared the sidewalk in front of the house in two leaps. The uniformed patrolman at the wheel of the squad car meshed the gears without waiting for orders and the big car groaned into action.

"The S-club in Manhattan," Senff said, "and don't spare the hosses."

It was mid-afternoon when Senff reached the Manhattan speakeasy so glibly called a club. Only the assistant manager and the charwomen and some of the waiters were there. Senff colared the assistant manager and pushed him into a corner. He showed him the pictures in the newspaper, pointed out the one of the fighter at the hat check door.

"Who's this dark guy here?" he demanded. "Know him?"

"I don't know his name," the assistant manager said, "but he's rushing our hat check girl."

"Can you get her here right away?"

"I can if it's important. If it isn't I wouldn't like to wake her up."

"It's about as important as anything can be," Senff insisted.

The girl came to the club, a 25-year-old blond, a little frightened and confused. The assistant manager had told her over the telephone that a detective wanted to see her. If she had wanted to run away, she would have had opportunity. But she came to the club instead and Senff met her there. He showed her the same picture and she stared at it inquiringly.

"Who's the fellow leering at you?"

The girl colored a little, bit her lip. She looked helplessly at Senff. He stared back at her and she wavered. Then she talked, almost in a whisper.

"That's a boy friend of mine," she said. "His name's George—George D'Amico."

"George D'Amico?" Senff's face fell. "Are you sure it's not Gavino Demair?"

"It's George D'Amico," she insisted.

"He's a house servant, isn't he?" Senff said.

The girl laughed half hysterically. "I should say he isn't," she said. "He's got money. He's got a big Packard car and he spends plenty. Why only last night he spent around fifty dollars on me, including fifteen he gave me for room rent."

"Last night, eh?" Senff said. "Well, well. And when did you last see his Packard?"

"About two months ago or a little less," the girl said. "He's got it up on his place in Connecticut now and doesn't like to drive into New York."

"I'M glad to get this information," Senff said. "You see, your friend recently lost some jewelry and a great deal of money and the police think they've located it."

"Oh, yes, he did tell me something about losing money, but I thought he said in the stock market," the girl said.

"Oh, he probably wanted to minimize his losses," Senff assured her, "and to keep you from worrying. As a matter of fact, we can help him now if we can get hold of him. Can you tell us where to locate him?"

"You'll find him in a hotel in Philadelphia tomorrow or the next day," the girl said. "He has some business trips to make and then he's going to meet me in Philadelphia and we are going

to see his father in Washington. His father's a diplomat."

"That's fine," Senff said. "Do you know the name of the hotel?"

The girl gave the name of the hotel. Senff went outside, called headquarters and instructed them to send two men to shadow Mary. Then he went back to Brooklyn and took O'Hagan into conference.

"I want you to go to this hotel in Philadelphia and wait for Gavino Demair," he said. "He may register there under the name of D'Amico or he may be only looking for a job. Wait there until you may find him, because, since there's a woman in it, and quite a good looker, too, he'll be waiting for her. In the meantime, I'll send Diamond to pick up the other."

He went to the door and called for Landaris. The butler came slowly into the room, accompanied by the vigilant patrolman.

"How many sets of keys do you have to the house?" Senff asked the butler.

"I have one and my wife has one."

"Were they given you when you came here?"

"My set was, but we had to have a set made for my wife. It seems that one of the former employes had taken his set with him."

"Thanks," said Senff. He turned to O'Hagan and Diamond, who had come in. "There, gentlemen, is the key to the unopened doors and the unmarked window sills. Think no more of them."

He chuckled a little to himself. O'Hagan saw the chuckle and divined its meaning.

"Pretty dumb of the little squirt coming here his morning," he suggested.

"Not so dumb," Senff argued. "In fact, it was pretty cute. The idea was

that he would show up and no one would expect even the dumbest cluck to do that. He came all filled with grief and even told how he'd gotten in bad with Deely. If it hadn't been for that picture, we might never have had an idea."

O'Hagan took the night train to Philadelphia. He went to the designated hotel. They had no one registered as George D'Amico and they had no reservation. Neither did they hire any Filipino help. But O'Hagan was not discouraged. Though Demair might never register there, he would be there to meet Mary and he would make some contacts there, so as to appear at home.

He rented a room and took the bell captains into his confidence. He told them to look out for anyone answering the description of the Filipino. He would remain in the lobby as many hours as he could, but would have to sleep sometime. While he was sleeping, the bell captains and their men could watch—for a price.

IN the meantime, Diamond picked up the other Filipino. He had a new job, with a private family. He and Demair had lived together for a time after they'd left Deely, but had separated when he went to work. It was obvious that he was innocent. In response to inquiries about Demair's work and his money, he would say nothing save that he had not worked and that he had not said anything about money.

On the second day of his vigil, O'Hagan saw a slim figure in a gray suit and snap brim hat come jauntily through the revolving doors of the hotel. He was dark and his nose was wide and flat. He had a sullen mouth, but there was nothing sullen about his eyes, because they laughed even as they

were haunted and he walked with a quick, incisive step.

He went across to the newsstand and bought a pack of cigarettes. He went to the desk and inquired for mail for George D'Amico. Then he asked if there was a room available. O'Hagan had done his work well. The clerk looked across at the waiting detective and nodded ever so slightly.

"We have a very nice room," he said. "I'll be glad to have the assistant manager show it to you personally."

The little brown man beamed. This was service beyond his expectations. The clerk called out "Mr. O'Hagan," and O'Hagan, leaving his hat in the chair, strode to the desk.

"This gentleman, Mr. D'Amico, would like to see our six-twenty-four," the clerk said. "Would you be so good as to show it?"

"Certainly," O'Hagan said. "In the meantime, you may notify that party I was speaking about that I am ready for them any time. I'll be showing this gentleman six-twenty-four."

To kill time, O'Hagan offered to show his quarry the roof garden. He knew he could take this slim kid alone, but he didn't want any slip-ups. It would be better if he carried out his original plan. So he took the elevator to the roof and Demair seemed flattered at the attention. They remained on the roof for some ten minutes. Then they went back down to 624. They went in and O'Hagan waited near the door as Demair looked around. Gavino Demair inspected the bedroom and came out smiling.

"This most excellent," he said, suavely. "Please to give me this."

There was a quick knock at the door. Demair's smile fled. His face was suddenly dark and accusing. O'Hagan opened the door and three burly plain-

clothesmen from Philadelphia headquarters came through the door. Demair took one look at them and fled toward an open window. He might have made it, too, if John O'Hagan hadn't been a hammer thrower in his youth.

A flying chair clipped the slim youth just as he was about to dive head foremost to a desperate oblivion. He crashed against the side of the window and when he recovered the handcuffs were on him and he was being taken down the freight elevator to the street. Three and a half hours later he was viewing the body of Deely in the Brooklyn morgue. He stood adamant above it, the grief of his first visit destroyed in a sullen self-defense.

FOR hours he denied that he had been to the house. Even when one of the series of three keys needed for the crime was found in his white and gray striped trousers, he denied that he had committed the crime.

Then Senff had an idea. He went to a telephone and pretended to be calling the S-Club in Manhattan: He asked for Mary. He waited, then spoke soothingly.

"Mary, your friend George D'Amico wants to see you. I'm afraid the kid's getting a wrong deal. I thought he was the one who killed Deely, but I'm sure now he's not."

He was silent a minute. Then: "Yes, I'm the one who talked to you."

Another long silence, then a mild protesting: "But, Mary, you wouldn't throw him down like that, would you?" he seemed to plead. "After all, he spent money on you and he did things for you. You say he did have blood on his clothes that night he spent the money on you. You say he said he'd had a nose-bleed, but you couldn't see

how his hat would get blood on it from a nose-bleed? And on his socks? Why, Mary, those things *could* happen. Are you sure you hate him?"

Demair waited for no more. He sprang to his feet and shook his brown fist at the telephone. "You tell her she's little mice," he exclaimed. "You tell her I keel her, too—"

"Too?" Senff replaced the receiver. "Did you say, *too*?"

For a moment Demair tried to recover his composure. Then he broke completely. He fell into a broken English description of his infatuation for the hat check hostess. He told how he had taken Deely's car to impress her, of how he had spent all he could make on her, of her demanding more and more.

He said he'd kept the keys to Deely's house with no thought of using them, but that she had taunted him for money. He said he knew the doctor always had at least fifty dollars and sometimes a hundred with him at night. So he'd gone to the house, let himself in, found the doctor asleep around one o'clock, then slashed his throat.

To his astonishment, the doctor wasn't killed. He leaped to his feet, staggered a moment, Demair said, then

grappled with him. Demair stabbed at him and the knife was wrenched from his hand. He grabbed the bed to keep from being hurled to the floor and the top of the post came off in his hand. He slugged the doctor with it and finally the doctor wilted.

Then he hit him again and finally got the radio wire and tied it about his neck. He locked all the doors then, after making sure the windows were open to divert suspicion to that method of entry, then went to meet Mary and ran into the flashlight picture that caused his undoing.

He admitted he'd gone to the house to make sure that no suspicion had fallen on him and then he said that Mary had called the house that night when the mysterious telephone call came, had done it as his request "to make sure nobody know, so can sleep."

It didn't take long to send Gavino Demair up the river to the little, square, whitewashed room from which none returns alive. He was a frightened boy when they led him into the chair. He tried to talk, but he could only mutter, through parched lips that trembled sickeningly at the sight of the squat, oak death machine:

"Is woe to die, but worse to kill friend. Gavino should die—"

Crime Marches On!

THE records of the Federal Bureau of Investigation reveal that 4,300,000 men and women are following a career of crime in the United States at the present time, according to head G-man J. Edgar Hoover.

The Number One G-man declared that crime costs the United States an estimated \$15,000,000,000 a year. This, he stated, could only be remedied by an increased mental vigilance on the part of the citizens and whole-hearted coöperation with the Federal forces. He said:

"We find that it means a burden on each and every individual of \$10 a month. The estimate of the F.B.I. of the number of major crimes or felonies committed during the year 1936 was 1,333,526—a burglary every 40 minutes, a robbery every 10 minutes, a felony every 24 seconds."

—Walter Barlay

Ten Grand Trade



She picked the inkwell up and heaved it just as he was slamming the door

Diamonds in a Dead Man's Pocket!
... That Was the Clue That Led
Harper Into the Murder Trap

THE door opened when I was halfway through my mail and Hester, my secretary, sailed in and said:

"There's a guy to see you. He acts like his name is a secret."

"Talk English," I said, "and take that gum out of your face when you do."

She wet her fingers and removed the gum. "Cranky!" she snapped. "A gentleman to see you. He refuses to give his name."

I said this was better and to show the gentleman in. She put the gum back in her mouth complaining: "I don't know why I work for you. So help me,

By Roger Torrey

Author of "Double Gamble," "Back Alley," etc.

I don't," and went out, to come back in a minute with about the cutest little man I'd seen in many a day. She stood around for a moment, as though she wanted to find out what the little man had to say, but I nodded at the door:

"If you'll get those letters out, Miss Magee."

She left, and her jaws looked as if she was talking to herself, rather than just chewing on the gum.

A nice kid . . . but hard to control. In fact, impossible to control.

The little man asked: "You are Mr. Harper?" He was about five feet, with

not over four inches on top of it, and very dark. Long sideburns and a Latin way about his looks and talk. A very neat gray suit that must have set him back plenty, and a shirt that looked between purple and red. A black tie; one of the five-dollar kind. His hat was a match for the suit in both color and class.

I said that I was Harper, and he went on: "You are the man who works for the insurance companies, is it not?"

"How did you know that?"

He showed me some teeth then and I saw that two of them were gold. He said quietly and casually:

"It is that it is my business to know. I am a jewel thief, you understand. My name is Carlos Gomez."

WELL, I didn't think I'd heard what he'd said. My door was lettered: *Joseph H. Harper—Investigations*, and I'd had four years on the cops before I started my own agency. And most of my agency work was for insurance companies on jewel thefts. This was the first jewel thief I'd ever met who went around admitting it like that. So I said:

"Hunh! I guess I didn't get that, Mr. Gomez."

"I am a jewel thief. I live in Europe mostly; I have the reputation there."

He pointed over at the paper I had spread on my desk. "It is about that I come to you. About the Callendar diamond robbery. Is it that you work for that insurance company? The one who insures those gems?"

I admitted that I'd worked for that insurance company at times and that the Callendar diamonds were insured for sixty thousand dollars. And then he said:

"It is well. You will get in touch with your company. You will tell them

you have a lead on the gems and that you can have them returned for ten thousand dollars. I think this fair. Then you will tell me and I will give them to you. That is business-like, is it not?"

It was business-like all right, and I said so. I asked him if he had the stones and he smiled at me as though I'd lost my mind and assured me that he hadn't, but that he would produce them as soon as the ten thousand dollar matter was adjusted. And then he put on his new gray hat and wished me good-morning and left. I got back to earth about then and called after him:

"Hey! Where can I get in touch with you?"

He turned and said: "The Waldorf. I *always* stay at the Waldorf. It is the best, is it not?"

He went out the front door then and I tried to decide whether somebody was trying to kid me or not. But I remembered how serious he'd acted and how confident he'd been and decided Carlos Gomez wasn't a party to the joke. He had something . . . but I couldn't figure whether this something was the Callendar diamonds or a fit of insanity.

HESTER MAGEE was rattling away on her typewriter when I put on my hat and went out in the office. I said: "Listen, Hester, I'm going over to the *Occidental Indemnity Company* and see what I can find out about the Callendar diamond case. If anybody asks for me, tell 'em I'll be back. If anybody don't, just file it."

She didn't even look up at me, so finally I asked: "Did you hear me?"

She looked up then and answered: "Yes, Mr. Harper. But I have my work to do and have no time to waste in idle chatter."

And then pulled the gum from her mouth, cracked it with some trick she has, and snapped: "Now play that on your piano!"

This, because she'd lost her temper when I chased her out of the private office. A nice kid . . . with a lovely disposition and an absolutely unhealthy curiosity.

ABRAMS was the man I wanted to see at the insurance company and I got in to him fast. He was walking up and down the floor and talking a mile a minute to an impressive looking, gray-haired man who was trying to get in an answer and wasn't succeeding. Abrams said:

"Hah, Joe Harper. Just who I want to see. This is Mr. Callendar."

Callendar and I shook hands and I sat down and told them about my caller. Though without giving his name or description. A lot of thieves know me, and they know they can come to me and that I'll act as a go-between with the insurance companies. They know I won't cross them, if they don't cross me. That's understood. It's a break for the insurance companies as well; they get their stolen goods back at less than they'd have to pay on the loss. It isn't exactly ethical maybe; both the insurance people and I know that thieves should be captured and punished . . . but insurance companies are run by business men, after all.

And there's another argument. A lot of stock in these companies is held by people who depend on dividends . . . and good business, even if not quite ethical, keeps these dividends up.

Abrams and Callendar listened to the tale and Callendar said, in an excited voice:

"Where did he go?"

"How would I know?"

"Didn't you follow him?"

"Of course not."

Callendar swung on Abrams then and snapped out: "This man is supposed to be a detective, isn't he? And yet he doesn't follow the man who practically admitted stealing my diamonds. This is collusion, Abrams, I insist it's collusion."

Abrams is a good friend but is a bit excitable. He waved his hands and said:

"Now, Mr. Callendar! Stop! Mr. Harper is not alone an employee, Mr. Harper is a friend of mine. You must not say these things."

I was sore and I helped out with: "For all I know you were working with the thief yourself. And after all, sixty grand is quite a lot of dough to shoot for, even if you and the guy that's working for you settle for ten grand of it."

He got purple and it looked as though Abrams and I were going to have an apoplexy case on our hands. He ended up choking at me: "Why . . . why you . . . you . . ."

"Don't say it," I said. "After all, you can't go around accusing people of thieving unless you got reason for it. If you'd been ten years younger you'd have got a smack on the snout instead of a smart crack back, and don't you forget it."

Abrams was throwing oil on the troubled waters when the telephone rang, and he scooped this up and listened and then handed it to me. I said hello and Hester Magee said:

"That you, Joe?"

"This is Mr. Harper," I said, and tried to make it dignified. "What is it? Why call me here? I'm in conference with Mr. Abrams."

"There's two men here who want to see you. They've locked me in the in-

side office and they're looking through the files, for anything about the Callendar case. I guess you could say I'm in conference, too."

I said: "Hold on," and hung the phone up, and then asked Abrams: "What about the ten grand settlement? Is it okay?"

By the time he said it was I had my hat and coat on and I was halfway out of the office before he said:

"Hey! What's the rush?"

I called back at him, over my shoulder: "I got company I don't want to miss."

I WAS in no danger of missing my company, but I didn't know that. I got out of the elevator and went down my hall in a hurry, and I got the gun out from under my arm as I put my hand on the door knob. And then a man stepped out from the broom closet that faced my door, jammed a gun in my back, and said:

"I'll take the pretty."

And then reached down and took the gun out of my hand, reached past me and opened the door, and added:

"Inside, Harper."

I went in.

They'd let Hester Magee out of the inside office and she was sitting in front of her typewriter and looking as though she could bite through a ten-penny nail. That mad. A tall slim man in a tight blue overcoat and blue Homburg was facing her, and he held one hand in his right coat pocket. The pocket bulged. Hester saw me and squealed:

"Oh, Joe! They let me phone and listened on the extension in the outside office when I did. I thought they wouldn't know about the phone but they did. They tricked me."

I didn't say anything. The man be-

hind me said: "Get over against the wall and face around."

I minded this and saw him for the first time. He was the exact mate to the blue-coated man that had the gun in his pocket. I said aloud:

"The Bulger twins!" and remembered these twins had been mixed in jewel thieving since they were ten years old. They'd almost gone to reform school then for breaking into some old maid's house and stealing some ten-cent store jewelry that they'd taken down to the corner store and traded for cigarettes. Both of them had served time, but they hadn't been rapped for several years. They'd learned things, since those days in jail. The one that had collared me said:

"That's right, Harper. We wanted to talk to you, and we didn't want to wait. We knew the girl would bring you back here in a hurry."

"That's okay," I said, "but why the gun play? I'm willing to talk without it. There's no warrant out for you, as far as I know."

He grinned, then said to his brother: "This Harper's got every record in the country filed away in his head." And to me:

"Sure there ain't. We don't want one out against us, either. What's the reward for the Callendar diamonds?"

"Have you got them?"

"Don't be silly. Of course we haven't. But we might run onto them; we get around quite a lot."

Hester Magee said, bitterly: "And you, Joe Harper, will let them stand there, after throwing me around, and not do one thing about it. What a man you are! I don't think!"

The twin that was talking to me said: "Don't be silly, Harper. The gal started a wildcat act on us, with her teeth and finger nails. We just pushed

her back in that chair and told her to behave. What's that reward; let's leave the women out of it."

"It's ten grand. To be paid when the diamonds are returned and okayed as being right."

"And no questions about how we returned them?"

"You know me; you know that answer. What's this rush act for? Why didn't you wait for me? I'd have been back. Why this act?"

Their first names were George and Henry and I didn't know which one of them was doing the talking. But whichever one it was put his gun back in his pocket, flashed a look at his brother, and answered:

"We was just in a hurry. We got work to do and want to get at it."

Then he jerked his head at his brother and backed toward the door. The brother followed him, keeping an eye on Hester Magee, who had a hand on an inkwell. He said, just as he backed out:

"Now don't, sister!"

He wasted breath. She picked the inkwell up and heaved it. He slammed the door, just as she did, and the inkwell crashed through the glass panel. She picked up a bronze statuette that was supposed to be a penholder, and started for the door and I took it away from her and said:

"Now wait, you dope!"

I had a little trouble doing this because, as soon as she saw what I was trying to do, she tried to hit me over the head with the statuette. After the argument she went back to her desk and began crying, and I went out in the hall and explained to the building superintendent about the inkwell and smashed door. It seemed that I was trying to fill this inkwell and it slipped from my hand, and after I agreed to

have the door glass replaced at my expense he pretended to believe this. I went back inside and Hester lifted her head and said:

"What a man! What a detective! Here the men that have the stolen diamonds come in and you're afraid to arrest them."

I gave her my clean handkerchief and said: "It wasn't that, Hester. I don't know that they have them. I don't know *who* has them. And, even if I did, my job is getting them back to the insurance company. Suppose these twins had them and I'd pinched the twins? They wouldn't have admitted it because that would mean a jail term. They'd have kept quiet and we'd never have convicted them. Then they'd have waited a while and fenced the stuff out and the insurance company would have been stuck for a sixty thousand dollar pay-off. I know my business; suppose you tend to yours and let me handle mine without interference."

She quit sniffing and mopped at her eyes with the handkerchief. Then she grinned up at me, very nicely, and said:

"I'm sorry, Joe! I shouldn't have said a thing. I'll keep out of it from now on."

She probably meant this at the time, but it didn't mean a thing to me. That curiosity of hers was no secret.

HESTER went to lunch at twelve, and it was about a quarter after this when the phone rang. I scooped it up, said: "Hello! Harper speaking!" and got: "Anderson, at the Station," back at me.

"Yeah, Billy," I said.

"You working on the Callendar case?"

"If I get anything to work on, I am."

"You got any records on those stones?"

I told him to hold the wire and went over to the file and looked around. I had. I lit a cigarette, got comfortable in my chair, and said:

"Shoot!"

He said: "One stone with a slight rose tint. A carat and just a shade over nine-sixteenths."

I looked at the list. "Check. A carat and thirty-seven sixty-fourths. A slight rose tint. The necklace shaded to rose at the center."

"Okay! Another. Same tint. A shade over a carat and a quarter. How about that one?"

"Check! A carat and nine thirty-seconds."

"Can you identify the stones?"

I laughed and said I was no jewel expert but that the *Occidental Indemnity Company's* men could certainly identify the rocks if they were from the Callendar haul. And then:

"Where'd you pick 'em up?"

I'd expected him to tell me the Robbery Detail had picked them up from some hock-shop or maybe some fence, so it was rather a shock when he said instead:

"Off a stiff that was dumped out at the corner of Riverside and a Hundred and Thirteenth. Nobody got the number of the car they rode him in."

"How long ago?"

"Maybe an hour. Not over that."

I said I'd be right over and hung up.

Billy Anderson was a good friend and I'd worked with him when I was on the cops. He was waiting for me when I went into the Station, looking big and stocky and blond and husky, and he said:

"Hi, Joe! I had a hunch you'd be after those rocks."

I said: "Sure! Where's the stiff?"

"The morgue, dope! Did you expect me to have him laid out here on the floor for you?"

We went to the morgue. The dead man was only a kid, maybe twenty-one or two, and he'd been knifed. Just plenty well, too. Three holes in his neck, two in his right breast and one in the right cheek, and a slash that went from the corner of his eye to the corner of his mouth. They hadn't washed him yet and he looked very messy. Anderson asked me:

"You know him?"

"No."

"We checked him by his prints. It's a kid named Archer. He called himself Archie Collins, or Archie Thompson, but his last name was really Archer. He was a two-time loser; up the first time for breaking and entering; the second time for armed robbery and atrocious assault for an additional charge. He got ten years for this last, but our big-hearted parole board let him out in less than three."

I said the parole board often did things like that and asked where the diamonds were found. Anderson said the two diamonds were loose, in the kid's vest pocket, and that he had about a dollar in change and a leather sap on him besides that. I said this was fine and started to leave, and Anderson said:

"Hey! Is that all?"

"What else can I do, Billy? Am I expected to stand here and look at the body all afternoon?"

He shook his head and said he'd expected better and I asked him whether he knew where the Archer kid lived. He gave me a Tenth Avenue address and I told him that if he wanted some excuse to keep from working he might go down there with me.

So we went. And he spent the time

it took to get there in telling me he'd expected me to look at the corpse and immediately tell who'd murdered him.

A city cop don't miss when he gets a chance to rib a private one.

ARCHER had lived in not too bad a furnished room . . . if you happen to like furnished rooms. I don't. It was fairly clean for that kind of a place; even had new wall paper. Anderson and I looked it over, Anderson going through the clothes left in the closet, and me looking over the room itself. The bed was covered with blood. There was one chair tipped over and on the wall, above where it should have been, there was a sort of stain. It might have been hair oil but I remembered the dead Archer hadn't had oil on his hair. The table had an empty whiskey bottle, an empty gin bottle, and a half-full bottle of fairly expensive rum. The wash basin was dirty, with a brownish rim around the edge, and there was an equally dirty towel on the floor by it. The towel looked a little bluish in the sunlight. Anderson said:

"They'll take all this stuff down to the lab and give it the once over, probably. But maybe they won't. Any cop in the world would say the kid getting killed is a good thing."

I said: "Sure! But the insurance company might think it was a good thing if I got my hands on what's left of those diamonds. The kid had two of them. That's why I'm looking around."

"A knife killing is a funny one. Mostly these guys shoot it out. That is, when it's an argument about who gets the loot. Ain't that your idea, Joe?"

"A knife's quiet," I said. "Maybe that's the answer."

He said maybe I had the right idea.

I thought maybe I had, but it was one, I hadn't told him. The Latin guy, Carlos Gomez, the one who'd been in to see me that morning, would use a knife in preference to a gun any day in the week. His eyes had told me so. But I hadn't told Billy Anderson anything about the call . . . and decided I wouldn't for a while, at least. I had faith in Gomez. . . . I thought I'd find him at the Waldorf.

I did. I left Anderson at the station, took a cab to the Waldorf, and the clerk beamed at me and said:

"Why surely! Mr. Carlos Gomez. He has suite 19-E."

I phoned up and his accented, soft little voice said: "Mr. Harper! A pleasure, it is. Will you come up?"

I said: "That's what I came here for. To see you," and he laughed as though this was very funny, so I rode the elevator.

He met me at the door and insisted on showing me the place. Very nice it was. And insisted on buying me a drink of rum, which was also very nice.

"To business, shall we go. Is it that the insurance company will pay me ten thousand dollars if I locate and produce the Callendar diamonds?"

"They will if you produce all of them."

He frowned, and the frown made his pretty little face vicious and mean. It didn't affect his voice. This was still soft when he asked: "But why shouldn't I produce all the diamonds as well as just part of the diamonds? This is something I do not understand."

I said: "You better check up on your alibi. The cops got two of the stones, already. They found them on a kid named Archer, who was sliced up with a knife. I got a notion they'll want to ask a man named Gomez some questions."

He just stared at me a moment, then came out of his chair at me. He'd brought out a knife from some place, I didn't see where, and he came lunging for me with this out in front of him. I wasn't expecting it and I wasn't ready and there was only one thing to do. I had my arms flat along the arms of my chair, my feet on the floor, and I leaned back in the chair and kicked out with both feet.

It worked. One foot caught the knife and the other caught him high on the chest. He went pitching back and sat on the floor and I picked up the knife and said to him:

"Let's leave the hardware out of this. What's the idea?"

He spit up at me like a cat. "It is that you turn me up to the police. I am jewel thief, not murderer."

"What's this for then? I'd say you tried to murder *me*, just a second ago."

"We kill the traitors in my country. You are the what you call double cross. I go to you with business; you make the police on me."

I said: "Get up and listen to me," and tossed him back his knife. "I work for the insurance company. Understand that. The police don't know anything about you, unless they got it from someone else. I didn't tell them a thing."

"It is that you didn't tell them?"

"Of course not. Nobody knows you're here. Nobody knows a thing about you, as far as I know. Use your head; I'm trying to get back the stones and you know where they are. I don't want you in jail, I want you running around after the stones."

He thought about this and then the phone rang. He answered it, handed it to me and said:

"It is for you."

Hester Magee said, over the phone:

"Oh Joe! Those two men were here again. Those Bulger twins. They just left. I thought you'd want to know."

"How'd you know where I was?"

She laughed, as though she was very proud of herself, and said: "Oh I knew. I heard that little man tell you this morning where he stayed, so I thought you'd maybe be talking to him. I heard his name, too. So I just called the hotel and asked for him and then for you. I keep my ears open around the office, Joe, you know I do."

I said she was telling nothing but the truth and then something slammed me alongside the head. I went down to my knees, dropped the phone and twisted around, and saw Gomez standing over me. He had a metal ash tray in his hand and he was swinging it toward my jaw.

He must have hit it; as far as I was concerned the lights went out.

I COULDN'T have been out very long but when I came to the Latin had packed and gone. I got to my feet, feeling pretty bad, made it to the table and the rum, and then got on the telephone. I got Billy Anderson at the Station and said:

"Billy! Work fast on this. There's boats sailing this afternoon. Put a watch out for a little guy named Carlos Gomez. Five feet four; dark; sideburns and the rest of that trick make-up. He's dressed very well; got Waldorf written all over him. I'd figure he'd pick a boat for South America, but don't take chances. Get it?"

He said he got the description and what did I want the man held for. Just what charge? I said: "He's the one back of the Callendar diamond case. The dead man you found, Archer, was working for him."

"How do you know that?"

"Cinch! The little man drinks expensive rum and there was some in Archer's room. The little man wears a lot of grease on his hair and there was a smear of it where he'd leaned his head back on Archer's new wall paper. And he'd already been to me offering to turn in the diamonds. So that makes him a natural for being Archer's boss."

Anderson sounded a little excited. "He probably killed Archer over the split. Knifing is Latin work. Archer was holding out on him—remember those two diamonds—and the guy got sore and gave him the shiv."

I said: "I've remembered something else. The Bulger twins killed Archer. They must've have known he had the diamonds some way or another and they got to him before this Gomez did. They've got the rest of the diamonds. I'm going after them now. They tried to sell them to me, also. That shows they knew where they were. They killed Archer. They must have missed two of the diamonds when they searched him."

"I'll put out a want for them, too. How do you know they did it?"

I said I'd tell him that when either he or I got them and hung up the phone. And then took another drink, a ride down on the elevator, and a cab to the office.

Hester Magee was jumping up and down from excitement. She said: "I thought you'd never get here," saw the lump on my jaw, and said in the same breath:

"Oh Joe honey! What happened?"

"Gomez crowned me, because you called up and spoiled the play. He thought I was crossing him. That's all. What did the Bulger twins want?"

"Just to see you. They were excited."

"I want to see them. Are they coming back?"

"They didn't say. They were very nice this time." She stopped then. "Why don't you go and see them?"

"Where will I find them, stupid?"

"Why here," she said, very innocently. "I've got their address right here."

She handed me a letter addressed to George Bulger and with a Brooklyn address on it. I asked her where she'd gotten it. She grinned, said:

"Well, he was standing right next to me and I saw it in his pocket. So I just reached down and took it. I try to be a help to you, Joe. To do things for you that an ordinary office girl wouldn't think of doing."

I said: "And now you're thieving for me," and took the letter and started for the door. She asked me where I was going and I said:

"To Brooklyn! I'm after those stones. I'd have been after them before, but I couldn't fit that dirty towel in until I'd talked to the Latin. Then it came to me."

"What dirty towel?"

I said: "Never mind. You've done your part."

THE Bulger twins weren't in when I got to Brooklyn. They lived in a shabby little house, set in a nest of others as shabby, and I knocked on the door for a while and then went to a grocery store across the street to wait for them. And I waited for over three hours, getting plenty scared that they'd skipped out.

The boys drove a battered little coupé, that fitted the neighborhood, up in front of the house and I waited a minute and took the gun from under my coat and put it in my side pocket and went across. I knocked on the door, and when it opened I kicked it as hard as I could and went all the way in.

One of the brothers got knocked back

against the wall by the door, and the other came rushing out of another room and looked at the gun in my hand and put his hands up. I said:

"Now that's pretty!" and reached behind me and started to close the door. And then it slammed against me, just the way I'd slammed it against one of the twins, and I went piling into the brother, gun and all.

I'd had everything under control but this altered it. The one close to me grabbed the gun and shouted:

"George! Take it away from him."

George came over and I kicked him in the stomach. I swung the one I was wrestling around toward the door, to see who'd opened it, and it was Hester. Just standing there with her mouth open and a silly grin on her face. I shouted:

"Get the hell out of here!" to her, then swung my partner around and tried to kick George in the face before he could get to his feet, but George dodged and ducked away. I couldn't follow because the twin I held took that time to stamp on my other instep.

It hurt plenty and I just about let go of him. Then I got a new grip, and twisted, and here was Hester trying to keep the brother George from picking up a chair.

I knew what he wanted to do with the chair. Smash it over my head. I yelled to Hester: "Get out!" and then George stopped any chance she had of getting out. He let go the chair and smashed her in the jaw with his fist.

She went down and out. About then I managed to get my right hand free and eighteen inches of space to swing it in. I smacked the brother I was holding and let go of him with my other hand, just as I did, and he went sailing back and fell over Hester.

It worked fine because I still held

the gun in this hand. I backed the one that had smacked Hester over to the wall, cuffed him to the leg of a table that happened to be standing there, and then took stock.

Hester was out cold and so was the brother I'd hit with the gun. They even looked peaceful lying there. I went outside then, and called to the fifteen or twenty people who'd heard the brawl and were afraid to come in and see it:

"One of you call a policeman!"

One old lady said: "As if we hadn't, you dope. Didjer think you could wreck that jert without us calling the cops?"

I went back inside. That Brooklyn accent was always hard for me to understand. Hester talked it.

THE battered Hester didn't think her mother would believe the yarn, so I went inside with her and explained it. And then I said to Hester:

"See what you get for butting in? The brawl brought the cops and I didn't get any chance to work on those Bulger twins and find out where they hid the diamonds they took from Archer. You heard them say they didn't have them and they'll stick to that story. I'm working for the insurance company and I want the stones and I've got a fat chance of finding them unless those guys break down. You balled the thing up when you butted in like that."

She said: "But Joe! I got worried about you. You were gone a long time and you didn't phone and so I decided to go to that address and see what had happened to you."

I thought of something else then and used the phone. I got Anderson, at the Station, and he said:

"We got your Latin for you, and I hear you got your Bulger boys. How you going to prove Archer's killing on them?"

I said I'd tell him that when I saw him.

"Did you find the stones?" Billy sounded worried.

"No. And I doubt if I ever will. The twins will never crack about that. Why should they?"

He repeated: "Why should they?" and laughed, and then said: "We got the stones for you, shamus. The Latin had them. He tried to get on a fruit boat. He was dressed up in dungarees and he was in an oiler gang but he slipped up."

"How?"

"He had on patent leather shoes; he'd forgotten to change all his Waldorf make-up. We picked him on that and found the stones when we searched him. He said Archer must have held out two of the stones from the center of the necklace and given him the rest. He got to Archer before the Bulger twins did, after all. This guy talked plenty. Told us the works. He thought we wanted him on a murder rap; a plain jewel theft charge was a relief to him."

I said that was fine. He went on with: "The twins must have got panicky and killed Archer when he didn't kick through with the diamonds. Then they overlooked the two stones in his pocket when they searched him. Of course they were looking for a lot of stones, not just a couple. Why d'ya suppose they went back to your office?"

"I figure they wanted to kill Hester

and I. But when they found just Hester there, alone, they changed their minds. I'd still have been loose and I'd have suspected them for sure. As it was, all I had on them was their talk about the diamonds."

"Are you sure you can prove they killed Archer?"

I said, again, that I was sure I could prove the twins killed Archer, and that I was glad the stones were found. That the stones were what I'd been after all the time. Then I hung up and turned around and Hester said:

"How are you going to prove the Bulger twins killed Archer?"

"Easy! You pitched a bottle of ink at them when they went out the door on their first visit, and it went through the glass and spilled on them. After they killed Archer they washed their hands, and there's ink stains on the towel they dried themselves with. That'll prove it on them. Now, Hester, from now on, when I'm working on a case, you keep out of it. You hear me?"

She said: "I hear you. Too much. Did you ever stop to think you wouldn't have known it was them if I hadn't thrown that ink? And that you wouldn't have known where to go after them if I hadn't stolen that letter? I tell you, Joe, I do things around that office that the average office girl wouldn't dream of doing."

I quit arguing. After all, she was right.



Practical Finger Printing

*The First Steps in
Telling One Print
from Another*



Primary Classification

By **Lieut. Charles E. Chapel**

*U. S. Marine Corps; Member, International
Association for Identification*

IT is your first day on a fingerprint job. The Chief of the Identification Bureau hands you a fingerprint record card, saying, "File these!" What do you do? It sounds difficult, but if you proceed slowly you can accomplish the task without a headache.

Before you can place the record card in the file cabinet, you must classify the prints. The first step is the Primary Classification, which means the numerals you write down in the form of a fraction to indicate the proper part of the cabinet for this particular set of prints. Further classification will tell you the exact spot, but Primary Classification gives you the general location.

Look at the prints. You will notice that the rolled impressions are in square spaces, those of the right hand in the top row, with the prints of the left hand below. Below the rolled impressions are the plain prints. In classifying, we pay no attention to the plain prints unless we are afraid that

the man who took the impressions made a mistake, such as recording the ring finger in the space meant for the middle finger. If we suspect that happened we glance at the plain prints to check the work. Since the plain prints were not made one at a time, but were registered by pressing the whole hand, minus the thumb, on the paper at one printing, they must be in the correct order.

The reason we are concerned about the prints being in the proper order from right to left is that we get our Primary Classification by assigning values to the various fingerprints according to the type of print, and the position it occupies in relation to the other fingers.

There are, as you may remember, two big groups of fingerprint patterns. These are Loops and Arches in one group, with Whorls and Composites in the other group. For the Primary Classification, the first group has no value, but we give prints of the second group arbitrary values, based on their location.

The right thumb and right index finger are called the first pair. A Whorl or Composite in this pair has the value

of 16. The right middle and ring fingers constitute the second pair, with a value of 8. The right little finger and left thumb are taken as the third pair, with a value of 4. The left index and left middle fingers are the fourth pair, worth 2. The fifth pair, the left ring and left little finger, has a value of 1.

In the second class we have Whorls and Composites. A Composite is a fingerprint in which two or more patterns are found. Composites include Lateral Pocket Loops, Twinned Loops, Central Pocket Loops, and Accidentals. All of these have weight in the Primary Classification, based, not on their particular pattern, but on their position in the set of prints.

The right thumb is a Whorl. Since it is in the first pair it has a value of 16. The right index finger is a Loop, and has no value. We write the first of a pair as the denominator, and the second of a pair as the numerator. This gives us $0/16$.

The right middle finger is an Arch, and the right ring finger is a Lateral Pocket Loop. Being in the second pair, the Lateral Pocket Loop is worth 8, but the Arch has no value, so we write $8/0$.

The right little finger is a Tented Arch, with no value, while the left thumb is a Twinned Loop, worth 4, hence we have $4/0$.

The left index is an Exceptional Arch, with no value, and the left middle finger is a Central Pocket Loop, worth 2, so we write our fraction as $2/0$.

The left ring finger is an Accidental, worth 1, while we find another Loop in the left little finger. Our fraction is $0/1$.

Add together the numerators and denominators separately. This gives us $0/16$ plus $8/0$ plus $4/0$ plus $2/0$ plus

$0/1$ or $14/17$. To this we add the fraction $1/1$, giving us $15/18$ for our Primary Classification. This tells us that the prints must be filed in the 15th vertical row, and in the 18th horizontal row.

Why did we add the $1/1$ to the fraction obtained by adding together the fractions assigned individual prints? This question is always given in fingerprint examinations. A simple answer is that $1/1$ is added to make room for records which otherwise would have no place in the files. This is clear when we realize that a set of prints that was all Loops and Arches would have no value, since the rule gives weight only to Whorls and Composites. By adding $1/1$ in each case we can put the Loops and Arches in the $1/1$ classification.

The first fingerprint cabinets resembled the racks used in post offices for sorting letters. They were made with 32 horizontal rows and 32 vertical rows, numbered from left to right, and from top to bottom, so that $1/1$ was in the extreme upper left hand corner, with $32/32$ in the extreme right hand lower corner.

Another important question often asked in examinations to fill fingerprint expert vacancies is: "Why did the early files consist of 32 horizontal and 32 vertical rows?" You can file prints without knowing the answer, but the answer depends on a basic understanding of the Primary Classification, so it is doubtful if you can get a job without knowing this.

In any pair of prints, there are four possible combinations. We can have Loops in both, Whorls in both, a Loop in the first with a Whorl in the second, or a Whorl in the first with a Loop in the second.

If one pair of fingerprints has four possible combinations, it can be shown

that four prints would have sixteen possible pattern combinations, six fingers would have sixty-four combinations, eight fingers would have two hundred fifty-six, and ten fingers would have $4 \times 4 \times 4 \times 4 \times 4$ or 1024 possibilities. This means that 1024 compartments would be required in the ideal fingerprint cabinet. To arrange these neatly, the first fingerprint experts arranged the pigeonholes in a square formation, with 32 horizontal, and 32 vertical rows of boxes. This took care of all possible Primary Classifications under the Henry System.

We have been discussing fingerprint filing as though an identification bureau used the old-fashioned pigeonholes, but this was merely to give you the historical background for the subject and at the same time explain it clearly and logically. Today, the more efficient fingerprint offices have abandoned the old cubbyholes, which were "blind files," in favor of modern methods which are termed "visible record systems."

In "visible" filing, the lower edges of the cards overlap. On the visible edge can be found the classification number, the subject's name, his alias, and his status, such as confined, serving sentence, awaiting investigation, etc. Removable colored clips, called "signals" can be attached to the edge of the card to provide information regarding any temporary condition, or to call the file clerk's attention to special classes of records that require priority treatment. By glancing down a row of cards the clerk can count the number of special cases, and reach an analysis of the records in a few minutes, instead of spending hours pawing through the cabinets, as he had to do when the cards were merely stacked in boxes.

Another interesting question which may occur in examinations for fingerprint jobs is: "The Primary Classification of a set of prints is 15/18. State what types of prints are found on each finger in the set."

This question may seem theoretical, but it is quite practical in cases where the police of one city telegraph a classification to the police of another city, asking them if they have a duplicate record. To answer the question, the fingerprint expert first subtracts 15 from 32, giving him 17. The number 17 includes 16 and 1, which tells him that there is a Whorl or Composite missing in the second pattern of the first and fifth pairs of prints. In other words, the right index finger and the left ring finger do not have Whorl or Composite patterns. The right index finger is a Loop, and the left little finger is also a Loop.

In the same manner, subtract 18 from 32 giving us 14. The number 14 includes 8 and 4 and 2, which tells us that there is neither a Whorl nor a Composite in the first pattern of the second, third, and fourth pairs. Checking with our instructions, we find that the prints in question are an Arch, a Tented Arch, and an Exceptional Arch.

Here's another angle.

In backchecking from the Primary Classification to find the type of prints, you will notice that after we subtracted from 32, we broke the resultant number into its *largest* parts. We could have said that 14 included three 4's and one 2, but this would not have given us any clue to the fingerprint patterns.

Many fingerprint bureaus have had to go back and write in an extra figure which their old record cards did not contain it originally.

The figure is the ridge count of the

first Loop found in the set of prints. This may be in the right index finger. If not there, and a Loop were found in the right ring finger we would have counted the ridges and written down the number, but we would not have done this unless the right thumb, right index, and right middle fingers had all been lacking in Loops.

The ridge count of the first Loop found in the set is called the GUIDE. It is part of what are called "Extensions" to the Henry System of Classification. Almost everyone interested in fingerprints takes it for granted that we use the Henry system, but it is well to remember that there are many foreign countries where other methods are in vogue, and be precise in our terminology.

The Extensions to the Henry System are a proper subject for our careful study after we have learned to completely classify fingerprints, but it does no harm to mention the "Guide" right at the beginning of this part of our work. The rule is invariable, continue through the set until you reach a Loop, even if you do not find it until you reach the left little finger.

In addition to the "Guide," if we find any freak fingers, or ones that are missing or bandaged there may be a special note written beside the classification fraction, calling attention to this condition. We are not yet ready to explain the classification of hands where there are missing, deformed, or bandaged fingers, but it is well to know that they are not neglected.

The presence of the scar in the left thumb, far from detracting from the value of the print, gives it that much more identification value. If the owner of the scarred finger is ever wanted for any offense after the recording of his prints, the first thing that the police will

look for when examining suspects will be that scar in the left thumb.

It might appear that we have accomplished a great deal in learning the Primary Classification. This is quite true, but in a large identification office there may be thousands of records with a Primary Classification of 15/18. Unless we break up these accumulations under that number, we shall be forced to spend hours searching for cards, trying to find an old record, or a proper place for a new card, when a few minutes of further classification will save up our time and energy.

Time saving was one of the reasons for writing down the "Guide." The ridge count of the first Loop in a set provides a still further means of breaking collections of cards into groups small enough to handle easily. There might be a thousand 15/18 Primary Classifications in the records, but there may be only two hundred that start out as 7 15/18.

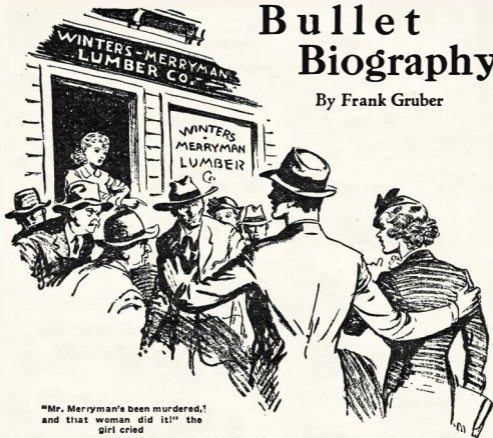
Next week we shall begin the journey through the land of Loops and Whorls.

While waiting to progress toward the goal of identification expert, why not take the prints of friends and relatives? Look at the patterns first, to identify the Arches, Tented Arches and Loops in the finger tip designs. Having decided on the types, proceed with the Primary Classification. It is surprising to find how interested people are in fingerprints if given a little elementary information.

Undoubtedly some prospective subjects will protest that they have never had their fingerprints taken, that they are decent, law abiding citizens. The reply is that if they intend to stay law-abiding they have no fear of fingerprints; furthermore, a collection need not be open for police comparisons.

Bullet Biography

By Frank Gruber



"Mr. Merryman's been murdered,
and that woman did it!" the
girl cried

He Played the Horses for a Killing —and Found His Profit Was a Murder!

THERE was resentment in the red-haired stenographer's eyes. Women usually resented Jean Jordan. Because she had a complexion that would have shamed any school-girl, because her \$35.00 suit looked better on her than \$150.00 outfits looked on other women, and because men became jittery in her presence.

"What is the nature of your business with Mr. Merryman?" the red-head asked, coldly.

Jean smiled. "It's a personal matter I want to see him about."

"Personal?" The stenographer sniffed as she turned and went to a door marked private. She closed it behind her, but opened it again a moment later.

"I'm sorry," she said, a note of triumph in her voice. "But Mr. Merryman said he doesn't know you. And he doesn't want any insurance!"

Jean smiled ever so sweetly. "I'm not selling insurance, dearie, and it's very important that Mr. Merryman sees me." Under her breath she added, "Important to me."

"I'm very sorry, Madam," the

stenographer said, unsheathing her claws a trifle, "but Mr. Merryman is very busy and cannot see you. If you wish to tell me what it's about, perhaps I can help you."

Jean sighed and leaned over the railing. "Tell Mr. Merryman," she said in a confidential tone, "that I want to see him about . . . Fairgrove. I'm sure he'll understand."

A cunning look came into the girl's eyes. So Mr. Merryman had been out stepping with this blonde hussy. And Fairgrove was the scene of his indiscretion.

She went off again, and when she returned this time, said, "Mr. Merryman will see you."

"Thank you." Jean passed through the swinging gate and walked swiftly into Mr. Merryman's private office. She closed the door carefully.

Walter Merryman was thirty-five or thereabouts, wore pince-nez, taught Sunday School, and went to burlesque shows when away from his home town.

Jean thrust out her white gloved hand. Mr. Merryman rose from his swivel chair and took the hand in a lingering grasp. His face was slightly pink.

"Uh, how do you do," he said. "My, uh, secretary said you wanted to see me about—Fairgrove?"

The apple in his throat bobbed.

Jean looked him squarely in the eye. "Fairgrove? Why no, she must have misunderstood me. I represent *Living Americans*. My office has sent me all the way from Chicago to get material for your biography. *Living Americans*, as you undoubtedly know, is the authoritative biography list of this country. It is considered an honor to be listed in it, an honor accorded only to persons of distinction. . . ."

Merryman put up a hand. "Is this going to cost me money?"

JEAN JORDAN cleared her throat. "For publishing your biography? Of course not, Mr. Merryman. But naturally a man in your position will want to purchase some of the books. You see . . ."

"How many books do I *have* to buy? And how much are they?"

"Well, you'll want to buy at least four copies. They're only five dollars each."

Merryman glanced at his wrist watch. "How long will the interview take? I've an appointment in five minutes and . . ."

"It will take me only a minute. Let's see—you were born in this town in 1896. You are part owner of the Winters-Merryman Lumber Company. You belong to the Elks, Masons, Kiwanians, Moose and Eagles. Your hobbies are hunting and fishing, and horses—no, you won't want that put in. You belong to the Congregational Church and—what else?"

Merryman's eyes were bright. "Where'd you get all that?"

"Biographies are my business, Mr. Merryman," Jean smiled, "and my hobby, too. I know all there is to know about anyone of importance."

"Yes—and where'd you hear about Fairgrove?"

Jean shook her smartly coiffured head. "The skeleton in your closet is safe with me, Mr. Merryman. I have to do a bit of bone rattling now and then to gain an entrance, for after all, a girl must make a living. And now—will you please sign this order? If you prefer to pay now for the books there's a ten percent discount. Otherwise, a five dollar down payment will suffice."

"I'll just make the down payment," said Merryman. He pulled an immense roll of bills from his trousers pocket, skimmed through it and fished out a five dollar note.

Jean held her order book for Merryman to sign, then put it into her white, brocaded purse.

"Thank you, Mr. Merryman. You'll receive proofs of your biography within two weeks. Good day, Mr. Merryman."

Merryman glanced at his watch again. "Good day, Miss . . ." Jean did not supply the name. If Merryman had not remembered it, that was just as well. He could not telephone her later at the hotel and try to arrange a date.

Jean put on her victory smile as she left Merryman's office. But it was wasted. The red-headed stenographer was gone. Jean looked at her watch and saw that it was two minutes after twelve. The girl had no doubt gone out for lunch.

As she opened the outer door, Jean collided with a man coming in. He had approached swiftly and seemed almost to have darted into the doorway. He almost knocked Jean off her feet, but he apologized profusely.

"Aw say, I'm *terribly* sorry, Miss."

"Quite all right," Jean said, sweetly, although she had to fight down an impulse to kick his shins.

She smoothed her clothing and started down the street. It was a small village. The main street was paved with wooden blocks, but the weather had done things to the blocks. A hundred miniature golf courses could have been laid out in the street, with plenty of holes to spare.

Jean turned into a building, which bore the lettering, *Elmhurst Weekly Herald* on the windows.

A young six footer with a huge shock of black hair, looked up from the most untidy desk Jean had ever seen in her life.

He scowled at her.

"Whaddya want?" he barked.

Jean smiled her prettiest smile. "Gossip."

"Then subscribe to the *Herald*," retorted the young man. "We dish out the local gossip once a week."

"I don't want that kind of gossip. I want the kind that doesn't get printed in nice newspapers. You know—the things the ladies talk about over the back fences."

The young man stared at her. "I'll be damned!" he exclaimed. "Who're you?"

"Jean Jordan is the name. I represent *Living Americans*, the most authoritative—"

"Authoritative me eye," cut in the newspaper man. "That's a vanity book. I've heard of it. Anyone with twenty bucks can buy his way into it."

"You are being very rude about this without proper justification," Jean retorted. "And our method of collecting is painless—almost. And everyone can't get into it. Only those who are *someone*. Of course if the *someone* doesn't buy four copies of *Living Americans* his biography might get crowded out. There are a good many important people, you know. But anyway—our subscribers get much more than twenty dollars worth of satisfaction out of *Living Americans* by giving the books to their friends and keeping one on the living room table along with the Bible and the family album. The book has many practical uses, too, you know."

"What, for example?"

"Why, it can be used for pressing flower petals, as a door stop, a win-

dow prop and, oh, lots of other things."

THE young man roared. "Wow! You're honest about the thing, anyway. Just for that I'm going to help you. If you want gossip, I'll send you to the best gossip in the entire county. Just go around the block to Miss Abigail Cretzmeyer's house. She'll tell you more gossip about local folks than we print in this newspaper in five years!"

"Thanks, kind sir," replied Jean. "I'll go see this Abigail. She wouldn't be an old maid, would she?"

"She would—but say!"

"Yes?"

"It's lunch time. How about having it with me?"

Jean cocked her head to one side and scrutinized his grinning face. Suddenly she smiled.

"After all, lunches cost money. And I must eat. What's your name?"

"Jim Barclay. I'm the editor, advertising manager and publisher of this rag. Let's go. The Busy Bee's right next door."

"Ah, this town has a Busy Bee? That means I get my choice of roast beef or roast pork. Right?"

"Right. And apple pie or vanilla ice cream for dessert."

At the door Jim Barclay exclaimed. "Oh-oh, something's happened!"

Jean saw people rushing by outside and opened the door quickly. "They're going up the street—to the Winters-Merryman Lumber Company," she said.

"D'you mind?" asked Jim Barclay. "After all, I'm a newspaperman."

"Business always comes first with me, too. I'll go along."

They walked swiftly up the street. A noisy crowd had already collected

outside the office of the lumber company. They were still fifty yards away when a high pitched voice shrilled out a single word: "Murder!"

Jean caught her breath and stopped. "I—I don't think I'd better go with you after all."

Barclay had heard the ugly word, too. He nodded. "Sorry, Miss Jordan. I guess our date's off. You're staying at the hotel?"

"Yes, until tomorrow."

"Then . . .?"

"*There she is!*"

The red-headed Merryman stenographer was standing on the doorstep of the lumber office, pointing over the crowd . . . at Jean Jordan.

Jim Barclay gasped. "Why, she's pointing at you. What's the matter, Miss Jordan?"

"Something very bad, I'm afraid."

"That's her!" cried the red-head. "She was in Mr. Merryman's office when I left, only fifteen minutes ago. He—didn't want to see her, but she forced herself upon him."

"What are you talking about, Elsie?" Barclay called out sharply.

"Mr. Merryman's been killed—murdered!" cried the girl called Elsie. "And that—that woman did it!"

Jean was grateful for Jim Barclay's steadying hand.

A lean, hungry-looking man whose black slouch hat and string tie proclaimed him to be a law officer, stepped quickly through the crowd. "Miss," he said to Jean. "Were you in Mr. Merryman's office a few minutes ago?"

"Steady, Bill," Jim Barclay cautioned. "Miss Jordan's a friend of mine."

Jean smiled wanly. "Thank you, Mr. Barclay. But I was in Mr. Merryman's office, just before I came into yours. However—if Mr. Merryman's

been killed, I know nothing about it. Yes . . . that man . . . he went in just as I came out."

The law officer's face was impassive. "What man?"

"Why, just as I was leaving I bumped into a man going in. A tall, rather well built man of about thirty-five."

The crowd had moved up, circling Jean and the two men. The man with the string tie turned. "Elsie," he said, "did anyone else go into Mr. Merryman's office?"

"Of course not," declared Elsie vehemently. "Only her. And what's more she threatened Mr. Merryman. I heard her."

Jean gasped. "That's ridiculous! Why should I threaten Mr. Merryman? I merely wanted to sell him something . . ."

"You did so threaten him!" yelled Elsie. "I heard you myself. When he refused to see you, you told me to tell him . . . some name, I forget . . . and when I told him, he turned all sorts of colors and said he'd see you. He . . ."

"Bill," said Jim Barclay. "Let's not shout all this out here on the street. If you want to question Miss Jordan, why not go inside somewhere?"

"That's just what I was going to suggest," replied the officer. "Walter's dead, and there ain't no use goin' in there. Doc Pardley and Yancey are in there already, and they can tell all that's necessary. Let's step over to my office. You too, Elsie."

BILL turned out to be Sheriff Bill Watterson. He led the way across the street to a small, one-story building with thick, barred windows. It was a combination sheriff's office and jail, consisting of a one-room office in front

and a larger room in the rear in which were the cells.

Bill Watterson pulled out his own swivel chair for Jean. Jim Barclay sat down on the desk, swinging his long legs. He grinned reassuringly at Jean. The girl, Elsie, sat stiffly on a straight-backed chair and glared.

Jean's usual self-reliance came back to her. "Now then," she said, "let's get this thing straightened out. When I left Mr. Walter Merryman he was well, and happy, I suppose. In fact, he ordered some books from me and paid me a deposit on them."

"You have a copy of the order, Miss Jordan?" Barclay asked swiftly.

"Yes." Jean opened her purse and drew out the order book. "He signed it himself."

Jean turned to show the order book to the sheriff and in doing so clunked her handbag against the desk. It made an ominous sound. "What you got in that there bag, Miss Jordan?" asked the sheriff.

Jim Barclay protested. "See here. Bill."

"Yes, there's a gun in it," said Jean. She opened the purse and brought out a .25 caliber automatic. "I've a license to carry it."

Bill Watterson took the gun, slipped out the cartridge clip and sniffed the muzzle. "It ain't been fired lately."

Jean was looking at Jim Barclay. "Of course not."

But there was still a questioning look in Barclay's eyes. He thinks nice girls don't carry guns, Jean thought. He doesn't realize that a business girl, traveling alone, might get into situations where the touch of a gun, even a little one, would make her feel lots safer.

"Well," she said, "how was Mr. Merryman killed?"

Watterson's face clouded. "With a shotgun. His whole face was shot away. With his own gun, too."

Jean shuddered. "I noticed a shotgun hanging over a moose head in his office."

"Yeah, Walter was fond of hunting. Had the best guns in the county, I guess maybe. A ten gauge shotgun shore plays hell—beg pardon, Miss!"

"Why should anyone want to kill him with a shotgun?" asked Jean. "They make a tremendous noise and . . ."

"Maybe the fellow—person—hadn't figured on killing him and they had an argument or somethin' . . ."

Jean's face became crimson again. "You think because I carry a gun, I'm a gun moll. Don't you think that a person with an automatic would be foolish to take a strange shotgun from the wall without even knowing whether it was loaded or not and try to use it?"

Jim Barclay snorted. "She's right, Bill. Now, how about the man Miss Jordan saw going into Walter's place? Hadn't you ought to check up and find out if anyone else saw him going in or coming out?"

Something else occurred to Jean. "When I first went in, Mr. Merryman looked at his watch and said he had an appointment. When I left, he looked at his watch again."

"Now we're getting somewhere," exclaimed Barclay. "Elsie, you know about his appointments. Who'd he have one with?"

Elsie sniffed. "No one. He looked at his watch because it was lunch time, that's why."

A walrus-mustached man pushed open the door and came in. Following him was another typical Elmhurst citizen.

"What'd you find out, Doc?" asked the sheriff.

The walrus-mustached man shrugged and showed tobacco-stained teeth. "What'd you expect? The shotgun just about tore his head off. He—he was a mess."

Bill Watterson shifted his gaze to the other man. "Well, Yancey?"

"I dusted the gun with that powder, but there wa'n't no prints but Walter's. Fella musta used gloves."

"Did you examine Merryman?" demanded Barclay. "It might have been a robbery or holdup, you know."

"Naw," said the deputy Yancey. "He had twenty-eight dollars on him and that fancy wristwatch he bought hisself last year was still on his wrist. Wa'n't no robbery."

JEAN met Jim Barclay's eyes and tried to smile, but it was a vain effort. Things looked worse at every turn. The thing was absolutely absurd of course—but was it? The town was small. Everyone knew everyone else, even down to their wearing apparel, their habits. No one had seen a stranger enter the office of the Winters-Merryman Lumber Company.

Winters . . .

"I just thought of something," Jean exclaimed. "The firm name. What about Mr. Winters, Merryman's partner? Where's he?"

The men looked from one to another. "Joe Winters is in the hospital," Watterson said. "Can't anyone suspect him."

"Why not? People have feigned illness before."

"Not Winters," declared Doc Pardley. "You see, I operated on him day before yesterday, for gallstones. He won't be out of the hospital for six weeks or more."

Watterson fidgeted. "You see how things stand, Jim—they ain't nothin' else I can do."

Jim Barclay rose. "Miss Jordan, I—I want you to know that I believe every word you've said, and I'm going to do my very best to get you out of here."

"Out of here?"

"Natcherly I got to hold you," said Watterson.

"I'll get your things from the hotel," said Barclay, avoiding Jean's look. "And what's more, I'll telephone to Rocky Ridge and have the best lawyer there come over and look after things for you."

He left, and Jean felt that she had lost the only friend she'd ever had in the world.

Bill Watterson became brusque the moment Barclay was gone. "All right," he said, "I got work to do."

He led Jean to the cell room. "You'll be here all by yourself," he said. "We ain't had much crime lately in Elmhurst."

He motioned to one of the cells and Jean, shuddering, stepped inside. The sheriff locked the cell door and went back to his office, closing the door between it and the cells.

Jean looked around her cell with distaste. There was an iron cot, some mouldy looking blankets, a washstand and sanitary equipment, and a small, wooden stool. There were three other cells in the room, similarly furnished.

Jean dropped down on the stool. The seriousness of her plight suddenly overwhelmed her and she gave way to despondency. She was a stranger in a small town. A girl. Surrounded by aliens, friends and acquaintances of a man whose life had suddenly been snuffed out under peculiar circumstances. The instinct for vengeance and

retaliation is a primal one in every human being, and these people would want vengeance for their townsman's death . . . against someone. Jean Jordan was the most logical candidate at the moment.

Tears of self pity were welling up in Jean's eyes, when she became aware suddenly of a tiny, scratching sound. Her eyes darted to the wall side of the cell, and she saw a small, furred animal scuttle along the floor.

"Eek!" Jean cried and sprang instinctively to her feet.

The mouse accelerated its speed and vanished. Reaction set in and Jean laughed.

She felt better. She sat down again on the stool and calm, now, began adding up the score. It didn't look so good. The red-haired girl was going to be a bad witness against her. Jean had got in to see Mr. Merryman by a trick. The girl had told about it, and they'd make blackmail of it.

No one had seen Jean leave Merryman's office, except the man who had bumped into her. But he—he was the murderer. He had to be.

JEAN opened her purse and became aware of her sample copy of *Living Americans* on her lap . . . Biographies . . .

Barclay . . . Watterson . . . Merryman . . .

Jim Barclay wrote political articles, quite a few of which were printed in the big city dailies, and his weekly newspaper editorials were often reprinted in other papers.

Bill Watterson. Ah! Her own *Living Americans* had a biography of a Watterson. Zachary Watterson of Shell River, twenty miles from Elmhurst. He had a cousin named William. Jean's eyes gleamed.

Walter Merryman. Horses were Merryman's weakness. Horses and women. The clerk at the Elmhurst Hotel had winked, when he'd let drop that bit of information. Jean had remembered the wink and when resistance had sprung up at his office had taken a chance and whispered the magic word, Fairgrove. For the horses were running at Fairgrove now, and Merryman probably had a guilty conscience.

The jail door banged open, and Jim Barclay strode into the cell room. He carried a chair, which he set down carefully in the aisle before Jean's cell.

"Now, Jean Jordan," he said. "Let's talk. You're in a tough spot."

She forced a smile.

"You're telling me?"

"I'm telling you. Now explain yourself, who you are, what you do, and why. I've engaged Judge Halbach, and he'll be here in a couple of hours, but I want to know everything about you before then. So talk."

"All right . . . Jim." Jean blushed as she saw his eyes light up. "I told you I sell *Living Americans*. I worked my way through college with it, and I'm earning more money selling *Living Americans* now than I could doing anything else. And I'm independent."

"That means a lot to you?"

"Yes, doesn't it to you?"

"I don't know. I'm not independent. You see, my father owned this paper before me, and I'm sort of tied down to it. I—well, never mind about me. Go on, Jean."

"So I sell biographies. I sold Walter Merryman. I left his office and went straight to yours."

"To sell me a few books?"

Jean smiled crookedly. "No, you're not the type to fall for the vanity stuff. I—I saw you through the window on my way to Merryman's. I

stopped on the way back to, well, to get some gossip. You looked like a real sort, and I thought maybe you'd talk."

"About what?"

"People."

"Why people?"

"Because of this book. Listen, Jim, I know more about people perhaps than any person in this country. There are eighteen thousand names in *Living Americans*. I put more than a thousand of them in myself. And I've put close to a thousand a year in other editions for six years. I became interested in biographies of living people when I took up this work, and I read everything about people I see anywhere. Books, newspapers, magazines, and—everything. And I remember things about people."

"But why the gossip stuff?" Barclay persisted.

"Because I like to know the real people—not the stuff we print about them. We may print that Walter Merryman is a deacon of the church and a member of the Elks and Kiwanis, but for myself I prefer to know the real Walter Merryman. The Merryman who bets on horses, paws—women, and is a hell-raiser away from home. And I want to know the Bill Watterson who was once arrested for stealing chickens over in Guthrie County, not the Watterson who is the sheriff here."

"Bill stole chickens?"

Jean smiled. "I've worked all the larger towns in this state, including Shell River, where the Watterson clan originated. I know all about them. I know your history, too, Jim, and that of everyone in this town who's ever been in the news."

"You sound like a walking scandal sheet."

"That's what they call me at the home office. I sell biographies because

I know people, things about them. Look—when I go into a man's office and tell him things about himself that he figures no stranger knows about about him, the sales job isn't a tough one."

JIM BARCLAY scratched his chin. "Listen Jean, what else do you know about people in this town?"

Jean's forehead creased. "Aw, say, I shouldn't have said that about Bill Watterson . . . and Merryman. That puts me in the same class as your Abigail Cretzmeyer."

"Just the same, I've a special reason for asking. Tell me what you know about some of our local people, the undercover stuff."

"Well . . . name some of the important people."

"Mm. How about George Beatty? Or Tom Sloan or Harvey Cannon?"

"Cannon? He's your mayor, isn't he? Yes, I know a choice morsel about him. He sold that old Lamson spot to the city some years ago."

"No, Gus Lamson sold it."

"He did, but Harvey Cannon got half the money. A pretty stiff sum, too."

"Where'd you hear that?"

Jean shook her head. "Almost everyone has a skeleton in the closet somewhere. Lamson moved away from Elmhurst. He lives in Tenente now, and he doesn't mind blabbing about what he's done in Elmhurst. Well, the Lamson deal is the skeleton in Cannon's closet. George Beatty's is drinking. He was locked up overnight in Waverly, twelve years ago, for being drunk."

"Beatty? Why, he's the judge of the circuit court now!"

"And he's probably a good one. But he's got that old skeleton in the closet."

"Jean," Barclay said, "I've got to see a man about something. Sit tight. I'll be back in a little while."

"Wait a minute, Jim. While you're out, I wish you'd go and see the . . . Walter Merryman."

"What for?"

"I'll tell you why later. Look him over carefully, and then come back and tell me exactly what he wore and anything else you notice about him."

It was twenty minutes before Barclay returned. "Watterson'll be here with the keys in a couple of minutes," he chuckled. "The judge is springing you."

Jean leaped to her feet. But then she looked at Barclay, suspiciously. "Jim—you didn't . . .?"

Barclay laughed. "I did. I reached into Judge Beatty's clothes closet, pulled out a hale and hearty skeleton and rattled it in front of the judge. Inside of ten seconds he was searching for *habeas corpus* forms."

"Oh Jim, what a mean trick!"

"Heh-heh, it's no dirtier than your being in jail. And that isn't all—just for fun I dropped a few words about poultry to Bill Watterson. He's galloping full speed to Judge Beatty's to get your release paper."

Jean shook her head and sighed. "Well, somehow I'm not very much grieved over Watterson's discomfort. But Jim—did you look at Merryman?"

"Yes, he was wearing a blue worsted suit, with narrow white pin stripes, black oxfords, black sox, a white broadcloth shirt, a red striped tie . . ."

"Red?"

"Yes, red. I particularly noticed it because—well, it's been pretty much soaked in blood, but it's a loud color just the same."

"And how much money is there on him?"

"Twenty-eight dollars. Hmm—no, I don't believe it. I wouldn't put it past Watterson, but Yancey, he's honest. And so's Doc Pardley."

"But then I can't understand it," protested Jean. "When he paid the deposit on the biography he pulled a tremendous roll of money from his pocket. I saw 'fifties' and 'hundreds' in it."

Barclay whistled. "That's strange. Walter hasn't been so flush lately. He tried to get a personal loan at the bank a few weeks ago. I'm on the board of directors and we turned him down."

"What about the business?"

"Oh, that's sound enough, but Winters really owns two-thirds of it, and he kept Walter down pretty much."

Bill Watterson pushed open the door. He carried a ring of keys. "Judge Beatty says to turn you loose. Here's your gun. But don't go popping it off around here."

"I could have used it in here," Jean said. "There are animals running around in here."

Watterson glowered at her.

OUTSIDE the jail Jim Barclay said, "Shall I take you to the hotel?"

"No . . . Jim, how would you like to catch the murderer of Walter Merryman?"

"You know who did it—and where he is?"

"I think so. How far is Fairgrove from here?"

Barclay's eyes widened. "That's where the race track is. You mean this has something to do with Merryman's playing the horses?"

"The man who went into his office as I came out is the type you'd expect to see at a race track."

"A bookie, eh? And you think . . .?"

"I'm not sure, yet. But I'd like the ride and a chance to think."

Jim Barclay owned a long, low-slung roadster. With the cool breeze blowing on her face and whipping the waves out of her coiffure, Jean thought things over. Jim Barclay was the perfect driver. He kept his eyes on the road; spoke, it seemed to Jean, when she wanted him to speak and was silent when she wanted to be quiet.

Fairgrove was eighty miles. They made it at exactly three o'clock. The horses were just going to the post for the fourth race.

"Now let's try to find the bookies when the race is over," Jean said to Jim Barclay.

The horses crossed the finish line to the wild yelling of the throngs in the grandstand and along the rails. Here and there disgusted looking spectators tore up slips of paper.

"There's one of them," said Barclay.

Jean saw the man in a checked suit, writing on a small pad of paper. As she looked she saw him rip off a slip of paper and give it to a customer. But no money changed hands.

"Do they trust them?"

Barclay laughed. "They have to in this state. They pay off and collect later. By not passing money at the time the transaction is made they get around the law . . . What's wrong?"

Jean had suddenly gripped Barclay's arm. Barclay half whirled — and gasped. "Walter Merryman!—It can't be!"

"But it is. I guessed right!"

It was Walter Merryman. He wore a blue worsted suit with white pin stripes. He was coming toward the bookie. As yet he hadn't seen Barclay or Jean. But when Jim Barclay suddenly stepped before him, the Elmhurst horse player reeled back. His face be-

came as pallid as a weak quarter moon.

"I thought you were a dead man, Walter!" Barclay said.

Merryman's eyes threatened to pop from their sockets. "Barclay . . . how . . . why . . .?"

"You killed him," said Jean. "You knew he was coming. He was about your physical build and you knew that he usually wore a blue suit with a pin stripe. So you dressed like him and then shot his face off . . ."

"I don't know what you're talking about!" cried Merryman, hoarsely. "Can't a man visit a track . . .?"

Jean turned and signalled to the bookie behind them. The man came up. "Listen, Mister," Jean said, "are any of the, ah, bookmakers, missing today?"

The bookie shrugged. "Dick Fallon isn't around. But he had an errand to run today. Why?"

"Have you ever seen this man before?"

"Yeah, sure, why—why, this is the guy Dick was goin' to look up!"

"He owed Fallon money—a large sum?"

"Yeah, that's why Fallon was . . . Hey!"

Walter Merryman, who had been listening with a twisted grimace, suddenly leaped backwards and started to run. Jim Barclay lunged after him, clawed at his coat, missed and dove for his knees. He brought Merryman down with a flying tackle, but the Elmhurst killer was up in a flash. Barclay held on to one ankle, but Merryman stooped and struck down at him with his fist.

Then Jean Jordan went into action. She took a couple of swift steps toward the struggling men, and swung her white brocaded bag in which she carried the little automatic. It thumped

against the side of Merryman's head, and he collapsed on top of Jim Barclay.

A COUPLE of uniformed men came dashing up. "Here, what's going on?" one of them bellowed.

"This man is a murderer!" said Jean vehemently.

Merryman, dazed, was struggling to his feet. The policemen flanked him and gripped his arms.

The bookie came up. "He owed Dick Fallon fifteen grand and Fallon was going up to collect or else . . ." he said now to Jean. Later, when they were driving back to Elmhurst, Jim Barclay turned to Jean. "You put the puzzle together all right, but how you did it is beyond me."

"It was the red tie . . . and the money," Jean replied. "Merryman was pretty sure Fallon would be wearing the blue, pin-striped suit because he always wore it at the track. And the white shirt . . . But he couldn't be sure about the tie, and he guessed wrong. I remembered Merryman had on a blue tie when I left him at the office. But what first made me suspicious was the money. Merryman had forgotten that I saw his roll, or was in too much of a hurry to go through all of Fallon's pockets.

"He had to use the shotgun to erase Fallon's face and because it made so much noise, he was afraid to stay around. He probably just grabbed everything from Fallon's coat pockets and ran out the back way. Men usually carry letters and identification papers in their inside breast pocket, but money in their trousers."

"That's right," agreed Barclay. "But I can't understand where Merryman got all that money."

"I think you'll find that the account of the Winter-Merryman Lumber

Company has recently suffered a severe attack. Merryman was at the end of his rope. He'd gone through all his money and was in debt to the bookies. Then Fallon said he was coming to collect or else. Merryman had him come at noon when he figured the office would be empty. Then I stumbled in, and Merryman gave me an order and five dollars to get rid of me quickly."

Barclay nodded in admiration. "That sounds like a logical explanation," he admitted.

"It's the only one. You see, I know the Merryman history. An uncle of Walter's absconded with some money years ago. The family made it good rather than have it become public knowledge. Walter figured the family would do the same for him. With the

shortage made up and Walter apparently dead, the whole matter would soon be forgotten. There wouldn't be any curious insurance investigators or detectives looking for him."

"But one thing more, Jean. How'd you know where to find him?"

"Horse players are horse players. Merryman had been betting small money for a long time. With a big roll he just couldn't resist taking a last fling at Fairgrove. A big fling. But he lost—more than money."

"Because a walking scandal sheet remembered her biography."

"Speaking of remembering, Mr. Barclay," grinned Jean, "I remember that you invited me to lunch today. We missed that—but could you make it dinner, kind sir?"

The Elusive Jack Shepherd

THE memory of Jack Shepherd, highwayman, survives after more than 200 years. His popularity with the English public made the prosperity of several novels and plays. He was not gallant like Claude Du Vall, nor clever like Jonathan Wilde, but as a jailbreaker he was a phenomenon.

He was thrown into Newcastle several times under sentence of death, escaped, got drunk where it was most convenient for the police to find him, was jailed again, escaped again, got drunk again, and so on.

At last he was placed in the stone room, chained and stapled to the floor. With a crooked nail he opened the lock, pulled up the staples, took out two stones from the chimney, entered the red room, broke down the door, got into the chapel, broke a spike of the door, and by it opened four other doors, got upon the roof, and from thence by the means of his blanket, went through a garret window into the next house, and so down to the street. All the time he was in irons.

He knocked off the irons, robbed a pawnbroker, and got so drunk that he hardly knew he was under arrest till landed in jail. After that a guard, paid out of fees given by the people who thronged to get a look at him, was with him constantly until he was hanged.

Even on the last day he hoped to escape from the death cart by jumping into the crowds that filled the streets to see him go by, but the guards found and took from him the knife he had hidden to cut his bonds. He was still in his early twenties when he was hanged in November, 1724.

—J. L. Considine



They're Swindling You!

They Didn't Swindle Me!

By

Frank Wrentmore

This is the ninetieth of a series of articles exposing business rackets that cost you billions of dollars every year! Mr. Wrentmore is an authority on swindles and frauds, well known in legal, financial, and commercial associations.
—The Editor.

FOR the first time in this series I am going to recount a personal experience in an effort to prove to you that I take the same medicine myself that I prescribe—and that it is good medicine.

About the first of this year, a new financial publication—*The Financial Observer*—appeared on the horizon in New York City. It was to be financed and directed by a Boston man who used the name of John Bruce Heath and who employed as his editors some of the leading men in American journalism. Not only that, but they, in turn, sought prominent writers and gave them assignments to write articles for the new publication.

Inasmuch as I do not consider myself a prominent writer, I was very much flattered when my agents advised me that they had received an inquiry from this new magazine about me and my work. This inquiry naturally indicated that the editors were apparently interested in the type of articles which I produce and that I might be given an assignment.

Although the magazine appeared to be reputable—judging from the men

who were its editors—I had never heard of Mr. Heath and so before authorizing my agents to answer the letter, I went to the National Better Business Bureau and requested some information about Mr. Heath and his new venture. What I learned there was so disquieting that I requested the agents to do nothing with the magazine on my behalf.

Two or three issues appeared. It was a splendid looking publication, dignified, clean, sedate. Big names were signed to some of the articles. I waited.

Then the expected explosion came. Mr. John Bruce Heath is actually "John" or Thomas Nelles Neville, an ex-convict who has served a seven-year term in Joliet, Ill., prison and has been in trouble in other parts of the country as well. He was arrested on March 18 at the instance of the Attorney General's office and coincident with his arrest *The Financial Observer* suspended publication, leaving many unpaid bills and unpaid authors. Neville has confessed and has been returned to Boston for trial on various charges.

As John Bruce Heath in Boston, Mr. Neville operated what the Boston Better Business Bureau describes as a "get-rich-quick scheme," under the name of "Bainton Associates," which promised a return of 25 per cent a month on money invested in it. That rate of in-

terest would bankrupt the Bank of England. Although this money was supposed to have been invested in the stock market, it is alleged that Neville used it to finance *The Financial Observer*, which lost money at the rate of \$5,000 a week. Neville, through his "Bainton Associates," got more than \$100,000 from Boston investors, all of which is lost, and "Bainton Associates" was under investigation by the Boston Better Business Bureau at the time Neville was starting his publication in New York City.

Two years ago, Neville was stony broke and was working variously as a waiter and checker in a Boston restaurant and as a house-to-house canvasser selling hosiery. This was part of what I learned two and a half months before the collapse of his scheme and before the first issue of *The Financial Observer* appeared on the newsstands. Because I could not understand Neville's unexplained rise to affluence and his connection with a financial proposition which promised the impossible return of 25 per cent a month to investors, I preferred to steer clear of the man and his promotions.

The same information I received was also available to any other person who inquired at the National Bureau. Few did. The people in Boston who lost their money through "Bainton Associates" could have learned of the questionable nature of the undertaking—at no cost to themselves—at the Boston Better Business Bureau and saved their money.

The big writers and editors who became associated with this man did so

because they neglected one of the fundamentals—to investigate *first*—and their present embarrassment is the result of another lesson in that most costly of all schools; the school of experience.

The offices of *The Financial Observer* in New York City were very impressive, occupying seven floors of a large office building. They boasted the furniture used at the national campaign headquarters of the Republican and Democratic organizations.

"Bainton Associates" in Boston meantime kept the money flowing in and maintained the interests of its clients by sending them certificates in the form of checks which indicated the amount due the "investor" perforated in the same manner as checks. The perforated amount was supposed to indicate the liquidating value of the "investment" and the "interest" on some of the older accounts amounted to 240 per cent of the original "investment." Neville followed the basic plan of Charles Ponzi—who also used Boston as his field of operations—and paid dividends out of the capital he was receiving from new suckers—when he paid.

That's about all I have to tell. All I could have lost was the time and effort I might have expended in the composition of one or two articles, plus the natural embarrassment of a "racket" writer being caught by a "racket." Others with much more at stake failed to take the one simple precaution and they lost all they ventured. It isn't necessary to be so wise yourself; just be careful and investigate first.



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. O'HAYER
"Sunyam"

used X to represent e, X will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clues. Thus, the affixes -ing, -ion, -ally are frequent. Read the helpful hints at the beginning of this department each week. The first cryptogram each week is the easiest.

COULD you follow the tantalizing trails in cipher No. X-37, by W. H. J., Hilo, Hawaii, published two weeks ago? Due to the zigzag arrangement of the letters in the process of encipherment, the transposition system here employed is commonly termed the "rail fence" cipher. Incidentally, this same kind of cipher was used to some extent in our own Civil War!

X-37. (a) Come down and see us sometime, fans. You'll be surprised at the beauty of our islands. W. H. J., Hilo, Hawaii.

(b) C M D W A D E U S M T M ...etc.

O E O N N S E S O E I E...etc.

(c) CMDWA DEUSM...OEONN

SESOE...etc.

Transformation of plain text into cipher text is here accomplished as shown in the short example, where the full translation of No. X-37 is also given. The letters of the message (a) are first written "rail fence" fashion, as shown at (b), thus "splitting" it into two lines, one comprising the odd-numbered, and the other the even-numbered letters.

These lines are then read off by "fives," (c), the first line forming the first half of the cryptogram, CMDWA DEUSM, etc.; and the second line, the second half, starting with OEONN SESOE, etc. Identification and solution of "rail fence" cipher may be accomplished by scientific processes, although ordinarily such ciphers will yield to careful inspection.

E. T. C. leads off in this week's puzzles with a timely division problem, considering the current agitation of the court question. The key is numbered: 0123 456789. Elimination in $E \times D = E$ will identify D, for a starter. In Ameer's contribution, try for HVFVL'H, noting the phrase VA VBL. Next, supply the middle letter in LFEVB, continuing with BDHVAEG.

Centuries ago, Tryphiodorus wrote an "Odyssey" with no "a" in the first book, no "b" in the second, and so on. And this supplies a fitting background for the message conveyed in Krypton's cipher. Note PU, -PVU, VUL, and EU, for entry; and follow up with DOL, YPDOVSD, and DLU. Sophie M. Voith's four alliterative phrases will prove intriguing. For a starter, consider -ZSE and -HZPS'K. Then try for RFSSPSFTZSE, noting FS.

†Posius, who is enjoying a Mediterranean cruise, mailed his No. 155 to us from Gibraltar. Perhaps you can locate *q*, since the message is pangrammatic. †Howard J. Prear's inner circle cipher contains YM, a two-letter word! But this is only a negative clew, since symbol occurs elsewhere in the message! Par on No. 156 has been set at 150 answers, and the number of solutions submitted will be announced later. Which reminds us, *Jay Abey's "Arab Boys," No. 78 of last Mar. 27, challenging 175 solutions, netted us no fewer than 248 answers! Good work, fans! Answers to this week's puzzles will appear next week. Asterisks in crypts indicate capitals.

No. 151—Cryptic Division. By E. T. C.

AGE) GUESS (JND
GAN

JDS
YUD

AAYS
AMDE

GA

No. 152—Stony in Difference. By Ameer.

*ZLQ *GAET HVFVL'H PLAXAPDRFX BDHVAEG RFZ OL
VEFRLK VA VBL *SEL-*RFYOEDFZ SLEDAK, AXKLHV ELR-
APZDUFOX L DZ VBL EARTH AN VBL LFEVB.

No. 153—Ponderous Lipogram. By Krypton.

"*NEKAFZ—*HOETXPVU VM *ZVSDO," UVBLR FZ *LGU-
LAD *BPUHLUD *YGNOD, *RVA *EUNLRLA, HVUDEPUA
MPMDZ DOVSAEUK, VUL OSUKGLK DLU YVGKA, YPDO-
VSD EU "L" PU DOL LUDPGL ADVGZ!

No. 154—A Frenzied Affray. By Sophie M. Voith.

"FS *FGKHLZFS FLVA, FBNGXXA FLLFAUT, OPXTXA, OA
OFHHULA, OUKZUEU *OUXELFTU; *RPKKFRY RPVVFS-
TULK RFSSPSFTZSE RPVU, TUFXZSE TUKHLGRHZPS'K TU-
DFKHFHSE TPPV!"

No. 155—Sylvan Subtlety. By †Posius.

DILUTED CREAKSAMONY JUVVEDN ZAPAND PUFDHU
GODMJ FOJNY XAAJN, DFKEAROMQ NRFKSAMOPUEER
OFKHABONDJ JDUJ-THUMPS WDRTAUHJ.

No. 156—Literary Onslaught. By †Howard J. Prear.

*RPGBVFOZGBPUVXS VTZSZTUXFO PNOPRGZKVHPF GX-
KXGBKXFOVT TZSFGPTOAF XSPSO FGVKVOAXUVFR. VR-
GKZRGOA OKPXOVFP ZGGADSF FZGBVFOVTXU GZUPRV-
TF YM *EADZFUXL SPTKZRXPSTPK.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

145—Key: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
A L P E N S T O C K

mixed with turpentine. Awoke chewing wet brush!

146—Edward VII referred to the British people as his "subjects." King George V spoke of his "people." Edward Eighth addressed his "fellow men."

149—Afternoon golf, balmy breezes, diurnal swims, moonlight dancing parties, hectic baseball games, lovers canoeing under bright June moon,—summer has arrived!

147—"Do not hurry, do not worry,
As this world you travel through;
No regretting, fuming, fretting,
Ever can advantage you."
—Wylene.

150—Svelte djinn, phthisical gnome haunt hypochondriac. Frigid surgeon cons pharmacopœia, prescribes nux vomica, opium. Visitors vamoose!

148—Sleepy painter stole nap when paint supply ran low. Dreamed of eating cereal

Send in your answers to any of this week's puzzles cryptofans! You will be credited for them in our *Cipher Solvers' Club* for June. Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

Civil Service Q & A

By "G-2"

Could You Qualify as—

Police Patrolman	Special Agent (G-Man)
Police Detective	Secret Service Operative
Policewoman	Post Office Inspector
Fingerprint Expert	Customs Patrol
State Trooper	Immigration Patrol
Crime Prevention	Anti-Narcotic Agent
Investigator	Parole Investigator
Probation Officer	Prison Keeper
Criminologist	Internal Revenue Agent
Police Radio Expert	Alcohol Tax Agent

This department will give you every week typical questions asked in civil service examinations.

Clerk Test (Continued)

Q 55—The best of the following sentences is (a) Either he or I am to be promoted; (b) Either he or I is to be promoted; (c) Either him or I is to be promoted; (d) Either him or me is to be promoted.

Q 56—Best of the following sentences is (a) He has been late several times last month; (b) He has been coming late several times last month; (c) He has, tardily, been late several times last month; (d) He was late several times last month.

Q 57—Best of following sentences is (a) I meant to have told you about it; (b) I meant to tell you about it; (c) I meant to have informed you with regard to the matter; (d) I am sorry, I meant to have told you about it.

Q 58—Best of following sentences is (a) He is the best worker of the two; (b) He is by far the best worker of the two; (c) He, the best worker of the two, is both efficient and diligent; (d) He is the better worker of the two.

Q 59—Best of following sentences is (a) Everything being ready, we started to work; (b) Everything being ready we started to work; (c) Everything being ready, we, started to work; (d) Everything ready we started, to work.

Q 60—Best of following sentences is (a) If it does not rain we; shall leave the office early; (b) We shall leave the office early; if it does not rain; (c) If, it does not rain, we shall leave the office early; (d) If it does not rain, we shall leave the office early.

Q 61—Best of following sentences is (a) He said that "he would be glad to work." (b) He said that he would be glad to work. (c) He said that "He would be glad to work." (d) He said: that he would be glad to work.

Q 62—If a quotation consists of several paragraphs, one should put quotation marks (a) at the beginning and end of each paragraph; (b) at the end of each paragraph, but at the beginning of the first paragraph only; (c) at the beginning of each paragraph, but at the end of the last paragraph only; (d) only at the beginning of the first paragraph and at the end of the last paragraph.

Q 63—A quotation within a quotation should be enclosed (a) within double quotation marks; (b) within single quotation marks; (c) within triple quotation marks; (d) within no quotation marks.

Q 64—The best of the following definitions of a graph is (a) a graphic representation; (b) a pictorial representation; (c) to represent by means of straight lines; (d) to represent by means of pictures.

Q 65—It is generally agreed that in most cases the best type of language to employ in report writing is (a) polysyllabic; (b) discursive; (c) simple; (d) technical.

Q 66—Best of the following sentences is (a) He had neither respect or love for his superior; (b) He had lost respect or love for his superior; (c) He had not respect and love for his superior; (d) He had neither respect nor love for his superior.

Q 67—Best of the following sentences is (a) Let the book lie there. (b) Let the book lay there. (c) Let the book be lain there. (d) Let the book set there.

Q 68—Best of following sentences is (a) These kind of stories are uninteresting. (b) These kind of stories is uninteresting. (c) This kind of story is uninteresting. (d) This kind of story are uninteresting.

Q 69—Best of following sentences is (a) This typewriter is mine. (b) This here typewriter is mine. (c) This here typewriter belongs to me. (d) This is the typewriter of which belongs to me.

To be continued next week

Q 70—Best of following sentences is (a) This is among you and I. (b) This is between you and I. (c) This is among you and me. (d) This is between you and me.

Key answers to Q 1 to Q 70. Q 1—absolutely (clerks with 5 years' experience spelled it absolutely) Q 2—advice; Q 3—correct; Q 4—apparent; Q 5—correct; Q 6—balloon; Q 7—correct; Q 8—separate; Q 9—principal (many experienced clerks marked principle). Q 10—equivalent; Q 11—correct; Q 12—correct; Q 13—correct; Q 14—correct; Q 15—led; Q 16—miniature (50% spelled it minature). Q 17—believe; Q 18—too; Q 19—correct; Q 20—correct; Q 21—correct; Q 22—parallel (many spelled it parellel); Q 23—hypocrisy (60% spelled it hypocrazy); Q 24—privileges; Q 25—successful; Q 26—toward; Q 27—committee (36% spelled it comittee); Q 28—correct; Q 29—correct; Q 30—equipped (11% spelled it ecquiped or equipped); Q 31—correct; Q 32—cor-

rect (13% spelled demotratcy for democracy); Q 33—effect; Q 34—correct (some spelled veangance for vengeance); Q 35—correct (six spelled propeganda for propaganda); Q 36—correct (many spelled collegues for colleagues); Q 37—sergeant; Q 38—useful; Q 39—correct (many spelled sence for sense; some spelled trival for trivial); Q 40—correct (30% spelled preferred for preferred.)

Q 41—(B); Q 42—(C); Q 43—(A); Q 44—(C); Q 45—(D); Q 46—(C); Q 47—(D); Q 48—(B); Q 49—(A); Q 50—(A); Q 51—(C); Q 52—(C); Q 53—(B); Q 54—(D); Q 55—(A); Q 56—(D); Q 57—(B); Q 58—(D); Q 59—(A); Q 60—(D); Q 61—(B); Q 62—(C); Q 63—(B); Q 64—(B); Q 65—(C); Q 66—(D); Q 67—(A); Q 68—(C); Q 69—(A); Q 70—(D). (In these sentence tests, most of those who failed gave as best sentences "everybody did as they pleased"; "he has been late several times last month"; "let the book lay there.")

From a Recent Police Test

John W. Kuyava, Jr., of Duluth, Minn., submits a series of questions taken from two separate police tests, and requests answers. As is true of most police examinations, the questions fall into two classes, those which are general and might apply to police practice anywhere and those, the answers to which apply only to local conditions and procedure. Those which belong in the former class will be answered first with answers taken from actual police tests given in the past. Readers should understand, however, that the key answers given may be subject to debate since police and court procedure are not always alike.

Q 1—A person who aids or assists in the commission of a crime is called a —.

Q 2—A combination of two or more persons to accomplish a criminal or unlawful act is called —.

Q 3—The written order from a court or magistrate committing a person to a place of imprisonment is called a —.

Q 4—The one of the following which determines whether a person is guilty of a felony with which he is charged and may be legally sentenced to imprisonment is called a (a) coroner's jury; (b) grand jury; (c) petit jury; (d) justice of the peace.

Q 5—The one of the following to which *nolle prosequi* or *nol. pros.* refers is (a) insufficient evidence to obtain a conviction; (b) plaintiff's withdrawal of the charge; (c) a crime resulting from negligence; (d) result of coroner's inquest.

Key answers to the above: Q 1—accomplice; Q 2—conspiracy; Q 3—commitment; Q 4—(c); Q 5—(b).

The questions, answers to which are subject to local conditions and procedure, are:

Q 6—The written authority for one person to act for another in legal matters is called _____.

Q 7—Public or private employees who deliberately fail to perform their duties efficiently in order to embarrass the employers are said to practice _____.

Q 8—The one of the following to which the slang term "kip" refers is (a) an accomplice; (b) a lookout man; (c) a watchman; (d) a shoplifter.

Q 9—If a taxicab driver calls a patrolman because a passenger refuses to pay his fare, the most suitable course of action is (a) to arrest the passenger for disorderly conduct; (b) to try to persuade the man to pay his fare; (c) to see that the passenger gets out but not arrest him as you have no warrant; (d) to get the passenger's name and address and have the driver swear out a warrant.

Q 10—When a person steals money and jewelry through an open window, the legal name given to his offense is (a) larceny; (b) burglary; (c) robbery; (d) misappropriation.

Q 11—The most important of the fol-

lowing qualifications for a patrolman is (a) courage; (b) good education; (c) physical strength; (d) ability to get along with people.

Q 12—The one of the following which is most commonly considered by men and women past 40 as the outstanding characteristic of college graduates holding their first job is (a) competence; (b) conceit; (c) resourcefulness; (d) ability to fit into existing organization.

Q 13—The best of the following ways to handle the traffic problem is (a) to prohibit women and minors from driving automobiles; (b) to educate the public in safety rules, secure their cooperation in enforcing the law; (c) to make arrests every time the law is clearly violated, regardless of circumstances; (d) to make the legal speed limit for automobiles not more than 15 miles an hour in the city limits.

Q 14—A person suspected of grand larceny should, if arrested, be (a) tried immediately before a police magistrate; (b) released on bail pending indictment and trial; (c) released on his own recognizance pending indictment and trial; (d) refused bail and held in jail pending indictment and trial.

Q 15—A woman who has just missed a valuable diamond ring calls in a patrolman on the beat, accuses her maid of stealing the ring, asks the patrolman to arrest the maid and search her room. The one of the following things most suitable for the patrolman to do first is (a) arrest the maid and try to get her to confess;

(Continued on Page 144)

CIVIL SERVICE Q and A IN BOOKLET FORM

SAMPLE questions given in previous civil service tests are now available to readers in booklet form. THIS COUPON MUST ACCOMPANY EACH REQUEST. Coupons mailed later than TWO WEEKS after the date below will not be honored.

JUNE 26, 1937

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THE printer informs us, somewhat plaintively but in no uncertain terms, that we've been overambitious this week. We put so many stories in this issue that the *Flashes from Readers* department has to be compressed. Let's start the letters at once!

Here's a letter from a modern nomad.

DEAR EDITOR:

Thank you for giving us a serial about people who live in automobile trailers. My wife and I, who read your magazine regularly, almost fought over the issues containing T. T. Flynn's *Murder Caravan*.

Of course our trailer is nothing like *Tony Savage's*, but it gave us a great kick to read the description of what a de luxe trailer could be. And the territory the characters in the story covered is also similar to us. We were through the Southwest recently.

Also, glad to see Johnston McCulley's *Thubway Thum* back with us.

CHRISTOPHER HASEL,
Almost Anywhere.

A number of complete short novels are scheduled to appear in the very near future—among them stories by Victor Maxwell (see the Coming Next Week page) Roger Torrey, and Joel Townsley Rogers.

DEAR EDITOR:

First of all, I want to make it plain that I'm not writing a letter of complaint. I think your magazine is tops. If it's any trouble to consider what I have to say—or if there's any reason why I'm talking out of turn—please drop it into the wastepaper basket and forget all about it.

It used to be, some time ago, that you published rather complete short novels, all in one issue. They were not as long as serials. I just wondered what had happened to them.

There is something very satisfying about a longer piece of fiction. Readers can clamor all they want about short stories and novelettes. I think an author really shows what he's worth when he has room for plenty of suspense and plenty of complications and illuminating characterizations.

So, once in a while, may we have some more of them?

WILLIAM DRUMMOND,
Oklahoma City, Okla.

Don't you think you're being just a little unkind?

DEAR EDITOR:

Opposition Sheet by Edward S. Williams is the worst story I've ever read. Nothing like that could ever happen in this country, and so why does he have to write stories about it?

The thing I like about your magazine, usually, is the feeling of realism in the stories. But this Williams is screwy. He's done some pretty good stories, but this last one is a fairy tale.

All this stuff about hooded night-riders and crooked politics makes me sick.

ELMER STEADMAN,
Buffalo, N. Y.

(Continued from Page 142)

(b) to call up the station house and ask that a detective be assigned at once to handle the case; (c) question the woman and the maid as to when they last saw the ring and try to help find it; (d) to ask the woman and maid to accompany him to the station house so she can report the facts and swear out a warrant for the maid.

Q 16—A man who shoots a policeman without provocation in broad daylight is likely to be in a condition of —.

Q 17—"Snow" is a term often used by drug addicts when they refer to —.

Q 18—Three of the things needed for evidence that a police officer should look for when he finds the body of a murdered person are —.

Q 19—Three weapons much used by automobile bandits are —.

Q 20—Three weapons which stun or kill without leaving an easily discerned mark are —.

Suggested answers to the above: Q 6—power of attorney (in some states). Q 7—A modern term is sabotage though local laws may supply another term. Q 8—Slang expressions do not have uniform definitions. Q 9—In this case local police rules,

or the established law would prevail. Q 10—Larceny would be one answer though local laws may have a more exact definition. Q 11—Good judgment is supposed to be the No. 1 essential in a patrolman; Q 12—Answer should be based upon your own experience. Q 13—(b) has been accepted as best answer but here, again, the local traffic problem may be different, or peculiar to your locality. Q 14—All depends upon local police department regulations or local laws. Usual accepted answer is (a). Q 15—Depends upon local department regulations but in many tests (c) is accepted as correct. Q 16—Intoxication has been accepted as the proper answer though the question, as framed, admits of a multiple answer. Q 17—Slang terms have various definitions; in some sections "snow" means cocaine, in others it means heroin, cocaine and morphine. Q 18—Regulations differ as to procedure in such a case. Q 19—Machine gun, submachine gun, sawed-off shotgun. Q 20—Loaded rubber hose, billy, sand bag. This advice is offered to candidates for police tests—familiarize yourself with local department rules and regulations and penal laws, or strike up an acquaintance with a patrolman who has taken a test.

COMING NEXT WEEK

The Thunderbolt

Riordan and Halloran uncover a gigantic swindle
in an exciting short novel by

VICTOR MAXWELL

JOHN KOBLER

EDGAR FRANKLIN

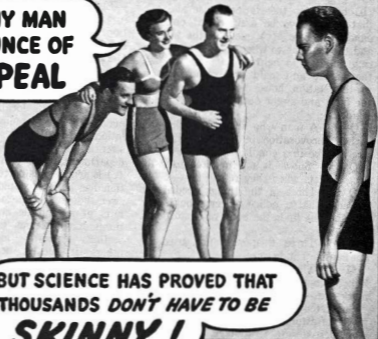
CORNELL WOOLRICH

LAWRENCE TREAT

DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

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SEX APPEAL**



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