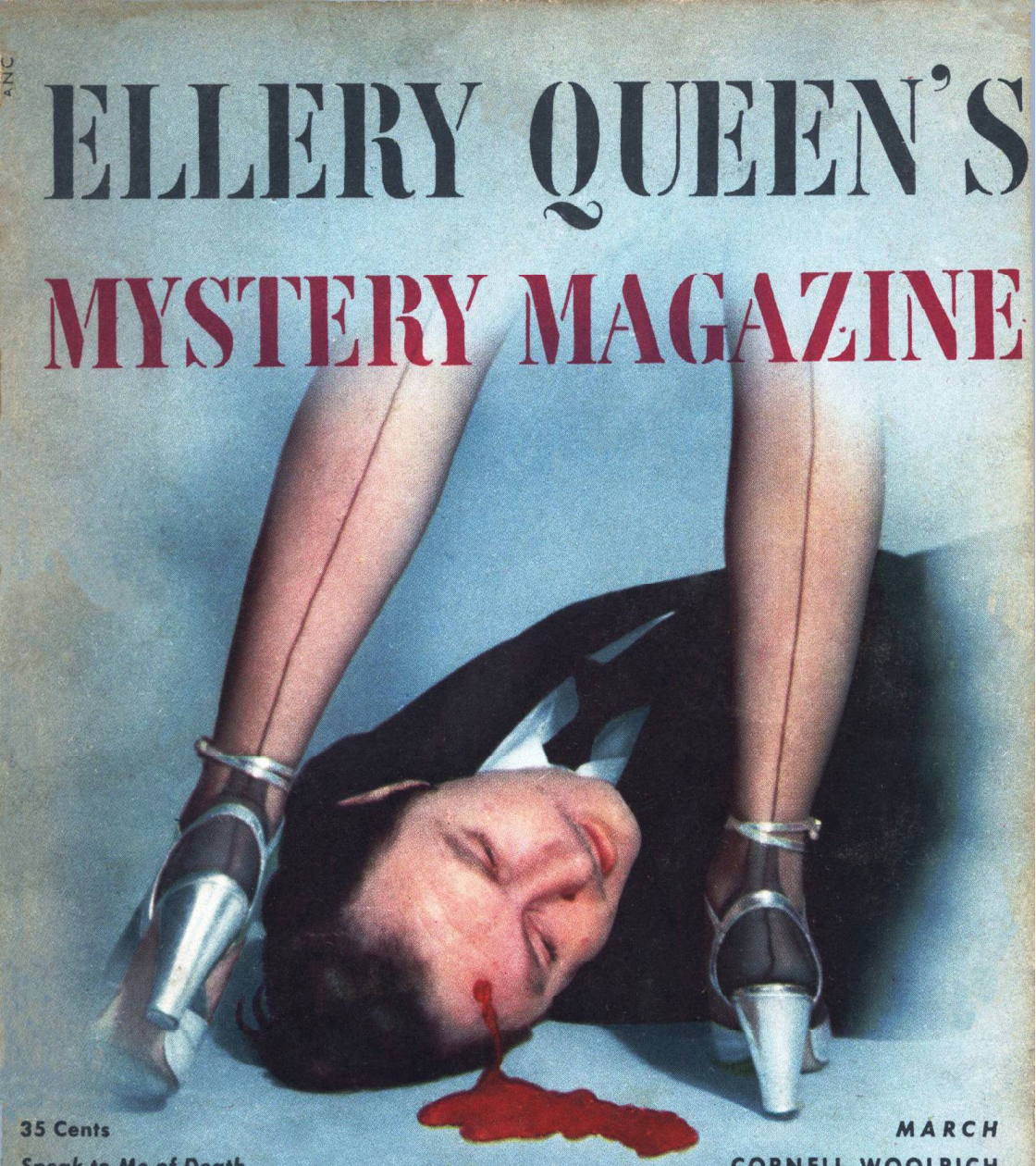
ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE



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ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

PUBLISHER: *Lawrence E. Spivak* EDITOR: *Ellery Queen*

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Cordially,

Lawrence E. Spivak

PUBLISHER

WOOLRICHIANA

It is our opinion that most professional reviewers, critics, and historians in the detective-crime-mystery field are unaware of the prodigious contribution Cornell Woolrich has made to the short story. Mr. Woolrich has been one of our most prolific producers: his output over the years has been terrific, both in quantity and quality. For much too long a time the Woolrich short stories and novelettes languished in undeserved obscurity — unreprinted, unhonored, and unsung. Not till six years ago did a book publisher show sufficient imagination and taste to begin collecting the old Woolrich shorts and issue them in book form; and this long overdue recognition is traceable unquestionably to Mr. Woolrich's having first established himself as a best-selling author of full-length suspense novels.

Now, it is quite well-known that Cornell Woolrich and William Irish are one and the same person. You would think, therefore, that Mr. Woolrich's books of short stories would be published under both names — some by Woolrich and some by Irish. Strangely enough, that is not true. Although most of the short stories (if not all!) originally appeared in magazines under the name of Cornell Woolrich, all the book-collections have so far been credited to William Irish. The reason for this consistent demarcation of authorship has never been explained, either by Mr. Woolrich himself or by his publishers.

In any event, the time has come to take bibliographic cognizance of the Woolrich-Irish work in the short-story form. To the best of our knowledge, no one has yet put together a check list which will serve as a guide for Mr. Woolrich's fans (and who isn't?). Here, then, is a complete record of all the William Irish volumes of shorts to date, with tables of contents and first-edition data to help those of you who already are, or obey the impulse to become, devotees of the second most exhilarating sport (in the words of A. S. W. Rosenbach) in the world.

I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes.
Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1943. First edition, 12mo, blue cloth.

I Wouldn't Be in Your Shoes
Last Night
Three O'Clock
Nightmare
Papa Benjamin

AFTER-DINNER STORY.
New York: J. B. Lippincott, [1944]. First edition, 12mo, green cloth. Reissued as SIX TIMES DEATH; New York: Popular Library, [1948], 18mo, colored pictorial wrappers.

After-Dinner Story
The Night Reveals
An Apple a Day
Marihuana
Rear Window
Murder-Story

IF I SHOULD DIE BEFORE I WAKE.
New York: Avon, (1945). First edition, thin 12mo, colored pictorial wrappers.

If I Should Die Before I Wake
I'll Never Play Detective Again
Change of Murder
A Death Is Caused
Two Murders, One Crime
The Man Upstairs

BORROWED CRIME.
New York: Avon, (1946). First edition, thin 12mo, colored pictorial wrappers.

Borrowed Crime
The Cape Triangular
Detective William Brown
Chance

THE DANCING DETECTIVE.
Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, (1946). First edition, 12mo, beige cloth.

The Dancing Detective
Two Fellows in a Furnished Room
The Light in the Window
Silent as the Grave
The Detective's Dilemma
Fur Jacket
Leg Man
The Fingernail

DEAD MAN BLUES.
Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1948. First edition, 12mo, light turquoise simulated cloth.

Guillotine
The Earring
If the Dead Could Talk
Fire Escape
Fountain Pen
You Take Ballistics
Funeral

Surely these six books represent one of the most important series in contemporary crime fiction; and with his almost inexhaustible reservoir of past material (much of which will appear in EQMM), together with the new short stories Cornell Woolrich is bound to write, the series will one day become an extraordinary 'tec target for future detective-story writers to shoot at. But it will be like shooting peas at the Pyramids . . .

SPEAK TO ME OF DEATH

by CORNELL WOOLRICH

A SLICK-LOOKING roadster stopped in front of Headquarters at about nine that night, and its lone occupant sat there in it for a moment before cutting the ignition, as if trying to make up her mind what to do. The car had money written all over it, money without flash. The number was so low it was almost zero. The girl in it took a cigarette out of the box fitted to the door, pulled a patented lighter out of the dash, inhaled deeply as if to brace herself. Then she got out and went up the steps between the two dark-green lights.

She was tall and slim and young. She wore a little leopard-skin jacket that didn't come below her elbows. The price of it probably ran into three figures. Her face was pale, paler than powder could have made it. At the top of the steps she took a second and final drag. Then she dropped the cigarette, stepped on it, and went in. She asked to see the lieutenant in charge.

His name was McManus and he brought a chair forward with his own hands for her in the back room. She was that kind of a girl.

She said, "My name is Ann Bridges." Then she looked down at the floor. You could see her wrists were trembling, where she held them

folded over one knee. Diamond-splinters flashed around her wrist-watch from the slight vibration.

"Any relative of John T. Bridges?" McManus said.

Ann Bridges looked up again. "I'm his niece," she said. "In fact his only relative." She took it in her stride, said it almost off-handedly. To McManus it was a stunning piece of information; it was like finding yourself in the same room with the heir-apparent to a throne. He never thought of doubting her. There was something 14-karat about her that couldn't have been faked.

She said, "It isn't the pleasantest thing in the world to come to the police like this —" she broke off abruptly. Then she went ahead: "I don't even know what there is you people can do about it. But something's got to be done —"

McManus' voice was kind. "You tell me what it is."

"That's the worst part of it. It doesn't sound like anything when you tell it. Anything at all. But it is something!" Her voice rose almost to the point of hysteria. "I can't just stand by and watch him — sink into the grave before my eyes! I *had* to tell somebody — *had* to get it off my chest! I've waited too long as it is!" Her eyes misted. "I've driven down here four nights in a row — and the first three times I lost my nerve, drove on around the block without stopping. I said to myself, 'Ann, they'll think you're crazy, Ann, they'll laugh at you —' "

McManus went over to her and rested a fatherly hand on her shoulder. "We don't laugh at people," he said gently. "We run across anything and everything, in our line — but we don't laugh at people who are in trouble." It wasn't because she was Ann Bridges; it was because she was so young and lovely and there was such distress written on her face.

"Something has hold of us," she said. "Something that started in by being nothing at all, by being just a joke over the luncheon-table; something that's grown and grown, until now it's like an octopus throttling us. I can't name it to you, because I don't know what to call it, don't know what it is. It threatens him, not me, but you see I love him, and so the threat is to the two of us."

She gave a little sob deep in her throat.

"Call it a prophecy, call it a prediction, call it fate — call it what you will. I fought against it hard enough, God knows. But the evidence of my own eyes, my own ears, my own senses, is too much for me. And the time's too short now. I'm afraid to take a chance. I haven't got the nerve to bluff it out, to sit pat. You don't gamble with a human life. Today's the 13th, isn't it? It's too close to the 14th; there isn't time-margin enough left now to be skeptical, to keep it to myself any longer. Day by day I've watched him cross off the date on his desk-calendar, drawing nearer to death. There are only two leaves left now, and I want help! Because on the

14th — at the exact stroke of midnight, as the 15th is beginning —"

She covered her face with both arms and shook silently.

"Yes?" urged McManus. "Yes?"

"He's become convinced — oh, and almost I have too — that at exactly midnight on the 14th he's to die. Not just die but meet his death in full vigor and health, a death rushing down to him from the stars he was born under — rushing down even before he existed at all. A death inexorable, inescapable. A death horrid and violent, inconceivable here in this part of the world where we live."

She took a deep, shuddering breath, whispered the rest of it. "*Death at the jaws of a lion.*"

McManus didn't answer for an awfully long time. When he spoke, it wasn't to her at all. He opened the door, called to someone, said, "I'm not to be disturbed — until further orders, hear?"

When he came back to her she said limply, "Thanks — for not laughing, for not smelling my breath, for not hinting that I should see a doctor. Oh, thanks, anyway!"

He took a package of cigarettes out of the desk-drawer, passed them to her. "I know you modern kids," he said paternally. "Smoke up. Pull yourself together. Tell it in your own way. Begin at the beginning — and tell it right straight through —"

It all started (Ann Bridges said) about an airplane ride. My Uncle John was going to 'Frisco on business, and he'd bought his ticket. He showed it to me at lunch, and I saw that the take-off was dated Friday the 13th. Half-kiddingly I suggested he put off leaving until the day after. There'd been a bad crack-up a week before, but lord! we were both joking, not serious about it.

My maid must have overheard us. She came to me later and said, "Beg your pardon, miss, but if that were I, I'd never let him do a thing like that."

I said, "Be your age."

She said, "I know of someone who could warn you, if there is to be any trouble. A man who's gifted with second sight. Why don't you let me take you to him?"

I gave her a cold look and I said, "Just what do I look like to you? Are you seriously suggesting that I go to some flea-bitten fortune-teller with a dirty cloth wrapped around his head and —"

"He's not a fortune-teller," she defended. "He'd resent being called that. He doesn't make a profession of it, and he doesn't take money for it."

"I bet he doesn't refuse it, either," I said cynically.

"He's a good man," she said stoutly, "not a sharper of any kind. He happens to be born with this gift, he can't help that. He doesn't trade on it in any way, in fact he doesn't like to use it. My family and I have known him for years —"

I smiled to myself, as anyone would have. "He's certainly sold himself to you, Elaine," I remarked.

"We won't talk any more about it,

miss," she said stiffly. "Only, you remember that time I was in trouble —" She'd got mixed up with some man, and I'd straightened it out for her; it wouldn't be fair for me to give you the details. "You were the only one knew about that, Miss Bridges. I didn't say a word at home, I didn't dare. He took me aside one night and told me the whole thing. He told me how it was going to end up, too. He said the man was going to meet death, and I'd be rid of him once and for all. I fainted dead away on the floor. You remember how we heard two months later he'd been run over on the street?"

I did, but my skepticism wouldn't dent much. "You didn't say a word to me at the time, how was that?"

"He made me promise not to. I've broken my word to him today. He doesn't want it to become known. He hates his gift himself, says it causes him nothing but misery —"

All of which sounded reasonable enough, but I was definitely not impressed. I've had very good commonsense all my life, and you have to watch your step — when you own twenty millions.

My uncle took off from Newark early the next morning, and when I got back to the house the maid blurted out: "There's nothing to worry about, Miss Bridges. I — I asked him about this trip, and he said it was safe to make it."

"Oh, you did, did you?" I said severely. "And who told you to?"

"I didn't tell him who it was or anything about it. Just asked him about this morning's plane," she defended. "But Mr. Bridges needn't have gone at all, could have saved himself the trouble. He told me that whoever this party is that's going out there, he or she is doomed to disappointment; nothing will come of it, he'll just have wasted his time."

My uncle's in the import and export business; he'd gone to see about an important consignment of silk from Japan, but the maid couldn't have known that, much less this seer of hers. I'm afraid I snickered rudely right in her face.

Nothing daunted, she rushed on: "But don't let Mr. John come back by air, Miss Bridges, whatever you do! Wire him to take the train instead. The eastbound-plane *is* going to run into trouble — he saw it clearly. Not a crack-up, but it's going to be grounded somewhere in the Rockies and half of them are going to die of exposure before they're located. He saw snow piled all around it and people with frozen hands and feet having to have them amputated later —"

I blew up. I said, "One more word out of you, and I'll give you your week's notice!"

She didn't open her mouth from then on, just went around looking sorry for me.

Uncle John had told me he was starting back the following Saturday. Take-off was at seven Pacific Coast Time, ten back here. I'll admit I got a little worried Friday night, wondered whether or not I oughtn't to

send that wire after all. I was afraid he'd laugh at me. More than that even, I hated to give in to her after the way I'd talked. I went to bed without sending the wire. It was too late when I woke up in the morning, he would have started already.

He should have got in about noon Sunday. I drove to the airport to meet him, and he wasn't on the plane. That gave me a nasty turn. I asked at the airport-office, and they told me he'd booked a seat from Chicago east, along with several other people, on this one, and none of them had shown up to make the connection; the 'Frisco plane had been overdue when they left Chicago.

I went home plenty worried. It was in the papers and on the radio already, reported missing somewhere over the Rockies with fourteen people in it!

The maid saw how I was taking it, so finally she came out with: "I suppose I'm discharged, but I knew better than you — I took the liberty of sending Mr. John a wire over your name last night, begging him to come by train instead —"

Discharged? I could have kissed her! But then anxiety raised its head again. "He's stubborn, he'd never listen to a message like that —"

"I — I told him that one of his associates wanted to consult him about a very important matter, and mentioned a place where the planes don't stop, so he'd have to take a train. *He* says," she went on, "that it won't be found for three days, the plane. It wouldn't have meant death, it isn't Mr. John's time yet, but he would have lost both feet and been a helpless cripple for the rest of his —"

All of which evoked a pretty creepy feeling in me. It wasn't helped any when my uncle got off the train three days later, safe and sound. The first words out of his mouth were that he'd made the trip for nothing: a maritime strike had broken out on the Coast and his silk-shipment was tied up indefinitely at Honolulu; he hadn't been able to accomplish a thing.

The snow-bound plane was sighted from the air later that same day, and when the rescue-parties got to it, seven of the fourteen were dead from exposure, and several of the survivors had to have their hands or feet amputated as soon as they got them to a hospital. Just as *he'd* foretold — rescue-date, circumstances, number of casualties, and all! It was uncanny. I didn't want to believe, I fought like anything against believing — and yet there it was.

I told my uncle the whole story of course — who wouldn't have? — and he was as impressed as I was. What we did next was what anyone else would have done after what had happened. We asked the maid to take the two of us to this man, we wanted to see him for ourselves. She wasn't to tell him who we were, just two friends of hers. I even put on an old coat and hat of hers, to look properly working-class, and we left the car home, went there on foot.

It was a big let-down, at first. This

fortune-teller was merely a middle-aged man sitting in a furnished-room with his suspenders hanging down! His name was Jeremiah Tompkins, about as unimpressive a name as they come. And worst of all, he was just a bookkeeper. Had been, rather, for he wasn't working just then. If I remember correctly, he was reading the want ads in a newspaper when we came in.

I could see my uncle was more disappointed; he was almost resentful. After all, Uncle John is a levelheaded, intelligent businessman. That a figure like this should be able to spout prophecies, should know more than he did himself about what was going to happen to him, was too much for him to swallow.

"Watch," he said to me out of the corner of his mouth, "I'll show you. I'll show you he's just a phony, that all this was just a coincidence. I've got something here that's the best little miracle-eraser in the world!"

And he took out five hundred dollars in cold cash and pressed it into Tompkins' hand. Tompkins had been reading the want ads, remember, and Elaine told me later her people were having him in for meals with them out of sheer pity.

"You've done something for me I can never repay you for," my uncle said as a come-on. "This is just a token of my gratitude. Call on me at any time and I'll be more than glad to —"

Tompkins didn't let him finish. He threw the money down at my uncle's feet. "I don't like being insulted," he said quietly. There was a sort of dignity about the way he said it, at that. "It's like being paid for — for showing a gruesome scar or some deformity. I don't do that for money, and I won't take money for it. This girl here —" he pointed at Elaine — "is a friend of mine. She asked me some questions about a plane and I answered them for her, that's all. Please go. I don't like being made a holy show of."

"But you don't know who I am," my uncle began protestingly.

Tompkins gave a bleak smile and put his hand up to his head, as though he had a headache. Not in that theatrical way clairvoyants do when they're about to "go into their trance," but as though something were hurting him, wouldn't let him alone.

He answered as though he were speaking against his will. "You're John Bridges," he said. "Your mother died when you were fourteen years old, and it was the sight of the beautiful silk kimonos and wrappers she wore that really made you go into the export and import business later on. . . ."

Elaine could have told him all that was the unspoken thought in my mind.

He turned to me and answered it as though it had been said aloud. I went white and nearly fell through the floor! "But here's something she couldn't have," he said. "About you. You took off your dance-slippers under a restaurant-table one night last week and a waiter accidentally kicked

one halfway across the room. Rather than admit it was yours, you left in your stocking-feet. And you've got a diamond and ruby necklace with twenty stones in it in Safety-Box No. 1805 at the National Security Bank. Also a bundle of letters you bought back from a gigolo in Paris for fifty thousand francs."

My own uncle didn't know about that!

"I don't ask you to believe in me, I don't care whether you do or not," this Tompkins went on somberly. "I didn't ask you to come here in the first place. You're going to the police about me some day, anyway, and get me in a lot of trouble."

My hands strayed up and down the blank wall trying to find the door where there wasn't any door. My eyes were blurred. I moaned, "Get me out of here!" The whole world was turning upside-down on its axis. I felt like a fly walking on the ceiling.

My uncle took me home. The five hundred stayed there on Tompkins' floor. Elaine brought it back with her when she returned, after we did.

"Wouldn't touch it," she murmured. "What do you think he did, though? Borrowed five dollars from me, to tide himself over."

That business of the $500 sold the fortune-teller to my uncle more than any number of bull's-eye predictions could have. He was convinced now that Jeremiah Tompkins wasn't a phony, a fake, a schemer of any kind. That he was a phenomenon: an ordinary, in fact sub-ordinary, human being with this frightful gift — or blight — of prognostication. In other words, the groundwork of credulity had been laid. The rest followed in due course.

To begin with, Uncle John tried to make the man a gift of money again — no longer to show him up, but in all sincerity and respect now. He mailed him his personal check, for $1000 this time. It came back inside a readdressed envelope, almost by return mail, torn into eight neat pieces. That failing, my uncle got Tompkins a job — and made sure he'd accept it by keeping his own name out of it. He had a friend advertise for a bookkeeper. The friend, without knowing the details, agreed to bar all except one of the applicants who might answer it — Jeremiah Tompkins. In other words, it was a one-man ad. Elaine was posted to call the man's attention to it in the paper, in case it should escape his eye. It all worked out according to plan; he took the job.

"But," I insisted stubbornly to the two of them, "if he's the actual mind-reader he showed himself to be, how is it he didn't know at once who was in back of this paid ad you showed him? Why couldn't he see that the job came through Uncle John?"

"He doesn't go around all day reading what's in people's minds — he'd kill himself doing that," Elaine protested, as though I had disparaged the man. "It seems to come to him in flashes, only when he'll let it — and he doesn't like to. It's there in his

unconscious self the whole time." She meant subconscious. "And he lets it flicker out once in awhile, or else it gets out in spite of him — I don't know."

Anyway, Tompkins took the job, and if he was a first-class mystic, he wasn't any great shakes as a bookkeeper. My uncle's friend had to let him go in about six weeks. The friend didn't, of course, know the inside story; he claimed the man was too moony and moody — in plain English, shiftless.

Meanwhile Tompkins kept getting under my uncle's skin deeper and deeper. The strike on the Pacific Coast gave signs of going on all the rest of the summer. The silk-shipment, which was worth thousands, was stuck there in Honolulu, rotting away. My uncle got an offer from a Japanese dealer in the islands, considerably below its intrinsic value, let alone any profit. It looked like a case of take what he could get or lose the whole thing. It wasn't a question of the money so much, with him, but he hated to come out second best in any transaction, hated to admit himself licked.

He'd already drafted the cable accepting the Jap offer, then at the last minute held it without filing. He went and looked up Tompkins by himself, without confiding in anyone.

I don't know what passed between them. All I know is that Uncle John came home that night and told me he'd cabled the Japs to go to hell; the shipping strike was going to be over in forty-eight hours, right when the deadlock seemed at its worst.

I don't have to remind you what happened. You've read how the Chief Executive himself intervened unexpectedly two days later and the strike was arbitrated and called off between sun-up and sundown. The President's own advisers hadn't known he was going to do it, so it was said. My uncle's consignment beat every other cargo into 'Frisco; and by getting into port first — well, it was quite a windfall. Uncle John got exactly double the usual price for the shipment.

A man in a shabby furnished-room, without a job of his own, had saved his firm exactly $200,000 all told!

I kept out of it from then on. I wanted to hang onto my peace of mind; more than that even, my sanity. I didn't want to turn into a neurotic ghost-ridden candidate for a mental clinic. I wouldn't even discuss Tompkins with Uncle John, or let him mention the man to me. So I can't give you the intermediate steps.

But then the thing finally clamped down on my uncle, as anyone might have known it would eventually. Three months ago, I saw the change come over him and asked him what it was. He suddenly retired from business, sold out — or rather gave away his interest for next to nothing. He lost concern in everything and anything. He got haggard. I could see the mortal terror standing out in his eyes, day by day.

He'd gone to Tompkins again about

some enormous venture he was contemplating. He was gambling more and more on these "inside tips," growing more reckless all the time. But this time there was a different answer, a catastrophic answer.

The thing under discussion was a long-term transaction, that would have taken about six months to pay off. "It doesn't matter one way or the other," Tompkins told him indifferently, "unless of course it's the firm itself you're thinking about, and not yourself personally." And then very indifferently, as though he'd known it all along: "Because you'll be dead by that time. Your life's coming to an end at midnight on the 14th-to-15th of next March."

I don't know whether Tompkins told it to him all at once, or doled it out piece-meal. I don't know how many times my uncle had to seek him out — plead with him maybe, or grovel on bended knees. I don't know anything at all. Uncle John wouldn't have been human if he hadn't asked the man how he would die, in what manner, and what could be done to prevent it.

"Nothing," was the merciless answer. "You can't stop it from happening, can't evade it. Though you fly to the far ends of the world, though you hide yourself in the depths of the earth, though you gather a thousand men about you to shield you, it will still find you out. It's there — written down for you — *Death by the jaws of a lion.*"

And then Uncle John started going slowly to pieces. Oh, it's not the money, Lieutenant McManus! It's not that he's endowed Tompkins with hundreds of thousands of dollars at a time, that he's dissipating our fortune, my inheritance, trying to buy minutes and *seconds* of life back from a man who admits, himself, that he has no control over it, can do nothing about it. I don't mind that.

It's that he's dying by inches, before my very eyes, day by day. It's that the Spanish Inquisition, the Chinese, the Iroquois, never devised tortures to compare to what he's going through now. It's that it's become communicated to me; I'm terrified, and sick with horror, and beating my hands together in the dark. It's that the sun has gone out and we're two people trapped in a black pit. It's that there's only tomorrow left now. I want help! *I want help!*

She was so overwrought that she fell forward across his desk, burying her face against it, pounding it helplessly with her little clenched fist, again and again. McManus had to send out for a sedative. When she had drunk the spirits of ammonia, she lay down on a cot in another room and rested, dozed off for awhile. McManus covered her up to the chin with his own overcoat, with his own hands.

When he went back again alone to his office, he spat out: "Gad, what things you run into!" Twenty million dollars, eighteen years old, and her very soul taken from her. On the border-line of gibbering idiocy, al-

most. As for the uncle, McManus could imagine the shape *he* was in.

He sat down at his desk, stayed there staring blankly before him as though he'd forgotten the whole incident.

After about five minutes, he picked up the phone very slowly, and he said even more slowly: "Send Tom Shane in here to me. And Schafer. And Sokolsky. And Dominguez. Send out a short-wave if you have to, I want 'em here right away. Tell 'em to drop whatever they're on, no matter what it is. . . ."

Tom Shane was just a pleasant-looking fellow in a thirty-dollar herringbone suit. He didn't look dumb and he didn't look bright either. Just a guy you wouldn't mind having a glass of beer with. He lined himself up to the left of the other three.

"Shane," said McManus, "are you afraid of lions?"

"I wouldn't go to bed with one," admitted Shane frankly.

"Shane," said McManus, "do you think you can keep a millionaire from being mangled by a lion at exactly twelve o'clock tomorrow midnight?"

It wasn't really a question. McManus seemed to be talking absent-mindedly while he did a lot of thinking behind the smoke-screen of words. "I may as well tell you now that the 'lion' might take almost any kind of a shape. It might be a bullet. It might be a poisoned cup of coffee. Then again it just might be an honest-to-goodness lion. I could fill that house with fellows like you, have 'em hanging from the chandeliers like mistletoe, but I don't want to do that. Then the 'lion' would only defer its visit, come around some other time, maybe six months from now, when it was least expected. I don't want that to happen; I want it to come when it's due to come, so I can make sure it'll never come again. So there's only one man going up there to that house with those two people, and I don't want him to fall down on the job. It's a double-header too. If this is what I think it is, that girl's as doomed as her uncle. That would mop up the twenty millions nicely, otherwise she could always bring suit to recover what's already been given away of it.

"So, Tom Shane, you go in there in the next room and sit by Ann Bridges, and go home with her when she's feeling fit enough. You're not a detective — you're her boy-friend on a week-end visit as her house-guest, or her new butler, or a traveling-salesman trying to sell her vacuum-cleaners, I don't care. But keep those two people alive. Midnight tomorrow's the deadline."

Tom Shane wheeled around and went out without a word. He still didn't look bright, but he didn't look dumb either. Just a well-built guy in a herringbone suit.

McManus said, "Schafer, you're on a girl named Elaine O'Brien — and all her family too. I want to know more about 'em than they know about themselves. And be ready to pinch.

"Sokolsky, you're on a guy named

Jeremiah Tompkins. And don't kid yourself by the way he looks that he's no great shakes of a guy. He's the kingpin in this, whatever it is. Don't let him out of your sight. Dictaphones and every trick of the trade. And try not to think while you're at it; the guy's supposed to be a mind-reader. Take somebody else on it with you, it's not going to be any pushover. And be even readier to pinch than Schafer. Tompkins has got to be in custody long before midnight — whether you get anything on him or not."

There was just a guy left that looked a little like Valentino, only better-looking.

"Dominguez," McManus said, "I've gotta lotta little odd-jobs for you. But they're just as important as the other guy's assignments, don't bluff yourself they're not. Find out what zoos there are within a 500-mile radius of here. Check with every one of them and find out if they keep lions. Find out if any have escaped or been swiped."

"Swipe a lion?" breathed the detective.

"Warn the keepers at all of 'em to keep extra watch over their lion-cages tonight and all day tomorrow. Report to me. Got that? *Then*, find out at what night-club Miss Ann Bridges had a slipper kicked across the dance-floor two years ago. And what became of it. Also, the mate to it. Use your Latin looks, apply for a job there or something. Find out what waiter picked 'em up after she'd gone, and what he did with them. If you can get hold of him, bring him in. Report to me. *Then*, buttonhole one of the big-shots at the National Security Bank, ask his cooperation, see if you can trace the leak by which the number of Miss Bridges' safe-deposit box — 1805 — and what it had in it, came into the possesh of a third party. There's nothing criminal in that, in itself, but it would give us a swell lead.

"Y'got less than twenty-four hours to do all this in! Y'ain't eating and y'ain't sleeping and y'ain't even taking time off to talk from now on! Get going!"

And when he was all by himself once more, McManus picked up the phone and asked for long distance. "Gimme Paris, France," he said matter-of-factly, "the Chief of the *Surêté*."

Many blackmailing gigolos have had telephone love-calls, but few have ever been the cause of a trans-atlantic long-distance from police-official to police-official!

The University Club Building has two entrances, one on the side street, the other on the avenue. An L-shaped lobby connects them. It's just for men, of course — college men — and women aren't allowed above the mezzanine floor, but the lobby's usually full of them, calling for pinch-hitters to fill in at dances, theatre-parties, house-parties, etc.

Ann Bridges and Tom Shane arrived there simultaneously, she in her

car at the main entrance, he in a taxi at the side entrance. He had a cowhide overnight-bag with him, and had changed in the cab itself. He had Princeton written all over him and — no offense — was now veering dangerously toward the dumb side of the not-dumb, not-bright equation. He had a polo coat hanging down his back below the elbows, orange-and-black tie (very narrow diagonals, not loud), the usual thick brogues. If you'd have unbuttoned his jacket, you'd have seen a fraternity pin on the lower tab of his vest. He looked about twenty-three. He jelled perfectly.

The girl was just coming in one side of the lobby as Shane showed up from the other, bag in hand. They were collegiately informal — and loud. He didn't raise his hat; she punched him on the shoulder. "Hi, toots." "'Lo ducky!" He grabbed her arm and they went sailing outside to her car, two young things without a care in the world.

Heads turned after them. Somebody mentioned her name. Everybody wondered who he was. All this to baffle watchful eyes that otherwise might have seen her drive away from Headquarters with Shane and would have known him to be a detective. A ticket for a traffic violation she had actually received two days previously was screen enough for her visit there tonight. McManus had had the desk-sergeant enter a dummy complaint against her in his records, and a Headquarters reporter had fallen for it, phoned in a couple of lines about it to his paper.

In the car she took the wheel. Shane pitched his bag into the back seat, lay back on the base of his skull. But as they shot off, he suddenly grew up again.

"Feel well enough to drive?" he asked.

"It'll keep my mind busy till we get there. College men usually let the other fellow do their driving for them anyway. If you're not one to the life — ! How did you do it so quickly?"

"Borrowed the outfit from a friend who really went to one — changed in the cab. . . . Who's out there with him?" he asked abruptly.

"We have a cook, and a door-opener; then there's Elaine, and Uncle John's secretary. My uncle will be all right — I know what you're thinking — but he'll be all right until tomorrow night. He wants to live too badly to — to do anything to himself ahead of time. It's tomorrow night we've got to worry about." She drew in her breath fearfully and repeated it a second time: "Tomorrow night."

"Step it up a little," Shane said quietly. "Ninety won't hurt it any." The clock on the dashboard said midnight. The midnight before *the* midnight.

It was a palatial place, lost in the midst of its own grounds. Couldn't see it from the main road, it was so far back, but a private driveway led to it. Lighted by their own private road-lights.

Two granite lions couchant, like a sort of omen, were the first things met Shane's eye as he got out in front of the entrance. A little like the lions in front of the Public Library in New York, but smaller. They went up the steps between them.

"I bet it hasn't helped any to have those things staring him in the face every time he went in or out the last few weeks," Shane muttered grimly.

"He's spoken several times of having them removed and replaced by something else," the girl said, "but this terrible lethargy, this fatalism, that's come over him, has prevented his doing even that."

The butler let them in. Shane, taking a snapshot of the man through his mask of collegiate vacuity, decided this wasn't one of those crime-story butlers who are to be suspected at sight. He was an old man — sixty or more — had loyalty written all over him, and looked plenty worried in the bargain.

"How is he, Weeks?" the girl asked in a whisper.

The butler shook his head. "I can't stand much more of it myself, Miss Ann. Just watching him. He's sat in one place ever since you left, staring at a clock on the wall." The old man looked sort of hopefully toward Shane; then, noting the get-up, his hopes seemed to fade a little.

"Yes, he knows about it, Weeks," the girl said; "that's why he's here. Take his bag up — put him in the room next to my uncle."

On each side of the long entrance hall a ceiling-high stained-glass panel was set into the blank wall, with electric lights hidden behind them to throw them into relief. They gleamed out in beautiful medieval tones of ruby, emerald, sapphire and mauve. Each leaded sub-division bore the head of some mythological or heraldic animal — a unicorn, a wild boar, a lion rampant, a phoenix. . . .

She saw Shane looking at the windows as they went by. "They came from England," she said dully. "Some royal abbey or other. Time of the Plantagenets."

Shane didn't know who the Plantagenets were. He wasn't supposed to, anyway. "Pretty old, I guess, eh?" he hazarded. It occurred to him that, judging by the number of decorative animals around, the prophecy might very well have originated right here in the house, in someone's evil, fertile mind.

"*He* ever been here, to your knowledge?" he asked.

"Who, Tompkins? Never."

She took the detective in to see the doomed John Bridges.

Bridges sat in the middle of a big room, and he had gathered three time-pieces around him. A big clock on the wall, a medium-sized one on the table before him, an expensive white-gold watch on his wrist. All three were ticking remorselessly away in the silence, like the mechanism of a time-bomb. There was a minute's difference, Shane noted, between the wall and table clocks. Bridges turned two feverish, burning eyes in hollow

sockets toward his niece as she came in.

"Which is right?" he pleaded. "What does yours say?"

"It's twenty-nine past twelve, not half-past," the girl said.

His face lit up joyously. "Oh, Ann!" he cried. "Oh, Ann! that gives me a minute more! Just think, a minute more!"

Tom Shane thought, "For what he's done to this guy already, Tompkins deserves the chair, whether he intends doing anything more or not."

Aloud he said, cheerfully, "You and I, oldtimer, are going to have a good stiff highball together — then we're going up to bed!"

"Yes, yes," Bridges agreed pathetically. "My next-to-the-last night on earth! I must celebrate, I must —" His voice broke dismally. "Oh, help me to forget, fellow, for just five minutes! Just five minutes, that's all I ask!" He opened a drawer, pulled out a checkbook, scribbled hastily in it. "If you can take my mind off it for just five minutes, write your own figure in here over my name! Five thousand, ten thousand, I don't care!"

Shane thought: "I wonder how many times friend Tompkins has cashed in like this?" He went out to mix the highballs himself, and gave Bridges a shot of Scotch that would have lifted a horse off its shoes. McManus' words came back to him: "It may be a poisoned cup of coffee." He sampled the drink himself first, rinsing his mouth with it carefully. The taste was so good he hated to waste it, so he swallowed it. "Pleasant way of dying, anyway," he consoled himself.

He took the drinks inside. "You go to bed, kid," he told the girl. "Lock your door. It's my job from now on."

She said, "You're swell. Keep us alive," with a funny little catch in her voice as she sidled by him and went up the stairs.

The wall-clock chimed one, with a horrid, shuddery, brazen sound. "Twenty-three hours to go," John Bridges said.

Shane clicked their glasses together with almost enough force to shatter them. "Here's to crime!" he said huskily. He winked one eye deliberately at the doomed man.

3 A.M. — Schafer, lieutenant. Sorry to wake you up, but I've lost this Elaine O'Brien twist, Miss Bridges' maid —"

You've lost her? Well, find her again! Whaddye mean by —

It ain't that. I know where she is, but she's no good to us any more. She's dead.

Dead? What happened to her?

She did the Dutch. Took a run up to the bathroom just before I closed in on her, and swallowed something. I called an ambulance right away, but it was too late.

So then she *was* implicated! She knew something and was afraid we'd get it out of her!

She didn't know I was on her tail. I had just about located her house, when I heard the screaming start up

inside. Time I busted in, it was all over. I'm holding the rest of them. They claim it was the prophecy preying on her mind. She came home tonight and told them she couldn't stand the gaff, waiting around out there for it to happen. I checked on the drugstore where she got the stuff, and she bought it a full three days ago, long before Miss Bridges came to us. What'll I do with the rest of 'em?

Bring 'em in Schafer — and keep 'em from swallowing things.

10 A.M. — Dominguez, lieutenant. I took a dishwashing-job at the Club Cuckoo, where Miss Bridges lost her shoes. My hands are red as lobsters!

Never mind your hands, I'm no palm-reader. What'd you get?

They knew who she was, so they knew whose shoes they were. First the manager was going to send 'em out to her house next day — after all, they cost about fifty bucks a pair — but a Frenchman fella who was sitting there at one of the tables buttonholes him. This gee gives the manager a lotta malarkey about how he's an old friend of Miss Bridges, knew her in Paris, and he'll see she gets 'em back. I got all this from a waiter, who I gave a tip on the horses to while I was massaging the crockery —

Well, you got something, Don. I was just asking about that very guy at the rate of twenty bucks a syllable. The shakedown racket made Paris too hot for him, so he came over here about two years ago. You gotta descriptch, I suppose?

Yeah. Misplaced eyebrow on his lip. When he's doing the hot spots he wears one eyeglass in his right lamp. Very good-looking. A short little devil, about five —

That's enough. One of his names is Raoul Berger, but he's got twenty others. So he got the shoes?

No. The pay-off is the manager wanted all the credit for himself and hung onto them. But this Frog didn't seem to mind —

Sure he didn't. All he cared about was knowing what had taken place, so he could tip off Tompkins and get under her skin. I'm sending out a general alarm for Berger right away. They're probably working hand-in-glove together, and intend splitting the Bridges millions between 'em at the windup. Probably the idea was originally Berger's, since he'd already shaken her down once in Europe.

Now, about the safe-deposit box, chief. I been conferring with Cullinan — he's the manager of that branch of the National Security — and we questioned the vault-keeper. I think I've cleared up pretty definitely about how the number of Miss B's box, 1805, was known — but not its contents. The vault-custodian seems straight enough; he's been with them for years. He recalls definitely that one day about a year and a half ago, Miss B. took her box into one of the little private cubbyholes that are provided for that purpose down in vault-room. The custodian recalls it, because she came out and absentmindedly left her key behind her in

there. . . . Now, two of these keys are used at a time, see. The custodian has one, and the owner of the box has the other. The number of the box it opens is engraved on the shaft of each key. Well, Miss B. stepped right back inside, that day she mislaid her key, and the custodian went with her to help her look. The key wasn't in there. They came out again — she went through her purse and everything — no sign of it. He stepped in again a second time, and there it was, right on the slab! . . . The custodian's pretty certain that the adjoining booth was occupied at the time, but is hazy about just who was in there. That doesn't matter. The partitions don't run all the way up to the ceiling. Obviously it was our friend Berger, and obviously he'd been in there every time she was, waiting for just such a thing to happen. And when it did, he probably used a fish-hook or a magnet on the end of a string to draw the key up, memorize its number, then replace it again. All to add to Tompkin's buildup with her as a wizard. But about what the contents of the box were, I don't know, unless he used some kind of a mirror as a periscope —

More likely she bought that necklace in Paris. Berger'd seen it on her over there, and he figured it would be in the box. Also the letters she'd written to him. Took a guess at it and scored a bull's-eye. To get into the vaults all he'd have to do was rent a box under a phony name for five, six bucks, stuff it with old newspapers, and keep showing up each time she did. Still, it isn't as easy as it sounds. Berger had to stay out of sight — she knew what he looked like — and he had to get in right next door to her each time, not further down the line.

For twenty million bucks I'd go to that much trouble myself.

Get busy on them zoos, or you won't even be earning forty-eight-hundred.

Zoos! That's gratitude for ya!

5 P.M. — Sokolsky, lieutenant —

It's about time I was hearing from you! Where've you been all this time? What've you got?

A pretty bad case of the jitters, for one thing. And Dobbs — I took him on this detail with me — is about ready to crack wide open. I don't think he'll be any good for the rest of this case.

I ain't asking for a health report, I wanna know —

It's uncanny about that guy — Tompkins, I mean. He — he can see through walls and things —

Less words and more facts!

Yes, sir. We took a room in the same house he lives in. We got a lucky break and got the one right over his. Tompkins was out at the time, so we fixed up a dictaphone and led it up through the ceiling behind the steam-pipe. The landlady don't like him, on accounta he read what was in her mind when she insured her third husband so heavily, after losing two in a year, and also 'cause he's hep that the color of the hair she goes around

wearing ain't her own. She didn't tell me this; I put two and two together from the remarks she let drop. Anyway, I got around her and found out some French cake-eater's been calling on Tompkins off and on for the past year or so.

Your voice makes sweet music! We're getting places fast, now!

The landlady thinks this Frenchy is the nuts, but that's neither here nor there. The point is, he's the only person at all — outside of the O'Brien girl and the old man Bridges himself — who has been near Tompkins since he's living in the house. . . .

Well, the O'Brien girl's out of it now. I don't think she was in on it, anyway. Just a stooge they used to pump facts out of about the Bridges family. I think maybe she found out there was something phony up, after it was too late, and realizing what she'd done to her benefactors, committed the old harry. Go ahead, Sock, what else?

I gave Tompkins' room a good going-over while I was in there, and came across any number of checks made out by Bridges. Way up in the high brackets too, telephone-numbers! The only thing that don't jell right, was some of 'em were dated six months or more back. He hauls 'em in all right, but don't seem to bother cashing 'em! Maybe he's just cagey, afraid to go too heavy yet while Bridges is still alive. Maybe he's saving them all up until B. and the girl have been done away with!

Will those checks build us a case against him and his French shill! What'd you do with them?

I was afraid he'd miss them if I impounded them this soon. Dobbs and I rushed a few of the biggest ones out, had 'em photostated, and then replaced 'em again.

Good work!

Tompkins came in about midnight, just as we were getting through, so we beat it upstairs to listen in. About two in the morning this French pal of his pays him a visit. Dobbs took down everything in shorthand, until he went haywire, and I'll read it to you.

Tompkins says, "You again? What do you want now?"

"Endorse me another one of them checks — I'm running short."

T. refuses at first, says he don't want Bridges' money, and Frenchy has no right to it either. Frenchy pulls a gun on him or something, and makes him do it. Then Frenchy says, "Now you get hold of Bridges tomorrow and have him change his will, while there's still time. I'll supply the lawyer, a friend of mine. He's to turn over everything to you, see? Kid him that you'll call off the prophecy if he does it."

Tompkins says, "But I can't. It's not in my power. It's there. It's going to happen."

The French guy does a slow burn. "You think I believe that stuff? Save that for him! You do what I tell you, or —"

Tompkins answers quietly, "You're not going to get hold of his money,

Berger. You're not going to live long enough to. Why, you're going to die even sooner than he is! His time is tomorrow night, but yours is right tonight! You're never even going to get out of this house alive. There are two dicks in the room over us right now, listening to every word we say — their names are Sokolsky and Dobbs —"

The notes break off there, loot, because Dobbs keeled over right at the mike and pulled a dead faint on the floor. Yeah, honest! It gave me a pretty stiff jolt myself. Just seeing the leadwire of the dictaphone, which I'm sure he didn't, wouldn't have given this Tompkins our names — nor how many of us there were.

I'll have to quote the rest from memory: "Death," says Tompkins, "is rushing at you right now, I hear the beat of his swift wings. I feel it, I see it, it's on its way. You have only minutes left. And for me there is imprisonment waiting, and lingering death in a little stone room —"

I heard the Frenchman yell out, "So you framed me, you dirty double-crossing lug! Well, see if you saw this in your crystal ball!"

And with that the gun goes off, and nearly busts my eardrum. The Frenchman has shot him.

I didn't wait to hear any more. I unlimbered my own gun and lit out and down the stairs hell-bent for leather. Berger had beaten me out to the stairs; he was already a flight below me.

I yelled, "Hold it! Stay where you are!" Instead he turned and fired at me, and I fired at the same time he did. He fell all the rest of the way down to the ground floor, and when I got to him he was dead.

Tompkins came out of his room unhurt, but with a powder-burn across his forehead. Berger must have fired at point-blank range, and still didn't hit him! He started coming down slowly to where I was, with nothing in his hands. Dobbs had come to, and came down behind him, looking like he'd seen a ghost.

Well, this is the hardest part to believe; look, you can suspend me if you want to, but it's the God's honest truth. This man Tompkins came all the way down to where I was bending over the body at the foot of the stairs. I straightened up and covered him with my gun. It didn't faze him in the least, he kept moving right on past me toward the street-door. Not quickly, either; as slowly as if he was just going out for a walk. He said, "It isn't my time yet. You can't do anything to me with that."

I said, "I can't, eh? You take one step away from me, and it'll not only be your time, but you'll be a minute late!"

Dobbs was practically useless; he almost seemed to be afraid of the guy.

Tompkins turned his back on me and took that one step more. I fired a warning shot over his head. He put his hand on the doorknob. So I lowered the gun and fired at the back of his knee, to bring him down. The bullet must have gone right through between his legs. I heard it hit

wood along the door-frame. Tompkins opened the door and stepped into the opening, and I got mad. I reared after him and fired point-blank at the back of his head. He wasn't five yards away from me. It was brutal — would have been murder and I'm willing to admit it myself, even though technically he was resisting arrest! I'm telling you he didn't even stagger; it never even got him. He went on through and the darkness swallowed him up.

I leaned there against that door for a minute seeing ghosts, then I ran out after him. He was clean gone, not a sign of him up or down the block.

Loot, I'm in a frame of mind where I don't care what you do to me. My job is to get flesh-and-blood guys that know a bullet when they feel one, not protoplasms that don't even know enough to lie down when they're hit. . . .

Awright, Sokolsky, pull yourself together. Bring in the stiff and rinse yourself out with a jolt of rye; maybe it'll help you carry out instructions better next time! All I know is you let Tompkins slip right through your fingers, and we're right back where we were. We got to start all over again. We've stopped the crook, but the maniac or screwball or whatever you want to call him, the more dangerous of the two, is at large. And every minute he stays that way, Bridges and his niece are in danger of their lives! Tompkins wasn't bluffing when he walked out that door. He believes in that hooey himself; and if the prophecy don't work, he'll help it work! We've got seven hours to pick him up again, out of seven million people!

"Don't!" Shane yelled at the man roughly. "Take your eyes off that clock! You're starting to get me myself, doing that! I'm only human!" He took a quick step over to the table and turned the instrument face down.

John Bridges gave a skull-like grin, all teeth and no mirth. "You're only human — that's right. That's the truest thing you ever said, son. You're a detective too, aren't you, son? That's why you've been hanging around here all day. Don't try to tell me, I know. This poor child here thinks you can save me. *You* think you can save me, too. You poor fools! Nothing can — nothing! *He* said I'm to die, and I've got to die."

"He's lying through his teeth!" Shane yelled hotly. "That Tompkins is a faker and a crook and a skunk. He'll fry in hell, before anything gets near you. I'll live to see it, and so will she — and so will you!"

Bridges' head fell forward, over his lap. "Will it hurt much?" he whined. "I guess it must. Those terrible fangs in their mouths! Those sharp, cruel claws, tearing your skin to ribbons! But it won't be the claws — it's the jaws that will mangle me, worry me like a cat worries a mouse! By the *jaws* of a lion, he said — by the *jaws* of a lion!"

Ann Bridges put her hands over her

ears. "Don't," she murmured quietly. She gave Shane a look. "I'm trying so hard to — to stay all in one piece."

Shane poured a dynamic drink, all Scotch with just a needle of seltzer. He handed it to Bridges with a stony face. "Give yourself a little brave-maker," he suggested in an undertone.

The millionaire deliberately thrust the glass away from him. Liquor spilled all over the carpet; the glass bounced and rocked on its side without breaking. "Alcohol! Trying to ward off death with bottled slops!"

Shane took out his gun, pointed it butt-first at the old millionaire. "Don't this mean anything to you? Don't it mean anything to you that every window and door of this house is locked fast, that there's an electric alarm on them? That there's dozens of armed men within call hidden all around this estate, ready to jump in and grab anyone or anything the minute it shows? That we're sealed up tight, just the five of us?"

The secretary had lit out in panic sometime during the previous night. Just as Elaine O'Brien had fled. Shane had found a note from him that morning, saying he couldn't stand it, resigning the job.

Bridges cackled horribly, like a chicken about to have its neck wrung. "Five against Fate. Five against the stars. And what a five! A fat Finnish cook, an old-man butler, a slip of a girl, a loud-mouthed boy with a gun, and I — !"

"Fate, hell! Stars, hell!" Shane smashed the butt of his gun fiercely at the face of the clock on the wall. Thick glass dribbled off it. "That for Fate, and that for the stars!"

Something happened to the clock. The damaged mechanism started whirring violently, the hands began to fluctuate — the hour-hand slowly, the minute-hand more rapidly. They telescoped, jammed together in a straight line pointing at the top of the dial, stayed that way. The whirring sound stopped, the apparatus went dead.

Bridges pointed a bloodless finger at the omen; he didn't have to say anything.

In the silence the old butler came to the door, stood looking in at them a minute. "Dinner is served," he said hollowly.

"The Last Supper," Bridges shuddered. He got up, swayed, tottered toward the dining-room. "Eat, drink, let us be merry, for — tonight we die!"

Ann Bridges ran to the detective, clung to him. What difference did it make, at a time like this, that Shane was still a stranger to her, that she hadn't even known him twenty-four hours before?

"And I still say it was just a coincidence," he muttered pugnaciously. "You say it too! Look at me and say it! It was just a coincidence. That happened to be the nearest place on the dial where they both met exactly, those two hands. My blows dented them. They got stuck there just as the works died, that was all. Stay sane whatever you do. Say it over and

over. It was just a coincidence!"

Outside the tall French windows, in the velvety night-sky, the stars in all their glory twinkled derisively in at them.

10:45 P.M. — Dominguez, Mac. I've been trying to get through to you for fifteen minutes. Must be some trouble along the line somewhere. I'm way the hell out at a little crossroads called Sterling Junction — yeah, it's only about ten miles from the Bridges place, in the other direction. Very bad grief. Checking the zoos like you told me, I dig up a traveling road-show — a carnival or whatever you want to call it — making a one-night-stand here.

Now they had two lions — yes, I said *had*, that's the grief. Two monsters, a male and a female, both in one cage. My check-up was a post-mortem. They'd both busted out not twenty minutes before — don't know if the cage was left open through the keeper's carelessness, or deliberately tampered with. I beat it right up here to find out what I could. The female was shot dead just outside the carnival-grounds but the male got away clean. A posse is out after it with everything from shotguns to fire-extinguishers, hoping to rub it out before it gets anyone. They think it's heading toward the Bridges estate. Someone in a Ford reported sighting what he mistook to be an enormous tawny dog with iridescent green eyes in the underbrush as he went by.

Earlier in the evening, the keeper tells me, there was a peculiar-looking duck mooning around the lion cage. Kept staring at them like he was trying to hypnotize the two brutes. The keeper caught this guy teasing them with a bit of goods torn from a woman's dress, flitting it at them through the bars. He sent him about his business, without having sense enough to try and find out what the idea was. It may have been our friend Tompkins, then again it may not. Plenty of village half-wits can't resist riling caged animals like that.

D'you suppose brutes like that can be mesmerized or hypnotized in some way, loot? D'you suppose they can be given the scent of one particular person, through a bit of clothing, like bloodhounds? Yeah, I know, but then this whole affair is so screwy from first to last, nothing would surprise me any more. You better contact Shane right away and let him know he's up against the real thing, not a metaphor any more. There's a lot of difference between a man-eater like that and a little runt like Tompkins, when it comes to a showdown!

John Bridges was slumped in a big overstuffed chair by now, staring wild-eyed at nothing. Shane was perched on the chair arm, his gun resting on his thigh, finger around the trigger, safety off. Ann Bridges was standing behind the chair, leaning over it, pressing soothing hands to her uncle's forehead.

The portières were drawn across the

French windows now, veiling the stars outside — that were there nevertheless. In addition, a ponderous bookcase blocked one window, a massive desk the other. The double-doors were locked on the inside, and the key to them was in Shane's vest-pocket. The butler and the Finnish cook were, at their own request, locked in the scullery. If death must come to the head of the house, perhaps it would pass them by. They were not marked for it.

It was the awful silence that was so hard to bear. They couldn't get the old millionaire to say anything any more. Their own voices — Shane's and Ann's — were a mockery in their ears, so they quit trying to talk after a while. Bridges wouldn't drink either, and even if he had, he was past receptivity by now; it wouldn't have affected him.

The girl's face was the color of talcum. Her uncle's was a death-mask, a bone-structure overlaid by parchment. Shane's was granite, with a glistening line of sweat just below his hair-line. He'd never forget this night, the detective knew, no matter what else happened for the rest of his life. They were all getting scars on their souls, the sort of scars people got in the Dark Ages, when they believed in devils and black magic.

The travesty of food and drink that Shane had swallowed at that shadowy supper-table a while before was sticking in his craw. How can wine warm you when the toast is death at midnight? He'd tried to urge the girl to leave while there was time, to get out and let the two of them face it alone. He hadn't been surprised at her staunch refusal; he admired her all the more for it. He would nevertheless have overridden her by physical force if necessary — the atmosphere had grown so macabre, so deadly — but for one fact, one all important fact that he hadn't mentioned.

When he'd tried to contact McManus, to have a special bodyguard sent out to take Ann away, he found out that the phone was dead. They were cut off here. She couldn't go alone, of course; that would have been worse than staying.

They had a clock with them in the room again. Bridges begged and pleaded so hard for one, that Shane had reversed his edict. The mental agony of Bridges, and the strain on Ann and himself, he noticed, were much worse without a clock than with one. It was far better to know just how much time there was left. Shane had brought in a large one with a pendulum, from the entrance-hall. It was fourteen minutes to twelve, now.

Tick, tick, tick, tick, tick — and it was thirteen minutes to twelve. The pendulum, like a harried gold planet, kept flashing back and forth behind the glass pane that cased it. Ann kept manipulating her two solacing hands over the doomed man's temples, stroking gently.

"It goes so fast, so fast," John Bridges groaned, eyes on the clock. The minute-hand, shaped like a gold

spearhead, had just notched forward again — eleven to twelve.

"Damn!" Shane said with a throaty growl, "Damn!" He began to switch the muzzle of his gun restlessly up and down on his thigh. Something to shoot at, he thought; gimme something to shoot at! A drop of sweat ran vertically down his forehead as far as the bridge of his nose, then off into one of the tear-ducts beside it.

Tick, tick, tick — whish, whish, whish — eleven to twelve.

Bridges said suddenly, without taking eyes off the clock: "Son — Shane, or whatever your name is — call Warren 2424 in the city for me. Ask *him* once more — oh, I've asked him so many times, so many thousand times already — but ask him once more, for the last time, if there isn't any hope for me? Ask him if I've got to go, if he still sees it?"

Shane said, "Who?" But he knew who. Bridges wasn't aware yet that Tompkins was no doubt in custody long ago, that McManus had probably seen to that item right after Ann's visit, first thing.

"Tompkins," the dead man in the chair answered. "I haven't — haven't heard from him in two days now. And if — if there isn't any hope, then say goodby for me."

Shane said curiously, sparring for time because he knew the phone was dead, "You want me to unlock those doors, go out there into the other room where the phone is?"

"Yes, yes," Bridges said. "It's still safe, we have — yes, there's ten minutes yet. You can be back in here inside of a minute. His landlady will answer. Tell her to hurry and bring him down to the phone —"

Shane snapped his fingers mentally, got off the arm of the chair. "Maybe I can bring this baby back to life," he thought. "Why didn't I think of this before?" He gave the girl a look. "Stay right by him, where you are, Miss Ann. I'll just be outside the door."

He took the doorkey out, opened the two tall halves, stepped quickly to the phone in the room beyond. The lights were on all over the house, everything was still.

The phone was still dead, of course. One of the lines must be down somewhere. He said loudly into the silent mouthpiece, "Give me Warren 2424, hurry it up!" He feigned a pause, then he said: "Bring Jeremiah Tompkins to the phone, quickly! This call is from John Bridges."

He faked another wait, slightly longer this time. He could hear the clock ticking remorselessly away in there where Ann Bridges and her uncle were, everything was so quiet. He kept his gun out in his right hand; the phone was a hand-set. A gust of wind or something scuffed and snuffed at one of the French windows over on the other side of the house; instantly his gun was pointing in that direction, like the magnetic needle of a compass. There was something almost animal about the sound — *Phoof!* like that. A snuffle.

It wasn't repeated, and the fact

that he was staging an act out here, a lifesaving act, took Shane's mind off the interruption. He said aloud, into empty space: "Tompkins? I'm talking on behalf of Mr. Bridges. Does that still hold good, for tonight at twelve? It's nearly that now, you know."

There was a long mirror-panel in the wall over him. In it he could see the room he had left, see the two of them in there, the girl and her uncle, tense, bending forward, drinking in every word he uttered.

"Fight fire with fire," he thought. "I don't know why McManus didn't sweat Tompkins down to the bone, then make him eat his prophecy to Bridges' face. That would have undone the damage quicker than anything else!"

He raised his voice. "That's more like it!" he said. "When did you find this out? Re-checked, eh? You should have let him know first thing — he's been worried sick! I'll tell him right away!" He hung up, wondering just how good an actor he was going to be.

He went briskly in again, gave them the bridgework. He could tell by the girl's face that, woman-like, she saw through the bluff; maybe she had found out already that the phone was n.g. But if he could only sell the death-candidate himself—

"It's all off!" he announced cheerfully. "Tompkins just told me so himself. There's been a change in — in, uh, the stars. He's not getting the death-vibrations any more. Can't possibly be midnight tonight. He'll tell you all about it himself when he —" Something in the old man's face stopped him. "What's the matter, what're you looking at me like that for? Didn't you hear what I just said?"

John Bridges' head was thrown wearily back, mouth open. He began to roll it slowly from side to side in negation. "Don't mock me," he said. "Death's too serious to be mocked like that. I just remembered — after I sent you out there — his landlady had that phone taken out a month ago. Too much trouble calling roomers to it all the time, she said. There is no phone at all now in the house where Tompkins lives."

Shane took it like a man. He turned away without a word, closed the doors again behind him, leaned his back against them. Tossing the key up and down in the hollow of his hand, he smiled mirthlessly out of the corner of his mouth.

The figure in the chair was holding out a hand toward him, a trembling hand. "It's five-to," he quavered. "I'm going to say goodby now. Thank you for sticking by me, anyway, son. Ann, my dear, come around in front of me. Kiss me goodby."

Shane said in a hoarse, offensive voice: "What'll you have for breakfast?" He ignored the outstretched hand.

Bridges didn't answer. The girl crouched down before him and he kissed her on the forehead. "Goodby, dear. Try to be happy. Try to forget — whatever horror you're about to witness in the next few minutes."

Shane said belligerently, trying to rally him: "Not to want to die is one thing. Not to lift a finger to keep from dying is another! Were you always like this, all your life?"

The doomed man said, "It's easy to be brave with forty years ahead of you. Not so easy with only four minutes —"

The tick of the clock, the hiss of its pendulum, seemed louder than all their voices. Three minutes to twelve . . . two minutes. John Bridges' eyes were like billiard-balls in his head, so rounded, so hard, so white, straining toward those two hands closing in on one another. Shane's trigger-finger kept twitching nervously, aching to pull, to let go — but in which direction he didn't know, couldn't tell.

That was the worst part of it, there wasn't anything to shoot at!

One minute to go. The space between the two hands was a sliver of white, a paring, a thread. Three pairs of eyes were on it. Dying calf-eyes; frightened woman's eyes; hard, skeptical policeman's eyes that refused to believe.

Then suddenly the space was gone. The two hands had blended into one.

A bell, a pair of them, rang out jarringly. The phone that Shane had thought dead, that *had* been dead until now, was pealing on the other side of the door. The shock lifted him off his heels. The girl jolted too. Bridges alone gave no sign, seemed already half into the other world.

Bong! the clock went mellowly, majestically.

Before the vibration had died away Shane was already outside at the signaling instrument, gun-hand watchfully fanning the empty air around him. A trick? A trap to draw him away? He'd thought of that. But Bridges and the girl were in full sight of him; to get to them anything would have to pass him first. And he had to find out what this call was.

It must be vital, coming at just this precise —

It was vital, *Bong!* went the clock a second time, over McManus' distant voice in his ears: "Hello! Shane — Shane? Line was down, couldn't get through to you till now. Been trying for an hour. . . . Everything's under control, Shane. We've beaten the rap, the guy's saved! No time to tell you now. I'll be out there the quickest I can —"

Bong! cut across the voice, third stroke of the hour.

"Hurry, chief," said Shane. "The poor guy is sweating his very life away with terror. I want to tell him it's all O.K."

"General alarm was out for Tompkins. At half-past ten tonight he walks in here of his own accord, gives himself up! Yeah, Headquarters! Said he knew he'd be arrested anyway. Was he! He's still spouting Bridges has to die. Also that he's going to conk out himself, in jail waiting for his trial to come up. The latter he has my best wishes on. Here's something for you, kid, after what you must have gone through out there tonight — according to Tompkins, you're marrying

twenty-million bucks inside a year, Ann Bridges, before the year is out!"

Bong!

"Oh, one other thing. I just got word they shot a lion that was heading your way, cornered it on the outskirts of the estate. A real one that broke out of its cage earlier tonight. We thought at first Tompkins had something to do with it, but he's been able to prove he wasn't anywhere near there when it happened. Just one of those spooky coincidences—"

The girl's frenzied scream seared through Shane like cauterization. He dropped the phone like a bar of red-hot iron, whirled. Bridges flashed by before he could stop him. The old man whisked out the other door, and turned down the entrance-hall like something bereft of its senses.

"Hold him! He's gone out of his mind!" Ann Bridges screamed.

Bong! sounded dismally.

Shane raced after him. Glass crashed far down the lighted hall. Bridges was standing there, stock still, when Shane turned into the hallway. The millionaire seemed to be leaning over against the wall, up where those two stained-glass panels were.

The detective didn't see what had happened until he got there. Then he stood frozen, unable to breathe. For John Bridges was headless, or seemed to be; he ended at the neck. . . . Then Shane saw that was because he'd thrust his head through one of those leaded panes, clear to the other side.

Jagged teeth of thick, splintered glass held his neck in a vise, had pierced his jugular. You could see the dark shadow running down the inside of the lighted pane that was the millionaire's life-blood.

He was gone, gone. . . . And the square of glass he'd chosen, in his blind, headlong flight, out of all the squares, was that one of the lion rampant!

Bong!

The mane and rabid eyes and flat, feline nostrils of the beast still showed undestroyed above John Bridges' gashed neck, as though the painted image were swallowing the man bodily. And for fangs now, instead of painted ones there were jagged spears of glass, thrusting into Bridges' flesh from all sides of the orifice he himself had created.

Shane felt the cold horror which washed his spine and turned his blood into ice-water.

Death by the jaws of a lion!

Bong! the clock went for the twelfth time, and then all was silence.

McManus raised worried eyes above the report he was making out. "What'll I put in here? Would you call it murder by mental suggestion?"

"I'm not so sure," Shane answered low.

"Are you starting to go superstitious on me too?" the lieutenant snapped. But his eyes went uneasily toward the window, beyond which the stars were paling into dawn.

They both kept looking troubledly out and up, at those distant inscrutable pin-points of brilliance, that no man can defy or alter.

Last year Alfred A. Knopf published TALES OF HORROR AND THE SUPERNATURAL *by Arthur Machen — a long overdue omnibus-collection edited, and with an Introduction, by Philip Van Doren Stern. In his sympathetic and imaginative analysis of Arthur Machen's life and work Mr. Stern puts his finger on the heart of the matter. He reminds us that Machen "wrote of things more ancient even than ghosts"; that "there is a faint aroma of the* fin-de-siècle *about [Machen's] work"; that Machen had learned early "that the best way to summon up horror is to do so by suggestion, by half-veiled hints, and by building up atmospheric effects rather than by the blood-and-thunder methods so often used in such tales"; that "Machen is the artist of wonder, the seeker for something beyond life and outside of time."*

Now, it is true that Arthur Machen will be remembered longest for his work in the field of supernatural literature — a genre (again quoting Mr. Stern) in which he had few superiors. But the supernatural, as such — pure and unrelieved, not evoked merely to be dispelled — is not within the editorial limits we have set for EQMM. So, while we cannot give you a supernatural story by Arthur Machen, we can give you one of his little-known crime stories — one not *included in the Knopf collection. It is a tale which would have delighted O. Henry — for reasons best left to your own discovery.*

THE COSY ROOM

by ARTHUR MACHEN

And he found to his astonishment that he came to the appointed place with a sense of profound relief. It was true that the window was somewhat high up in the wall and that, in case of fire, it might be difficult, for many reasons, to get out that way; it was barred like the basement windows that one sees now and then in London houses, but as for the rest it was an extremely snug room. There was a gay flowering paper on the walls, a hanging bookshelf — his stomach sickened for an instant — a little table under the window with a board and draughtsmen on it, two or three good pictures, religious and ordinary, and the man who looked after him was arranging the tea-things on the table in the middle of the room. And there was a nice wicker chair by a bright fire. It was a thoroughly pleasant room; snug you would call it.

From "The Cosy Room And Other Short Stories," published by Rich & Cowan, 1936

And, thank God, it was all over, anyhow.

It had been a horrible time for the last three months, up to an hour ago. First of all, there was the trouble; all over in a minute, that was, and couldn't be helped, though it was a pity, and the girl wasn't worth it. But then there was the getting out of the town. He thought at first of just going about his ordinary business and knowing nothing about it; he didn't think that anybody had seen him following Joe down to the river. Why not loaf about as usual, and say nothing, and go into the Ringland Arms for a pint? It might be days before they found the body under the alders; and there would be an inquest, and all that. Would it be the best plan just to stick it out, and hold his tongue if the police came asking him questions? But then, how could he account for himself and his doings that evening? He might say he went for a stroll in Bleadon Woods and home again without meeting anybody. There was nobody who could contradict him that he could think of.

And now, sitting in the snug room with the bright wallpaper, sitting in the cosy chair by the fire — all so different from the tales they told of such places — he wished he had stuck it out and faced it out, and let them come on and find out what they could. But, then, he had got frightened. Lots of men had heard him swearing it would be "outing dos" for Joe if he didn't leave the girl alone. And he had shown his revolver to Dick Haddon, and "Lobster" Carey, and Finniman, and others, and then they would be fitting the bullet into the revolver, and it would be all up. He got into a panic and shook with terror, and knew he could never stay in Ledham, not another hour.

Mrs. Evans, his landlady, was spending the evening with her married daughter at the other side of the town, and would not be back till eleven. He shaved off his stubbly black beard and mustache, and slunk out of the town in the dark and walked all through the night by a lonely by-road, and got to Darnley, twenty miles away, in the morning in time to catch the London excursion. There was a great crowd of people and, so far as he could see, nobody that he knew, and the carriages packed full of Darnleyites and Lockwood weavers all in high spirits and taking no notice of him. They all got out at King's Cross, and he strolled about with the rest, and looked round here and there as they did and had a glass of beer at a crowded bar. He didn't see how anybody was to find out where he had gone.

He got a back room in a quiet street off the Caledonian Road, and waited. There was something in the evening paper that night, something that you couldn't very well make out. By the next day Joe's body was found, and they got to Murder — the doctor said it couldn't be suicide.

Then his own name came in, and he was missing and was asked to come forward. And then he read that he was supposed to have gone to London, and he went sick with fear. He went hot and he went cold. Something rose in his throat and choked him. His hands shook as he held the paper; his head whirled with terror. He was afraid to go home to his room, because he knew he could not stay still in it; he would be tramping up and down, like a wild beast, and the landlady would wonder. And he was afraid to be in the streets, for fear a policeman would come behind him and put a hand on his shoulder. There was a kind of small square round the corner and he sat down on one of the benches there and held up the paper before his face, with the children yelling and howling and playing all about him on the asphalt paths. They took no notice of him, and yet they were company of a sort; it was not like being all alone in that little, quiet room. But it soon got dark and the man came to shut the gates.

And after that night: nights and days of horror and sick terrors that he never had known a man could suffer and live. He had brought enough money to keep him for a while, but every time he changed a note he shook with fear, wondering whether it would be traced. What could he do? Where could he go? Could he get out of the country? But there were passports and papers of all sorts; that would never do. He read that the police held a clue to the Ledham Murder Mystery; and he trembled to his lodgings and locked himself in and moaned in his agony, and then found himself chattering words and phrases at random, without meaning or relevance; strings of gibbering words: "all right, all right, all right . . . yes, yes, yes, yes . . . there, there, there . . . well, well, well, well . . ." just because he must utter something, because he could not bear to sit still and silent, with that anguish tearing his heart, with that sick horror choking him, with that weight of terror pressing on his breast. And then nothing happened; and a little, faint, trembling hope fluttered in his breast for a while, and for a day or two he felt he might have a chance after all.

One night he was in such a happy state that he ventured round to the little public-house at the corner, and drank a bottle of Old Brown Ale with some enjoyment, and began to think of what life might be again, if by a miracle — he recognized, even then, that it would be a miracle — all this horror passed away, and he was once more just like other men, with nothing to be afraid of. He was relishing the Brown Ale, and quite plucking up a spirit, when a chance phrase from the bar caught him: "looking for him not far from here, so they say." He left the glass of beer half full, and went out wondering whether he had the courage to kill himself that night. As a matter of fact the men at the

bar were talking about a recent and sensational cat burglar; but every such word was doom to this wretch. And ever and again he would check himself in his horrors, in his mutterings and gibberings, and wonder with amazement that the heart of a man could suffer such bitter agony, such rending torment. It was as if he had found out and discovered — he alone of all men living — a new world of which no man before had ever dreamed, in which no man could believe, if he were told the story of it. He had woken up in his past life from such nightmares, now and again, as most men suffer. They were terrible, so terrible that he remembered two or three of them that had oppressed him years before; but they were pure delight to what he now endured. Not endured, but writhed under as a worm twisting amid red, burning coals.

He went out into the streets, some noisy, some dull and empty, and considered in his panic-stricken confusion which he should choose. They were looking for him in that part of London; there was deadly peril in every step. The streets where people went to and fro and laughed and chattered might be the safer; he could walk with the others and seem to be of them, and so be less likely to be noticed by those who were hunting on his track. But then, on the other hand, the great electric lamps made these streets almost as bright as day, and every feature of the passers-by was clearly seen. True, he was clean-shaven now, and the pictures of him in the papers showed a bearded man, and his own face in the glass still looked strange to him. Still, there were sharp eyes that could penetrate such disguises; and they might have brought down some man from Ledham who knew him well.

He was turning aside, making for a very quiet street close by, when he hesitated. This street, indeed, was still enough after dark, and not well lighted. It was a street of low, two-storied houses of gray brick that had grimed, with three or four families in each house. Tired men came home here after working hard all day, and people drew their blinds early and stirred very little abroad, and went early to bed; footsteps were rare in this street and in other streets into which it led, and the lamps were few and dim compared with those in the big thoroughfares. And yet, the very fact that few people were about made such as were all the more noticeable and conspicuous. And the police went slowly on their beats in the dark streets as in the bright, and with few people to look at no doubt they looked all the more keenly at such as passed on the pavement. In his world, that dreadful world that he had discovered and dwelt in alone, the darkness was brighter than the daylight, and solitude more dangerous than a multitude of men. He dared not go into the light; he feared the shadows, and went trembling to his room and shuddered there as the hours of the night went by; shuddered and gabbled to himself his infernal rosary:

"all right, all right, all right . . . splendid, splendid . . . that's the way, that's the way, that's the way, that's the way . . . yes, yes, yes . . . first-rate, first-rate . . . all right . . . one, one, one, one" — gabbled in a low mutter to keep himself from howling like a wild beast.

It was somewhat in the manner of a wild beast that he beat and tore against the cage of his fate. Now and again it struck him as incredible. He would not believe that it was so. It was something that he would wake from, as he had waked from those nightmares that he remembered, for things did not really happen so. He could not believe it, he would not believe it. Or, if it were so indeed, then all these horrors must be happening to some other man into whose torments he had mysteriously entered. Or he had got into a book, into a tale which one read and shuddered at, but did not for one moment credit; all make-believe, it must be, and presumably everything would be all right again. And then the truth came down on him like a heavy hammer, and beat him down.

Now and then he tried to reason with himself. He forced himself to be sensible, as he put it; not to give way, to think of his chances. After all, it was three weeks since he had got into the excursion train at Darnley, and he was still a free man, and every day of freedom made his chances better. These things often die down. There were lots of cases in which the police never got the man they were after. He lit his pipe and began to think things over quietly. It might be a good plan to give his landlady notice, and leave at the end of the week, and make for somewhere in South London, and try to get a job of some sort: that would help to put them off his track. He got up and looked thoughtfully out of the window; and caught his breath. There, outside the little newspaper shop opposite, was the bill of the evening paper: New Clue in Ledham Murder Mystery.

The moment came at last. He never knew the exact means by which he was hunted down. As a matter of fact, a woman who knew him well happened to be standing outside Darnley station on the Excursion Day morning, and she had recognized him, in spite of his beardless chin. And then, at the other end, his landlady, on her way upstairs, had heard his mutterings and gabblings, though the voice was low. She was interested, and curious, and a little frightened, and wondered whether her lodger might be dangerous, and naturally she talked to her friends. So the story trickled down to the ears of the police, and the police asked about the date of the lodger's arrival. And there you were. And there was our nameless friend, drinking a good, hot cup of tea, and polishing off the bacon and eggs with rare appetite; in the cosy room with the cheerful paper; otherwise the Condemned Cell.

HOW A STORY WAS BORN

Lee Hays has spent most of his 35 years collecting, singing, and writing American folk music, and delving into the fascinating mysteries of American folk lore. He has sung on a few radio shows and in some folk music concerts, including one at Town Hall, New York City. He has worked with the leading figures in the field — Burl Ives, Josh White, and others. It is a medium which, unfortunately, does not pay off too well; as a result, Lee Hays has had to explore other channels to piece together a bare living. One of those bypaths is writing, and we predict that one of these days the bypath will become Lee Hays's main road. Right now he is devoting almost full time to giving "a local habitation and a name" to ideas which have been shaping themselves in his head since that day, long ago, when he first began to think for himself . . . This man, Lee Hays, is a big fellow — make no mistake about that. Potentially, he has the stuff of great talent. You will be hearing from him, more and more, and in the voice of truth.

The story of how Lee Hays found the song in "On the Banks of the Ohio" will tell you what we mean. It is a gorgeous, ripsnorting, earthy tale, and we give it to you in the author's own words . . .

In 1936 Lee Hays was traveling through the South, collecting folk songs and taking movies. One night he camped on a bony ridge near some sharecroppers' shacks. Pretty soon the younger folk started to spend a lot of time at his camp. It was a remote place in the hinterland — so far from what we call civilization that Lee Hays had to go 45 miles to get fresh oranges. He shared the oranges with his visitors, and once in a while they returned the compliment by bringing him a hungry-looking rabbit, or buffalo fish from the river.

Now, there were two brothers, about 15 and 17, who became special friends of the big man who could sing. These boys were unusually intelligent, and had such a lust for learning that Lee Hays was hard pressed to answer their burning questions. They wanted to know why people raised cotton instead of vegetables; how a raggedy old sharecropper could stand in the middle of a cotton field, surrounded by a sea of white fluff which the landlord was going to ship off to the mills, and still not have more than a shirt to his sharecropper's name, and that one full of holes;

why there were wars in this big, intelligent world of ours; what made a movie camera work; what this universe was about, anyhow, and how did we come to be here and, more important, where were we going.

Lee Hays wrote to a friend of his, in upper New York State, and the friend promptly offered to give the lads a home on his dairy farm, and an education that would try to answer some of their questions. But the father of the two boys wanted a down payment in cash, and the offer was withdrawn on the constitutional grounds that slavery had been abolished.

Well, late one night the boys woke Lee Hays and told him that one of their many sisters was having a baby and needed a doctor. Lee Hays drove to town and implored the doctor to come back with him. But the doctor refused, because there was no money for the fee. Lee Hays heard later that the doctor's barn burned down — struck by lightning, no doubt.

In desperation they went for an old conjure woman who lived in the neighborhood and who did a little midwifing. Her only equipment was a foul weejy ball and a pair of filthy, clawlike hands. When they got back to the house, the girl was whooping and hollering. The conjure woman started to go inside to her, but Lee Hays just couldn't allow those dirty hands to — well, the upshot was that Lee Hays went in and delivered the baby himself.

About six in the morning, with mother and baby doing well, Lee Hays and the boys sat on the porch and had what they call a hootenanny. One of the brothers had a sort of guitar — only three strings, and two of them out of tune. They drank and whammed the guitar and sang songs, and not all of them were hymns. One of the lads crooned "On the Banks of the Ohio," and Lee Hays liked it so well he wrote it down.

And that's how a story was born.

The facts are all gospel true. If you so much as doubt a word, Lee Hays can show you on a map *the exact spot where it all happened.*

We don't disbelieve a single syllable of the tale. It rings Steinbeck-true to us, and besides, here are the words and music to prove Lee Hays's testimony. Yes, here is the story of Willy the steamboat man and the gal he didn't do right by and Mr. Wheeler the country schoolteacher. Watch them strut and hear them declaim like actors in an oldtime stock company. Here, my good friends, is a reading experience in wild rhythms, in mounting melodrama, in the feverish, tragic, soul-stirring accents of backwoods America — as authentically American as the mountaineers' feud, the illicit still, and the need for an anti-lynch law.

ON THE BANKS OF THE OHIO

by LEE HAYS

I asked my love to take a walk,
Just to walk a little way,
And so we walked, and so we talked,
Of our approaching wedding day.
Then only say that you'll be mine,
You in no other's arms I'll find,
Down beside where the waters flow,
On the banks of the Ohio.

"WILLY," she says, "you jest wait till I fetch my poke bonnet and I'll be proud to walk out with you."

Yes, you miserable, lowdown skunk. You took that poor girl, who had promised her hand to you, and you went walking through the woods. Away over yonder you could see the steeple of the church you were going to be married in, and that was the only sign to remind you that you were in a thriving river town, a steamboat landing where you could take passage up or down river, if you had to. Not a soul anywhere around, and no sound save for the singing of birds and the music of the loud running river ahead.

"Oh, Willy, do you think you'll enjoy bein' married to me? Will you mind very much, havin' to settle down to bein' a good husband, Willy? Oh, my, when I think of the places you have been, the things you have seen, the things you have done —"

Yes, you weasel-tempered excuse for a man. "What do you mean, the things I've done? Answer me!" Turn loose her wrist, you devil's artist, don't you see you're hurting her?

"Nothing, Willy! I only meant the steamboats. The work you did on the steamboats, that you told me about. Seeing New Orleans, and all the fine people, and the East. That was all I meant, truly."

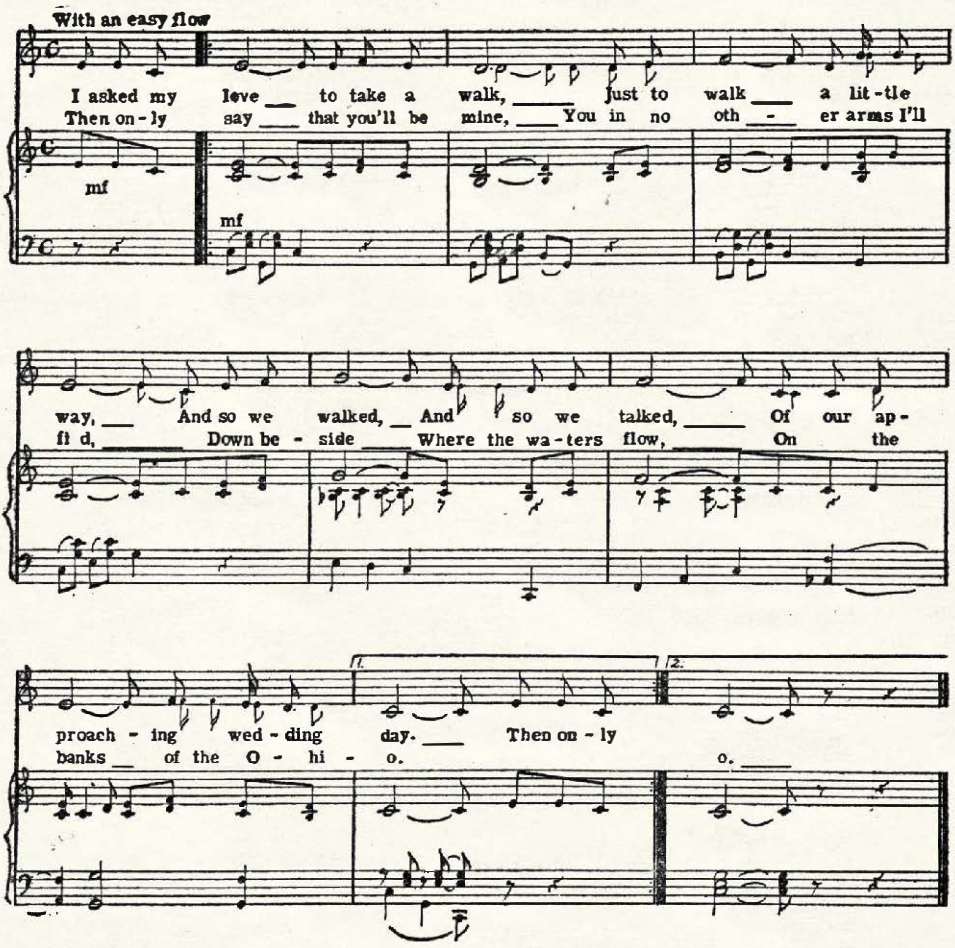
Yes, you conniving scoundrel. You said you were a second mate on the boats, didn't you? Like the knave of hearts in your spotty-dog gambler's cards — that's the kind of second mate you are. But one lie tastes like another, as brandy calls for brandy, and you could have told her you were half-owner of a whole string of boats, and she'd have believed you. She was taken in by your slick good looks. Slick as greased lightning, you. I admit we were all taken in. You can sing louder in church, and pray louder, and confess to more sins, than anybody. But only sins that wouldn't get you past the first gate of hell, so the men would say, "There is a man who's been around," admiring; and the women, "My, ain't he handsome! He's just puttin' on his devilish ways!"

And all would say, "He'll settle down when she marries him. Maybe he has sowed a few oats, but he's the marryin' kind, underneath his show."

Yes. The girl was babbling on, so pleased and proud, talking about the

ON THE BANKS OF THE OHIO

American Folksong
Arranged by Hille-Veinus



Here are the words of the song that Lee Hays discovered on a share cropper's porch at six o'clock in the morning, just after he had delivered a baby. To the best of our knowledge this is the first time in detective history that a murder story has been offered complete with music. Why not some night, between singing "The Blue Tail Fly" and "Foggy Foggy Dew," put this page on the music rack of your piano and see how it goes?

wedding to come. She'd have real bridesmaids, as they did in the East. You ought to have a best man to stand up with you, too, and if you wanted, she'd ask Mr. Wheeler, the schoolteacher — she was sure Mr. Wheeler would be proud to stand up with you. Well, somebody else, then, just so you had a best man to match her bridesmaids, and make it a real wedding.

You just listen! And when the preacher came to the part about "love, honor and obey" — why, she'd sing out the words so clear and loud that you'd know forever, and all the people would know forever and ever, how much she loved you. She'd be pleased and proud to say it, and she wanted you to know that she would be a wife who knew her place, who was willing to serve her husband in all ways, just as the Bible said to do.

Yes, you two-storeyed, blue-bellied monster! "Obey? You would obey me?" Says she, "Oh, yes! I may not be like the fashionable steamboat ladies you know, or like your stylish ladies in the East, or in New Orleans. But when we're married, I aim to be the best wife a man ever had!"

Yes. So you told her you'd just like to see if she meant it. Was her do-so as big as her say-so. If she meant it, sit down beside you on the mossy banks of this old river, and you'd propose a test of her obedience.

So she was caught in her own words, and she blushed fire, but she had said it, and so she let you have your way.

I drew a sword acrost her breast,
Gently in my arms she pressed,
Cried, "Willy, oh Willy, don't murder me!
For I'm unprepared for eternity!"
Then only say that you'll be mine,
You in no other's arms I'll find,
Down beside where the waters flow,
On the banks of the Ohio.

Yes, you tight-breeched devil, you mask of evil. You had this in mind all the time, didn't you? You wanted to take that poor girl, and ruin her, just to see if you could. It made you feel like a man, didn't it? You soft-palmed, soft-worded imitation of a human being! Why, there are men better than you that never had more than a pair of britches to their names, with no pretty straps running under the foot to hold their legs down, either. The men that axed their way through this wilderness took care of their womenfolks. If they had known they were clearing a way for corruption like you they would have quit, gone home, and left the land to the Indians.

Yes, you honey-worded liar. You could put innocence on your face as easy as putting on a clean stock, couldn't you? Look just as innocent as an angel — as if she, the woman, was an Eve-natured temptress, to blame for it all, while you were the injured party.

"Oh, Willy, I didn't know there'd be a *baby*! You said —"

Oh, yes. The ignoranter they are, the easier they fall. You'd say just

about anything, to have your way.

"We'll have to git married right away, Willy! I don't care if your money from your bank in the East don't never come! Let's not wait for the money, Willy. Let's git married —"

Oh, no. Nobody could speak to you like that, could they? Didn't she trust you? Weren't you her own true lover who had sacrificed a career as a vice-president of a bank, to settle down in this backwoods hole, for love of her?

Did she begin to mistrust you? Wasn't it being a steamboat captain you were going to sacrifice for love of her?

When you're caught in a lie the hurt shows all over you, and the bigger the lie the more hurt you are, like an angel caught at the sorghum jug.

Did she mistrust you? Well, that was nothing — not a drop of river water of mistrust — compared to the mistrust you had of her. "I guess you never walked out down here with a man! Yes, and after we were engaged, too!"

"Why, Willy, that wasn't nobody but just Mr. Wheeler, the schoolteacher. Why, he's just an old granny, where women are concerned. He taught me my letters. He's an old man — I expect he's close to thirty-five, or more."

"Wanted you to marry him. I know."

"Why, Willy, that don't mean anything, if he did! I guess others have asked me besides you. That don't mean I have to marry them, does it? I'm goin' to marry you, Willy!"

You didn't like schoolteachers. No real man would teach school, anyway. You asked Mr. Wheeler at the tavern one night to have a game of cards with you, and he said he didn't know how to play. Call that a man? He'd rather find him a high place on a dark night and look at the stars with his cheap little spy-glass. A star-gazer! Did Wheeler talk to her about the stars?

Yes, and everybody on the river was proud to have a schoolteacher that knew something about something. There were heavens beyond heavens, and what harm did it do if Mr. Wheeler taught his pupils more than their letters? Why, there were steamboat pilots that tied up at the landing to take a look at the heavens through Mr. Wheeler's spy-glass. They respected him.

Then you were accusing her of doing the same with Mr. Wheeler as she'd done with you. The poor little thing.

She had spirit. Maybe you thought she was no more than an ignorant little backwoods girl, but her mind was waking up to your ways. Did she say, "If you don't set a date for the weddin', right away, I'm goin' home and tell my folks all about us! I don't care if the scandal echoes from Cairo to New Orleans. I don't care if it's the scandal of creation, I'll tell! I'll not pin my hopes on a trifler!

You're a trifler and I'll tell anyway! I'll tell!"

When she saw the knife, did she cry out, and tremble, and weep? Did she cling to you and beg you not to murder her?

Yes, you murdering beast. You whited sepulchre, all fair without, but within full of dead men's bones and all manner of corruption. Why didn't you kill her then? Did she shame you? She was going to tell. Then you'd be walking on air, swinging from the limb of a tree, playing cards with the devil in hell. If she told, there'd be river men to give you justice. I imagine you were afraid. I imagine you were not man enough to do the unmanly, cowardly deed.

I took her by her lily white hand,
Led her down where the waters stand,
I picked her up and pitched her in,
Watched her as she floated down.
Then only say that you'll be mine,
You in no other's arms I'll find,
Down beside where the waters flow,
On the banks of the Ohio.

Oh, God! Send fire to smite this abomination! Let his name be anathema! Burn him in the bottomest pits of hell everlasting!

You were so scared, you put your knife away. The honey words poured out like molasses from a jug in summer time. Forgive! Forgive! It was a jest! A jest! And she, poor doomed girl, forgave. God rest her innocence. Receive her soul to everlasting glory. She never sinned. The sin was yours, you craven, quaking excuse for a man. The sin was mine. The sin was ignorance.

Yes, you sepulchre. You monster of desolation. You walked to the edge of the cliff, didn't you? Your arm was around her. You were only testing her, as Abraham was tested, to see how far her trust would go. You said a woman's trust should go as far as the brink of hell. And she forgave. And she mistrusted, and cried, "But you said it was a jest! And now you're tellin' me you were puttin' me to a test! Oh, Willy, you lied! You were goin' to kill me, so I wouldn't tell!"

And then you pushed her in.

And I saw.

I started back home 'twixt twelve and one,
Crying, "My God, what have I done!
I've murdered the only woman I love,
Because she would not be my bride!"
Then only say that you'll be mine,
You in no other's arms I'll find,
Down beside where the waters flow,
On the banks of the Ohio.

Oh, yes, the woman is always to blame. It's the way of your kind. She would not be your bride, so you killed her. Man's pride could not stand being turned down. It was that Wheeler she loved, you were convinced of it. She loved the schoolteacher and was only trifling with you all the time, leading you on with honeyed words. Now, because of her, you'd have to sneak aboard the next steamboat —

and hope that one came along with a captain who didn't know you, and would give you passage — and travel away from this place. All because of a trifling Jezebel who had caused you this great inconvenience.

You never thought you'd meet me here, did you, so soon after you did the deed?

How do I know what I know? Love knows. Love sees. Love hears and, always, love surmises, and fears. No, I never followed you. I feared, and waited. Today — oh, God, forgive me! — I followed. I came too late.

Now I'm on my feet and I've got your knife, and you're on your knees begging for your life. I won't push you in the river. The river is her grave; she has sanctified the river. She rests in the arms of the Lord.

You'll lie in a lime-pit grave; you'll be eaten to the last bone; your festering flesh will sicken the maggots. You'll gamble no more. You'll ruin no more poor innocent girls.

Stop slobbering! Stop whimpering! Why do you care if your stock is in place? What a foolish thing to worry about, at such a time. At that, I do believe it's better than hanging. Hold your head back. So!

It is murder I have done? I will ask the river men to decide. They may hang me, if they choose. If they free me, I'll stay right here, and go on teaching school, as I have always done. At night, I'll turn my glass toward the heavens beyond the heavens, where she is.

KING OF THE FIRSTERS

by RICHARD CONNELL

WHY I was walking across Brooklyn Bridge that midnight is neither here nor there. The fact is, I was. Midway over I met Mr. Milo Meechem. Perhaps "met" is not just the word to describe grabbing a total stranger by the seat of his pants as he is about to jump to a dank doom. He struggled in my grasp — but rather perfunctorily, I thought; and his protests that I had no right to keep him from ending it all struck me as merely formal.

There is a handy tavern near the Manhattan end of the bridge, and thither I marched him, sat him down, and poured into him three inches of liquid fortitude. I examined the candidate for a watery grave and found him to be a small, sober, neat man of thirty in a good gray suit.

"I'm mighty glad you happened along," he said. "I acted on an impulse. I won't try it again. There must be some other way out of my trouble than a wet one."

"What trouble?" I asked.

"The irony of fate has stabbed me in the back," he said.

"Victim of the recession?"

"Not me," he said. "My dad left me a nice little insurance business. All I have to do is collect the commissions, and that takes only a couple of days a month. I'm sitting soft."

"You don't look sick," I observed.

"First-class risk in any company," he said. "Eat like a wolf, sleep like a babe, and can chin myself ten times."

"Nor," I went on, "do you look like a criminal fleeing from the scene of some grisly crime with his conscience and the cops at his heels."

"Thank you," he said. "I never broke a law in my life, if you don't count double parking."

"Domestic difficulties?"

"Bachelor," was his answer. And he sighed.

"Ah," I exclaimed, "unlucky in love."

"On the contrary. Marvelously lucky. I've found the one girl for me."

"But she will have none of you, is that it?"

"It is not. She thinks the sun rises and sets in my vest pocket."

I tried one last shot.

"Some men," I said, "get tired of plodding along doing nothing that amounts to anything, being nobodies —"

"I," he cut in stiffly, "am a somebody. I am Milo Meechem."

I could see he expected me to know the name. I didn't.

"Guess you don't read the papers," Milo Meechem said. "My name is in them often. In the headlines, too.

With my picture, sometimes. Last time it said, 'Meechem Does It Again.'"

"Does what?"

"Gets there first."

"Gets where?"

"Anywhere," he said, and into his somewhat froggish eyes came the rapt glow that radiates from a high and holy cause. "They call me the king of the firsters."

He saw my blank look.

"Who was the first man in Radio City Music Hall?" he asked me.

He had me there.

"It was yours truly, Milo Meechem," he said. "I waited at the box office twenty-one hours. I was so tired I slept through the show — but I was the first man inside when the doors opened. Who was the first passenger in the elevator to the top of the Empire State Building?"

I knew the answer this time.

"And first through the Holland Tunnel, and the Lincoln Tunnel, and across the Tri-Boro Bridge?" he rushed on, ecstatically. "I was, and I have clippings home to prove it."

The king of the firsters bought a drink.

"I started in a modest way," he said. "Just being the first kid in the park when the baseball season opened. Then I branched out and was always first in line at the World Series. One year I waited forty-nine hours at the Polo Grounds' box office. I was offered all kinds of money for my place. Lots of other fellows wanted the honor. The competition among us firsters is keen. But nobody's really in my class. They're willing, but they lack my technique."

"You would not have been the first to hop off Brooklyn Bridge," I pointed out. "Steve Brodie beat you to it."

"Yes, I know," he said morosely. "But the way I felt just then I couldn't wait for 'em to build a new bridge. I'd just come from proposing to my girl —"

"She turned you down?"

"She accepted me one hundred percent," he said.

"So you tried to jump in the river," I said. "It's a unique way of announcing an engagement."

"If you only knew —" he began.

"Knew what?"

"Things grow on you. I started being a firster for the fun of it and now it's got a grip on me, like a disease or a religion. Being first takes time and concentration, so I never bothered about women or such goings-on. I guess you'd call me career-conscious."

Again I saw that glow in those froggish eyes.

"Couple of months ago I went down to Coney Island to make the opening of a new Ferris wheel," continued Mr. Meechem. "It was a minor affair, but I'm keeping in training for the World's Fair next year. Naturally I was the first person in the first car, beating a girl to it by a short head. Naturally I looked at her, just out of professional interest, and all of a sudden my heart got as big as a

pumpkin. As the wheel spun round we exchanged eyes and next thing I knew I was mooning at her over a mess of steamed clams. She knew who I was, knew my record. When she told me she was Lovella Curley, I nearly choked on a clam. Lovella Curley!

"Lovella Curley is the champion firster of the Pacific Coast," Mr. Meechem continued; "the first girl to stow away on a trans-Pacific plane; first female to cross the Golden Gate Bridge; first in line at every big picture première in Hollywood; first in the Rose Bowl for five straight years! If I am king of the firsters, Lovella Curley is, beyond dispute, queen. She told me there were no more worlds for her to conquer in the West, so she had come east to break into the big time and cross lances with me."

Mr. Meechem pulled moodily on his drink.

"If ever a match was made in heaven, ours was. We did a bit of firsting together — first couple on the floor at that new skating rink in the Bronx; first passengers on the maiden voyage of a Staten Island ferryboat — just routine stuff — and we were very happy together, Lovella and I. Then came tonight. It started favorably enough. We were the first diners in a new health-food restaurant, and shared a beefsteak made of acorns, and planned some firsting that would make the eyes of the world pop out.

"When we got back to her apartment, I pulled myself together and asked Lovella to be my mate. She jumped right on my lap and said, 'Oh, Milo, we can be the first couple married at the church they just finished in Flatbush.' I was on top of the world, and then, kaboom, I tumbled down a million miles to the bottom of nothing. Lovella told me something — the last thing I wanted to hear. My world's been banged to bits, but I think in time I can put it together again."

He started to go. I collared him.

"No you don't," I said. "Not till you tell me what Lovella told you."

EDITOR'S NOTE: *We are sure that Richard Connell did not intend "King of the Firsters" as a riddle story. Yet, by withholding the last sentence, we can transform this satirical little gem into one of the finest riddle stories we have read in a month of Mondays.*

Reader, pause for a moment and ask yourself: Just what did Lovella tell Milo which shattered his dream of seventh heaven?

You will find the answer below — printed upside down!

"She told me," Mr. Meechem said, "that she is a widow."

We welcome to the pages of EQMM a young South African writer for whom we predict an exceptional detective-story future. Meet Peter Godfrey and his impressive detective character, Rolf le Roux. You will be hearing more from both of them . . .

Peter Godfrey is in his early thirties. He is well-known in Cape Town as the author of a controversial syndicated political column. He wrote his first fiction on the night the news broke that an atom bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima: it was a psychological story with an atomic theme, and it was published in Canada, Australia, and the British Isles. Encouraged by the success of his initial effort in fiction, Mr. Godfrey began to write on all cylinders. Today he holds an enviable reputation in South Africa as a writer of detective and problem tales, and produces an amazing number of stories — indeed, he is so prolific that he requires no less than four pseudonyms. Yes, you will be hearing more from Messrs. Godfrey and le Roux . . .

It isn't often that we quote an author's literary agent, but we cannot do better in this instance than to use Mr. Godfrey's own representative as the chief witness. With appealing candor Mr. Godfrey's agent admits that "at this stage Peter Godfrey is not at the top of the tree, judged by world standards. He is [the agent continues] an extremely competent craftsman with flashes of brilliance."

We accept that testimony, and as an example of Mr. Godfrey's brilliance we give you "Time Out of Mind" — a grimly fascinating story, well-knit technically, subtly contrived, and with more than one bright flash in its conception. The scene is a private insane asylum, and we found the characters, the background, and the atmosphere of abnormality both frightening and disturbing. Especially curious to us was the realization that this story first appeared in a South African magazine called "Milady"; the women's periodicals of South Africa are certainly not nambypamby in a romantic sense . . .

TIME OUT OF MIND

by PETER GODFREY

FROM the battery on Signal Hill the midday gun boomed. The dull sound mushroomed out in the still air, shivered, and was gone. The little table clock in the dining room started to strike. In the lounge the old grandfather cleared his throat wheezingly, preparatory to coughing out his deep reverberating chimes.

Miss Brett shook her head regret-

fully. It was all wrong, of course — the time was really half-past three. All the clocks would have to be altered. She sighed and rose.

The minutes crept by. In her room, plump Mrs. Fenwick opened her curtains slightly and gazed at the smartly-cut pair of shoes on the sill. She reached out her hand to touch them, and then the temerity of her action froze her muscles. She remained, with her hand stretched out, eyes drinking in the symmetrical music of the shaped and fluted leather, her soul caressed into ecstasy by wave after wave of adoration.

She stood like this a very long time.

Upstairs, old Mrs. Calloran looked at the mark on the wall and made baby noises. She had looked at the same mark and made the same noises all the time Nurse Villiers had washed and dressed and fed her; she was much worse than usual today. The nurse thought something had upset her but, of course, it was no use asking. So she left her cooing to the wall, and went out to gather the others together for lunch.

She found Miss Kemp flat on her stomach in the garden, peering fiercely through a rhododendron bush. As Nurse Villiers approached, she sprang up suddenly, put her fingers to her lips, and said "Hush!" She continued, quite conversationally: "I'm looking for a tall man with a fair mustache. I don't think you've met him, but he's my husband. The Jungle Queen kidnaped him, but I shot her with an arrow this morning, and now he's disappeared again. I must find him soon or else the municipality will prosecute him for the bad drainage."

"Yes, yes," said Nurse Villiers soothingly. "Have you thought of the dining room? He may have gone there for lunch. All the others are going, you know."

Miss Kemp went like a lamb.

Mrs. Perry was peering in through the window of Sister Henshaw's office. When she turned round to look at Nurse Villiers, her eyes were full of tears. "Everyone is against me," she said.

"Oh, come now," said Miss Villiers, "nobody hates you here — we're all your friends. You'll feel much better after lunch."

"You're not telling the truth," said Mrs. Perry. "Oh, it's too cruel. You all lie to me. Even Sister Henshaw lies to me."

"Really?" said Nurse Villiers good-humoredly. "What about?"

"That knitting needle I lost. You know I looked everywhere for it and Sister said she hadn't seen it."

"Yes?"

"Well, look," said Mrs. Perry, pointing through the window. "She's had it all the time."

Nurse Villiers looked.

Until she caught a grip on herself, she felt the blood rushing from her head. Almost automatically she consoled Mrs. Perry, and led her gently to the dining room. She saw all her charges settled and beginning the meal.

Only then she went to the telephone and dialed a number frantically. For endless seconds she heard the t-r-r-ing, t-r-r-ing of the bell on the other phone; then there was a click as the receiver was lifted, and a familiar voice came over the wire.

"Oh, thank God, doctor," she said. "This is Nurse Villiers here. Can you come over right away? Sister Henshaw is dead. Murdered. Yes, doctor, murdered, M-U-R — yes. No, it couldn't be anything else. Please come right away, doctor . . . please."

She put the receiver back on the rest, not to end the conversation, but because even that little action helped to steady her.

The house was in the upper fringes of Oranjezicht, on the slopes of the mountain, and was set in large grounds surrounded by a high paling fence. It was called "The Haven."

The police came in two cars. In the larger were Detective-Sergeants Johnson and Botha, the medical examiner Dr. McGregor, and a uniformed driver. Inspector Joubert drove from Caledon Square in his own little Austin, and his uncle, Rolf le Roux, came with him. Dr. Patterson, as he had promised over the telephone, was waiting for them outside the wrought-iron gates.

He knew McGregor, and the medical examiner introduced him to the others.

"I want to make a statement," said Patterson, "but before I do, I would first like you to examine the body. There are certain things I should point out on the spot."

The time was then a quarter past two.

They went into the room, and the unseeing left eye of Sister Henshaw stared at them. From the right eye the end of a steel knitting-needle projected.

"The cause of death," said Patterson, "is obvious. But I want you to take particular note of the weapon."

"Any chance of fingerprints?" asked Joubert, but Johnson shook his head.

"Very doubtful," he said. "The surface of the needle is too small. Even if we find anything, it'll be doubtful if it'd be sufficient to make a positive identification."

McGregor was examining the body, testing muscle flexion, peering carefully at the trickle of congealed blood on the right cheek. He met Joubert's inquiring gaze, and shrugged. "Not less than one and not more than four hours ago," he said. "I canna tell more certainly. But there is one thing here that is queer. There is powder on this blood trickle — someone powdered the corpse after death."

"I'm glad you noticed that," said Patterson. "I never looked closely enough myself, but I was going to point out the make-up to you. You see, Inspector, it's completely out of the ordinary. Sister Henshaw never used lipstick or rouge — and you'll note there's plenty of it on her face now."

He added: "As far as the time of

death is concerned, I think I may be able to narrow it down for you."

"Yes?" said Joubert.

"Not now, Inspector — when I make my statement later. First there is just one more oddity I would like to point out. Her shoes."

Joubert squinted down at the body. "I see what you mean. She's not wearing any. But why is that particularly queer? After all, she seems to have laid down on the sofa for a rest or a nap, and was probably attacked during her sleep, judging by the absence of signs of a struggle. She probably would remove her shoes before lying down."

"You're missing my point, Inspector. I happen to know she always does take her shoes off when about to lie down — but where has she put them? I've had a fairly good look around, and I can't see them anywhere. To my mind, they've been removed from the room, probably by the murderer."

Joubert said: "That's interesting," and then added, "I think we should have a thorough search before jumping to conclusions. Johnson — Botha — let's get down to it."

They did. They peered under furniture, opened drawers and cupboards. No shoes.

"It seems you are probably right," said Joubert. "Well, let us go into the other room, and get your statement down."

Rolf le Roux said "Just a minute, Dirk." He was standing near the head of the couch, unlit pipe gripped between his white teeth and projecting beyond his bushy beard, and his soft brown eyes were peering intently at the body.

Joubert looked at him inquiringly.

Rolf took out his pipe to use as a pointer. "The matter of this make-up has been raised," he said. "Dr. Patterson has not yet told us why, and I do not know whether what I have noticed has a bearing on his explanation. Nevertheless, come and have a look here. You have already seen that the face was powdered after death. Now I want you to note that the eyebrows have been carefully penciled before the powder was put on the face. You can see that because the powder is over the eyebrow-pencil marks. But the rest of the make-up — the lipstick, the rouge — is also under the powder. In other words, each individual cosmetic was put on first, and *then* the face was powdered."

"And all this means — ?"

Rolf shrugged. "I do not know at this stage, Dirk. It is merely that it might have some significance. Perhaps after we hear the statements. . . ."

They went into the little lounge adjoining, found seats, and made themselves comfortable. Patterson spoke up clearly and concisely, like a man used to marshaling his facts.

"I had better start with my personal connection with the affair," he said. "In the first place, 'The Haven' is a residential clinic for psychotics — in popular terms, a private lunatic asylum. It was owned by myself with Sister Henshaw as a full partner,

and we have one other trained nurse as an assistant. At 1:15 p.m. today the assistant, Nurse Villiers — yes, I am sure of the time; I made a note of it — telephoned me at my house with the news that Sister Henshaw had been murdered. I rushed straight over here, inspected the situation without touching anything, and telephoned you immediately."

Joubert interrupted: "So it was not you, but Nurse Villiers who discovered the body?"

"Yes."

"Where is she now?"

"She's in the house, Inspector, busy with her duties. I will relieve her in a few minutes and send her to you. May I go on?"

"Yes."

"What I want to tell you may possibly save you a good deal of unnecessary work. I don't know very much about normal police methods, but I am convinced this is not a rational crime, and any inquiries along normal channels are bound to be fruitless. For instance, if you were to ask me if Sister Henshaw had any enemies, I would have to tell you that I don't think she had a single friend. She was super-efficient, domineering, stubborn, and almost aggressively insulting to everyone she came across. I can speak from personal experience. I recently had an offer for this place which I thought we should accept, but Sister Henshaw refused. She continually kept bringing the offer up, for the sole purpose, apparently, of criticizing me for what she called my gullibility. So you see, I had an accentuation of all her worst traits piled on my head in the last three weeks — and I can speak with authority on the effect she had on the people who disliked her. The reaction was to avoid her at all costs — not to do her physical harm."

"You realize," said Joubert, "that you have just provided us with what might be construed as a possible motive for murder?"

"I am perfectly conscious of that," said Patterson, and smiled. "I am also conscious of the fact that you would find similar motives for every other person who knew her. I have told you my opinion as a psychiatrist that this isn't a rational crime. Yet, although I cannot name the murderer, I know where she is at this moment."

Rolf asked, "She?" and Joubert said, "Where?" at exactly the same time. Patterson answered both.

"Somewhere in this house," he said. "We have five patients here at the moment — all women — and I am morally certain that one of them is guilty of the crime." He sighed a little wearily. "And I am afraid, Inspector, that my science, which should be able to help you at this stage, cannot give me any ideas. At the time of original examination of these patients, I could not discern homicidal tendencies in any of them. If I had, the one concerned would never have been admitted here — we have no facilities for dealing with violent cases. Nor have I noticed anything subsequently which could

give us a clue. It may be any of them."

Joubert said, "I see." He paused, and then added: "You said something just now about narrowing down the time factor."

"Yes. You will realize in a clinic like this it is necessary to adhere to a rigid routine in order not to upset the patients. Everything went by the clock. The day started at 6:30, and various well-defined duties kept Nurse Henshaw busy until 11:30. At that hour sharp she went into her office to lie down and rest, rising at 1 p.m. for lunch which was served to her in her office. She stayed in the office until I arrived to discuss cases and treatment with her at three o'clock sharp. During the period she was in the office, it was a rigid rule that she should not be disturbed until lunch. Nurse Villiers tells me the body was discovered at approximately 12:50 p.m., which means that the murder must have been committed within the 80 minutes preceding that time."

"And the various things you pointed out to us in connection with the body?"

"They may have significance in terms of the case histories of the various patients, but perhaps I had better deal with them after you have seen the patients themselves. Would you like to come round with me now? They are all in their rooms at this time, waiting for my visit."

Joubert hesitated. "I think perhaps we had better interview Nurse Villiers first. Would you call her for us? I'll send her for you again as soon as we have finished the interview."

Patterson left, and a few minutes later Nurse Villiers came into the room. She took the chair Joubert indicated. In answer to his question she told of her conversation with Mrs. Perry, and how she looked through the window.

"I understand," said Joubert, "that this was approximately at ten minutes to one?"

"Yes."

"And I suppose it was quite a shock to you to see your employer murdered in so brutal a fashion?"

"Naturally."

"Did you go in and examine the body, to make sure life was fully extinct?"

"It wasn't necessary, Inspector. I know death when I see it. There was no possibility of her being alive."

Joubert said, "I see," and then added almost negligently: "And, of course, you hated her, too."

She sat up very straight. "Naturally I hated her. She wasn't a very likeable person. But I didn't murder her, if that's what you're insinuating. I don't like your tone of voice, Inspector. I don't know how you learned that I'd quarreled frequently with her, but I wasn't the only one. And I don't think that fact in any way justifies your attitude that I am under suspicion."

"No?" said Joubert. "Well, perhaps you can enlighten me in another direction. You say that at ten minutes to one you looked through the window and recognized with a shock that

Sister Henshaw had been murdered. How is it, then, that you didn't telephone Dr. Patterson until 1:15?"

She was still tense. "I can see you've had no experience of mental institutions. The first rule we learn is that, under no circumstances must patients be upset. I adhered to that rule. I took Mrs. Perry to the dining room, saw all the others were settled and had started to eat lunch, and then I went to telephone. I suppose in a way it was my duty to report the matter immediately — but it was also my duty not to alarm the people I am looking after. If I did wrong, I am sorry."

"But surely Mrs. Perry had already been upset?"

"No, I don't think so — at least, not in the way you mean. I had the impression that she was preoccupied with the discovery of the missing needle, and didn't realize the significance of its . . . position."

Joubert nodded to Johnson, who closed his notebook and replaced it in his pocket. They stood up. Nurse Villiers seemed surprised.

"Are you finished with me?" she asked.

"For the moment," said Joubert. "We are going on an inspection of the patients. We would like you to fetch Dr. Patterson, and then come round with us."

McGregor took advantage of the interval to excuse himself. "I'm no' a psychiatrist," he said, "and I've got an autopsy to perform. If you dinna mind, I'll take the car, and then send it back to you. When the van arrives, show them where the cadaver is."

He waved farewell not only to them, but also to Dr. Patterson and the nurse, who had just arrived through the other door.

"I'm going to follow my regular round, if you don't mind," said Patterson. "The first is Mrs. Perry, the owner of the weapon that killed Sister Henshaw. The clinical diagnosis of her case is paranoia — an insanity of delusions. She believes she is being persecuted. Like all the others here, she comes from a good family. Her insanity dates from the time her husband left her."

While he talked, he led them along a passage, eventually knocking on a door, which he pushed open without invitation.

Mrs. Perry looked up wild-eyed from the bed on which she was sitting. "Oh, doctor," she said. "It wasn't my fault. Really it wasn't my fault. I know everyone blames me, but I didn't mean it."

"Didn't mean what, Mrs. Perry?"

"Letting the patient die under the operation, doctor. It wasn't my fault. The scalpel slipped, that was all."

"We all know it wasn't your fault, Mrs. Perry. I hear you've got good news for me? I hear you found your knitting needle?"

Mrs. Perry became quite animated, but it was the animation of despair. "Oh, no, doctor, I thought I had, but I hadn't. I know where it is, though. Sister Henshaw has it, and she won't

give it up. She hates me. I know she hates me. She had a look in her eye. . . ."

At a signal from Patterson, the police party backed out into the corridor. They heard Mrs. Perry sobbing, and a soothing undertone of words; eventually the doctor and nurse joined them.

"The next," said Patterson, "is Miss Brett. Quite frankly, I don't know how to describe her case. She is perfectly normal, except for one morbid fixation. It appears that when she was a young girl her watch was wrong, and she missed an important appointment. Ever since then she spends the whole day ascertaining the time, and checking its correctness. You may question her yourself, if you like."

He led them into the room and introduced them to Miss Brett. Joubert saw her eyes travel to his wrist watch and then to the clock over her dressing-table. He felt quite relieved that the two instruments agreed.

"Do you remember what you did this morning, Miss Brett," he asked her.

"Oh, yes, I didn't waste a minute."

"Did you see Sister Henshaw go into her office?"

"Yes. That was at half-past eleven."

"Did you see anyone else go into the office?"

"No. I wasn't there, you see. I went round to check the clocks."

"And did you return a little later?"

"Yes. Just before the noon gun went off. There was something wrong with it today, though. It went off at the wrong time. I had to alter every clock in the house. It threw everything out, too. Lunch was later, everything was later. I wonder why it happened?"

Joubert said, "I'm sure I don't know." But he had quite obviously thrown up the sponge. He added, "Thank you," and "Good afternoon," and sidled into retreat.

"I think you do much better than I do," he told Patterson. "I'll leave the others to you." He added: "In any case, little as I got out of her, I still have the impression that she's by no means a murderous type."

Patterson looked at Nurse Villiers, and smiled. "As a matter of fact, Inspector," he said, "Miss Brett is the only one of all our present patients who has ever given any indication of violence. It was the other afternoon. When we made our rounds, she was out of the room when we arrived — probably checking up the clocks somewhere — and Sister Henshaw tactlessly asked her why she was late. Miss Brett became quite hysterical, and would certainly have assaulted Sister Henshaw if Nurse and I hadn't intervened."

He stopped opposite a third door. "I'm afraid we are going to get very little out of this patient, Inspector. She is what is technically termed a foot fetichist — the only real emotional response she gives is to feet or footwear. I'm afraid it's not uncom-

plicated, either. There are definite symptoms of religious mania."

He turned the handle and walked in.

Mrs. Fenwick, coarse, crude, and fat, knelt at the window, with an expression of ethereal spirituality in her eyes. She was gazing at a pair of shoes on the sill. Her lips were moving, but without sound, and her hands were clasped under her chin. It was obvious that she was talking to the shoes; just before she rose, Joubert saw, with a quiver of shock, that she mouthed the word "Amen."

Patterson questioned her, but her answers were vague and meaningless, and she looked not at their eyes but at their feet.

Nurse Villiers suddenly shivered, and caught Joubert by the arm. "The shoes on the sill," she said. "Those are Sister Henshaw's! She was wearing them this morning."

Patterson heard. "Tell me, Mrs. Fenwick," he said sharply, "where did you get those shoes on the window?"

For the first time she seemed to understand. "They came," she said. "It was a miracle. They came with the pain of fire and the flash of steel. Let us pray."

She was down on her knees again, and Patterson shrugged. They moved out of the room.

They went upstairs.

Patterson asked Miss Kemp what she had been doing that morning, and she smiled knowingly. "I will tell the Court Martial," she said. "In the meantime, it is a secret. Only you and I know, eh, Nurse?" She would say nothing more.

Outside the door, Nurse Villiers said: "She's very strange today. I mean more so than usual. I think I know what she was referring to about a secret, though. She told me this morning that she had killed the Jungle Queen with an arrow. Oh, doctor, do you think —— ?"

"Why her more than the others?" said Patterson, and turned to Joubert. "As a matter of fact, Inspector, if I were to suspect one more than any other, on psychological grounds, I would choose Mrs. Calloran, the old lady we are now going to see. I think I had better explain. There is an insanity called dementia praecox in which the sufferer gradually becomes sunk into himself to such an extent that he becomes as helpless as a new-born babe. By the time they reach this stage, the patients are perfectly harmless, and lose all cognitive power and initiative. Mrs. Calloran has similar symptoms as far as the regression of an infantile state is concerned, but she has stopped regressing at the period equivalent to a child of ten months. However, I have definitely formed the impression that she is not a praecox patient at all. For instance, it is only her emotional responses that have been affected — I am reasonably certain that she can act as purposefully as you or I, under certain conditions and circumstances. Remember, the make-up on Sister Henshaw's face? Mrs. Calloran once

owned a beauty parlor. Against this, of course, is the irrefutable fact that the door of her room is always kept locked."

He turned the key as he spoke, and opened the door.

Mrs. Calloran lay on her back on the bed with a large wax doll gripped in her left hand. She was rolling from side to side and crooning inarticulately. She stopped the movement suddenly, vindictively jabbed her extended forefinger in the doll's eye, and said "Goo!"

She did not even look at them.

"It's no good talking to her in this state," said Patterson. "Let us go downstairs and finish our discussion."

In the lounge again, Joubert said: "Naturally I have come to my own conclusions, doctor, but after all you are the expert. You said you would attempt to correllate the various factors with the case histories of the various patients. Will you do so now?"

Patterson said, "Yes," and lit a cigarette. "I must stress again that although there are clues pointing in certain directions, they are not conclusive — in fact, they are mutually contradictory, and I can make very little sense out of them. I think the easiest thing for me to do is run through the arguments for and against the guilt of each individual patient.

"First, Mrs. Perry. The weapon was a knitting needle which she made a great fuss of losing two weeks ago. She has a persecution mania, and often such a mania can become converted into a homicidal one. It is psychologically possible, if she found the needle in Sister Henshaw's possession, that she would attack her. On the other hand, her attitude that Sister Henshaw is still alive and still has the needle seems to argue against that possibility — and I cannot find grounds, psychiatric or otherwise, which would have led her to remove the shoes or make the face up.

"The same objection holds good in the cases of Miss Brett and Miss Kemp, although we must have suspicion against the former for her violence last week and against the latter for her cryptic remarks to Nurse Villiers. The disappearance of the shoes and their recovery definitely seems to point to Mrs. Fenwick, but I cannot imagine her committing such a crime or in such a manner. The most likely psychological type, as I mentioned before, is Mrs. Calloran, and the making-up of the face seems to point in her direction. Even the method of the crime is quite consistent with her mental make-up — did you notice her gesture with the doll? — and it is not impossible that she could have removed the shoes and placed them on Mrs. Fenwick's window. Only, of course, her door was locked."

"Are you quite sure?" asked Joubert, and turned to Nurse Villiers. "Isn't it possible, Nurse, that Mrs. Calloran's door was left unlocked even for a few minutes during the morning?"

She said, very positively: "No. I went into the room half a dozen times during the morning, and each time I both unlocked and locked the door. I came up last about a quarter to twelve, when I changed her clothing and fed her. I distinctly remember locking the door when I left, because I had to put the tray on the floor to do so. I also remember unlocking it when I came in, for the same reason."

Patterson threw up his hands in a gesture. "There you have it, Inspector. That one of them did it I am perfectly sure, but which one I cannot say. I don't even know whether the points I have brought forward in defense are valid or not — they only represent my own opinion. If the various factors had made a consistent pattern, I would have had no hesitation in naming one or the other. As it is. . . ."

"But there is a consistent pattern," said Rolf le Roux, and the others turned to him in surprise. "Yes, doctor," he went on, "all your reasoning has been completely logical — *except your conclusion.* The individual clues point to one or the other of your patients; not all the clues point to any one of them. Yet you have fallen into the fallacy of still contending that one of your patients is the guilty party."

"Then what is your interpretation?" said Patterson.

Rolf seemed to sheer off from the subject abruptly. "Before I tell you, there are one or two points I want to be perfectly clear about. First, that the routine of this house is always unchanging?"

"Yes."

"That in accordance with this routine you never arrive until a quarter before three? In other words, at the time the murder was committed, you were neither here nor expected here for some time?"

"Quite right."

"So that when Sister Henshaw went to lie down at 11:30, the only person about who had anything to do with the handling of the patients, who knew about the routine, was Nurse Villiers."

"Yes. But what are you getting at?"

"The only explanation of the clues. Yes, I will tell you now. I say those clues were *deliberately laid by the murderer*, and that therefore *the murderer was a person with some knowledge of the mental twists of your patients.* Contrary to your theory the crime was completely rational and premeditated."

Nurse Villiers said: "You can't ——" and then all eyes were turned on her.

"But the clues themselves," said Rolf, "help us a little further in the matter. Remember the make-up on the face, and consider that in the light of the fact that the crime was a rational one."

Joubert said: "What do you mean?"

"Remember how I pointed out the powder was *over* the penciled eyebrows. There is a definite indication as to the sex of the murderer. Women

use eyebrow pencil after the face has been powdered, not before. No, *the murderer was a man.*"

The eyes swung back to Patterson. He stubbed out his cigarette violently and said, "Do you realize the seriousness of your allegation? Do you think your very ingenious theory is sufficient evidence?"

"No," said Rolf, "but that can still be remedied." He turned to Nurse Villiers. "Bring Miss Brett in here."

There was no sound in the room until the nurse returned. Patterson lit another cigarette.

Rolf said to Miss Brett: "You told us before that you saw Sister Henshaw going into her office, and left to check the clocks?"

"Yes."

"What was the time?"

"It was half-past eleven."

"You mean it was half-past eleven because Sister Henshaw went into her office?"

"Of course. It's always half-past eleven when she goes into her office."

"And if the clocks showed a different time, then you would put them right?"

"Naturally."

"You remember when the gun was fired on Signal Hill this morning? You told us that something was wrong with it and you had to alter all the clocks. What was wrong with the gun?"

"Usually when it fires it's twelve o'clock. Today it was half-past three."

Rolf leaned forward in his chair. His voice was calm, but his knuckles showed white from the pressure of his fingers round his pipe.

"You mean," he said, "that as the gun fired today, something else happened which always happens at half-past three?"

"Of course. What else could I have meant?"

Rolf sat back, relaxed. His voice was very quiet. "Tell me, Miss Brett, how do you know when it is half-past three? What happens every day which tells you that it is half-past three?"

"Don't you know?" she asked in surprise, and then added as though she was instructing a child: "It is half-past three every day when Dr. Patterson comes out of Sister Henshaw's office."

MORE "COMPLIMENTS OF THE AUTHOR"

by ELLERY QUEEN

You will recall that we ascribed four stages of development to the evolution of a "compleat" book collector — Book Lover, Connoisseur, Fanatic, and Bibliomaniac. In the last stage (the happiest of earthly afflictions) the full-fledged collector seeks not only the most immaculate copies of first editions but also those comparatively rare first editions which are inscribed by the author.

Inscribed books also fall into four categories. The first, and simplest, is the copy which the author merely signs. An example in the Queen collection is Glen Trevor's MURDER AT SCHOOL (1931). The author wrote no inscription; at the top of the flyleaf he simply scrawled his name. But the interesting aspect of this particular signature is that the author wrote his real name, not the pseudonym of "Glen Trevor." The author's real name is, of course, James Hilton.

Ranking next above the signed copy is the type of inscribed copy in which the author writes a message and signs it, but gives no indication for whom the inscription was intended. These inscriptions are usually impersonal in tone, applying equally to any collector who may happen to acquire the book. To illustrate again, we have a first edition of Arthur B. Reeve's THE DREAM DOCTOR (1914) which bears the inscription: *Advice from "Craig Kennedy": — Be careful how you tell your dreams to a student of Freud. Arthur B. Reeve.* Advice to whom? We shall never know: the person originally admonished will remain anonymous forever. Yet in the thirty-odd years that have passed, the inscription has gained a new significance. Arthur B. Reeve wrote his cautionary words long before the current flood of so-called "suspense novels," in which writers of all levels have delved deeply — and dangerously — into morbid psychology. Today Reeve's inscription can be interpreted as a general warning to all writers: Beware lest readers turn the tables — and psychoanalyze the authors!

An example of the inscription which is more personal in tone and yet fails to reveal the identity of the presentee is one written in pencil by Frances Noyes Hart in an English first edition of her THE BELLAMY TRIAL (1928): *A very poor bread and butter in return for a delightful day — Frances Noyes Hart.* With whom did the author spend that delightful day, presumably in England? And what

made the day so memorable? We shall never know: authors' inscriptions in mystery books are often more mysterious than the plots themselves.

So far our stages of inscription have a simple botanical growth. The unelaborated signature is the seed. The inscription with signature but without the name of the addressee is the bud. Obviously, the third stage must be the full flower — the presentation copy in which the author inscribes the book to a specific individual. Presentation copies range from the impersonal (to readers, admirers, and collectors) to the personal (to colleagues, friends, and members of the author's family). Here is a group of presentation inscriptions which show the gradations of relationship — from the author's objective greeting to a stranger to the author's confidential message to someone close to him (or her) in spirit and affection:

Inscribed for Lewis L. Cantor. John Russell. In THE RED MARK (1919).

To *P. M. Stone with the regards of Thomas Burke.* In DARK NIGHTS (1944).

From L. T. Meade to Mr. Silas Hock. In THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE SEVEN KINGS (1899) by L. T. Meade and Robert Eustace — and how appropriate in flavor is the name of the presentee!

To Paul Webster from Liam O'Flaherty. In THE INFORMER (1925).

To J. B. McGee, Esq. This book contains the first fiction story I ever wrote "The Escape of Mr. Trimm" and the best one I ever wrote "The Belled Buzzard." Yours Sincerely, Irvin S. Cobb. In THE ESCAPE OF MR. TRIMM (1913).

To Little Eva, wishing her luck. H. J. O'Higgins. In THE ADVENTURES OF DETECTIVE BARNEY (1915).

These six inscriptions were apparently meant for readers and admirers, although it is possible that the last two were written to friends. It is not often that an inscription identifies the presentee specifically as a book collector, but consider the following in a first edition of ORIENTATIONS (1899):

This is a scarce first issue of my first volume of short stories. It is half an inch taller than later issues. To Fred with all good wishes W. Somerset Maugham written in 1898.

The precise bibliographic data — unusual in an author's inscription — points to the recipient as a book collector; on the other hand, the use of the first name only and the fact that the inscription antedates publication (suggesting a pre-publication author's copy) would also indicate "Fred" to be a friend as well as a collector.

Bear in mind that readers, admirers, and collectors may also be friends, colleagues, and relatives — overlapping is inevitable. Yet we would characterize the next group of inscriptions as intended primarily from one writer to another:

To Captain Achmed Abdullah whose writings have always held me fascinated. With all good wishes Sincerely Erle Stanley Gardner. In THE CASE OF THE CURIOUS BRIDE (1934).

For the 'Queens' — may they continue to rescue us from the ever-recurring menaces of crime. Daly King. In THE CURIOUS MR. TARRANT (1935).

To Gelett Burgess with the compliments of the author. Jacques Futrelle. In THE THINKING MACHINE (1907).

For Fred Dannay, who, as I have remarked before, had a hand in hatching out P. Moran, and who must accept responsibility for a share of his misdeeds. Percival Wilde. In P. MORAN, OPERATIVE (1947).

Some inscriptions defy exact classification of the relationship between the author and the presentee. How would you judge the pawkish humor of

To the prettier Ellery Queen. Ben Hecht

when we tell you that Ben Hecht wrote precisely the same inscription in *two* first editions of his ACTOR'S BLOOD (1936) and then handed one copy to *each* of the two Ellery Queens!

How differently unclassifiable is F. Tennyson Jesse's penciled inscription in a first edition of her THE SOLANGE STORIES (1931):

Frederic Dannay with good wishes from Fryn Tennyson Jesse. New Year 1947 (And may it be less bloody than 1946)

It starts like any ordinary inscription, but between the words of the postscript you can read sadness, futility, sacrifice, and the eternal hope for a better tomorrow.

Halfway between friendship and the ties of family is the inscription Frederick Trevor Hill once wrote on the flyleaf of THE CASE AND EXCEPTIONS (1900):

To my ex-ward and client Miss Irving and my friend Isabel this little volume is inscribed with best wishes for many happy New Years. Frederick Trevor Hill.

But the most intimate presentation copy in the Queen collection is unquestionably our first edition of Dorothy L. Sayers's WHOSE BODY? (1923). The inscription reads simply:

Mother and Dad with the author's love.

Imagine the author's thoughts as she wrote those words in the first book about Lord Peter Wimsey! Imagine the thrill her parents must have felt when the book reached them! We still marvel at our possession of such a family treasure; the book came to us indirectly from the library of Michael Sadleir, the eminent collector of and authority on Victorian fiction, but how, or under what circumstances, the book came into Mr. Sadleir's possession we do not know — indeed, we cannot even guess.

Seed, bud, flower — to what fuller blossoming can an author's inscription grow? Yet, still speaking botanically, there is a fourth stage — the prize flower, the exhibition piece, the "best of show." First, remember, we had the simple signature; second, the unaddressed inscription; third, the presentation. Now we have the rarest of all author's inscriptions — rarer even than the most personal of presentations — the inscribed dedication.

There may be, you understand, a thousand signed copies — a hundred inscribed copies — a score of presentation copies. But usually there is but one copy in all the world which an author has signed, inscribed, and presented to a dedicatee.

At the time of this writing we have but four examples of this, the most exclusive of all inscribed books (but note the implied hope that the future may bring us more!). It is a great honor to have a book dedicated to you, especially by a colleague (and competitor). We are happy to have been so generously regarded by Anthony Boucher, Antonio Helú, Craig Rice, and Carter Dickson. To quote at least one of these four dedications would cause us to blush in print, but with some modesty we can give you Carter Dickson's, complete with four different inscriptions.

In his THE CURSE OF THE BRONZE LAMP (1945), Carter Dickson wrote the following enigmatic dedication:

For Ellery Queen

My dear Ellery:

I dedicate this book to you for two reasons. First, in memory of those times when far into the night we discussed detective stories and how they should be written: a subject, happily, we found inexhaustible. Second, because we agree that the particular form of the 'miracle' problem set forth here — *not* the locked room, be it said — is perhaps the most fascinating gambit in detective-fiction. I will do no more than make cryptic reference to Mr. James Phillimore and his umbrella. You have been warned.

Yours as ever,
Carter Dickson.

On the flyleaf of a copy of the American first edition Carter Dickson wrote: *From one nom-de-plume to another nom-de-plume. In friendship and esteem. John Dickson Carr.*

When the book appeared in England under the title, LORD OF THE SORCERERS (1946), the author sent us a copy inscribed: *For Ellery Queen. The dedication speaks. Yours as ever, Carter Dickson.*

Later, when the book was published in French as L'HABIT FAIT LE MOINE (1947), the author presented us with a copy in which he wrote: *Toujours bien a vous, Le vieux bonhomme, Sir Stanley [sic] Merrivale et Carter Dickson.*

Still later, when the book was published in German as DER HEXENMEISTER (1947), we received a copy inscribed: *For Ellery Queen to whom the title of this book, in detective fiction, is most applicable. Carter Dickson John Dickson Carr.*

Thus the gamut of authors' inscribed copies . . .

Now, you will recall that among all the presentation and "association" copies known to exist in detective fiction, we personally considered the first edition of THE MOONSTONE (1868) which Wilkie Collins inscribed to Charles Dickens as the most desirable. But there are even more fabulous presentation and "association" copies — in the realm of speculation. True, we cannot, as imagination bodies forth, give to airy nothing a local habitation — but we can give the forms of things a name, for surely no one would deny that these books

must have existed once upon a time, and may still exist in some dusty attic, or in some forgotten trunk or packing case.

Yes, these treasures may exist, and we nominate them as the crown jewels of detectivedom, each worth a King's ransom — or a Queen's bookplate. Their descriptions sound like magical incantations. How would you like to possess

— a first edition of Voltaire's ZADIG (1748) inscribed to Frederick, king of Prussia — or, perhaps, to Madame de Pompadour? And what ironic inscription did Voltaire pen on the flyleaf of this incomparable volume?

— a first edition of THE PROSE ROMANCES OF EDGAR A. POE (1843), containing the first book appearance of *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, which Poe must have inscribed and presented to Virginia Clemm — and what did Poe write to his girl-wife in the copy he gave her while she lay in bed recovering from another rupture of a blood vessel? What words of hope, encouragement, love?

— the copy of Poe's TALES (1845) which Abraham Lincoln owned before he became President and which he undoubtedly took with him to the White House — for William Dean Howells once wrote that Lincoln re-read Poe's tales of ratiocination every year. And surely that copy — still in some secret archive in Washington? — bore Abraham Lincoln's autograph on one of its preliminary leaves?

— the copy of "Beeton's Christmas Annual," containing the first appearance in print of the first Sherlock Holmes story, which the improvident Dr. A. Conan Doyle purchased for one shilling at a London kiosk or railway terminal on the very day the "Annual" went on sale. And surely Dr. Doyle must have inscribed that particular copy and presented it to his beloved "Ma'am"!

— a first edition of . . .

Oh, well, we can dream, can't we?

James Sandoe has observed that Roy Vickers's tales of the Department of Dead Ends "are so meticulous and circumstantial as to seem inevitably drawn from life. But although Mr. Vickers admits parallels and often refers to famous cases," Mr. Sandoe has not been able "to discover a distinct source in life for any of these admirable stories."

Mr. Sandoe has also observed that without these "meticulous, acid accounts of middle-class murder and its eventual detection, Roy Vickers's reputation would rest unfairly" on the handful of thrillers which represent most of Mr. Vickers's work published in this country.

All of which is true, and re-confirmed by the latest of the Department of Dead Ends stories to come from Mr. Vickers's brilliant typewriter.

THE CROCODILE CASE

by ROY VICKERS

WHENEVER a husband is murdered by a lover with the connivance of the wife, Englishmen bring up the Thomson/Bywaters case of 1922, and discuss all over again whether Ethel Thomson ought to have been hanged. The case has become a modern prototype of a very old crime.

The Chaundry/Lambert case of 1936 ran it very close in essentials. Phyllis Chaundry — who was only ten in 1922, and had probably never heard of the prototype — resembled Ethel Thomson in character. Unlike the latter, she was never brought to trial. Indeed, she finally married James Lambert, held the wedding reception at her father's house, with the friends and relatives of both sides present — with two photographers, a write-up in the local paper, and all the trappings of middle-class respectability — and all made possible by the elimination of Arthur Chaundry.

Like Ethel Thomson, she wrote and talked a great deal of high-falutin' to her lover. Her letters are so extravagantly sentimental that to quote them directly would be embarrassing to present-day taste. A recurrent theme was that she now felt that it was "blaspheming against nature" to endure the affection of her forty-seven year old husband (who had been forty-five when she had married him with no little eagerness and pride in his position). The poor fellow, she wrote, was so afflicted with the infirmities of age, so unable to tear his young victim-wife out of his imagination, that she sometimes wished she possessed the courage to help him end his misery. Such an act would be purely and simply a mercy-murder.

Purely and simply! To Phyllis it all had a sincerity of its own. The sincerity of the man in the club who

says: "If I were dictator of Europe, I would soon settle this trouble" — without any intention of embracing a political career.

At first, James Lambert thought it rather tall talk. At twenty-six he was as intelligent and mentally healthy as the next man. A lean, attractive man of middle height with a strong talent for mechanics, he was a car agent in the suburb of Rubington, with a growing repair shop. As his service after purchase was known to be patient and efficient, he automatically mopped up most of the new car business of that populous district.

His passion for Phyllis overwhelmed him, to his own vast astonishment. She had large dark eyes whose stupidity he mistook for unearthly kindness, thick dark hair, a sinuous, expressive body. No greedier than an amiable, well-fed cat. Not unduly conceited, but so egocentric that she regarded her own happiness as a moral ideal to be striven for by others.

Gradually, in the brain of James Lambert, the mercy-murder idea began to take root. After all, if he himself were — well — call it fifty, and prematurely senile ("owing to a life of debauchery which he confessed after we were married") he might well find a bullet a happy solution.

"But you mustn't do anything about it on your own," he warned her. "You'd get caught. You do just what I tell you and nothing else, then everything will be all right."

"Tell me now!" she begged in an ecstasy of obedience.

"On Thursday night at eight he's due at the meeting of the Greenfellows at Warthame. He's treasurer, isn't he? Right! Tell him you'll be lonesome and you're going to the Palais with your sister."

"But he thinks the Palais is vulgar, and he hates me to dance with other men."

"Then, you'll have to kid him it's all for the best. He'll be using the Chrysler — straight from the office without coming home. You ring up and hire from me, saying you want Albert to drive as he's so slow and reliable. You go with Aileen. Instead of Albert, I shall turn up and come with you to the Palais. I'll tell you the rest on Thursday night."

On the night — which was that of March 6th — Phyllis rang her husband at 9:40. The telephone on the committee-room table of the Greenfellows Club had one of those earpieces which are audible at several feet. So the secretary and the chairman both heard the essentials.

"Arthur, I'm so sorry to interrupt, but I feel you would wish me to. When the car I hired turned up just after you had gone, James Lambert was driving instead of one of his staff. He's in evening dress and came in with us. I danced twice with him, out of politeness, and I've told him I shan't dance any more. There are some people here who know us, and I thought perhaps it would be better if you were to come here and collect me when your meeting is over — we don't want *talk*, do we, Arthur?"

Arthur Chaundry, a plodding architect, successful in a small way, was inclined to be sensitive in the matter of younger men dancing with his young wife — not in itself a proof of senility.

"You have behaved very properly in ringing me, dear." He was just old enough to have inherited a Victorian pomposity from his father. "I will be there about ten thirty."

"It closes then, and I shall be left all alone. Try to be here at twenty past, please, Arthur. If you come by the new road, it's much shorter — it was thrown open on Monday. Turn left as you leave the Greenfellows."

Crudity such as this characterized the crime throughout. The only part that was not crude and obvious was James Lambert's timing. He left the Palais earlier, met Chaundry on the new road, enticed him to stop the Chrysler and get out, battered him to death with a monkey-wrench, and returned to the Palais within eleven minutes.

Chaundry had been carrying £109 in currency notes and thirty shillings in silver belonging to the Greenfellows. Lambert subsequently burned the notes and pocketed the silver. No one had seen him leave or re-enter the Palais.

His alibi was not watertight — but he knew that he was not required to prove that he did not kill Chaundry. There was nothing of a positive nature to connect him with the crime — except, of course, Phyllis.

About ten fifteen the two girls reclaimed their cloaks. James was pleasurably surprised at Phyllis's coolness.

"If you're both ready I'll bring the car round," he said.

"Be quick and you'll dodge the rush," said Phyllis.

That was all wrong. Phyllis ought to have announced that her husband was coming to take her home. Aileen was standing very close to Phyllis.

"You did say you were going to telephone Arthur," prompted Lambert. "Did you think better of it?"

"Oh — I forgot! I did telephone him. And he said he would be here about ten twenty."

To his astonishment, he saw that she really had forgotten.

"It's ten twenty now," said Lambert. "I'll leave word that we've gone on."

When he brought the car round he tipped the commissionaire.

"If a Mr. Chaundry inquires for Mrs. Chaundry, tell him that she left with Mr. Lambert and her sister."

As arranged, he took Aileen home first, then drove to Chaundry's house. He went into the house with Phyllis — into Arthur's study, which Phyllis had ably converted into a general living room, reserving the drawing-room for formal occasions. In 1936, even daily help was difficult to obtain in the suburbs.

"Well, that's that!" said Lambert. "I'll wait up to half an hour for the police. Better if I'm here when they call. Get me a drink, dear, to make it look natural."

"The po-*lice!*" echoed Phyllis and

then, with consummate fatuousness: "*What* police?"

"Steady, girlie! You've been wonderful all night. Don't break now. Everything's all right, same as I promised you. I ran the car onto that bit of waste ground and put the lights off. They're sure to spot it almost at once. We want 'em to."

"Jim!" Her eyes were wide with terror and she was panting. "Have you killed Arthur?"

"Keep your head, Phyl! I've told you everything's all right. Arthur never felt anything."

"It's horrible!" she gasped. "I can't believe it. I shall go mad."

"It isn't that horrible. It's a mercy-murder. That's what you told me yourself. You meant it, didn't you?"

"What's the good of saying that now!" she sobbed. "I never supposed for a moment you would be mad enough to do it!"

Lambert blinked. Phyllis had blurted out a truth about herself that was beyond his comprehension. To him thought existed solely as a prelude to action. If you didn't intend to do something, there was no sense in thinking about it. He let it go at "nerves." There remained the urgent necessity of calming her before the police arrived.

A fresh wave of horror broke over her.

"Jim! Oh, Jim, you will be hanged! I can't bear it."

"If you don't stop these tantrums, we'll *both* be hanged!" That secured her full attention. "If I'm put in the dock, nothing I can say or do can save you from coming with me. I did everything, and all you did was telephone. Admitted. But that telephoning will be enough." He expounded the law, with but slight exaggeration.

"I've fixed everything. All you've got to do is tell the truth. Don't tell one single little lie about anything. Tell 'em you telephoned Arthur tonight. Tell 'em you forgot you had, when I said I'd fetch the car. Just as you did forget. Mention everything and admit everything — except that you know I killed Arthur, and that I told you to telephone. You said you always wanted to obey me in everything — now's your chance."

She gulped in the aftermath of crying. She was steadying.

"Poor Jim!" She smiled wanly. "I know you wish now that you had thought of me." Already she saw him as one who had been so unfortunate as to cause her distress. "You mustn't worry. I shall be all right."

"That's the stuff, girlie!" He patted her shoulder. She leaned towards him and wanted to be kissed, but he couldn't manage it, just then. "Let me mop you up. Don't want 'em to see you've been crying."

"You'll make it worse," she warned as he dabbed her face with a cambric handkerchief. With considerable skill she went quickly to work with her compact and succeeded beyond his hopes. It had helped the steadying process, too.

"Was my crocodile dressing-case in the car?" she asked. "He said he

would bring it back from the menders for me."

"Yes. And that purple scarf of yours. I had a look round — afterwards. Don't think about details — they're all provided for."

She accepted the information in silence.

"Anything worrying you?" he asked.

"Is — is Arthur — in the car?"

"No. Keep your mind off all that."

"I was thinking — I wish you had brought the case away. If there's no one in the car it might be stolen."

Poor kid! She had no sense of proportion. Bring the dressing-case along — and make everything easy for the police!

"It didn't occur to me at the time," he said, to humor her.

"It's a lovely case," she sighed. "I felt *wicked* when I tore a gash in it. But Arthur says there's a sort of invisible mending process and that it won't show."

If he had understood anything of her emotional sequences, he would never have been taken in by her "mercy-murder" vaporings. With the murder barely an hour old — at this moment when her own life and his depended on the reasonableness of her behavior — it was inconceivable to him that she could be genuinely anxious about an item of luggage. He assumed that it was a device to stave off what she would call "the horrors."

"Arthur paid a hundred and twenty pounds for it — real gold fittings!"

"There now! I didn't know you could spend as much as that for a case."

She rambled on, giving him details to which he did not listen, though he encouraged her to keep her mind on so safe a subject, while he watched the clock. He could reasonably dally half an hour over a drink to pay his respects to her husband. To stay longer, he had calculated, would be risky. He stretched it ten minutes — then another five minutes in the hall in his overcoat, hoping to be found in the act of departure.

"Directly I've gone, go upstairs and get some of your clothes off. See them in your dressing-gown. Tell them I came in for a drink. Tell them everything truthfully except the one thing — you know!"

"I shall be brave," she promised, "for your sake."

There was no need to argue about that. Self-preservation inspired the most effective response:

"You couldn't be anything but brave! I shall be even more proud of you tomorrow than I am tonight — when I know you've kept your head with the police. Some women would lose their nerve."

He left her at ten minutes to midnight. She went obediently upstairs. Some fifteen minutes later, wearing an *ensemble-de-nuit* in pale violet, she opened the door to the local superintendent and a sergeant.

He was a good sergeant who knew the gossip of the neighborhood and had distilled it for his superior. They

arrived not unprepared to discover a Thomson/Bywaters set-up — an assumption which was soon to be strengthened by Phyllis Chaundry's demeanor.

She received them with the right degree of dismay. At their own suggestion they entered the house. She had the prudence, at this stage, to remain silent. A call from the police at midnight is certain to mean bad news — the police themselves expect slightly abnormal behavior from the innocent. In the study, she stood facing them, waiting for them, as if nerving herself for the unknown.

The superintendent made the little set speech, breaking to her the news that her husband had been killed.

"*Ah!*" She gave a little gasp, put one hand to her head and with the other plied a dainty wisp of handkerchief to her eyes. "Forgive me!" Brokenly, she begged them to sit down.

She herself dropped, with some elegance, on to the leather settee whose cushions happened to make a good background for the violet *ensemble.* The wisp of handkerchief canvassed, as the dramatic critics say, the attention of the audience.

Both the superintendent and the sergeant had seen a great many women cry. They were, in a sense, experts at watching women cry. That wisp of handkerchief, they could have told you, would have been no earthly use for the real thing. Yet they were asked to believe that it was amply holding its own. The Thomson/Bywaters theory loomed larger. They let the act run for a little and then the sergeant began the routine questioning regarding the known movements of the deceased. Phyllis answered clearly and truthfully.

"As I understand it, Mrs. Chaundry," interposed the superintendent, "your husband told you before he left for the office in the morning that he would pick you up at the dance hall after his Greenfellows meeting?"

"No. I was to hire a car from Lambert's Garage and pick up my sister. I did so. But in the course of the evening I telephoned my husband and asked him to call for me after his meeting."

"Why?"

"Because Mr. Lambert came personally with the car instead of one of his staff. We know him socially and he came in with us and danced with us. And my husband is — was — rather jealous sometimes, so I thought I would telephone him."

"I have to ask you, Mrs. Chaundry, whether he had any reason for his jealousy?"

"Well, I don't know —" she faltered. "Of course, he hadn't any *reason*, if that's what you really mean, but he may have thought he had. He used to think things and say afterwards he was sorry. And anyhow it seemed better to ring him up and save bother."

That was an unexpectedly frank admission, but it might have been made in the knowledge that it would be certain to emerge. Further ques-

tions elicited that she had forgotten that she had telephoned until Lambert had reminded her — that Lambert had come back with her and had waited for her husband until close upon midnight.

The superintendent saw that he would need new facts and a check-up on those given. The sergeant resumed the routine.

"Can you furnish a list of any valuables known or believed to have been carried by the deceased at the time when he met his death?"

"My husband was treasurer of the Greenfellows and he may have been carrying a lot of their cash, and I should think that was why he was killed, if the cash was missing."

That was more the sort of thing they were expecting. She had suggested robbery as the motive. The robbery — in the old set-up — would of course be a blind.

"Any other valuables carried by the deceased at the time of—"

"Well, he was carrying my crocodile dressing-case which he was bringing back from Lorota's in Regent Street, where it had gone to be mended and which cost a hundred and twenty pounds. And a purple scarf of mine which I left behind yesterday. They'd both be on the back seat." She paused while the sergeant made his note, then added:

"The dressing-case was in the car, wasn't it — on the back seat?"

"What makes you sure it was in the car, Mrs. Chaundry, and on the back seat?"

Phyllis realized dimly that she had made a slip, but her main concern was the fate of her dressing-case.

"He moves — moved — his feet a lot and I didn't want him to kick it, so he promised me he'd put it on the back seat out of the way." With growing anxiety she pressed her question: "It *is* there, isn't it?"

"The scarf was there, but there was no dressing-case."

"D'you mean to tell me it's *gone* — *stolen?*"

"I only mean to tell you," answered the superintendent, "that it was not in your husband's car when we made our examination."

"You must get it back for me!" she shrilled. "You *must!*"

This time the police were able to add one to the total of women they had seen cry. Indeed, an amateur could have made no mistake. Real tears coursed down her cheeks, smudging her make-up, spoiling her attractive appearance. The wisp of handkerchief only aggravated the damage. She seemed oblivious of the errand of the police. As one who is brokenhearted she sobbed out details.

"I shall never forgive myself. I ought to have taken it and brought it back myself. That wretched accident! I squeezed it against the door handle of the car and gashed it in the middle — on the side that shows when you carry it."

The police were bewildered but very patient, even to the point of giving a polite answer when she urged them to move heaven and

earth in recovering the dressing-case.

Asked for a description, she restrained her grief and became almost excessively helpful. She described the size, the pattern, the sheen, exact details of the fittings and contents of the bottles, which had not been removed when the case was returned to the dealer's for repair.

The superintendent was somewhat dispirited. The story of the £120 dressing-case menaced the theory of the robbery being a blind — if the story was true.

The police checked on the dealer who had mended the dressing-case — on the attendant at the garage near the Greenfellows' Hall, where Mr. Chaundry had deposited a dressing-case of crocodile in the office, declaring it to be specially valuable. The attendant had himself placed it on the back seat of the car when Mr. Chaundry drove away to his death.

No dressing-case had been deposited at the Palais — none found by the roadside. If the robbery had been a blind, it would have been just as effective without the addition of the suitcase, so difficult to dispose of — virtually impossible to dispose of in the very short time between the murder and Lambert's rejoining Mrs. Chaundry and her sister in the hall of the Palais.

That was to say, if the robbery was a blind there must have been a real theft of the dressing-case, by somebody other than James Lambert, while the car was standing on the waste ground.

Suspicion of Lambert rested on evidence of a distressingly negative nature, though there were plenty of clues pointing in his direction. The deceased, though carrying cash and goods of a value exceeding £200, had stopped his car on a new by-road at a point near waste ground, which suggested that he had been hailed by someone whose face he knew. Why not Lambert?

Chaundry had got out of the car, whether of his own will or otherwise could not be determined. The body had been found in the ditch a few yards away, together with the canvas bag, stamped with the insignia of the Greenfellows, which had contained the money. Further, Lambert admitted that Mrs. Chaundry had told him that she had asked her husband to call for her and had advised using that route. Brother officials of the Greenfellows had confirmed the statement about the telephone conversation. No one was able to state positively that Lambert was in the Palais between ten and ten fifteen.

These various facts would have had great cumulative force if there had been one single item of proof that Lambert had in fact been on the scene of the crime at an essential time. A single slip on his part would have brought him to the gallows.

When the coroner's jury returned murder by person or persons unknown, the local police believed them and called in Scotland Yard. The Yard kept an open mind but

were unable to establish a *prima facie* case against Lambert.

Even if James Lambert had partly accepted the mercy-murder angle, his motive had been that of attaining the woman he desired in conditions of respectability. She had made it clear to him that Chaundry would not consider divorce. She lacked the courage to attack Lambert's fastidious objection to a furtive *affaire* of indefinite duration.

Now, if you murder a man in order to attain respectability it is uneconomical to throw respectability away immediately after the murder. Respectability, for instance, required Phyllis to impose on herself a period of mourning — a truth she had overlooked when dreaming of the advantages of a mercy-murder to the survivors. She was hurt when James left the coroner's court without offering to see her home. She rang him up to ask if she had offended him.

"If I had taken you home it would have caused a scandal," he explained. "You can see that, if you think about it. And anyway I don't suppose you would care to discuss such a matter over the telephone."

"You're quite right, Jim. I'm so upset that I hardly know what I'm doing. That means that you can't come to the house. Where shall we meet?"

"It will cause talk if we meet anywhere — for a bit. Couldn't you go away and stay at a boarding house for a month or so? What about South Devon? It'll be warm there, and the rest would do you good."

"A month! Jim, I think that's horrible of you! At least we could meet in Town if you really wanted to see me."

"We can't just at present. There's your position to be considered." He heard a disapproving sound and added: "And it isn't a good idea to ring me up."

She cut off. It was the first time she had shown temper. Poor kid! he thought. She had every excuse for being nervy. She just hadn't understood what she was letting herself in for.

His knowledge of mechanics had enabled him to know that the telephone had not been tapped. But it might be tapped at any time. And if she were to blurt out her inmost thoughts before he could stop her —

He would have to find some way of dodging her calls. In that moment began an elaborate system of subterfuge, which disturbed his sense of order, wasted his time and became, in short, an infernal nuisance.

But it averted a quarrel. Through her sister, Aileen, he arranged a meeting at a teashop in London. Aileen left them alone for half an hour, during which Phyllis consented to go, not to a boarding house, but to the best hotel in Torquay.

"The solicitor told me that Arthur had left me more than enough to live on, so it would be false economy for me to go to a place I might not like, wouldn't it?"

Jim had not envisaged the possibility of a mercy-murder paying a dividend in cash, and could not figure out quite how he stood.

"That's your affair, girlie. When we set up housekeeping, anything that comes to you from Chaundry will be just your pocket money."

"That'll be lovely! How soon can we get married?"

"That's what I've been wondering. People generally wait a year."

She was horrified.

"I couldn't be alone for a year! I should be *ill*. And you can't ask me to live with the family. I may be doing them an injustice, but I don't think they really want me to."

"Well, maybe we can cut it down to six months. See how things go. We can meet here again after you come back from Torquay."

She was unhappy about it and inclined to be weepish, but she accepted his decision.

"You'll write to me every day, won't you, Jim!"

"I'm not going to write to you at all. And you're not going to write to me. You can tell me your news through Aileen and I'll do the same. You don't want to spoil everything, Phyl. Here's Aileen coming back." He added, without much conviction: "Go on being a brave kid. The time will pass soon enough, and we'll have the rest of our lives together."

She braced up as Aileen returned. It had been arranged that the girls should leave first. Jim was thanking Aileen when Phyllis cut in:

"Oh, Jim, I forgot to tell you about the police!"

He knew a spasm of physical fear — of something approaching momentary hatred of her for the rashness that constantly risked his life.

"That superintendent! I had — well, almost 'words' with him! I don't believe he's doing a single thing to help find my dressing-case and I told him he was spoiling his chances by telling the newspapers all about it. I said I was going to ask my solicitor to write to him."

After she had gone, he tried to come to terms with himself about her. She was putting the murder of Chaundry out of her mind — had already done so. She was kidding herself that she had played no part in the murder. Believing it too — in the same sense in which she had kidded herself into believing that she wanted to murder him out of mercy.

It was certain that she did not realize that she herself was in peril. She had not supposed he was lying when he had told her that her danger was equal to his. It was "purely and simply" that her mentality was unable to retain the idea that to telephone a man and ask him to drive you home might be the same, in law, as killing him.

There followed a very shattering corollary. As she was incapable of caring about anybody but herself, it was not at all unreasonable that the loss of a favorite dressing-case should interest her more than her lover's peril.

"Which means that she's not such an almighty fool as I am."

At his wedding in the following October, James Lambert was unable to shake off a feeling of surprise that they were both at large at the end of the six months of separation — on any day of which she might have chattered them into prison.

The sense of triumph, of at last possessing the object of his desire, was altogether lacking. The grand passion, which had suffused his personality, had wilted under the subterfuges and banalities of shoring up their respectability.

He had again come to terms with himself — slightly different terms. His original attitude to her now seemed as absurd as his bitterness at her triviality. Her potent physical attractiveness remained. Though a silly little woman, she was docile when humored, and had small, pleasing characteristics. At worst, she always purred prettily when you stroked her. Make the best of her as she was, he thought to himself.

At her suggestion they went for their honeymoon to the same hotel in Torquay where she had passed the first few weeks of widowhood. She was thinking more about the hotel than about their reunion. She was but dimly aware that the period of separation had reduced James Lambert (*"dream lover, put your arms around me"*) to the stature of a presentable man who asked nothing of life but the right to be kind to her.

James was indulging himself with four weeks' absence from business and, on the whole, enjoyed himself. The strain of the preceding months had made itself felt and he was able to find her prattle restful. He noted without resentment that she had many male acquaintances among the regular patrons. During their last week he felt a pang of animal jealousy in respect of a young man, monied and much more socially gifted than himself, whom he knew only as "Wilfy."

He had refused to live in Chaundry's house, which had been left to her. So she sold it and increased her already enormous wardrobe. They moved into his house, conveniently near the garage.

He found her a reasonably competent housewife, unexpectedly quick and methodical, so that she had much time on her hands. His business continued to expand and to eat up more of his leisure.

Phyllis had a simple theory of business. If you were your own master, you could obviously take time off whenever you wanted to — a theory which began to produce domestic jars before the first year had been completed. Their squabbles, if frequent, were brief. She was always genuinely sorry for anyone who had the misfortune to displease her, so bore no malice. It was after a small tiff, which she had forgotten and he had not, that she happened to remark:

"Oh, did I ever tell you that I went to Scotland Yard about my dressing-

case and they didn't do anything either!"

"For God's sake forget that foolery!" he snarled and went out, banging the door.

If she was obsessed with dressing-cases, he reasoned, why the devil didn't she buy herself one! She had as much pin money — Chaundry's money — as the wife of a wealthy man. He had not realized that to such a women as Phyllis a luxury had to be a gift expressive of admiration. But he did realize that his outburst had been a backslide — a failure on his part to accept her as she was and make the best of it.

He made a trip up to Regent Street — to Lorota's. He asked for a fitted crocodile dressing-case to cost one hundred and twenty pounds.

Mr. Lorota regretted that he had not, just then, a case at exactly that price. The nearest was one at one hundred and fifty or, at a lower figure, a really excellent article at ninety guineas. With, of course, real gold fittings.

Lambert hesitated, then decided on the ninety-guineas one. It was a mistake he would not have made in business. But ninety guineas did seem a pretty substantial apology for a piece of petulant rudeness.

He arrived home at four instead of seven, to find her chatting on the telephone with "Wilfy." He waited until she had finished, then displayed the dressing-case.

"Jim, you darling!" She gave him a hug. "You know how I adore crocodile! Why, it's just like mine!" She turned it in the light and crooned over it. "And I'm *sure* it's got a triple row of fittings and its very own manicure set!"

She snapped open the catches.

"Oh!" No more able to conceal her feelings than a child, she had given a little moan of disappointment. "Perhaps the manicure set is on this side."

It was patent to Lambert that the case had but a double row of fittings and that no manicure set was supplied with the ninety-guineas model. The case lay at her feet, open. He felt that Lorota had cheated him.

He found her looking up at him with large, moist eyes.

"Jim, darling, you mustn't mind! You mustn't be disappointed — really you mustn't!"

Lambert stared at his wife, then stared at the case, with the same expression. He took a flying kick at the case, which sent it hurtling across the room into a Japanese urn, which had been one of her few contributions to the household.

The urn was smashed — so, more or less, was the ninety-giunea dressing-case. Alone in the room, he picked it up and carried it to the hot-water furnace into which he thrust it, gold fittings and all. Then he went back to the garage and worked the whole evening.

Phyllis told herself that Jim no longer loved her — a correct conclusion reached, however, by faulty reasoning. She left him for "Wilfy" — without any of that tiresome waiting

about through fear of what people would say. People said all they could, which was not very much because neither Lambert nor any of the neighbors knew Wilfy's correct name or whereabouts.

Phyllis Chaundry's appeal to Scotland Yard had been made during the period of active investigation. With her assertion that it was "of the utmost importance to recover the dressing-case," Detective-Inspector Karslake had agreed, though for different reasons. It was obvious that James Lambert had not taken it: he could not have disposed of it.

On the other hand, the man who had stolen the dressing-case was almost certainly the murderer. His very existence, if it could be proved, would destroy the substantial, if negative evidence suggesting Lambert's guilt.

In the first few days they had picked up a clue of great promise. A casual laborer of no fixed abode, known a Conrad the Tinker, though he was not a tinker, had spent three weeks in a lodging house at Rubington, and had moved on to another lodging house in Warthame a week before the crime. He was given a month's employment as assistant gardener in the municipal park but had disappeared the night Chaundry was murdered.

The dragnet had been spread throughout the country without result. Once the hue and cry had been taken up by the newspapers, Karslake opined that they might find the man but they would not find the dressing-case, which could be easily destroyed by fire. Without the dressing-case the man might have little interest for them. They did not find even the man until the Chaundry case had been filed in the Department of Dead Ends for nearly two years.

Not that things had been wholly quiescent. No fewer than five crocodile dressing-cases, three with real gold fittings, had been foisted on Detective-Inspector Rason. Two of them had never been reclaimed. And then, seventeen months after the murder of Chaundry, a sixth crocodile dressing-case arrived with every appearance of being the right one.

With it came the kind of tale which was a commonplace in the Department. A six-ton truck had backed into a cottage in Wiltshire, partly destroying it. Among the débris was a wooden chest, six feet by three, padlocked but opened by the Salvage Corps, which contained a number of articles listed as "missing believed stolen," including a crocodile dressing-case with real gold fittings and the initials "P.C."

The cottage had been tenanted by an elderly woman named Mence, living alone in meager circumstances. The chest, she said, was not hers but her son's. He was the roving sort, but would come to stay with her sometimes. It was now nearly two years since she had seen him. Further questioning left little doubt that her son was Conrad the Tinker. She admitted that he had been to sea,

though he was not a seaman, and finally admitted that he was serving a sentence of three years in Scotland, with two years to run.

It looked remarkably like a cinch. All the same, Rason reminded himself, that "P.C." might stand for "Polly Crisp," or any one of the large number of names that began with "C." So he checked on the Chaundry file, concentrating on Phyllis Chaundry's exhaustive description of the dressing-case. Then he checked with Lorota, the dealer, after which he went in search of Phyllis, to invite her to the Yard to make formal identification of her property.

He arrived at Lambert's house before the latter left for the garage. The daily help did not directly answer his request to see Mrs. Lambert.

"You'd better see Mr. Lambert. He can tell you what's going on a lot better than I can —" which, from a detective's point of view, was a good beginning.

James Lambert told him quite frankly what was going on, the essential point being that he did not even know whether his wife was in the country or abroad. While he was speaking he was wondering uneasily what would happen if Phyllis were again subjected to police questioning.

"If it would help you for me to identify the dressing-case —"

"Thank you, Mr. Lambert." Rason always accepted an offer of help, whether he wanted it or not. "'S'matter o' fact, we need you on another angle too. The Tinker — Mence, his name is — says he was employed by you about that time as a temporary washer. We need an identification on that point."

"It may be true, yet I may never have seen him. I spend most of my time in the office."

"Other way up, I mean, Mr. Lambert. He says he knows you by sight. We want him to pick you out. If I may use your 'phone they'll have the parade ready by the time we arrive."

Lambert didn't like the look of it. But refusal would be very dangerous.

"Theft of goods — that's only a trifle," explained Rason, as they drove to the Yard. "It's the goods as evidence that counts. Why, come now, Mr. Lambert, between you and me, this Chaundry affair must have been something of a nuisance to you? I bet it has! I'm not supposed to say it, but when we've buttoned up this bit about the dressing-case — well, I guess it'll be a relief to you if it turns out he murdered Chaundry?"

"Oh, I see!" Lambert had not seen it before that moment. Now he faced a new kind of horror. He had never envisaged the chances of an innocent man being convicted of the murder. To let another man be hanged for his crime ranked in his mind as mean and undignified — like cheating a man over a car. Something to be avoided if avoidance were possible without going to extremes.

"The tale he offers," continued Rason, "is that he found the car all by itself on the waste ground, didn't see the body and thought he'd help him-

self while he could." Rason chuckled. "With his record he ought to know that no jury will buy *that!*"

At Scotland Yard Lambert was met by Detective-Inspector Karslake as an old acquaintance. Presently, a detective sergeant conducted Lambert to a courtyard, where he fell in line with a round dozen men, most of whom were of his own physical type.

Conrad the Tinker, in plain dress but without a collar, was told to walk down the line. Lambert risked a glance at the man, which told him nothing. The Tinker stopped for a moment in front of Lambert, in evident recognition, then passed on without speaking. The parade broke up.

"That didn't take long, did it!" chirped Rason. "We'll get the report on it presently." Karslake joined them on the way to Rason's office.

"Mr. Lambert," Rason explained to Karslake, "has promised to help us find Mrs. Lambert. You said we must get her, sir, to identify the dressing-case."

Rason's room was in its normally disgraceful state. A picnic basket and thermos crowned one of the filing cabinets; a wall map, with flagged pins, was propped up on the floor. On his desk, dumped on an open directory, stood a crocodile dressing-case, which instantly absorbed Lambert's attention.

Lambert picked up the case, turned it and put it down again. He grinned broadly at the two detectives. For he had seen a way of escape for the Tinker — an end of the whole inconvenient inquiry.

"That's not the right dressing-case!" he announced. As Rason gaped at him, he supplemented: "It's like the one my wife had, but it's not hers."

"Good lord!" Rason glanced apologetically at the unsympathetic countenance of Detective-Inspector Karslake. "I don't know what's gone wrong, sir." He turned to Lambert. "I say, Mr. Lambert, are you quite sure?"

"Quite sure!" answered Lambert. "Her case had her initials 'P.C.' cut on the side. This case has never been cut for initials."

"Now look here, Mr. Lambert." Rason was laboriously patient. "Your wife — Mrs. Chaundry as she was then — gave us two hundred and thirty words close description of her dressing-case. All about the bottles and gawd-knows-what! Not a word about her initials."

"She forgot — she often does forget the main thing. The initials were there, all right. *'P.C.'!* Done curly, instead of straight."

"Like this?" asked Rason.

From under the wall map sprawling on the floor Rason produced a crocodile dressing-case, looking now a little dingy. It bore the initials "*P.C.*" — slightly curly.

Lambert regarded it with profound distaste. Another crocodile dressing-case was a bad break. The Tinker would have to be hanged. He himself would have to make the best of that

mean feeling — like that of cheating a man over a car.

"Yes," he admitted. "That's her dressing-case."

"My fault from first to last!" groaned Rason. "My trouble is, I haven't enough room here. All sorts of articles are sent to me —"

He broke off as a messenger entered and handed a slip to Karslake.

"Report on the Tink — on the convict, Mence, sir."

Karslake glanced at the slip, then passed it to Rason. Rason read it, then characteristically stowed it in his waistcoat pocket.

"Well, we mustn't talk about my troubles, Mr. Lambert. We must talk about yours. I'm sorry, but I have to arrest you and charge you with the murder of Arthur Chaundry."

While Rason was reciting the routine warning, Lambert reminded himself that there had been no one on the road when he had killed Chaundry and that there was no nearby place of concealment for any one. There could have been no onlooker.

"That's a bit of a knock, Mr. Rason," he said coolly. "You know your job. But if you're betting on the unsupported statement of that convict —"

"The Tinker doesn't connect you with the murder!" exclaimed Rason. "He only says you were the owner of the garage. You can read the report yourself." He produced it for inspection.

"Then what's it all about?" demanded Lambert.

"Your arrest, d'you mean? Oh, your wife's evidence has dished you." Noting the other's incredulous expression, he went on:

"Come back to Mrs. Chaundry — as she was then, Lambert. She didn't *forget* those initials on her dressing-case. How come? Because she'd never seen those initials on her dressing-case. Lorota tried to mend a gash in the dressing-case, but the invisible mending stunt didn't come off. So he covered the gash by cutting those initials over it — which you don't generally do in crocodile. *She didn't know the initials were there!* But you did! How? Only if you saw them in the car. How could you see them in the car? Only if you killed Chaundry. Your own statements prove that it was not possible for you to have seen those initials *at any other place* or *at any other time!*"

Lambert blinked, groping for an answer.

"You've had a raw deal, Lambert. We'd never have got you if she hadn't bleated about that dressing-case. We know she put Chaundry on the spot for you. What about giving us the dope?"

He had thrown his life away for a doll. To assert that she had conspired with him would be a flattery which he grudged her.

"The dope is that she hadn't the guts for a job like that. I listened outside the box at the dance hall while she was telephoning. I saw my chance. She didn't know that I intended to kill Chaundry."

Last month we brought you the beginning of "The Rainbow Murders." Ten diamonds, worth $200,000, were stolen from Delgado's jewelry store in Manila, and Jo Gar, the Filipino detective, has started on the long trail — to recover the Von Loffler diamonds and to avenge the murders in their wake. The first clue is to find "the one who walks badly — always in white."

Bear in mind that "The Rainbow Murders" is not a serial: each of the six adventures is a separate story, complete in itself; only the central theme of the Rainbow diamonds connects Jo Gar's far-flung investigations. You can read each story independently, and enjoy it to the hilt.

We asked Mrs. Whitfield if she could remember the reative source of her husband's story. It seems that the inspiration came from an incident which occurred on the "Normandie," when Raoul Whitfield was rossing from New York to join his wife in Paris. A diamond bracelet had been found on the gangplank. Many had seen it glitter in the sun, but it had been picked up by an unidentified man who quickly vanished on board. There was much speculation among the passengers as to which among them was THE man.

The fact is, Raoul Whitfield needed very little to start him on a story. An incident which most people would consider trivial, a newspaper a count buried on an inside page, a casual remark by a stranger — these were the fragile details out of which he wove flashing designs. But it is the same with all born storytellers: a piece of fluff here, a piece of fluff there, the spinning wheel of the mind, and lo — a yarn!

WHITE DUCK

by RAOUL WHITFIELD

THE *Cheyo Maru* took red color from the setting sun; her boat deck was soaked in it. The sea was calm; even the white wings of the gulls that rose and dipped astern were tinted red. Manila and the Island of Cavite were no longer to be seen astern. There were few people in the deck chairs; the first dinner gong had already sounded.

Jo Gar relaxed his short body, kept his almond-shaped eyes almost closed. Now and then he lifted his brown-paper cigarette, inhaled. It was almost as though he slept between puffs, but that was not so.

When the Japanese steward came rapidly towards his chair, the Island detective lifted his head slightly. The steward had been well tipped, and had

been asked only a simple task. He reached Jo Gar's chair now, bowed jerkily.

"He has left his cabin," he said. "The man in white — the one who limps. He is coming."

He spoke in his native tongue, which was the tongue in which Jo had spoken to him. When the Island detective jerked his head in a gesture of dismissal, the steward moved towards the stern of the liner and vanished from sight. Jo turned his head a little and watched the man in white approach. He was of medium size; dressed in duck. He had a lean face, and it was as though the sun had not touched it. It was almost the color of the spotless suit he wore. He moved slowly, as Jo had seen him move at the dock, several hours before the boat had sailed. There was a very slight limp; it appeared that he stepped lightly when weight was on his left leg.

The man's face was turned away from him as he approached the spot opposite Jo's chair. But as he neared it he took his eyes from the water, looked at Jo in a swift, searching glance. The man in white had blue eyes; they were small and expressionless. His lips were thin, and without much color.

He stopped suddenly, his eyes still on Jo. He said, a slow smile on his face:

"Señor Gar, isn't it?"

Joe sat up and nodded. He even managed a little smile. He was very surprised, and tried not to let the other man know this.

The one in white nodded his head and seemed very pleased. His voice was soft, almost careless.

"Leaving the Islands?" he asked.

Jo Gar smiled pleasantly. "I have relatives in Honolulu," he said. "Leaving the Islands — for more islands."

The one in white chuckled a little. He said in an easy tone:

"I am Ferraro. For a time I was connected with the Constabulary. I have heard of you."

Jo Gar bowed. Ferraro's English was good though not perfect. There was a clipping of words, a cutting short, despite his leisurely manner of talking.

Ferraro said: "You leave at a bad time. A terrible crime — Delgado's son, that watchman at the bank. And Juan Arragon. All dead."

He shook his head. Jo Gar said: "You were acquainted with Señor Arragon?"

Ferraro frowned. "No," he said. "But I had heard of him."

Jo Gar relaxed again, inhaled. The one in white looked at the sea, shrugging.

"The murderers will be caught, of course. And the Von Loffler diamonds found. It is almost always so."

Jo Gar closed his eyes and nodded. "Of course," he agreed. "It is so — almost always."

Ferraro looked at him again. "There are few passengers aboard who came on at Manila. But perhaps you do not care to be addressed as Señor Gar?"

Jo widened his gray-blue eyes. "Why should I object?" he asked in a puzzled voice.

The one in white said: "Well, there has been this robbery — these murders. Only two days ago. There was a thorough search at the dock. I was asked many questions, myself. It seemed amusing."

Jo Gar said: "And you were formerly with the Constabulary?"

They both smiled, then Jo Gar said: "No, there is no secrecy. I am not of the police — I rather dislike the American who heads the force."

Ferraro said: "But Juan Arragon — he was one of your countrymen — a good friend —"

He paused, shrugged narrow shoulders. "At least, so I have heard," he said. "Having been in the Constabulary —"

Jo Gar nodded. "It is not so," he said quietly. "Juan Arragon was of the Manila police. He was always fighting me."

Ferraro said: "Oh, so that was it, Señor?"

The Island detective nodded very slowly. The man in white looked towards the water, then his eyes came back to Jo's again.

"I am dining alone," he said. "Will you join me?"

Jo thanked him and declined. "I do not think I shall dine tonight," he said. "My stomach pains me."

Ferraro expressed regret. He spoke a few words more and moved aft. His limp was barely noticeable, but it existed. Jo Gar reclined in his chair and remembered several things. Diamonds worth two hundred thousand dollars had been stolen from Delgado's jewelry store, on the Escolta, in Manila — the famous Rainbow diamonds. Delgado's son had been murdered. A watchman had been murdered. And Juan Arragon had been murdered, after he had vanished in pursuit of one of the fleeing machines. His body had been returned to Jo Gar's small office, with a forged note attached. And later in the night, while trailing a clue, the Island detective had been forced to shoot a Malay who had come at him with a knife. The Malay had talked. He had spoken of the leader of the diamond thieves as "the one who walks badly — always in white."

For Liam Delgado, whose son was dead — and Von Loffler, who wished to recover the ten diamonds, Jo Gar had left the Islands. He had left aboard the *Cheyo Maru* because another was leaving on the same boat — a man dressed in white, who limped when he moved.

Jo Gar shrugged his narrow shoulders. The sunset red was almost gone now. The Island detective thought:

When a man *is* a thief and a murderer he does not seek out one who hunts down thieves and murderers. And yet this Ferraro has approached me, has invited me to dine.

A little grimness came into the gray-blue eyes of the Island detective.

"Sometimes such a man is very confident," he half whispered. "And sometimes he has been of the police."

He nodded his head a little and ceased to smile. "And sometimes," he murmured very softly, "a dying man lies." The Island detective sighed. "It is very difficult," he said softly. "Even my own thoughts contradict."

When Jo Gar turned his key in the lock of his cabin, stepped inside, he closed the door slowly behind him. He hummed a little Spanish tune, and his body was rigid. There were his two bags — and they were opened, the contents spilled about. The lock of his small trunk had been smashed; the tray lay crosswise. His clothes were scattered. The berth sheets had been ripped up — the cabin was almost a wreck.

Jo stood with his back to the door, stopped humming. He lighted one of his cigarettes, moved about the cabin carefully, using his eyes. He touched nothing. After a few minutes he pressed a button and waited for the Japanese steward. When the man came he was breathing heavily, and his black, round eyes were wide. They grew wider as he surveyed the cabin. The Island detective made a little gesture with his brown hands.

"You see," he said. "There has been a search."

The steward broke into his native tongue. He was very excited. He had just entered the cabin of Señor Ferraro, who was of the Philippine Constabulary. And it, too, had been entered. Luggage had been ransacked. An officer of the boat had been notified.

Jo Gar made a clicking sound and nodded his head slowly.

"A clumsy person — this thief," he said. "I have nothing of value here. I am a poor man. Yet see how he has thrown things about."

The steward shrilled words — apologetic words. He had been away from the section only a short time. He had come on deck to do as Señor Gar had asked — to tell him that Señor Ferraro had left his cabin. He had come quickly and had taken a short cut to the spot in which Señor Gar's chair had been placed.

Jo Gar quieted the man. He narrowed his gray-blue eyes on the ransacked trunk, then turned abruptly. He said as he moved through the doorway to the narrow corridor:

"You do not think the cabin was entered — before you went above to tell me that Señor Ferraro had left his cabin?"

The steward was sure neither cabin had been entered before that time. Señor Ferraro's cabin was only fifty feet distant from Señor Gar's. And it was in the same condition.

Jo Gar said: "Perhaps there are others in similar state."

He went along the narrow corridor to a wider one. The steward followed. Two ship's officers, clad in white uniforms and gold braid, approached. The Chief Steward came from another direction. There was much swift talk — the Japanese who had charge of Jo's cabin led the way to the one occupied by Señor Ferraro.

It was an outside cabin, similar to

Jo's. It was in the same sort of disorder. Jo looked in — the others went inside. The Third Officer said in English:

"And your cabin was entered, too, Señor?"

Jo nodded. "I was on deck," he said. "Señor Ferraro talked with me, about twenty minutes ago. Then he went to dine."

The Third Officer said: "You are friends?"

Jo shook his head. "Acquaintances," he corrected.

There was more talk. The Third Officer suggested that Señor Ferraro be notified, and while he was offering the suggestion the one with the limp came along the corridor. His blue eyes widened on the group. The Chief Steward said apologetically:

"Your cabin has been entered, Señor."

Ferraro looked at Jo Gar, went to the doorway of his cabin. His eyes moved over the opened bags, broken trunk locks. He said slowly:

"But why? I am a poor man —"

Jo Gar chuckled a little. He said: "Those were my words, Señor. I, too, have been treated like this."

The one in white stared at Jo. Then he smiled a little with his thin lips. His face was bloodless; he had thin, yellowish hair.

His lips parted; he was about to speak, but he changed his mind. He went into the cabin and poked around among the clothes of a large bag. The officers were speaking with Jo when Ferraro uttered an exclamation.

"Ah — a woman!" he said.

Turning, he held out a white hand. In his palm lay the pin. It was perhaps two inches long. It had a setting so cheap that it could be immediately seen. There were a half dozen stones in the pin — but one was missing. They were glass — the glitter was false; they had not the appearance of even a clever imitation of diamonds.

The Third Officer took the pin and inspected it carefully. Jo Gar noted the cheapness of the metal — the flat backing. The pin clasp was bent — the whole thing a cheap job.

Ferraro stood close to the Third Officer. He said slowly, in his clipped-word manner:

"The sort of thing you buy on the Escolta for a few *pesos*. Cheap stuff — it fell while she was ransacking the place."

The Third Officer nodded. "You have not suffered a loss?" he asked.

Señor Ferraro shrugged. "I have nothing of importance — to lose," he stated.

He took the bar pin from the officer's fingers. He juggled it carelessly about in the palm of his right hand, without looking at it.

The Chief Steward addressed Jo Gar.

"And you, Señor Gar? You have not lost anything of importance?"

Jo Gar smiled at Ferraro. "I am much in the position of Señor Ferraro," he said quietly.

The Third Officer spoke in a peculiar tone.

"Neither of you gentlemen possesses

anything of great value — and yet each of you has been robbed."

Ferraro smiled a little, his blue eyes on the half-closed ones of the Island detective.

"It is very strange," he said softly.

Jo Gar spoke tonelessly. "It *seems* very strange," he agreed. "I shall return to my cabin and try to get things in order."

The Chief Steward said grimly: "We will make an investigation, of course. Perhaps the pin —"

Ferraro handed it to the Chief Steward. He looked at Jo.

"Señor Gar is quite skilled in these matters," he said slowly. "He is an interested person, in this case."

The Island detective smiled. "And *you* were formerly with the Island Constabulary," he reminded. "You see with what little esteem the intruder has regarded us."

The Third Officer said: "Perhaps it has been just a blundering affair — an attempt at quick robbery."

Jo Gar nodded his head, and kept his brown face serious.

"That is very possible," he agreed, and moved along the corridor towards his own cabin.

He was interrupted several times while he was adjusting things. It was not easy to think clearly, with so many people about. At ten o'clock the Third Officer came into the cabin, shutting the door behind him. He said very quietly:

"In matters such as this we always are suspicious of the cabin steward. We have questioned him at length. He states that you have tipped him generously, and that you had him come to you, on deck this evening, and warn you that Señor Ferraro had left his cabin and was going above for a bit of air before dining."

The Third Officer paused. Jo Gar nodded, his brown face expressionless.

"It is so," be said. "You wish to know the reason?"

The officer spread his hands in a little gesture, half of apology, half of assent. Jo said:

"I am weary of discussing Island matters. I wished to be alone. With the cabin steward advising me in time, I hoped to avoid Señor Ferraro for a few days. Unfortunately, I was unable to rise from the deck chair in time. So we met."

The Third Officer frowned. Then he nodded his head, very slowly. He said:

"Thank you, Señor Gar."

Jo smiled pleasantly. He said in a careless voice:

"You are keeping that imitation thing — that bar pin?"

The officer shook his head. "There was no loss to Señor Ferraro," he said. "We shall make adjustment for any baggage damage. He asked me to leave the pin with him. He intends, I believe, to do some quiet investigating. He was with the Constabulary."

Jo Gar nodded pleasantly. "That is quite the wisest thing to do, I think," he said.

The Third Officer expressed regrets. The captain was disturbed. Such things seldom happened aboard the *Cheyo Maru*.

Jo Gar sighed. The Third Officer went from the cabin, turning at the door and smiling pleasantly. When he had gone Jo removed his palm beach suiting and got into clothes that were of dark silk. He waited a short time, went to the deck quickly, carrying a light blanket that bulked over his arm. His face held a tight smile as he approached the spot where his deck chair had been.

The night was warm and there was no moon. Most of the deck chairs had been collected and were being stacked together. Jo moved towards the deck steward, a tall Jap with eyes that were very black. He said:

"Please return my chair. I wish to rest a while on deck — I am sleepy and my cabin is stuffy."

The deck steward bowed. Jo showed him the spot, one that was fairly secluded, aft of the second stack. When the chair had been set up he relaxed in it. The deck steward smiled and moved away.

After a short time Jo turned his head to one side and appeared to doze. The deck steward passed him, treading very softly. He halted, and through slitted eyes the Island detective saw that he was staring at him. Then the steward moved hurriedly forward.

Jo Gar lay motionless in the chair. There was the steady vibration of the engines, and the faint sound of steam reaching the air. From some spot below music reached the boat deck. Jo said very quietly:

"How calm the sea is!"

His lips held an ironical smile. He breathed evenly, closed his almond-shaped eyes.

Five minutes later there were three shots. The first one was a muffled, Maxim-silenced pop-cough. The second was smothered but had more sound. The third was a sharp *crack*.

Jo Gar, his small body tense, stepped out from behind the ventilator — caught sight of a black figure moving aft. He bent his body low, ran along the deck, his automatic gripped tightly in his right-hand fingers. From some spot forward a voice called with the shrill of the Jap tongue a word that sounded like:

"Hai!"

The dark figure ahead had reached the steps of the port companionway. It seemed almost to dive down them. Jo Gar slowed his pace, approached the steps carefully. When he reached the bottom of them he heard shouts. Men were coming up from below.

He tried to get past them, but a short, chunky man caught him by the right arm and tried to get his gun away. Jo said sharply:

"Stop — a man came down here! I am after — him."

He was breathing heavily. The chunky one wore a white uniform. He said in bad English:

"I — ship police. I see no one —"

Other men were coming up. Several of them were in dinner clothes. Jo Gar watched the Third Officer come into the group. He shook off the grip of the ship policeman, said grimly:

"I was on deck. Three shots were fired. A figure in black ran towards this companionway. I followed."

A man in dinner clothes said: "I heard only two shots — from above."

The Third Officer was beside Jo. He spoke in a soft tone.

"You are dressed in black, also, Señor Gar."

Jo Gar nodded. "It is less conspicuous," he replied. "I was on deck — and wished to be inconspicuous."

The Third Officer said: "Why?"

Jo Gar raised his voice, but did not answer the question.

"And none of this group saw the man I was pursuing?" he asked.

None in the group had seen any person in black — but Jo. The Third Officer said:

"The shots were fired — at you?"

Jo Gar shook his head. "At my deck chair," he said quietly. "I was some distance away."

He read suspicion in the Third Officer's eyes. The one in dinner clothes, who had spoken before, said grimly:

"You say there were three shots — I heard only two."

Jo Gar shrugged. "The first was Maxim-silenced," he replied. "If you will come to the boat deck —"

He broke off, turning. He went up the steps of the companionway, closely followed by the Third Officer. The others trailed along behind. When they reached the boat deck there were several other people. Two stood near the spot in which the steward had placed Jo's chair.

The Third Officer used his flashlight; he muttered an exclamation as the beam fell across the chair. Jo Gar stood to one side, smiling a little. His eyes were on the brown mask that had rolled from the chair. He said:

"That is a mask that Sebastino, the Spaniard in Manila, made for me. It is a good likeness."

He moved forward, lifted it. The others crowded around him. The plaster had been broken in two places. There was a hole in the left cheek — another in the forehead. The Island detective said very softly:

"You see — the one in black was an excellent shot. The third bullet —"

He leaned over the chair and moved the cloth of the palm beach coat he had wrapped around the light blanket. There was a hole in the left lapel. He said in a toneless voice:

"There is where it struck. It was like this —"

He adjusted the trousers and coat, rested the face mask above the coat, laying it with the right cheek against the canvas of the deck chair. He said:

"Switch off the light — and move back here."

The Third Officer switched off the flashlight. The group moved away from the chair, towards the vessel's port rail. They stood looking towards the mask and the palm beach material. In the faint light it resembled Jo Gar — sleeping in the deck chair.

The Third Officer sucked in his breath sharply. The man in dinner clothes, who had spoken before, swore.

He said grimly: "It was — attempted murder, all right!"

Jo Gar nodded. "And the one who attempted it has got away," he said. "Below that companionway — are there several avenues of escape?"

The Third Officer nodded slowly. "A corridor to the concert room. Another companionway, to the deck below. A narrow passageway to the radio room —"

Jo said: "That is enough."

The Third Officer made a clicking sound. "We shall talk with the captain — you and I, Señor Gar," he said.

Jo nodded. There was the sound of foot-falls — of a man running. A Jap came into the group, clad in the uniform of a subordinate officer.

"Deck Steward Kamogi, sir!" he breathed. "He lies up forward, near your cabin. He's — dead."

The Third Officer spoke in Japanese. "Dead?" he asked. "Shot?"

The subordinate shook his head. "It was — a knife, sir, in the back!"

The Third Officer narrowed his eyes on the blue-gray ones of Jo Gar. He said very softly:

"The deck steward, Señor Gar."

The Island detective looked towards the face mask in the chair. He said in a voice that held a suggestion of grimness:

"He *would* have been the first person I would have questioned."

Captain Haroysan sat across the table from Jo Gar, his moon face crinkled.

"You knew your life was in danger — you changed your attire, arranged a trap —"

Jo Gar spread his chubby hands.

"I *sensed* my life was in danger," he corrected. "It was the deck steward —"

The captain of the *Cheyo Maru* frowned. He spoke, shaking his head.

"It is very bad. The vessel has never had anything like this —"

Jo Gar smiled a little. "I have been very frank with you, Captain," he said. "The one responsible for the theft of the Von Loffler diamonds is aboard your ship, I am sure of that. He knows that I am aboard. That does not please him. I think that he bribed the deck steward to tell him when I was sleeping. Then he wished to be safe. So the deck steward was knifed."

The captain frowned. "And *you* bribed the steward of your cabin, to be told when Señor Ferraro was approaching you, on deck."

Jo Gar nodded. "I wished to evade him," he said.

The captain shrugged. "I do not believe that," he replied.

The Island detective smiled. "Señor Ferraro's cabin was broken into — so was mine," he said. "That is puzzling."

Captain Haroysan said sharply: "You are changing the point of the discussion."

Jo Gar rose from his chair. "The Von Loffler diamonds are valued in excess of two hundred thousand dollars, Captain," he said. "Already, more than a half dozen men have

been murdered, because of them. One of those men was Juan Arragon, my friend. Another was Señor Delgado's son. Both Von Loffler and Delgado have commissioned me to hunt down the thief and murderer. I had evidence that he was aboard your ship."

The Japanese stood up also. He said grimly: "If it satisfies me — I will take charge of him."

Jo Gar sighed. "It is weak evidence," he said quietly. "A Malay involved in an attempt to kill the American head of the Manila police gave it to me. He was dying at the time. It is not strong enough to make an arrest."

The captain said: "And you want the diamonds, Señor Gar?"

Jo Gar nodded. "Of course," he agreed.

The captain shrugged. "A murderer is aboard the *Cheyo Maru*," he said. "In less than two weeks we shall be in Honolulu. But what is to happen — before we land —"

The Island detective said tonelessly:

"We will have the murderer of the deck steward. *Perhaps* we will have the Von Loffler diamonds."

Captain Haroysan made a guttural sound. "I have radioed Manila — about you, Señor. And about Señor Ferraro."

Jo Gar said with a faint smile:

"And the information you received — it was good?"

Haroysan said with grim amusement: "It was even flattering. Señor Ferraro has seen honorable service with the Constabulary. You are much respected. And yet—"

The *Cheyo Maru* captain broke off abruptly. He shrugged. Jo Gar smiled sympathetically.

"And yet you are far from satisfied," he finished.

The captain said nothing. His eyes were narrow lines of blackness. Jo Gar bowed slightly.

"I can understand your feelings, Captain," he said softly. "I feel — much the same way."

On the fourth day out the sky clouded, and there was wind. It was wind that blew gently at first, but increased steadily in velocity. There were rumors of a typhoon; the *Cheyo Maru* rolled badly. At four in the afternoon, with the sea growing steadily rougher, Jo Gar moved cautiously towards the cabin of Señor Ferraro and rapped on the door.

Ferraro called out: "Who is it?" And Jo answered him. The door was opened almost immediately.

The Island detective smiled and said: "Does the roughness bother you, Señor?"

Ferraro's white face was a little twisted, but he managed a smile.

"I am not exactly a sailor," he said.

Jo stepped inside the cabin. Ferraro closed the door. Jo said:

"For the last two days I have been moving around in Second and Third Class quarters. I think you were doing something along the same lines, yes?"

Ferraro nodded. "I had no luck," he said.

Jo Gar smiled a little. "This morning I had a little," he said. "I came across this."

He placed a brown hand in a pocket of his palm beach suit and withdrew it again. In his palm was a pin. It was a bar pin, of cheap manufacture. It had four imitation diamonds in it — one hole was vacant. The glass was large in size, but not matched.

Ferraro stared at the pin. He took it in his fingers and inspected it. Then he looked towards the small table in his cabin. On an end of it was the pin he had found after his cabin had been ransacked. He went over and placed it beside the other.

"The same sort of junk!" he breathed. "It might mean something."

Jo Gar nodded. "It might, but I'm afraid not," he said. "There are always a lot of women traveling Second and Third Class on these ships. Many of them like cheap jewelry. A lot of these women are the dregs of the Orient. Captain Haroysan has told me that often First Class cabins are robbed. Or rather, attempts are made to rob."

Ferraro said: "But in this case — it was your cabin — and mine. And an attempt was made on your life."

Jo Gar nodded. "Many attempts have been made — to murder me," he said. "I found this pin in an empty Third Class cabin. It lay beneath a berth."

Ferraro said very steadily: "We were both in police matters. What if the person thought he could learn something, or she could learn something, by getting into our luggage?"

The Island detective nodded. "A possibility," he said.

Ferraro looked down at the two cheap objects in his palm. He poked them over on their backs. Jo Gar said slowly:

"I don't think that cheap stuff means anything. However, it is good to be careful."

He smiled at Ferraro and lifted one of the pins in his fingers. He said:

"We each have one — now."

Ferraro's mouth muscles twitched. He started to say something quickly, but caught himself. Turning, he made a movement as though to toss the pin towards the table. The ship was rolling heavily: he was forced to brace himself. Jo Gar leaned against the door. Ferraro said, facing him, a smile on his face:

"Wait — this is the piece of junk *you* found, Señor Gar."

There was a half careless tone to his voice, yet he spoke hurriedly. Jo Gar looked at the bar pin in his hand.

"Of course," he agreed. "I am sorry."

They exchanged pins, both smiling. Jo slipped his into a pocket. He said:

"I'm going to nap — it's getting steadily rougher. Sleeping helps."

Ferraro tossed the pin towards the table. It struck it, but rolled from the surface to the floor. The one in white made an instinctive motion towards it, checked himself. He yawned, faced Jo. "I'll have a try at it," he said.

Jo smiled and went outside. It took

him five minutes to get to the captain's quarters. In another ten minutes the cabin boy had been sent to Ferraro's cabin. The Third Officer and Jo Gar, five minutes later, watched the one with the pale face following the cabin boy towards the captain's quarters. He did not see them. They went swiftly to his cabin, and the Third Officer used the key. Inside, Jo Gar looked on the floor. The bar pin was not there. It lay on the small table, on its back, the cheap stones face downward.

Jo Gar picked it up and handed it to the Third Officer. They went silently from the cabin, locking the door behind them. The *Cheyo Maru* was rolling heavily.

The Third Officer said: "Getting a little rough, Señor."

The Island detective nodded.

Fallibar, a diamond expert returning to the States, seated across from Jo Gar and Captain Haroysan, spoke quietly:

"The third stone is a fine diamond," he said. "The others in the pin are just glass. Even this real one has been painted, to give it false glitter. Painted on the back. And crudely mounted. But then, all of them are just stuck in holes of the metal."

There was silence. Fallibar studied the slip of paper Jo had given him.

"It answers the description," he said slowly. "It's one of the Von Loffler stones. I've handled diamonds for thirty years. I'd swear to that."

Jo Gar sighed. "And it was lost, while Señor Ferraro's cabin was being ransacked," he said slowly.

The Third Officer said:

"Two of us have gone through everything he has in there. The purser is still detaining him, telling him there is a mistake in his passage papers. But we're through — found nothing."

Captain Haroysan regarded Jo with narrowed, dark eyes.

"Señor Gar has traced this one diamond," he said. "I think it should be his affair."

Jo smiled. "That is good of you," he said. "I can think of only one way."

The captain of the *Cheyo Maru* said quietly: "You will need assistance?"

The Island detective smiled with his thin lips pressed together. He ran brown fingers across the skin of his forehead, then shook his head.

"I do not think so," he said very softly. "It is difficult to tell."

Fallibar said grimly: "There has been a murder, and your life has been attempted —"

Jo Gar smiled at the diamond expert who was returning to the States. The *Cheyo Maru* rolled sluggishly in the seas kicked up by the tail end of the typhoon.

"I shall not need assistance," he said firmly. "If the captain will instruct the purser not to detain Señor Ferraro longer, I shall wait a little while, and then go to his cabin."

The Third Officer said: "But he will notice, perhaps, that the bar pin has vanished."

Jo Gar smiled with his almond shaped eyes on the swaying walls of

the Captain's office. "I am very sure that he will," he agreed tonelessly.

When Jo Gar rapped lightly on the door of Ferraro's cabin it was almost six o'clock. The one in white called again: "Who is it?"

Jo Gar said: "Señor Gar."

The door was opened and Jo went inside. He was smiling a little.

Señor Ferraro was dressed in white trousers and a white shirt. He wore slippers. He said in a sharp voice:

"I have been in the cabin only a few minutes. A mix-up in my passage papers, and the purser is very stupid. But when I returned here — that bar pin had disappeared."

Jo Gar stood with his back to the door and extended the palm of his right hand towards Ferraro. He said quietly:

"I have the honor — to return it."

Ferraro's face got hard. He took the pin, stared at it. He said, in a surprised tone:

"But now — there are *two* stones missing!"

His lips were twitching; he was breathing hard. Jo Gar nodded almost pleasantly. He put his right hand in a pocket of his palm beach coat.

"We removed one of them — one was already missing," he said.

Ferraro stared at the Island detective. He said nastily:

" 'We' removed one?"

Jo nodded again. "Mr. Fallibar aided me," he said. "He is a diamond expert — an acquaintance of the captain."

He watched the little jerk of Ferraro's body. The man in white was fighting for control. But he said in a hard, rising voice.

"But *why* — did you remove one?"

Jo Gar shrugged. "It was one of the Von Loffler stones," he replied. "I noticed a difference in the color, when you showed me the bar pin. I had Mr. Fallibar inspect it. The stone we removed is one of the ten missing ones — and quite valuable."

Ferraro said hoarsely: "It's a mistake! How would that pin have been lost — in here —"

Jo Gar stopped smiling. He said:

"It *wasn't* lost in here, Señor."

He waited, watching the fear in Ferraro's eyes, watching the man's attempt at control. Then he said:

"A Malay that I shot in Manila was dying. He told me to find 'the one who walks badly — always in white.' I wanted to know who the leader was — of the ones that robbed Delgado's store. I came aboard this ship — when I learned *you* were coming aboard, Ferraro!"

Ferraro said hoarsely: "You're — mad, Garl You think I —"

His voice broke. Jo Gar nodded and moved his right pocket material a little.

"I think the Malay made a mistake, Señor Ferraro," he said. "You were *not* the leader of the diamond thieves. But you had been with the Constabulary, and you could aid them. You were valuable, and for your services you received one diamond. A very valuable stone."

There was a sneer across Ferraro's face. Jo Gar said:

"You were not worried about me being aboard. Perhaps you were offered a bigger reward — for my death. You wanted to create a mystery, and to show me that you possessed nothing of value. You did not work alone. You thought that a safe way to carry your diamond was in the cheap pin. And you used it to attempt throwing me off the trail. But you wished to kill, also. You bribed the deck steward — and he told you I was asleep. You fired three shots at what you thought was Señor Gar, and you got away. You wore dark clothes — and threw them overboard. Then you were in white."

Ferraro said hoarsely. "That is a lie! I did not —"

Jo Gar said: "It is not a lie. The dark coat did not get clear of the vessel. It caught over an open port, just above the water line —"

Ferraro's voice was almost a scream. He cried: "You lie — you lie!"

Jo Gar said grimly: "I think that the first shot knocked the mask to the deck — you knew you had failed. You were afraid — and you went forward and knifed the deck steward so that he could not talk —"

Ferraro made a swift movement of his right hand. Jo Gar squeezed the trigger of his automatic. The *Cheyo Maru* was rolling — the bullet struck the mirror above the wash basin. Ferraro's gun cracked — wood spurted from the door behind Gar.

The Island detective fired again. Ferraro's body jerked; his gun arm dropped. He slumped slowly to his knees, swayed for a minute, rolled to the left as the vessel tilted.

Jo Gar moved forward and got the gun away from him. He said in a steady voice:

"You tried to be careless — with that bar pin. But you showed it had value."

Ferraro groaned. "That — damned coat —" he breathed in a tearing voice.

Jo said: "I was bluffing, Ferraro — it didn't catch on the port. Who were the others? Who was the one who planned the diamond steal —"

Ferraro's face was splotched with red. Blood was on his lips. He said thickly: "It was that —"

He was coughing, his face twisted. Jo bent over him. Ferraro's eyes were staring. He muttered thickly:

"The blind — Chinese — Honolulu — you can find —"

His muttering died. There was a convulsive shiver of his body. In the corridor there was the sound of footfalls, voices. Jo Gar bent down, straightened again. He braced himself against the ship roll, opened the door. The Third Officer stared past him, at the body of Señor Ferraro.

He said: "He *was* — the one — you were searching for!"

Jo Gar shook his head. But he didn't speak. The words of the dying Malay had helped. He was wondering if the last words of Ferraro would help, too. And he was making certain that he would remember them.

THE ENCHANTED GARDEN

by H. F. HEARD

'NATURE's a queer one,' said Mr. Squeers," I remarked.

"I know what moves you to misquote Dickens," was Mr. Mycroft's reply.

Here was a double provocation: first, there was the injury of being told that the subject on which one was going to inform someone was already known to him, and secondly, there was the insult that the happy literary quotation with which the information was to be introduced was dismissed as inaccurate. Still it's no use getting irritated with Mr. Mycroft. The only hope was to lure his pride onto the brink of ignorance.

"Then tell me," I remarked demurely, "what I have just been reading?"

"The sad, and it is to be feared, fatal accident that befell Miss Hetty Hess who is said to be extremely rich, and a 'colorful personality' and 'young for her years' — the evidence for these last two statements being a color photograph in the photogravure section of the paper which establishes that her frock made up for its brevity only by the intense viridity of its green color."

I am seldom untruthful deliberately, even when considerably nonplussed; besides it was no use: Mr. Mycroft was as usual one move ahead. He filled in the silence with: "I should have countered that naturalists are the queer ones."

I had had a moment to recover, and felt that I could retrieve at least a portion of my lost initiative. "But there's no reason to link the accident with the death. The notice only mentions that she had had a fall a few weeks previously. The cause of death was 'intestinal stasis'."

"Cause!" said Mr. Mycroft. He looked and sounded so like an old raven as he put his head on one side and uttered "caws," that I couldn't help laughing.

"Murder's no laughing matter!" he remonstrated.

"But surely, *cher maître*, you sometimes are unwilling to allow that death can ever be through natural causes!"

"Cause? There's sufficient cause here."

"*Post hoc, propter hoc*," I was glad to get off one of my few classic tags. "Because a lady of uncertain years dies considerably *after* a fall from which her doctor vouched there were no immediate ill effects, you would surely not maintain that it was *on account* of the fall that the rhythm of her secondary nervous system struck and stopped for good? And even if it was, who's to blame?"

"Cause." At this third quothing of the Raven I let my only comment

be a rather longer laugh — and waited for my lecture. Mr. Mycroft did not fail me. He went on: "I'll own I know nothing about causality in the outer world, for I believe no one does really. But I have spent my life, not unprofitably, in tracing human causality. As you're fond of Dickens, I'll illustrate from Copperfield's Mr. Dick. The *causes* of King Charles's head coming off may have been due to four inches of iron going through his neck. I feel on safer ground when I say it was due to his failing to get on with his parliament. You say Miss Hess died naturally — that is to say (1) her death, (2) her accident a fortnight before, and (3) the place where that accident took place, all have only a chance connection. Maybe your case would stand were I not watching *another* line of causality."

"You mean a motive?"

"Naturally."

"But motives aren't proof! Or every natural death would be followed by a number of unnatural ones — to wit, executions of executors and legatees!"

"I don't know whether I agree with your rather severe view of human nature. What I do know is that when a death proves to be far too happy an accident for someone who survives, then we old sleuths start with a trail which often ends with our holding proofs that not even a jury can fail to see."

"Still," I said, "suspicion can't always be right!"

What had been no more than an after-lunch sparring-match suddenly loomed up as active service with Mr. Mycroft's, "Well, the police agree with you in thinking that there's no proof, and with me in suspecting it *is* murder. That's why I'm going this afternoon to view the scene of the accident, unaccompanied — unless, of course, you would care to accompany me?"

I may sometimes seem vain but I know my uses. So often I get a ringside seat because, as Mr. Mycroft has often remarked, my appearance disarms suspicion.

"We are headed," Mr. Mycroft resumed as we bowled along in our taxi, "for what I am creditably informed is in both senses of the word a gem of a sanctuary — gem, because it is both small and jewelled."

We had been swaying and sweeping up one of those narrow rather desolate canyons in southern California through which the famous "Thirteen suburbs in search of a city" have thrust corkscrew concrete highways. The lots became more stately and secluded, the houses more embowered and enwalled, until the ride, the road, and the canyon itself all ended in a portico of such Hispano-Moorish impressiveness that it might have been the entrance to a veritable Arabian Nights Entertainments. There was no one else about, but remarking, "This is Visitors' Day," Mr. Mycroft alit, told our driver to wait, and strolled up to the heavily grilled gate. One of the large gilt nails which bossed the gate's carved timbers had

etched round it in elongated English so as to pretend to be Kufic or at least ordinary Arabic the word PRESS. And certainly it was as good as its word. For not only did the stud sink into the gate, the gate followed suit and sank into the arch, and we strolled over the threshold into as charming an enclosure as I have ever seen. The gate closed softly behind us. Indeed, there was nothing to suggest that we weren't in an enchanted garden. The ground must have risen steeply on either hand. But you didn't see any ground — all manner of hanging vines and flowering shrubs rose in festoons, hanging in garlands, swinging in delicate sprays. The crowds of blossom against the vivid blue sky, shot through by the sun, made the place intensely vivid. And in this web of color, like quick bobbins, the shuttling flight of humming-birds was everywhere. The place was, in fact, alive with birds. But not a single human being could I see.

Birds are really stupid creatures and their noises, in spite of all the poetry that has been written about them, always seem to me tiring. Their strong point is, of course, plumage. I turned to Mr. Mycroft and remarked that I wished the Polynesian art of making cloaks of birds' feathers had not died out. He said he preferred them alive but that he believed copies of the famous plumage-mantles could now be purchased for those who liked to appear in borrowed plumes.

"This, I understand," continued Mr. Mycroft, "is supposed to be the smallest and choicest of all the world's bird sanctuaries. It is largely reserved for species of that mysterious living automaton, the hummingbird," and as was the way with the old bird himself, in a moment he seemed to forget why we were there. First, he scanned the whole place. The steep slopes came down till only a curb-path of marble divided the banks of flowers from a floor of water. At the farther end of this was a beautiful little statue holding high a lance, all of a lovely, almost peacock-green hue. And from this lance rose a spray of water, a miniature fountain. This little piece of art seemed to absorb him and as he couldn't walk on the water and examine it, he took binoculars from his pocket and scanned it with loving care. Then his mind shifted and slipping the glasses back in his pocket, he gave the same interest to the birds. His whole attention now seemed to be involved with these odd little bird-pellets. Hummingbirds are certainly odd. To insist on flying all the time you are drinking nectar from the deep flask of a flower always seems to me a kind of *tour de force* of pointless energy. In fact, it really fatigues me a little even to watch them. But the general plan of the place was beautiful and restful: there was just this narrow path of marble framing the sheet of water and this wall of flowers and foliage. The path curved round making an oval and at the upper end, balancing the fine Moorish arch through which we had

entered, there rose a similar horseshoe arch, charmingly reflected in the water above which it rose. It made a bridge over which one could pass to reach the marble curb on the other side of the water.

"A bower," remarked Mr. Mycroft. He loitered along, cricking back his neck farther and farther to watch the birds perched on sprays right against the sky. He had now taken a pen from his pocket and was jotting down some ornithological observation. Poor old dear, he never could enjoy but must always be making some blot of comment on the bright mirror of — well, what I mean is that I was really taking it in and he was alrcady busy manufacturing it into some sort of dreary information. And poor Miss Hess, she too must wait till he came back to her actual problem, if indeed there was one.

I watched him as he stepped back to the very edge of the marble curb so that he might better view a spray of deep purple bougainvillea at which a hummingbird was flashing its gorget. Yes, it would have been a pretty enough bit of color contrast, had one had a color camera to snap it, but I had seen a sign on the gate outside asking visitors not to take photographs. So I watched my master. And having my wits about me I suddenly broke the silence. "Take care!" I shouted. But too late. Mr. Mycroft had in his effort to see what was too high above him stepped back too far. The actual edge of the marble curb must have been slippery from the lapping of the ripples. His foot skidded. He made a remarkable effort to recover. I am not hard-hearted but I could not help tittering as I saw him — more raven-like than ever — flap his arms to regain his balance. And the comic maneuver served perfectly — I mean it still gave me my joke and yet saved him from anything more serious than a loss of gravity. His arms whirled. Pen and paper scrap flew from his hands to join some hummingbirds but the Mycroft frame, under whose overarching shadow so many great criminals had cowered, collapsed not gracefully but quite safely just short of the water.

I always carry a cane. It gives poise. The piece of paper and even the pen — which was one of those new "light-as-a-feather" plastic things — were bobbing about on the surface. Of course, Mr. Mycroft who was a little crestfallen at such an absent-minded slip, wouldn't let me help him up. In fact he was up before I could have offered. My only chance of collecting a "Thank-you" was to salvage the flotsam that he had so spontaneously "cast upon the waters." I fished in both the sopped sheet and the pen, and noticed that Mr. Mycroft had evidently not had time to record the precious natural-history fact that he had gleaned before his lack of hindsight attention parted the great mind and the small sheet. Nor when I handed him back his salvaged apparatus did he do so; instead he actually put both pen and sopped sheet into

his pocket. "Shaken," I said to myself; "there's one more disadvantage of being so high up in the clouds of speculation."

As we continued on our way along the curb and were approaching the horseshoe Moorish arch-bridge, Mr. Mycroft began to limp. My real fondness for him made me ask, "Have you strained anything?"

Mr. Mycroft most uncharacteristically answered, "I think I will rest for a moment."

We had reached the place where the level marble curb, sweeping round the end of the pond, rose into the first steps of the flight of stairs that ran up the back of the arch. These stairs had a low, fretted rail. It seemed to me that it might have been higher for safety's sake, but I suppose that would have spoiled the beauty of the arch, making it look too heavy and thick. It certainly was a beautiful piece of work and finished off the garden with charming effectiveness. The steps served Mr. Mycroft's immediate need well enough, just because they were so steep. He bent down and holding the balustrade with his left hand, lowered himself until he was seated. So he was in a kind of stone chair, his back comfortably against the edge of the step above that one on which he sat. And as soon as he was settled down, the dizziness seemed to pass, and his spirits obviously returned to their old bent. He started once more to peek about him. The irrelevant vitality of being interested in anything mounted once again to its usual unusual intensity.

After he had for a few moments been swinging his head about in the way that led to his fall — the way a new-born baby will loll, roll, and goggle at the sky — he actually condescended to draw me into the rather pointless appreciations he was enjoying. "You see, Mr. Silchester, one of their breeding boxes." He pointed up into the foliage, which here rose so high that it reared a number of feet above the highest pitch of the arch.

"Surely," I asked, for certainly it is always safer with Mr. Mycroft to offer information armored in question form, "surely breeding boxes are no new invention?"

Mr. Mycroft's reply was simply, "No, of course not," and then he became vague.

I thought: Now he'll start making notes again. But no, poor old pride-in-perception was evidently more shaken by his fall than I'd thought. I felt a real sympathy for him, as I stood at a little distance keeping him under observation but pretending to glance at the scene which, though undoubtedly pretty, soon began to pall for really it had no more sense or story about it than a kaleidoscope. Poor old thing, I repeated to myself, as out of the corner of my eye, I saw him let that big cranium hang idly. But the restless, nervous energy still fretted him. Though his eyes were brooding out of focus, those long fingers remained symptomatic of his need always to be fiddling and raveling with something. How important

it is, I reflected, to learn young how to idle well. Now, poor old dear, he just can't rest. Yes, Britain can still teach America something: a mellow culture knows how to meander; streams nearer their source burst and rush and tumble.

The Mycroft fingers were running to and fro along the curb of the step against which he was resting his back. I thought I ought to rouse him. He must be getting his fingernails into a horrid condition as they aimlessly scraped along under that ledge and the very thought even of someone rasping and soiling his nails sets my teeth on edge.

My diagnosis that the dear old fellow was badly shaken was confirmed when I suggested, "Shall we be getting on?" and he answered, "Certainly." And I must say that I was trebly pleased when, first, Mr. Mycroft took my extended hand to pull him to his feet, then accepted my arm as we went up the bridge and down its other side, and once we were outside the gate let me hold the door of the cab open for him. At that moment from an alcove in the gate-arch popped a small man with a book. Would we care to purchase any of the colored photographs he had for sale, and would we sign the visitors' book? I bought a couple and said to Mr. Mycroft, "May I sign Mr. Silchester and friend?" — for this was a ready way for him to preserve his anonymity, when he remarked, "I will sign," and in that large stately hand the most famous signature was placed on the page.

As we swirled down the canyon, Mr. Mycroft gave his attention to our new surroundings. Suddenly he exclaimed, "Stop!" The cab bumped to a standstill. The spot he had chosen was certainly a contrast to our last stop. Of course, once outside the houses of the rich, this countryside is pretty untidy. We had just swished round one of those hairpin curves all these canyon roads make as they wiggle down the central cleft. The cleft itself was in slow process of being filled by the cans and crocks that fall from the rich man's kitchen. Something, disconcerting to a sane eye even at this distance, had caught Mr. Mycroft's vulture gaze. Even before the cab was quite still, he was out and went straight for the garbage heap. I need not say that not only did I stay where I was, I turned away. For that kind of autopsy always makes me feel a little nauseated. Mr. Mycroft knows my reasonable limits. He had not asked me to go with him and when he came back he spared me by not displaying his trophy, whatever it might be. I caught sight of him stuffing a piece of some gaudy colored wrapping-paper into his pocket as he climbed into the seat beside me, but I was certainly more anxious not to notice than he to conceal.

Nor, when we reached home, did Mr. Mycroft become any more communicative. Indeed, he went straight to his study and there, no doubt, unloaded his quarry. He did not, as a matter of fact, put in an appearance

till dinner. Nor did the dinner rouse him. I can hardly blame him for that. For I, too, was a little abstracted and so have to confess that I had ordered a very conventional repast, the kind of meal that you can't remember five minutes after you have ordered it or five minutes after it has been cleared away — a dinner so lacking in art that it can arouse neither expectation nor recollection.

Truth to tell, I was not a little disconcerted at the tameness of our "adventure." Mr. M. had as good as told me that he would disclose a plot and a pretty ugly one, but all we had seen was a charming enough stage, set for comedy rather than tragedy. And not a soul in view, far less a body.

The only incident, and surely that was tamely comic and I had to enjoy even that by myself, was Mr. Mycroft's skid. Indeed, as we sat on in silence I was beginning to think I might say something — perhaps a little pointed — about pointless suspicion. But on looking across at Mr. M. who was sitting dead still at the other side of the table, I thought the old fellow looked more than a little tired. So I contented myself with the feeling that his fall had shaken him considerably more than he chose to allow.

But as I rose to retire, after reading my half-chapter of Jane Austen — for me an unfailing sedative — the old fellow roused himself.

"Thank you for your company, Mr. Silchester. Quite a fruitful day." Perhaps he saw I was already "registering surprise." For he added, "I believe we sowed and not only reaped this afternoon but if you will again give me your company, we will go tomorrow to gather the harvest."

"But I thought today was Visitors' Day?"

"Oh," he carelessly remarked, "I expect the proprietor will be glad of callers even the day after. The place was quite deserted, wasn't it? Maybe he's thinking of closing it. And that would be a pity before we had seen all that it may have to offer."

Well, I had enjoyed the little place and was not averse to having one more stroll round it. So, as it was certain we should go anyhow, I agreed with the proviso, "I must tell you that though I agree the place is worth a second visit for its beauty, nevertheless I am still convinced that to throw a cloud of suspicion over its innocent brightness might almost be called professional obsessionalism."

I was rather pleased at that heavy technical-sounding ending and even hoped it might rouse the old man to spar back. But he only replied, "Excellent, excellent. That's what I hoped you'd think and say. For that, of course, is the reaction I trust would be awakened in any untrained — I mean, normal mind."

The next afternoon found us again in the garden, I enjoying what was there and Mr. M. really liking it as much as I did but having to spin all over its brightness the gossamer threads of his suspicions and speculations. The water was flashing in the

sun, the small spray-fountain playing, birds dancing — yes, the place was the nicest *mis-en-scène* for a meditation on murder that anyone could ask. Again we had the place to ourselves. Indeed, I had just remarked on the fact to Mr. M. and he had been gracious enough to protrude from his mystery mist and reply that perhaps people felt there might still be a shadow over the place, when a single other visitor did enter. He entered from the other end. I hadn't thought there was a way in from that direction but evidently behind the bridge and the thicket there must have been. He strolled down the same side of the small lake as we were advancing up. But I didn't have much chance to study him for he kept on turning round and looking at the bridge and the fountain. I do remember thinking what a dull and ugly patch his dreary store suit made against the vivid living tapestries all around us. The one attempt he made to be in tune was rather futile: he had stuck a bright red hibiscus flower in his button-hole. And then that thought was put out of my mind by an even juster judgment. Mr. M. was loitering behind — sometimes I think that I really do take things in rather more quickly than he — at least, when what is to be seen is what is meant to be seen. He pores and reflects too much even on the obvious. So it was I who saw what was going forward and being of a simple forthright nature took the necessary steps at once. After all, I did not feel that I had any right to be suspicious of our host who was certainly generous and as certainly had been put in a very unpleasant limelight by police and press. My duty was to see that what he offered so freely to us should not be abused or trespassed on. As the man ahead turned round again to study the fountain and the arch I saw what he was doing. He had a small color camera pressed against him and was going to take a photo of the fountain and the bridge. Now, as we knew, visitors were asked expressly not to do this. So I stepped forward and tapped him on the shoulder, remarking that as guests of a public generosity we should observe the simple rule requested of us. He swung round at my tap. My feelings had not been cordial at first sight, his action had alienated them further, and now a close-up clinched the matter. His hat was now pushed back and showed a head of billiard-baldness; his eyes were weak and narrowed-up at me through glasses, rimless glasses that like some colorless fly perched on his nose — that hideous sight-aid called rightly a *pince-nez*.

Suddenly his face relaxed. It actually smiled, and he said, "That is really very kind of you. It is a pity when the rule is not kept for it does deprive the pension house for pets of a little income — almost all that one can spare for that excellent work. I am grateful, grateful." I was taken aback, even more so with the explanation. "I have the responsibility for this place. Owing to a very un-

generous press campaign we are not getting the visitors we used to. So I thought I would take a few more photos for the sales-rack at the gate. Yes, I am the owner of this little place, or as I prefer to say, the trustee of it in the joint interests of the public and philanthropy. May I introduce myself? — I am Hiram Hess, Jr."

After my *faux pas* I stumbled out some kind of apology.

"Please don't make any excuse. I only wish all my guests felt the same way in our common responsibility," he replied. "Indeed, now that you have done me one kindness, you embolden me to ask for another. I believe that the public has been scared away and this seems a heaven-sent opportunity."

All this left me somewhat in the dark. I am not averse to being treated as an honored guest and murmured something about being willing to oblige. Then I remembered Mr. M. and that I was actually taking the leading part in a scene and with the "mystery character" to whom he had in fact introduced me. I turned round and found Mr. M. at my heels. I think I made the introduction well and certainly the two of them showed no signs of not wishing to play the parts in which I was now the master of ceremonies. Mr. Hess spoke first: "I was just about to ask your friend . . ." — "Mr. Silchester," I prompted — "whether he would add another kindness. I was told only yesterday by a friend that natural history photos sell better if they can be combined with human interest of some sort. Of course when I was told that, I saw at once he was right. It must be, musn't it?" Mr. M. made a "Lord Burleigh nod." "I am glad you agree. So I suggested that I might ask a movie star to pose. But my friend said No, I should get a handsome young man whose face has not been made wearisome to the public and that would give a kind of mystery element to the photo. People would ask, 'In what movie did that face appear?' " I own that at this personal reference — I am a Britisher, you know — I felt a little inclined to blush. "And," hurried on Mr. Hess, "now, the very day after I am told what to do, I am offered the means to do it!"

Frankness has always been my forte. Like many distinguished and good-looking people, I like being photographed and these new colored ones are really most interesting. "I would be most happy to oblige," I said, and turned to see how Mr. M. would react to my taking the play out of his hands. Of course this odd little man couldn't be a murderer. I'm not a profound student of men but that was now perfectly clear to me. Mr. M. merely treated us to another of his "Lord Burleigh nods" and then, "While you are posing Mr. Silchester, may I walk about?"

"Please look upon the place as your own," left Mr. M. free to stroll away and he seemed quite content to use his fieldglasses looking at the birds and blooms.

"Now," said Mr. Hess, all vivacity and I must confess, getting more likable every moment, "my idea is that we put the human interest, if I may so describe my collaborator, right in the middle of the scene. You will be the focus round which the garden is, as it were, draped." Then he paused and exclaimed, "Why, of course, that's the very word — why didn't I think of it before? I wonder whether you would be kind enough to agree — it would make the picture really wonderful."

Again I was a little at a loss, but the small man's enthusiasm was quite infectious. "How can I help further?" I asked.

"Well, it was the word drape that shot the idea into my head, darting like one of these sweet birdkins. Don't you think, Mr. Silchester, that men's clothes rather spoil the effect here?"

He looked down on his own little store suit and smiled. It was true enough but a sudden qualm shook my mind. The thought of stripping and posing, with Mr. Mycroft in the offing — well, I felt that awkward blush again flowing all over me. Whether my little host guessed my confusion or not, his next words put me at ease. "Do you think that you'd consent to wear just for the photo a robe I have?"

My relief that I was not to be asked to disrobe but to robe made me say, "Of course, of course," and without giving me any further chance to qualify my consent, off hurried little Hess. He was not gone more than a couple of minutes — not enough time for me to go back to where Mr. Mycroft was loitering near the gate at the other end of the pool — before once again he appeared, but nearly hidden even when he faced me. For what he was holding in his arms and over his shoulder was one of those Polynesian feather cloaks of which I had remarked to Mr. Mycroft that I thought they were one of the finest of all dresses ever made by man.

"Of course," Hess said, "this isn't one of the pieces that go to museums. I always hoped that somehow I would make a picture of this place in which this cloak would play the leading part."

All the while he said this he was holding out the lovely wrap for me to examine and as he finished he lightly flung the robe over my shoulder. "Oh, that's it, that's it!" he said, standing back with his head on one side like a bird. And looking down, I could not help thinking that I too was now like a bird and, to be truthful, a very handsome one.

So, without even casting a look behind me to see if Mr. Mycroft was watching and perhaps smiling, I followed Mr. Hess as he led the way, saying over his shoulder, heaped with the Polynesian robe, "I said right in the centre and I mean to keep my word." It was clear what he meant, for already he was mounted on the steps of the horseshoe-arch bridge and was going up them. Yes,

I was to be the *clou* of the whole composition. When we reached the very apex of the arch, he held out the cloak to me, remarking, "You will find it hangs better if you'll just slip off your coat." I agreed and obeyed. I had already laid aside my cane. He was evidently quite an artist and was determined to pose me to best possible effect. He tried a number of poses and none seemed to him good enough. "I have it!" he finally clicked out. "Oh, the thing gets better and better! Why you aren't in the movies . . . But of course after this . . . photogenic — why, it's a mild word! I'm not asking for anything theatrical — only an accent, as it were — just the natural inevitable drama, one might say. The cloak itself sets the gesture. You see, the sun is high above and you are the centre of this pool of flowers and birds. And so we would get perfect action, perfect face lighting, and perfect hang of drapery if you would just stretch up your arms to the sun and let the light pour on your face. You stand here, with your back to the garden — its high-priest offering all its life to the sun."

While the little man had been saying this, he had been arranging the robe to make it hang well, tucking it in at my feet. "The shoes mustn't show, you know," he said, as he stooped like a little bootblack and arranged my train; then he shifted my stance until he had me close to the balustrade, for only there could he get the light falling full on my upturned face. One couldn't help falling in with his fancy — it was infectious. I rolled up my sleeves so that now, as I stood looking into the sun, I confess I could not help feeling the part. I forgot all about my old spider, Mr. Mycroft. I was one with nature, transformed by the robe which covered every sign of the civilized man on me, and by my setting. Mr. Hess darted back to the other side of the arch, up which we had come, and began — I could see out of the corner of my upturned eye — to focus his camera.

And then he seemed to spoil it all. After some delay he became uncertain. Finally, he came back up to me. "It's magnificent. I've never had the chance to take such a photo. But that's what so often happens with really great opportunities and insights into art and high beauty, isn't it?"

I was more than a little dashed. "Do you mean that you have decided not to take the photo?" I asked. Perhaps there was a touch of resentment in my voice. After all, I had been to a great deal of inconvenience; I had lent myself to a very unusual amount of free model work and laid myself open to Mr. Mycroft's wry humor which would be all the more pointed if the photo was never taken.

"No — Oh, of course not!" But the tone had so much reservation in it that I was not in the slightest reassured, and even less so when he showed his hand, for then I was certain he had just thought up a none-

too-unclever way of getting out of the whole business. "But as I've said, and as I know you know, whenever one glimpses a true summit of beauty one catches sight of something even more remarkable beyond."

I snapped out, "Am I to presume that on reconsideration you would prefer not a high light but a foil, not myself but my old sober friend down by the gate?"

I had been growing quite resentful. But my resentment changed to outrage at the absurdity of his answer. It was a simple "Yes." Then seeing me flush, he hurriedly added, "I do believe that majestic old figure would make a perfect foil to yours."

Of course, this was an amend of sorts, but of a very silly sort. For could the man be such a fool as to think that while I might be generous and accommodating to a fault, my old friend would fall in with this charade?

"I think," I said with considerable dignity, beginning to draw the robe away from my shoulders, "that when you want models, Mr. Hess, you had better pay for them."

But my arm got no further than halfway down the coat-sleeve. For my eyes were held. Looking up at the sun makes you a little dizzy and your sight blotchy, but there was no doubt what I was seeing. That silly little Hess had run along the curb and as I watched was buttonholing Mr. Mycroft. I didn't wait to struggle into my jacket but running down the steps went to where they stood together by the exit. I couldn't hear what was being said but was sure I guessed. Yet, in a moment, I was again at a loss. For instead of Mr. Mycroft turning down the grotesque offer, beckoning to me, and going out of the gate, Mr. M. was coming toward me, and he and Hess were talking quite amicably. Of course, I could only conclude that Hess had been spinning some new kind of yarn but all I could do was to go right up to them and say, "Perhaps you will be good enough to tell me what you have arranged!"

I was still further bewildered when it was Mr. M. who answered, "I think Mr. Hess's idea is excellent. If the picture is to be the success which he hopes, it should have contrast and, if I may put it in that way, significance — a picture with a story. Wasn't that your telling phrase, Mr. Hess?"

Hess beamed: "Precisely, precisely! Mr. Mycroft is so instantly intuitive." And the little fellow looked Mr. M. up and down with a mixture of surprise and complacency that I found very comic and sedative to my rightly ruffled feelings. Still I was quite in the dark as to what had happened to make the three of us so suddenly and so unexpectedly a happy family with — of all people — Mr. M. as the matchmaker. Hess, however, was bubbling over to tell me:

"Do forgive me, rushing off like that. So impulsive. But that's the way I am — 'stung with the sudden splendor of a thought.' You see,

that was the way I was with you, wasn't I? And I know you're an artist too and so you must know that when one idea comes, generally an even brighter one comes rushing on its heels," he tittered. "I was also a bit frightened, I must confess," he ran on. "What if Mr. Mycroft had refused? I knew if I asked you, you'd say he would; and of course you'd have been right. So I just rushed on to my fate, risked losing the whole picture — the best so often risks the good, doesn't it?"

While the little fellow had been pouring out this excited rigmarole, he had been leading us back to the bridge and as Mr. M. followed without any kind of unwillingness, I fell in too. After all, it looked as though we were going to get the photo. As we reached the steps it was Mr. M. who forestalled Hess just as Hess was about to give us some directions. "You would like us, wouldn't you, to pose on the other side of the bridge-top?"

"Yes, that's it — just where I had Mr. Silchester."

I took up my position, picking up the robe, putting down my jacket. Hess arranged the fall of the robe as before. I must admit he was neat at that sort of thing. He moved me to exactly the spot I had held, asked me once more to raise my bared arms to the sun and throw back my head — "Just like a priest of Apollo," was his phrase, a phrase which I didn't quite like Mr. M. hearing. And even when Hess remarked to Mr. Mycroft, "with Mr. Silchester it's an inevitable piece of casting, isn't it?" — Mr. M. replied only, "Yes, quite a pretty piece of casting." I could only imagine that now Mr. Mycroft saw that the little fellow was obviously as harmless as a hummingbird — and about as brainless.

But Hess couldn't stay content with one triumph; he must try to crown it with another. "And you, Mr.. Mycroft, you too are going to be perfectly cast," and he chuckled.

"I am ready to fall in with any of your plans for philanthropy," was Mr. Mycroft's answer. The pomposity might have been expected but the agreeability was certainly one more shock of surprise.

"Now," and the little man had put down his camera and was fussing like a modiste round a marchioness client whom she was fitting for a ball dress, "now, Mr. Silchester is set and ready. You, Mr. Mycroft, would you please just sit here, just behind him, on the balustrade. You see, my idea has about it something of what great artists call inevitability! The group casts itself — it's a great piece of moving sculpture. Here is Mr. Silchester gazing with stretched-out arms at the glorious orb of day, his face flooded with its splendor, the very symbol of youth accepting life — life direct, warm, pulsing, torrential . . ." As he ran on like this I began to have a slight crick in my neck, and with one's head thrown back my head began to throb a little and my eyes got quite dizzy with

the sunlight. "Now, please, Mr. Silchester," said the voice at my feet, "hold the pose for just a moment more while I place Mr. Mycroft," and I heard our little artist in *tableau vivant* cooing to Mr. Mycroft. "And you, you see, are the wisdom of age, grey, wise, reflective, a perfect contrast, looking down into the deep waters of contemplation."

Evidently Mr. Mycroft fell in with all this, even to having himself shifted until he was right behind me. I remember I was a little amused at the thought of Mr. Mycroft being actually put at my feet and, more, that there I stood with the leading role and with my back to him — he who was so used to being looked up to. Perhaps it was this thought that gave one more stretch to the tiring elastic of my patience. And in a moment more evidently Mr. Mycroft's cooperation had been so full that Hess was content. The little fellow ran back down the steps of the other side of the bridge and I could just see from the corner of my rather swimming eyes that he had picked up his camera and was going to shoot us. But again he was taken with a fussy doubt. He ran back to us. We were still too far apart. He pushed us closer till my calves were actually against Mr. Mycroft's shoulder blades.

"The composition is perfect in line and mass," murmured Hess, "it is a spot of high-lighting color that's wanted and right near the central interest, the upturned, sun-flooded face. Mr. Silchester, please don't move an inch. I have the very thing here."

I squinted down and saw the little fellow flick out from his button-hole the hibiscus blossom which he was wearing. I saw what was coming. The beautiful Samoans did always at their feasts wear a scarlet hibiscus set behind the ear so that the blossom glowed alongside their eye. In silence I submitted as Hess fitted the flower behind my left ear and arranged the long trumpet of the blossom so that it rested on my cheek bone. Then at last he was content, skipped back to his camera, raised it on high, focussed. . . . There was a click — I am sure I heard that. And I'm equally sure there was a buss, or twang. And then involuntarily I clapped my hands to my face and staggered back to avoid something that was dashing at my eye. I stumbled heavily backwards against Mr. Mycroft, felt my balance go completely, the cloak swept over my head and I plunged backwards and downwards into the dark.

My next sensation was that I was being held. I hadn't hit anything. But I was in as much pain as though I had. For one of my legs was caught in some kind of grip and by this I was hanging upside down. For suddenly the bell-like extinguisher in which I was pending dropped away — as when they unveil statues — and I was exposed. Indeed I could now see myself in the water below like a grotesque narcissus, a painfully ludicrous pendant.

How had I managed to make such

a grotesque stumble? I could only suppose that the long gazing at the sun had made me dizzy and then some dragon-fly or other buzzing insect had darted at me — probably at that idiotic flower — which in spite of my fall still stuck behind my ear. That had made me start and I had overturned. For though the flower held its place, the cloak was gone and now lay mantling the surface of the pond some six feet below me.

These observations, however, were checked by another dose of even more severe pain. I was being hauled up to the balustrade above me by my leg and the grip that paid me in foot by foot was Mr. Mycroft's sinewy hands. When my face came up far enough for me to see his, his was quite without expression. He did have the kindness to say, "Sun dizziness, of course," and then over his shoulder where I next caught sight of the anxious face of little Hess, "Don't be alarmed. I caught him just in time. I fear, however, that your valuable cloak will not be the better for a wetting."

The little fellow was full of apologies. While this went on Mr. Mycroft had helped me into my jacket, given me my cane and led me, still shaken, to the gate, accompanied all the way by a very apologetic Hess. When we were there Mr. Mycroft closed the incident quietly. "Don't apologize, Mr. Hess. It was a brilliant idea, if the execution fell a little below expectation," and then putting his hand up to my ear, "I am sure you would like this flower as a souvenir of an eventful day. I hope the picture-with-a-meaning will develop."

As we swirled away in a taxi, every sway of the car made me nearly sick. When we were home Mr. Mycroft broke the silence: "I have a call to make and one or two small things to arrange."

Mr. Mycroft didn't come back till dinner was actually being put on the table and he too looked as fresh as snow, after a hot shower and a clean change of linen, I felt. He was kind, too, about the meal. The avocado-and-chive paste served on hot crackers he praised by the little joke that the paste showed symbolically how well my suavity and his pungency really blended. The Pacific lobster is a creature of parts but it needs skill to make it behave really *à la Thermidor*, and I was pleased that the chef and I had made my old master confess that he would not know that it was not a Parisian *langouste*. The chicken *à la King* he smilingly said had something quite regal about it while the *banan flambées* he particularly complimented because I had made them out of a locally grown banana which, because it is more succulent than the standard varieties, lends itself to better blending with alcohol. Indeed, he was so pleased that while the coffee was before us he asked whether I'd like to hear the end of the story in which I had played so important a part. Of course I admitted that nothing would give me more pleasure. But I was more than usually piqued when he

said quietly, "Let me begin at the end. As we parted I said I was going to make a call. It has been answered as I wished. Do not fear that we shall have to visit the bird sanctuary again. It is closed — permanently. Now for my story. It seemed for both of us to be marked by a series of silly little misadventures. First, it was my turn to fall and you kindly helped me. Then, on our second call, it was your turn to endure the humiliation of an upset. But each served its purpose."

"But what did you gain from skidding on our first visit?" I asked.

"This," said Mr. Mycroft, rising and taking from the mantelshelf, where I had seen him place his fountain pen when he sat down to dinner, the little tube.

"That was only a recovery, not a gain," I said.

"No," he replied, "it garnered something when it fell. To misquote — as both of us like doing — 'Cast your pen upon the waters and in a few moments it may pick up more copy than if you'd written for a week with it!' "

My "What do you mean?" was checked as he carefully unscrewed the top.

"See those little holes," he said, pointing to small openings just under the shoulder of the nib; then he drew out the small inner tube. It wasn't of rubber — it was of glass and was full of fairly clear water.

"This is water — water from the pond in the bird sanctuary. It looks like ordinary pond-water. As a matter of fact, it contains an unusually interesting form of life in it."

I began to feel a faint uneasiness.

"Oh, don't be alarmed. It is safely under screw and stopper now and is only being kept as Exhibit A — or, if you like it better, a stage-property in a forthcoming dramatic performance which will be Act Three of the mystery play in which you starred in Act Two, Scene Two."

"But I don't quite see . . ." was met by Mr. Mycroft more graciously than usual with, "There's really no reason why you should. I couldn't quite see myself, at the beginning. Yes, I do indeed admire such richness of double-dyed thoroughness when I come across it. It is rare for murderers to give one such entertainment, so elaborate and meticulous. They usually shoot off their arrows almost as soon as it enters their heads that they can bring down their bird and without a thought of how it may strike a more meditative mind afterwards. But this man provided himself with a second string of rather better weave than his first."

Well, when Mr. Mycroft gets into that kind of strain it is no use saying anything. So I swallowed the I.D.S. formula that was again rising in my throat and waited.

"You remember, when you helped me to my feet and the pen had been salvaged, that with your aid we completed the round of the little lake. But when we had gone no farther than the beginning of the high-backed bridge, I felt I must rest.

Do you recall what I did then?"

Could I recall! Naturally, for that was the very incident that had confirmed my suspicion that Mr. Mycroft was really shaken. I answered brightly:

"You sat, I can see it now, and for a moment you appeared to be dazed. And while you rested, as the beautiful old song, *The Lost Chord*, expresses it, your 'fingers idly wandered.' But I noticed that they must be getting dirty, because, whether you knew it or not, they were feeling along under the jutting edge of the slab that made the step against which your back was resting."

"Admirable. And the quotation is happy, for my fingers were idly wandering (to go on with the old song) over the 'keys'!"

Mr. Mycroft cocked his old head at me and went on gaily, "And may I add that I am not less pleased that you thought the old man was so shaken that he really didn't know what he was doing! For that is precisely the impression that I had to give to another pair of eyes watching us from nearby cover. Well, after that little rest and glance about at those sentimental birdy-homes, the breeding boxes, I told you we could go home. And now may I ask you three questions?" I drew myself up and tried to sharpen my wits. "First," said my examiner, "did you observe anything about the garden generally?"

"Well," I replied, "I remember you called my attention to the little Nereid who held a spear from which the jet of the small fountain sprang?"

"Yes, that's true and indeed in every sense of the word, to the point. But did you notice something about — I will give you a clue — the flowers?"

"There were a lot of them!"

"Well, I won't hold you to that longer. I couldn't make out myself whether it had any significance. Then in the end I saw the light — yes, the light of the danger signal! Does that help you?"

"No," I said, "I remain as blind as a bat to your clue."

"Then, secondly, if the flowers failed to awake your curiosity, what about the birds?"

"Again, a lot of them and I did like that minah bird with its charmingly anaemic hostess voice."

"No, that was off the trail. I'll give you another clue — what about the breeding boxes?"

"Well, they're common enough little things, aren't they?"

"All right," he replied with cheerful patience, "now for my last question. When we were coming back do you remember any special incident?"

Then I did perk up. "Yes, of course — the contrast stuck in my mind. After being bathed in all that beauty we passed a dump corner and you got out and hunted for curios in the garbage."

"And brought back quite a trophy," said the old hunter as he pulled something out of his pocket, remarking "Exhibit B."

And then, do you know, my mind

suddenly gave a dart — I do things like that every now and then. The thing he had pulled out and placed on the table was only a piece of cellophane or celluloid. It was also of a very crude and common red. It was the color that made my mind take its hop, a hop backwards. "I don't know what that dirty piece of road-side flotsam means but I now recall something about the garden — there wasn't a single red flower in it!"

Mr. Mycroft positively beamed. His uttered compliment was of course the "left-handed" sort he generally dealt me. "Mr. Silchester, I have always known it. It is laziness, just simple laziness, that keeps you from being a first-rate observer. You can't deny that puzzles interest you, but you can't be bothered to put out your hand and pluck the fruit of insight crossed with foresight."

I waved the tribute aside by asking what the red transparency might signify.

"Well," he said, "it put an idea into your head by what we may call a negative proof. Now, go one better and tell me something about it, itself, from its shape."

"Well, it's sickle-shaped, rather like a crescent moon. No," I paused, "no, you know I never can do anything if I strain. I have to wait for these flashes."

"All right," he said, "we will humor your delicate genius. But I will just say that it is a beautiful link. The color and the shape — yes, the moment I saw it lying there like a petal cast aside, my mind suddenly took wings like yours." He stopped and then remarked, "Well, the time has come for straight narrative. We have all the pieces of the board, yourself being actually the queen. It only remains to show you how the game was played. First, a tribute to Mr. Hess not as a man but as a murderer — an artist, without any doubt. Here are the steps by which he moved to his first check and how after the first queen had been taken — I refer to his aunt and her death — he was himself checkmated.

"You have noted that the garden has no red flowers and I have also suggested that the breeding box by the bridge interested me. About the water from the pond I have been frank and will shortly be franker. So we come to our second visit. It was then that our antagonist played boldly. How often have I had occasion to remind you that murderers love living over again the deaths they dealt, repeating a kill. That was Mr. Hess's wish. Of course, it wasn't pure love of art — he certainly knew something about me." Mr. Mycroft sighed, "I know you don't believe it, but I don't think you can imagine how often and how strongly a detective wishes to be unknown. To recognize you must remain unrecognized." He smiled again.

"Now note: You go up to him and ask him not to take photos. He shows first a startled resentment at your impudence, then a generous courtesy as proprietor for your in-

terference on his behalf. Next, a sudden happy thought — how well you would look as part of the picture he was planning. He dresses you up, taking care to place you in a position in which you'll trip and fall. Now he has the middle link in his chain. But you were merely a link. You see, his real plan is to get me down too. He could, you will admit, hardly have hoped to lure me to act as model for a sun worshipper. But put you in that role and then he might persuade me to get into the picture also. Then, when you went over backwards, you would pull me into the pond as well."

"But," I said, "we should have had no more than a bad wetting."

"I see you are going to call for all my proofs before you will yield to the fact that we were really in the hands of a man as sane as all careful murderers are. You remember that charming little statuette which so took my fancy when we first visited the garden? It was of bronze. Not one of those cheap cement objects that people buy at the road-side and put in their gardens. It is a work of art, a museum-piece."

"It had patinated very nicely," I remarked, just to show I could talk *objet d'art* gossip as well as the master.

"I'm glad you observed that," he replied. "Yes, bronze is a remarkable material and worthy of having a whole Age named after it. More remarkable, indeed, than iron, for though iron has a better edge, it won't keep if constantly watered."

"What are you driving at?" For now I was getting completely lost in the old spider's spinning.

"That pretty little sham spear from which the water sprayed wasn't sham at all. It was a real spear, or shall we say, a giant hollow-needle. Because it was bronze it would keep its point unrusted. The only effect the water would have — and that would add to its lethal efficacy — would be to give it a patina. Further, I feel sure from the long close look I was able to give when we were being posed for our plunge, the blade of the spear had been touched up with a little acetic acid. That would no doubt corrode the fine edge a little but would make it highly poisonous — though not to the life in the pool."

"Why are you so interested in the pond-life?" I asked.

Mr. Mycroft picked up the small tube which he had removed from the fountain pen and which was now standing on a small side-table. "You'll remember, I said this pippet contains an interesting form of life — a very powerful form, if not itself poisoned. So powerful that, like most power-types, it tends to destroy others, yes, far higher types. This is really a remarkably fecund culture of a particularly virulent strain of typhoid bacillus."

I drew back. I don't like things like that near where I eat.

"Oh, it is safe enough so long as you don't drink it." I gasped. "So, you see, that was his plan. But, thoughtful man that he was, it was only his second string. He was a very

thorough worker and had two concealed tools. If you fall over a bridge headlong and just underneath you is a Nereid holding a charming little wand, there is a good chance that you will fall, like the heroic Roman suicides, on your spear and so end yourself; and if the spear has round its socket some poison, the wound is very likely to give you blood-poisoning. But of course you may miss the point. People falling through the air are apt to writhe which may alter quite considerably the point at which they make their landing, or in this case, their watering. Well, thoughtful Mr. Hess realized how much human nature will struggle against gravitational fate — so he provided himself with a wider net. For when people fall headlong over a bridge, the natural reaction of panic is to open the mouth. So when they strike the water, they inevitably swallow a mouthful. And a little of this brew goes a long way."

"Now, now," I broke in, "I don't think any jury will send the nephew to join the aunt on that evidence."

"Why not?" was Mr. Mycroft's unexpectedly quiet rejoinder.

"First," I said, picking off the points on my fingers just as Mr. Mycroft sometimes does when closing a case, "granted this tube does contain typhoid germs, they may have been in this water from natural pollution. Proof that Hess poisoned the water cannot be sustained. Secondly, let me call the attention of judge and jury to the fact that when Miss Hess died a fortnight after her slight ducking, she did not die of typhoid. The cause of death was 'intestinal stasis.' Typhoid kills by a form of dysentery. Emphatically, that condition is polar to stasis."

"You are quite right," rejoined Mr. Mycroft, "the old-fashioned typhoid used to kill as you have described. But, would you believe it, the typhus germ has had the cunning to reverse his tactics completely. I remember a friend of mine telling me some years ago of this, and he had it from the late Sir Walter Fletcher, an eminent student of Medical Research in Britain. It stuck in my mind: the typhoid victim can now die with such entirely different symptoms that the ordinary doctor, unless he has quite other reasons to detect the presence of the disease, does not even suspect that his patient has died of typhoid, and with the best faith in the world fills in the death certificate never suggesting the true cause. "Yes," he went on meditatively, "I have more than once noticed that when a piece of information of that sort sticks in my mind, it may be prophetic. Certainly in this case it was."

I felt I might have to own defeat on that odd point when Mr. Mycroft remarked, "Well, let's leave Miss Hess and the medical side alone for a moment. Let's go back to the garden. I referred to you as the middle link. I have to be personal and even perhaps put myself forward. Mr. Hess was not averse to murdering you — if that was the only way of murdering me. We see how he maneuvered you

to pose and then having got you in place, he set out to get me. You would stagger back, knock me off my perch, and both of us would plunge into the poisonous water, and one might be caught on the poisonous point. It was beautifully simple, really."

"You have got to explain how he would know that I would suddenly get dizzy, that a dragonfly or something would buzz right into my eyes and make me stagger."

"Quite easy — I was just coming to that. That was the first link in the chain. Now we can bring everything together and be finished with that really grim garden. Please recall the thing you noticed."

"No red flowers," I said dutifully and he bowed his acknowledgment.

"Next, the two things which you couldn't be expected to puzzle over. The breeding box which you did see but did not understand, and the undercurb of the step which even I didn't see but felt with my hand. That breeding box had the usual little doorway or round opening for the nesting bird to enter by, but to my surprise the doorway had a door and the door was closed. Now, that's going too far in pet-love sentimentality and although very cruel people are often very kind to animals, that kind of soapy gesture to birdmother comfort seemed to me strange — until I noticed, on the under-side of the next box, a small wheel. When I felt under the jamb of the step, I found two more such wheels — flanged wheels, and running along from one to the other, a black thread. Then when I knew what to look for, I could see the same black thread running up to the wheel fixed in the bird-box. I couldn't doubt my deduction any longer. That little door could be opened if someone raised his foot slightly and trod on the black thread that ran under the step curb.

"Now, one doesn't have to be a bird fancier to know that birds don't want to breed in boxes where you shut them up with a trap-door. What then could this box be for? You do, however, have to be something of a bird specialist to know about hawking and hummingbirds. The main technique of the former is the hood. When the bird is hooded it will stay quietly for long times on its perch. Cut off light and it seems to have its nervous reactions all arrested. Could that box be a hood not merely for the head of a bird but for *an entire bird?* Now we must switch back, as swoopingly as a hummingbird, to Miss Hess. You remember the description?"

It was my turn to be ready. I reached round to the paper rack and picked out the sheet that had started the whole adventure. I read out, "The late Miss Hess, whose huge fortune has gone to a very quiet recluse nephew whose one interest is birds, was herself a most colorful person and wonderfully young for her years." I added, "There's a colored photo of the colorful lady. She's wearing a vivid green dress. Perhaps

that's to show she thought herself still in her salad days?"

"A good suggestion," replied Mr. Mycroft generously, "but I think we can drive our deductions even nearer home. Of course, I needed first-hand information for that. But I had my suspicions before I called."

"Called where?"

"On the doctor of the late lady. He was willing to see me when I could persuade him that his suspicions were right and that his patroness had really been removed by foul means. Then he told me quite a lot about the very odd person she was. She was shrewd in her way. She kept her own doctor and she paid him handsomely and took the complementary precaution of not remembering him in her will. Yes, he had every reason for keeping her going and being angry at her being gone. She was keen on staying here and not only that but on keeping young. But her colorfulness in dress was something more, he told me, than simply 'mutton dressing itself up to look like lamb.' She was color-blind and like that sort — the red-green colorblindness — she was very loath to admit it. That bright green dress of the photo pretty certainly seemed to her bright red."

I was still at a loss and let the old man see it.

"Now comes Hess' third neat piece of work. Note these facts: the aunt is persuaded to come to the garden — just to show that the nephew has turned over a new page and is being the busy little bird lover — sure way to keep in the maiden lady's good graces. He takes her round." Suddenly Mr. Mycroft stopped and picked up the celluloid red crescent. "Many color-blind persons have eyes that do not like a glare. The thoughtful nephew, having led auntie round the garden, takes her up the bridge to view the dear little birdie's home. She has to gaze up at it and he has thoughtfully provided her with an eye-shade — green to her, red to him, and red to something else. "Certain species of hummingbirds are particularly sensitive to red — all animals, of course, prefer red to any other color. When young these particular hummingbirds have been known to dash straight at any object that is red and thrust their long bill toward it, thinking no doubt it is a flower. They will dart at a tomato held in your hand. Well, the aunt is gazing up to see the birdie's home; she's at the top of the bridge, just where you stood. Nephew has gone on, sure that aunt is going to follow. He is, in fact, now down by that lower step. He just treads on the concealed black thread. The door flies open, the little feathered bullet which had been brooding in the dark sees a flash of light and in it a blob of red. The reflex acts also like a flash. It dashes out right at Miss Hess' face. Again a reflex. This time it is the human one. She staggers back, hands to face — not knowing what has swooped at her — the flight of some of these small birds is too quick for the human eye. Of course she

falls, takes her sup of the water, goes home shaken, no doubt not feeling pleased with nephew but not suspicious. After a fortnight we have a condition of stasis. The sound, but naturally not very progressive doctor, sees no connection. The police and public are also content. Nevertheless, she dies."

"And then?" I said, for I was on tiptoe of interest now.

"Well, Hess couldn't put a red eye-hood over your eyes, hoping you'd think it green and so make you a mark for his bird-bullet. So he put an hibiscus behind your ear. Each fish must be caught with its own bait, though the hook is the same. His effort with us was even more elaborate than with his aunt. What a pity that artists can't be content with a good performance but must always be trying to better it! Well, the bird sanctuary is closed and with it the sanctuary of a most resourceful murderer."

"Q"

". . . I'm not going to tell you how the book ends but you'll be surprised who the murderer is."

WEIGH THE STORY, NOT ITS TITLE

Israel Zangwill made his momentous contribution to the detective genre just before the earliest Sherlock Holmes short stories began to appear in book form, and in its own way Mr. Zangwill's classic proved an equally atomic event. For in THE BIG BOW MYSTERY *(Queen's Quorum No. 14) Israel Zangwill gave the world its first full-blown "locked room." The origin of Mr. Zangwill's great cornerstone is interesting — the author revealed it in the Introduction which he wrote especially for the 1895 edition of his remarkable tale. Mr. Zangwill recalled that "long before the book was written, I said to myself one night that no mystery-monger had ever murdered a man in a room to which there was no possible access. The puzzle was scarcely propounded ere the solution flew up and the idea lay stored in my mind till, years later . . . the editor of a popular London evening paper, anxious to let the sea-serpent have a year off, asked me to provide him with a more original piece of fiction." A more original piece of fiction indeed! Mr. Zangwill added simple, daring, brilliant ingenuity to Poe's basic conception of a "sealed room" mystery, and thus in one unforgettable stroke founded a dynasty of locked-room magicians whose current emperor is the ever-surprising John Dickson Carr.*

THE BIG BOW MYSTERY *is seldom read these streamlined days, although not long ago the story was used as the basis of a motion picture, with the original plot followed quite faithfully considering that Mr. Zangwill invented the details and devices more than fifty years ago. Perhaps one of these days we will take the original version, eliminate the out-of-date political threads in the story, and bring the condensed result to you as an example of one of the significant milestones in what John Dickson Carr has called "the grandest game in the world."*

Pending that editorial labor of love, we now offer you another tale by Israel Zangwill — a tale even more desirable both to the general reader and to the connoisseur. This tale has been lost in larcenous limbo for a long time. Its only appearance in print, so far as we have been able to check, was in a magazine called "The Idler," issue of February 1893, edited by Jerome K. Jerome and Robert Barr (creator of Eugène Valmont). To the best of our knowledge the story has never been included in any book, not even one of Mr. Zangwill's.

It is a story of exceptional ingenuity — either for 1893 or 1949 — but we will not give you even a hint of what to expect. Perhaps we have said too much already . . .

We have only one regret about this newly-discovered gem: we wish it were in our province to change the title. Not that Mr. Zangwill's title does not have its own subtle and ironic application; but the story offers the opportunity, the dream, the realization of a lifetime to give an unknown tale by Israel Zangwill the most perfect, the most appropriate title imaginable. Consider: there is a character in the story now named Everard Roxdal. Suppose your Editor had the right to make a simple change in that character's name — merely change the first name from Everard to, say, Benedict or Benjamin or Bennett. Then we could title the story — how apt, how felicitous, how faultless! — THE BIG BEN MYSTERY.

CHEATING THE GALLOWS

by ISRAEL ZANGWILL

THEY say that a union of opposites makes the happiest marriage, and perhaps it is on the same principle that men who chum together are always so oddly assorted. You shall find a man of letters sharing diggings with an auctioneer, and a medical student pigging with a stockbroker's clerk. Perhaps each thus escapes the temptation to talk "shop" in his hours of leisure, while he supplements his own experiences of life by his companion's.

There could not be an odder couple than Tom Peters and Everard G. Roxdal — the contrast began with their names, and ran through the entire chapter. They had a bedroom and a sitting-room in common, but it would not be easy to find what else. To his landlady, worthy Mrs. Seacon, Tom Peters's profession was a little vague, but everybody knew that Roxdal was the manager of the City and Suburban Bank, and it puzzled her to think why a bank manager should live with such a seedy-looking person, who smoked clay pipes and sipped whiskey and water all the evening when he was at home. For Roxdal was as spruce and erect as his fellow-lodger was round-shouldered and shabby; he never smoked, and he confined himself to a small glass of claret at dinner.

It is possible to live with a man and see very little of him. Where each of the partners lives his own life in his own way, with his own circle of friends and external amusements, days may go by without the men having five minutes together. Perhaps this explains why these partnerships jog along so much more peaceably than marriages, where the chain is drawn so much more tightly and galls the wedded rather than links them. Diverse, however, as were the hours and habits of

Peters and Roxdal, they often breakfasted together, and they agreed in one thing — they never stayed out at night. For the rest, Peters sought his diversions in the company of journalists, and frequented debating rooms, where he propounded the most iconoclastic views; while Roxdal had highly respectable houses open to him in the suburbs and was, in fact, engaged to be married to Clara Newell, the charming daughter of a retired corn merchant, a widower with no other child.

Clara naturally took up a good deal of Roxdal's time, and he often dressed to go to the play with her, while Peters stayed at home in a faded dressing-gown and loose slippers. Mrs. Seacon like to see gentlemen about the house in evening dress, and made comparisons not favorable to Peters. And this in spite of the fact that he gave her infinitely less trouble than the younger man. It was Peters who first took the apartments, and it was characteristic of his easy-going temperament that he was so openly and naïvely delighted with the view of the Thames obtainable from the bedroom window, that Mrs. Seacon was emboldened to ask twenty-five per cent more than she had intended. She soon returned to her normal terms, however, when his friend Roxdal called the next day to inspect the rooms, and overwhelmed her with a demonstration of their numerous shortcomings. He pointed out that their being on the ground floor was not an advantage, but a disadvantage, since they were nearer the noises of the street — in fact, the house being a corner one, the noises of two streets. Roxdal continued to exhibit the same finicking temperament in the petty details of the ménage. His shirt fronts were never sufficiently starched, nor his boots sufficiently polished. Tom Peters, having no regard for rigid linen, was always good-tempered and satisfied, and never acquired the respect of his landlady. He wore blue-check shirts and loose ties even on Sundays. It is true he did not go to church, but slept on till Roxdal returned from morning service, and even then it was difficult to get him out of bed, or to make him hurry up his toilette operations. Often the mid-day meal would be smoking on the table while Peters would still be smoking in the bed, and Roxdal, with his head thrust through the folding doors that separated the bedroom from the sitting-room, would be adjuring the sluggard to arise and shake off his slumbers, and threatening to sit down without him, lest the dinner be spoiled. In revenge, Tom was usually up first on week-days, sometimes at such unearthly hours that Polly had not yet removed the boots from outside the bedroom door, and would bawl down to the kitchen for his shaving water. For Tom, lazy and indolent as he was, shaved with the unfailing regularity of a man to whom shaving has become an instinct. If he had not kept fairly regular hours, Mrs. Seacon would have set him down as an actor, so clean shaven was he. Roxdal did not shave. He wore a full

beard, and being a fine figure of a man to boot, no uneasy investor could look upon him without being reassured as to the stability of the bank he managed so successfully. And thus the two men lived in an economical comradeship, all the firmer, perhaps, for their incongruities.

It was on a Sunday afternoon in the middle of October, ten days after Roxdal had settled in his new rooms, that Clara Newell paid her first visit to him there. She enjoyed a good deal of liberty, and did not mind accepting his invitation to tea. The corn merchant, himself indifferently educated, had an exaggerated sense of the value of culture, and so Clara, who had artistic tastes without much actual talent, had gone in for painting, and might be seen, in pretty smocks, copying pictures in the Museum. At one time it looked as if she might be reduced to working seriously at her art, for Satan, who still finds mischief for idle hands to do, had persuaded her father to embark the fruits of years of toil in bubble companies. However, things turned out not so bad as they might have been; a little was saved from the wreck, and the appearance of a suitor, in the person of Everard G. Roxdal, insured her a future of competence, if not of the luxury she had been entitled to expect. She had a good deal of affection for Everard, who was unmistakably a clever man, as well as a good-looking one. The prospect seemed fair and cloudless. Nothing presaged the terrible storm that was about to break over these two lives. Nothing had ever for a moment come to vex their mutual contentment, till this Sunday afternoon. The October sky, blue and sunny, with an Indian summer sultriness, seemed an exact image of her life, with its aftermath of a happiness that had once seemed blighted.

Everard had always been so attentive, so solicitous, that she was as much surprised as chagrined to find that he had apparently forgotten the appointment. Hearing her astonished interrogation of Polly in the passage, Tom shambled from the sitting-room in his loose slippers and his blue-check shirt, with his eternal clay pipe in his mouth, and informed her that Roxdal had gone out suddenly.

"G-g-one out," stammered poor Clara, all confused. "But he asked me to come to tea."

"Oh, you're Miss Newell, I suppose," said Tom.

"Yes, I am Miss Newell."

"He has told me a great deal about you, but I wasn't able honestly to congratulate him on his choice till now."

Clara blushed uneasily under the compliment, and under the ardor of his admiring gaze. Instinctively she distrusted the man. The very first tones of his deep bass voice gave her a peculiar shudder. And then his impoliteness in smoking that vile clay was so gratuitous.

"Oh, then you must be Mr. Peters," she said in return. "He has often spoken to me of you."

"Ah!" said Tom, laughingly, "I suppose he's told you all my vices. That accounts for your not being surprised at my Sunday attire."

She smiled a little, showing a row of pearly teeth. "Everard ascribes to you all the virtues," she said.

"Now that's what I call a friend!" he cried, ecstatically. "But won't you come in? He must be back in a moment. He surely would not break an appointment with you." The admiration latent in the accentuation of the last pronoun was almost offensive to her.

She shook her head. She had a just grievance against Everard, and would punish him by going away indignantly.

"Do let me give you a cup of tea," Tom pleaded. "You must be awfully thirsty this sultry weather. There! I will make a bargain with you! If you will come in now, I promise to clear out the moment Everard returns, and not spoil your tête-à-tête." But Clara was obstinate; she did not at all relish this man's society, and besides, she was not going to throw away her grievance against Everard. "I know Everard will slang me dreadfully when he comes in if I let you go," Tom urged. "Tell me at least where he can find you."

"I am going to take the 'bus at Charing Cross, and I'm going straight home," Clara announced determinedly. She put up her parasol, and went up the street into the Strand. A cold shadow seemed to have fallen over all things. But just as she was getting into the 'bus, a hansom dashed down Trafalgar Square, and a well-known voice hailed her. The hansom stopped, and Everard got out and held out his hand.

"I'm so glad you're a bit late," he said. "I was called out unexpectedly, and have been trying to rush back in time. You wouldn't have found me if you had been punctual. But I thought," he added, laughing, "I could rely on you as a woman."

"I was punctual," Clara said angrily. "I was not getting out of this 'bus, as you seem to imagine, but into it, and was going home."

"My darling!" he cried remorsefully. "A thousand apologies." The regret on his handsome face soothed her. He took the rose he was wearing in the buttonhole of his fashionably-cut coat and gave it to her.

"Why were you so cruel?" he murmured, as she nestled against him in the hansom. "Think of my despair if I had come home to hear you had come and gone. Why didn't you wait a few moments?"

A shudder traversed her frame. "Not with that man, Peters!" she murmured.

"Not with that man, Peters!" he echoed sharply. "What is the matter with Peters?"

"I don't know," she said. "I don't like him."

"Clara," he said, half sternly, half cajolingly, "I thought you were above these feminine weaknesses. You are punctual, strive also to be reasonable. Tom is my best friend. There is noth-

ing Tom would not do for me, or I for Tom. You must like him, Clara; you must, if only for my sake."

"I'll try," Clara promised, and then he kissed her in gratitude and broad daylight.

"You'll be very nice to him at tea, won't you?" he said anxiously. "I shouldn't like you two to be bad friends."

"I don't want to be bad friends," Clara protested; "only the moment I saw him a strange repulsion and mistrust came over me."

"You are quite wrong about him — quite wrong," he assured her earnestly. "When you know him better, you'll find him the best of fellows. Oh, I know," he said suddenly, "I suppose he was very untidy, and you women go so much by appearances!"

"Not at all," Clara retorted. "'Tis you men who go by appearances."

"Yes, you do. That's why you care for me," he said, smiling.

She assured him it wasn't, that she didn't care for him only because he plumed himself, but he smiled on. His smile died away, however, when he entered his rooms and found Tom nowhere.

"I daresay you've made him run about hunting for me," he grumbled unhappily.

"Perhaps he knew I'd come back, and went away to leave us together," she answered. "He said he would when you came."

"And yet you say you don't like him!"

She smiled reassuringly. Inwardly, however, she felt pleased at the man's absence.

If Clara Newell could have seen Tom Peters carrying on with Polly in the passage, she might have felt justified in her prejudice against him. It must be confessed, though, that Everard also carried on with Polly. Alas! it is to be feared that men are much of a muchness where women are concerned; shabby men and smart men, bank managers and journalists, bachelors and semi-detached bachelors. Perhaps it was a mistake after all to say the chums had nothing patently in common. Everard, I am afraid, kissed Polly rather more often than Clara, and although it was because he respected her less, the reason would perhaps not have been sufficiently consoling to his affianced wife. For Polly was pretty, especially on alternate Sunday afternoons, and when at ten P.M. she returned from her outings, she was generally met in the passage by one or the other of the men. Polly liked to receive the homage of real gentlemen, and set her white cap at all indifferently. Thus, just before Clara knocked on that memorable Sunday afternoon, Polly, being confined to the house by the unwritten code regulating the lives of servants, was amusing herself by flirting with Peters.

"You are fond of me a little bit," the graceless Tom whispered, "aren't you?"

"You know I am, sir," Polly replied.

"You don't care for anyone else in the house?"

"Oh, no, sir, and never let anyone kiss me but you. I wonder how it is, sir?" Polly replied ingenuously.

"Give me another," Tom answered.

She gave him another, and tripped to the door to answer Clara's knock.

And that very evening, when Clara was gone and Tom still out, Polly turned without the faintest atom of scrupulosity, or even jealousy, to the more fascinating Roxdal, and accepted his amorous advances. If it would seem at first sight that Everard had less excuse for such frivolity than his friend, perhaps the seriousness he showed in this interview may throw a different light upon the complex character of the man.

"You're quite sure you don't care for anyone but me?" he asked earnestly.

"Of course not, sir!" Polly replied indignantly. "How could I?"

"But you care for that soldier I saw you out with last Sunday?"

"Oh, no, sir, he's only my young man," she said apologetically.

"Would you give him up?" he asked suddenly.

Polly's pretty face took a look of terror. "I couldn't, sir! He'd kill me. He's such a jealous brute, you've no idea."

"Yes, but suppose I took you away from here?" he whispered eagerly. "Some place where he couldn't find you — South America, Africa, somewhere thousands of miles away."

"Oh, sir, you frighten me!" whispered Polly, cowering before his ardent eyes, which shone in the dimly-lit passage.

"Would you come with me?" he entreated. She did not answer; she shook herself free and ran into the kitchen, trembling with a vague fear.

One morning, earlier than his earliest hour of demanding shaving water, Tom rang the bell violently and asked the alarmed Polly what had become of Mr. Roxdal.

"How should I know, sir?" she gasped. "Ain't he been in, sir?"

"Apparently not," Tom answered anxiously. "He never remains out. We have been here for weeks now, and I can't recall a single night he hasn't been home before twelve. I can't make it out." All inquiries proved futile. Mrs. Seacon reminded him of the thick fog that had come on suddenly the night before.

"What fog?" asked Tom.

"Lord! didn't you notice it, sir?"

"No, I came in early, smoked, read, and went to bed about eleven. I never thought of looking out of the window."

"It began about ten," said Mrs. Seacon, "and got thicker and thicker. I couldn't see the lights of the river from my bedroom. The poor gentleman has been and gone and walked into the water." She began to whimper.

"Nonsense, nonsense," said Tom, though his expression belied his words. "At the worst I should think

he couldn't find his way home, and couldn't get a cab, so put up for the night at some hotel. I daresay it will be all right." He began to whistle as if in restored cheerfulness. At eight o'clock there came a letter for Roxdal, marked *Immediate*, but as he did not turn up for breakfast, Tom went round personally to the City and Suburban Bank. He waited half an hour there, but the manager did not make his appearance. Then he left the letter with the cashier and went away with an anxious countenance.

That afternoon it was all over London that the manager of the City and Suburban had disappeared, and that many thousands of pounds in gold and notes had disappeared with him.

Scotland Yard opened the letter marked *Immediate*, and noted that there had been a delay in its delivery, for the address had been obscure, and an official alteration had been made. It was written in a feminine hand and said: "On second thought I cannot accompany you. Do not try to see me again. Forget me. I shall never forget you."

There was no signature.

Clara Newell, distracted, disclaimed all knowledge of this letter. Polly deposed that the fugitive had proposed flight to her, and the routes to Africa and South America were especially watched.

Yet months passed without result. Tom Peters went about overwhelmed with grief and astonishment. The police took possession of all the missing man's effects.

Gradually the hue and cry dwindled, and died.

"At last we meet!" cried Tom Peters, his face lighting up in joy. "How are you, dear Miss Newell?"

Clara greeted him coldly. Her face had an abiding pallor now. Her lover's flight and shame had prostrated her for weeks. Her soul was the arena of contending instincts. Alone of all the world she still believed in Everard's innocence, felt that there was something more than met the eye, divined some devilish mystery behind it all. And yet that damning letter from the anonymous lady shook her sadly. Then, too, there was the deposition of Polly. When she heard Peters's voice accosting her, all her old repugnance resurged. It flashed upon her that this man — Roxdal's boon companion — must know far more than he had told to the police. She remembered how Everard had spoken of him, with what affection and confidence! Was it likely he was utterly ignorant of Everard's movements?

Mastering her repugnance, she held out her hand. It might be well to keep in touch with him; he was possibly the clue to the mystery. She noticed he was dressed a shade more trimly, and was smoking a meerschaum. He walked along at her side, making no offer to put his pipe out.

"You have not heard from Everard?" he asked. She flushed.

"Do you think I'm an accessory after the fact?" she cried.

"No, no," he said soothingly.

"Pardon me, I was thinking he might have written — giving no exact address, of course. Men do sometimes dare to write thus to women. But, of course, he knows you too well — you would have told the police."

"Certainly," she exclaimed, indignantly. "Even if he is innocent he must face the charge."

"Do you still entertain the possibility of his innocence?"

"I do," she said boldly, and looked him full in the face. His eyelids drooped with a quiver. "Don't you?"

"I have hoped against hope," he replied, in a voice faltering with emotion. "Poor old Everard! But I am afraid there is no room for doubt. Oh, this wicked curse of money — tempting the noblest and the best of us."

The weeks rolled on. Gradually she found herself seeing more and more of Tom Peters, and gradually, strange to say, he grew less repulsive. From the talks they had together, she began to see that there was really no reason to put faith in Everard; his criminality, his faithlessness, were too flagrant. Gradually she grew ashamed of her early mistrust of Peters; remorse bred esteem, and esteem ultimately ripened into feelings so warm that when Tom gave freer vent to the love that had been visible to Clara from the first, she did not repulse him.

It is only in books that love lives forever. Clara, so her father thought, showed herself a sensible girl in plucking out an unworthy affection and casting it from her heart. He invited the new suitor to his house, and took to him at once. Roxdal's somewhat supercilious manner had always jarred upon the unsophisticated corn merchant. With Tom the old man got on much better. While evidently quite as well informed and cultured as his whilom friend, Tom knew how to impart his superior knowledge with the accent on the knowledge rather than on the superiority, while he had the air of gaining much information in return. Those who are most conscious of the defects in early education are most resentful of other people sharing their consciousness. Moreover, Tom's *bonhomie* was far more to the old fellow's liking than the studied politeness of his predecessor, so that on the whole Tom made more of a conquest of the father than of the daughter. Nevertheless, Clara was by no means unresponsive to Tom's affection, and when, after one of his visits to the house, the old man kissed her fondly and spoke of the happy turn things had taken, and how, for the second time in their lives, things had mended when they seemed at their blackest, her heart swelled with a gush of gratitude and joy and tenderness, and she fell sobbing into her father's arms.

Tom calculated that he made a clear five hundred a year by occasional journalism, besides possessing some profitable investments which he had inherited from his mother, so that there was no reason for delaying the marriage. It was fixed for May-

day, and the honeymoon was to be spent in Italy.

But Clara was not destined to happiness. From the moment she had promised herself to her first love's friend, old memories began to rise up and reproach her. Strange thoughts stirred in the depths of her soul, and in the silent watches of the night she seemed to hear Everard's voice, charged with grief and upbraiding. Her uneasiness increased as her wedding day drew near. One night, after a pleasant afternoon spent in being rowed by Tom among the upper reaches of the Thames, she retired full of vague forebodings. And she dreamed a terrible dream. The dripping figure of Everard stood by her bedside, staring at her with ghastly eyes. Had he been drowned on the passage to his land of exile? Frozen with horror, she put the question.

"I have never left England!" the vision answered.

Her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth.

"Never left England?" she repeated, in tones which did not seem to be hers.

The wraith's stony eyes stared on.

"Where have you been?" she asked in her dream.

"Very near you," came the answer.

"There has been foul play then!" she shrieked.

The phantom shook its head in doleful assent.

"I knew it!" she shrieked. "Tom Peters — Tom Peters has done away with you. Is it not he? Speak!"

"Yes, it is he — Tom Peters — whom I loved more than all the world."

Even in the terrible oppression of the dream she could not resist saying, woman-like:

"Did I not warn you against him?"

The phantom stared on silently and made no reply.

"But what was the motive?" she asked at length.

"Love of gold — and you. And you are giving yourself to him," it said sternly.

"No, no, Everard! I will not! I swear it! Forgive me!"

The spirit shook its head skeptically.

"You love him. Women are false — as false as men."

She strove to protest again, but her tongue refused to speak.

"If you marry him, I shall always be with you! Beware!"

The dripping figure vanished as suddenly as it came, and Clara awoke in a cold perspiration. Oh, it was horrible! The man she had learned to love was the murderer of the man she had learned to forget! How her original prejudice had been justified! Distracted, shaken to her depths, she would not take counsel even of her father, but informed the police of her suspicions. A raid was made on Tom's rooms, and lo! the stolen notes were discovered in a huge bundle. It was found that he had several banking accounts, with a large, recently-paid amount in each bank.

Tom was arrested. Attention was now concentrated on the corpses washed up by the river. It was not long before the body of Roxdal came to shore, the face distorted beyond recognition by long immersion, but the clothes patently his, a pocket book in the breast-pocket removing the last doubt. Mrs. Seacon and Polly and Clara Newell all identified the body. Both juries returned a verdict of murder against Tom Peters, the recital of Clara's dream producing a unique impression in the court and throughout the country. The theory of the prosecution was that Roxdal had brought home the money, whether to fly alone or to divide it, or even for some innocent purpose, as Clara believed; that Peters determined to have it all, that he had gone out for a walk with the deceased, and taking advantage of the fog, had pushed him into the river, and that he was further impelled to the crime by his love for Clara Newell, as was evident from his subsequent relations with her. The judge put on the black cap. Tom Peters was duly hanged by the neck till he was dead.

Brief Résumé of the Culprit's Confession

When you all read this I shall be dead and laughing at you. I have been hanged for my own murder. I am Everard G. Roxdal. I am also Tom Peters. *We two were one!*

When I was a young man my mustache and beard wouldn't come. I bought false ones to improve my appearance. One day, after I had become manager of the City and Suburban Bank, I took off my beard and mustache at home, and then the thought crossed my mind that nobody would know me without them. I was another man. Instantly it flashed upon me that if I ran away from the Bank, that other man could be left in London, while the police were scouring the world for a non-existent fugitive.

But this was only the crude germ of the idea. Slowly I matured my plan. The man who was going to be left in London must be known to a circle of acquaintances beforehand. It would be easy enough to masquerade in the evenings in my beardless condition, with other disguises of dress and voice. But this was not brilliant enough. *I conceived the idea of living with him!* It was Box and Cox reversed.

We shared rooms at Mrs. Seacon's. It was a great strain, but it was only for a few weeks. I had trick clothes in my bedroom like those of quick-change artists; in a moment I could pass from Roxdal to Peters and from Peters to Roxdal. Polly had to clean two pairs of boots each morning, cook two dinners, and so on. She and Mrs. Seacon saw one or the other of us every moment; it never dawned upon them that *they never saw both of us together!*

At meals I would not be interrupted, ate off two plates, and conversed with my friend in loud tones. At other times we dined at different hours. On Sundays one was supposed to be asleep when the other was in

church. There is no landlady in the world to whom the idea would have occurred that one man was troubling himself to be two (and to pay for two, including washing).

I worked up the idea of Roxdal's flight, asked Polly to go with me, manufactured that feminine letter that arrived on the morning of my disappearance. As Tom Peters I mixed with a journalistic set. I had another room where I kept the gold and notes till I mistakenly thought the thing had blown over. Unfortunately, returning from the other room on the night of my disappearance, with Roxdal's clothes in a bundle I intended to drop into the river, the bundle was stolen from me in the fog, and the man into whose possession it ultimately came appears to have committed suicide.

What, perhaps, ruined me was my desire to keep Clara's love, and to transfer it to the survivor. Everard told her I was the best of fellows. Once married to her, I would not have had anything to fear. Even if she had discovered the trick, a wife cannot give evidence against her husband, and often does not want to. I made none of the usual slips, but no man can guard against a girl's nightmare after a day up the river and a supper at the Star and Garter. I might have told the judge he was an ass, but then I should have had penal servitude for bank robbery, and that sentence would have been a great deal worse than death.

The only thing that puzzles me, though, is whether the law has committed murder or I have committed suicide.

A PLEA FOR EDITORS

Has it ever occurred to you that an editor's life is no bed of roses? That an editor does not spend his time as a gentleman of (literary) leisure? That many of an editor's working hours creep by in the smoking watches of the night, when people of saner vocations are slumbering peacefully? That, in a phrase, being the editor of a detective-story magazine is not all bloodhound-beer and sleuthian-skittles . . . We do not refer to the editor's unremitting search for new vintage, or his ceaseless research for rare old wines, or the pressures of deadlines, or the problems of production. These are day-in and night-out worries, and the editor learns, albeit the hard way, to take them in stride. No, we refer to those comparatively few moments in an editor's career when, against his own wishes, with every fibre in his body crying out in protest, he is nevertheless forced to play God.

For in the final analysis it is the editor who makes the decisions. He accepts this story, he rejects that. Many are called, but few are chosen: for every manuscript an editor purchases, there are a hundred (or a thousand) which must be returned.

Consider the situation in which Your Humble Servant finds himself. During the course of a full year we bring you about 120 stories, of which approximately half are new, the remainder reprints. This means that in the course of a full year we purchase an average of slightly-more-than-one new story per week.

One story per week bought from original manuscript . . . Is it any wonder that we cannot possibly hope to satisfy all the writers, young and old, with established names and without, who submit stories to EQMM? Is it any wonder that we receive an astonishing number of letters from beginners who express disappointment, discouragement, and sometimes disgust with their conception of our editorial policy? After all, our physical needs are small, and our standards are large; we seek only the best, irrespective of source or reputation. Would you want it otherwise?

There is no short-cut, no royal road, to quick and enduring success. The writing game is full of heartache and heartbreak. The only sure formula for success can be stated in simple terms: talent and indomitable perseverance — and one attribute is almost valueless without the other. The ultimate quality which every writer must have is just that — quality.

Sure, it's tough, and every editor with a heart can say with absolute truth that when he returns a manuscript it hurts him more than it hurts the writer — especially if the editor is himself a writer. Editors are not cruel, callous robots: they know the agonies, the slings and arrows of outrageous misfortune, which they are compelled to make writers suffer.

Examine the lives of those writers who have beaten the game. Almost without exception they have gone through the murderous mill. Those who quit never made the grade; those who realized the odds and still fought on — those, and those alone, achieved some or full measure of success.

Take, for example, the case of MacKinlay Kantor. Today Mr. Kantor is one of the highest paid contributors to national magazines, but it was no simple "open sesame" for him. At the age of eighteen MacKinlay Kantor won first prize in a short story contest. Being young, Mr. Kantor thought that his future was assured. But listen: he did not make his next literary sale for another five and a half years! And it was not until twelve years after he had won the contest that Mr. Kantor gained any real financial or critical success — with the publication in 1934 of LONG REMEMBER, *one of the best novels of the Civil War.*

MacKinlay Kantor's experience is the experience of virtually every "big-name" writer. It's a long voyage home, with storms and doldrums and shipwrecks, and occasionally a record passage to renew confidence. And while editors cannot call themselves the captains, or even the steersmen, they are part of the crew who help bring the ships, big and little, into home port — if only the crew who man the mouse-like tugs. Yes, remember, that a mouse once gnawed a lion to freedom . . .

THE GRAVE GRASS QUIVERS

by MacKINLAY KANTOR

We were alone, out there in the soft spring sunshine. There was no one to disturb us. We dug silently, carefully.

The clinging, black earth came up at every shovelful — moist and alive with the richness of the prairies. We had been digging for ten minutes, when my shovel struck against something, and something cracked.

After that, it wasn't long before we began to uncover things. "Murdered," Doc said, once, and then he didn't talk any more.

It began in Doc Martindale's office, which, as soon as he retired, was to be my office, on a cool spring afternoon in 1921.

"How's it going?" asked Doc.

"I guess it'll be pretty slow here, to live," I said, childishly.

"Not much excitement," agreed Doc. He went to the door and picked up a copy of the *Cottonwood Herald* which a boy had just tossed over the banisters. . . . "Yes, local news is slow, pretty slow. There's a sample of a Cottonwood thriller."

It told of the plans for Arbor Day. The children of the public schools were going to set out some trees as a memorial to the local boys who had died in the World War.

> . . . and selected as their choice, American elms. The trees will be planted on the Louis Wilson farm, above the Coon River. Mr. Wilson has agreed to donate a small plot of ground for this purpose. It is thought that these trees, standing on a high hill above the river and overlooking a majestic view of our city will be a fitting memorial.
>
> Ceremonies are to begin at 2 p. m., and it is urged that all local people attend. Rev. J. Medley Williams of the Baptist Church will deliver a ——

Doc pulled his gray beard and laughed. "A few meetings, a church social, once in a while a fire or an auto accident! Once in a blue moon we have a divorce. Life comes — and goes — without much hullabaloo."

Then I had to laugh also, and a bit sheepishly. "I guess I'm rather silly. Of course those are the important things in most people's lives. But I would like to get called in on a nice, exciting murder once in awhile!"

Doc was silent for a moment. He appeared to be thinking heavily, as if he had taken me seriously. "Murders," he said, after a moment. "Once before the war, a Mexican section worker stabbed his wife. Then back in '96, an insane farmer shot his neighbor. But, come to think about it, those are the only murders we've ever had here in all my years of practice." He seemed much impressed. "Think of that, think of that! Only two murders since 1861."

"And who," I inquired idly, "was murdered in 1861?"

He tugged at his beard again, and cleared his throat. "Well," he said, slowly, "it was my father and my brother."

"Oh." And I scarcely knew what to say. "I'm sorry, Doctor, I ——"

"No matter." He shrugged. "It's a long time. I was just a boy then."

My curiosity was aroused. "What are the details, Doctor? That is, if you don't ——"

"Oh, I don't mind. . . . Sit down and take it easy." He fumbled around for his matches, and his fat, brown cigar had been fogging the room for several minutes before he began.

"My brother Titus — he was a lot older — had run away from home when he was small, and gone West with some folks. He didn't come back until the spring of '61. And when he came, what a time!"

He laughed his short, dry laugh.

"Titus had struck it rich. He had about seven thousand dollars in gold with him.

"Pa and Titus decided to take the gold to Hamilton. There was a sort of bank opened up there, and the

folks were afraid to risk keeping so much money around home.

"They were pretty careful, too, and didn't tell around town much about what they planned. They started out at night, figuring to get clear away from Cottonwood and the settlers who knew them, before daylight. Pa and Titus were big strapping men. They looked very strong, setting up on the board laid across the plank wagon box, and Titus carried a navy revolver on his hip and a Sharps rifle across his knees."

Doc Martindale shifted his fat, bumpy body in his old swivel chair. "And that," he said, "was the last we ever saw them.

"On the evening of the second day after my folks left," Dr. Martindale continued, "a farmer from the Salt Creek neighborhood rode up in front of our house, and said that he had seen our team down in a clump of willows by Little Hell Slough, hitched to a wagon, and that the men folks were not with the wagon. The team had been dragging around, and tried to go home, but they got hung up in the willows."

Old Doc was silent for several minutes.

"That was a terrible night," he said, simply. "Before we all got down to Little Hell Slough — most of the neighbors were with us — we found the team in those willows, pretty muddy and hungry, and tangled up in the harness, too.

"None of the stuff in the wagon had been taken except — sure: the gold was gone. The blankets were still there, and Titus's rifle, but his navy revolver wasn't anywhere around. And there was no other sign of Pa and Titus.

"I drove Ma and the girls home, in that wagon. Ma sat there beside me on the board, stiff and solemn. Once she said, 'Georgie, if they're gone and gone for good, you'll get the man who did it. Won't you?' I began to cry, of course. I says, 'Yes, Ma. I'll take care of you always, Ma. . . . But if they're dead, it wasn't a man who killed 'em. It was men. One man wouldn't be a match for Titus alone.' "

Doc was buried in the thickening shadows of the office. I couldn't see his face any more.

"Then I went back with the men. We searched the river, up and down the hills around Cottonwood, too, clear down to the East Fork. And never found a thing.

"In that wagon there was just one clue — just one thing which made it certain in our minds that they were dead. That was a little spot of dried blood on the floor of the wagon, right behind the seat. About half as big as your hand. Seemed like, if they'd been shot off the wagon, there'd have been more blood. Then, too, the horses were a fairly young team and they might have cut loose and run away if any shooting had started.

"It was always the general opinion that the murderers had disposed of the bodies in the river. But, personally, I always hung to the idea that Titus

and Pa were killed in some mysterious way, and their bodies buried. The fact is that the entire community searched for a week, and then gave it up. No other clue was ever discovered, and no further information of any kind was ever unearthed.

"I didn't quit searching for months. Eli Goble helped me, too; he worked like grim death. But we couldn't find a thing."

I asked, "Who was Eli Goble?"

There was the dull scraping of Doc's shoes on the floor. "Seems to me that you cashed a check this noon, boy. Where did you cash it?"

Somewhat perplexed, I told him. "At the bank across the street."

"Well, that's Eli Goble. And where are you living temporarily — until you can find rooms or an apartment to your liking?"

"At the — Oh, of course, Doctor. The Goble Hotel."

He chuckled. "Everything in this town's Goble, boy. He came here in '59 with a man named Goble, but that wasn't Eli's real name. He had heard that his folks came from Ohio, but didn't know anything about it. You see, his family was killed in the Mint Valley massacre, about 1840, and he had been kidnaped by the Indians. Lived with the Sioux until he was sixteen — could talk the language like a native, too. In fact, lots of folks used to think he was part Indian. But he wasn't. And during the search, he thought all the trailing experience which he had had when among the Indians, might be of some account. But even that didn't help. We couldn't find a thing."

I said, slowly, "He's rich, now?"

Doc sighed, and began to hunt around for the light switch. "Suspecting Eli Goble, are you?" He chuckled. "I don't believe anybody ever did, before. He never had a cent to his name for years after that. A few months later he enlisted in the army, served all through the war, and didn't come back here till 1867. In the meantime, through someone he met in the army, he had been trying to get track of his family. And eventually he succeeded. Found the original family, back in Ohio. He got what money was coming to him, brought it out here to Cottonwood, invested it carefully, and made good. He retained the name of Goble, for convenience's sake. Now he's almost ninety, but he's one of the richest men in the state, and one of the tightest. He never lets go of a nickel until the Goddess of Liberty yells for mercy."

The big yellow light hissed into being. It glared down on the white-enameled table, the glistening cabinets and instruments, the old desk and rows of books. Doc Martindale stood there in the middle of the office and nodded his head. "That's the story, boy. Real live mystery, just sixty years old this spring. . . ."

We were just putting on our hats, and Doc was struggling into his old brown slicker, when the telephone rang. Martindale took up the receiver. "Doctor Martindale speaking."

"Oh," he said, after a moment. "Well." And then he winked quickly at me above the telephone. "Did you use any of that stimulant I left last time? . . . Yes. I'm leaving the office, now, to go home, and I'll stop in. Yes."

He replaced the receiver on its hook. "Speak of the devil," he said. "Eli Goble's just had another heart attack. Nothing to get excited about. He has them frequently, but in between times he's up and down and around. We'll stop in to see him for a minute."

The Goble house was only a few minutes' drive from the main business streets. . . . Lights glowed from most of the windows, as we came up the sidewalk. "You can tell that Eli's flat on his back," said Doc. "If he was around, he wouldn't let them burn all that electricity."

The old man watched us from his pillow, with black, red-rimmed eyes, deeply sunk beneath the moldy fuzz of his eyebrows. . . . He was breathing heavily.

"Well, Eli. How do you feel? This is Dr. Patterson, Eli."

The old man seemed to glare broodingly at me.

"Don't feel — so — good," Goble managed with difficulty. "Plagued heart seems — like — played out on me."

Martindale began to open his bag. "Oh, nothing to worry about, Eli. We'll fix it all up right." He made a perfunctory examination. "You'll feel better soon, Eli. Sleep tight."

The old man mumbled and coughed; and we went down the shadowy stairway, through the gloomy, over-ornate hall, and out to the front door.

It was four o'clock the next afternoon when Doc Martindale and I arrived at the office, following a round of calls on widely separated cases. Beyond a few hasty reports to the girl whom Doc Martindale kept in his office during the mid-day hours, we had enjoyed no contact with the town of Cottonwood since 10 a. m.

When we returned in Doc's old touring car, it was to find the *Cottonwood Herald* spread on the table with plenty of black ink decorating the front page.

ELI GOBLE GIVES PARK TO CITY

Local Businessman and Pioneer Settler Decides on Memorial

Plans Changed for Tomorrow's Dedication

At a special meeting of the city council this afternoon, it was unanimously agreed to accept the gift tendered by Eli Goble, revered Civil War veteran and early settler in Cottonwood, who today offered to give the town of Cottonwood some thirty acres of beautiful woodland, to be known as "Goble Memorial Park."

It is understood that Mr. Goble has been ill, and that is the reason for a delay in his plans.

"The grand old man of Crockett County" stipulated in the terms of his gift that the proposed Memorial Grove of trees should be set out somewhere in the new park area. This necessitated a hasty change in plans. Instead of being planted on the north hill, on the Louis Wilson farm above the Coon River, the trees will be set out on the brow of the east hill,

which is included in the thirty acres donated by Mr. Goble.

A big parade, forming in the city hall square, and proceeding across the east bridge toward the new park, will officially open the Arbor Day ceremonies at two o'clock tomorrow afternoon. Following an invocation by Rev. J. Medley Williams, the Cottonwood city band will ——

We leaned there, side by side with our hands upon the desk, and read that newspaper story.

Doc tapped the paper with his forefinger. "I'll go on record as saying," he declared, "that this is the first thing Eli Goble ever gave away in his life — at least the first thing in which there wasn't some chance of his getting value received out of it. And I don't see what he can get out of this, except glory. . . . Eli doesn't care a rap for glory. Listen to Editor Nollins calling him, 'the grand old man of Crockett County.' That's because Eli holds a mortgage on the *Herald* building."

Two patients drifted in for examination. . . .When I left, an hour later, I looked back to see Doctor Martindale sitting there in his swivel chair, a tired hulk, still reading the *Cottonwood Herald*.

At five-thirty in the morning, Old Doc was beating on my door. I arose, startled, and feeling that nothing short of peritonitis or a breech delivery could have made him summon me so insistently.

He came into the hotel room and waited while I threw on my clothes. "What is it?" I asked, between splashes of cold water.

"We're going out and do a little digging," he said.

I nodded. "Appendectomy? Or what?"

"Nothing so unimportant," Doc replied. And his eyes looked as if he had been awake all night — red-rimmed and circled. . . . "Real digging. No one will know where we are. If Mrs. Gustafson takes a notion to sink and die while we're away, she'll just have to sink and die." He said it with seeming brutality. I was still too sleepy to press him for more details, or to wonder what it was all about.

But when we got out to the curbing in front of the hotel, and I glanced into the rear seat of Doc's car, there lay two spades, a scoop-shovel and a pickax.

I turned with an exclamation of astonishment.

"Get in," said Doc. And I did, without any more words. He drove down Main Street, north on Kowa Avenue, and under the Burlington viaduct. We seemed to be heading north of town. Two minutes later our car was making the Coon River bridge rattle and bang in every loose joint.

"This is the Louis Wilson farm," said Doc. "Hm. I reckon we can turn here past the Cedar school, and drive down the lane past the timber."

At the furthest corner of the cornfield we climbed out, taking the shovels and ax with us. Doc was breathing hoarsely, but the strange pallor had left his face. . . . His eyes were bright and intent; there

was something almost furious in their gleam.

He led me through a fringe of oak timberland, skirting two brushy ravines, and coming out on a sloping knoll where one solitary oak tree stood, stunted and twisted by many winds. The grass beneath our feet was coarse, tangled, flat-bladed. Native prairie sod, without a doubt. . . . Far away, a brand of crows was circling over the river, cawing with faint and raucous cries.

"This is the north hill," said Doc. "There's the town."

It was a very high hill, this bald mound on which we stood. Beneath us the Coon River swung in a flat band of glistening brown.

The thin, brittle grass of the barren hill was tufted with hundreds of pale, lilac-pastel flowers. The blossoms grew on short, fuzzy stems; the petals shaded from white to purple, with a heart of yellow in each flower.

"They're beautiful," I said, "I never saw anything like them before. What are they?"

"Wind-flowers. Easter flowers. Or I guess the more modern name is pasque-flower. Pretty things, aren't they? One of the earliest we have around here. . . . Well, I'm going to get busy."

Doc dropped the shovel he was carrying, and I was just as willing to relinquish the heavy load in my own arms. I went over and sat down against the gnarled oak tree, which was the only tree on all that bald, brownish hill. A million facts and statements and conjectures seemed boiling in my brain; I could make nothing out of them.

Before my eyes, Doc Martindale was behaving in a very strange manner. He was walking slowly in vague, indefinite circles, his eyes staring at the ground in front of him. Occasionally he would move up beyond the brow of the hill and sweep the surrounding area with his eyes. I had the strange notion that Doctor George Martindale, after unloading the sad story of his youth, had taken two days in going deliberately and completely insane.

He thrust a small piece of stick into the ground, moved away, surveyed the spot carefully, and then came back to set up another stick, several feet from the first. He repeated this process two more times. He now had an uneven rectangle, eight or ten feet long, marked at its corners by the bits of stick. "We'll try it here," he said.

Without another word, he removed his coat, lifted the pickax, and sent its point into the ground.

I cried, "Wait a minute! Won't people down in the town see us up here?"

"They'll think we're cows or pigs," said Doc.

And, as I have said before, we were alone — out there in the thin sunshine of early morning. We dug silently. Neither of us spoke a word. After Doc had penetrated some two feet in depth, at one side of the rectangle, he moved out toward the

middle of the space he had marked. I followed, with my shovel.

We had been digging for about ten minutes, when we began to find things.

"Murdered," said Doc.

We were finding them, picking out the disordered relics from the rich earth where they had lain so long. Tibiæ, ribs . . . phalanges . . . the rusty remains of an ancient revolver.

Doc straightened up, and spoke to me gently. His face was set and strained; it might have been cast in iron. "There's a sheet and a grain sack or two in the car," he said. "Will you go over and bring them?"

I was glad of the opportunity to get away for a few minutes. When I came back, Doc had most of the bones covered with his coat. The knees of his trousers were dark and earthy; he had been kneeling in the loose mold of the grave, picking out the smaller fragments.

"I want a witness," he said, shortly. "Take a look at this." From beneath the coat he withdrew a human skull and turned it slowly for me to see. There was a complete and noticeable fracture, such as might have been caused by the blow of a sharp ax. "The other is the same way," he added, and replaced the skull tenderly.

Then I spoke for the first time. "Can you identify them?"

"Easily," he said. "There's a Masonic pocket-piece, the revolver, and knives and things. . . . The pocket-piece is the best bet. It's engraved with Pa's name. Not corroded at all. I rubbed it up and could read the engraving."

Wisely, he made no attempt to identify or isolate the separate skeletons. The bones made awkward bundles, in the grain sacks. We worked slowly, carrying them and the shovels back to the car. I was too stunned by the grim reality to ask any questions. We went away and left that uneven black hole in the middle of the blooming wind-flowers.

Back in town, we went to Doc Martindale's garage, behind his little house on Omaha Street, and left the bundles there. Then we hurried to the office; fortunately there had been no phone calls at either house or office. It was after seven o'clock, and yet I had no desire for breakfast.

Doc sat at his desk and thumbed through a stack of old letters and notebooks. "Clell Howard's living in Long Beach," he muttered. "Got his address somewhere. . . . And Eph Spokesman is with his niece out in Portland. I've got to send telegrams right away." Then, strangely enough, he seemed to discover me standing there. "You go around and look at Mrs. Gustafson and that greenstick fracture and the little Walker boy; tell them I'm busy on an emergency case. Don't say a word to anybody."

"I won't," I promised.

He said, "And be sure you don't forget the parade. It forms at 2 p. m., at the city hall square. You'll want to see that." And then he turned back to his rummaging.

I had all of the bedfast patients bandaged and dosed and sprayed and examined before 1:30 p. m. At two o'clock I was standing, with a group of pleasant and gossipy citizens, on the steps of the Cottonwood city hall. The triangular "square" was blooming with the gay sweaters and dresses of hundreds of school children who darted wildly underfoot, seething and yelling in a mad half-holiday.

At twenty minutes after two, the crowd was somewhat impatient. There had been a large turn-out; the Boy Scouts were there, and the members of the American Legion, chafing and shifting in line. There was even a huge truck, splashed with vivid bunting, on which were the grove of memorial elms all ready to be set out, their dirt-encrusted roots sticking from beneath the scarlet shimmer of flags, like so many witches' claws.

This crowd was waiting for Eli Goble, albeit waiting impatiently. If a man was so kind as to give away thirty acres of land, one could at least expect him to show up for the dedication.

It was almost two-thirty before a big Cadillac touring car slid around the corner by the Phillips's oil station, and the crowds in that vicinity began a desultory hand-clapping. Yes, it was Eli Goble. I could see that bearded, skeleton shape sitting hunched in the rear seat, a Navajo blanket across his knees. His narrow-eyed son, vice-president of the bank, was driving.

Some fortunate fate had directed me to take up my station on those steps, above the mass of children. For I had a clear and unobstructed view of Doc Martindale, accompanied by a fat, pink-faced man who seemed very nervous, emerging from a dark stairway across the street.

I vaulted over the concrete railing beside me, and shouldered through the knotted humanity. Once or twice I had a quick glance at Doc and the pink-faced man, over the heads of the crowd. They were walking rapidly toward the corner where the Goble car was parked; the pink-faced man was drawing a folded paper from his pocket, and he seemed more nervous than ever.

We reached the corner simultaneously. A benign citizen, who wore a white silk badge, "Chairman," fluttering from his coat, was leaning at the side of the car, conversing with Eli Goble and his son.

"Daniel," said Doc Martindale.

The chairman turned.

"Get up on the city hall steps," Doc directed him, "and announce to the crowd that Mr. Goble's physician refuses to allow him to participate in the exercises. Then get them started with their parade."

Daniel began to stammer and sputter.

"Go 'long with you," ordered Doc, firmly. He opened the door of the back seat, and he and the pink-faced man slid in beside Eli Goble. And then Doc saw me standing there. "Get in the front seat, Dr. Patterson," he called, and before I knew it, I was

sitting beside Vincent Goble, who was too excited to even bow.

"I don't understand this," he said importantly." You're carrying things off with a very high hand, Doctor Martindale. It is my father's wish that ——"

Doc's lips were thin and firm beneath his scraggly beard. "You keep your mouth shut, Vincent," he said. Vincent Goble gasped. "Drive around the corner on Queen Street, out of this crowd, and pull up at the curb."

The younger man's face was flaming with rage, but he obeyed the command. The Cadillac purred ahead, past the corner, past the alley, past the crowd. A block away it drew up beside the curb.

Vincent Goble and I swung around to face the trio in back. Eli Goble sat in the middle, clutching and contracting his hands against the red triangles of the Navajo blanket.

"Go ahead, Ed," said Doctor Martindale.

The little pink-faced man gasped apologetically, and fluttered the folds of the paper in his hand. He began a whispered jumble of phrases: "As sheriff of Crockett County, it is my duty to place you, Eli Goble, under arrest. You are charged with the murder of Titus Martindale, and William Martindale, on or about the twenty-fourth of April, in the year 1861 ——"

Vincent Goble snarled. The old man still sat there, motionless except for the parchment hands which twisted in his lap. "Ain't true," he managed to whisper. "It — ain't true."

"You cowards!" cried his son. The banker's face was livid. "You'd devil the very life out of an old man with some crazy superstition like that! You'd ——"

Doc Martindale said, "Drive up to the sheriff's office, Vincent. We want to talk things over."

"Like hell I will! Like ——"

Ed Maxon, the sheriff, gulped fearfully. "Yes, Mr. Goble. That's right. Have to ask you to bring your father up to my office."

And so, we went. Vincent, cursing beneath his breath, Doc Martindale silent as the tomb, Ed Maxon twisting and rubbing a damp hand around his collar. And Eli Goble sitting there under the blanket, his eyes like black caverns, and saying: "I — never done it. You'll see. I never done — that."

"You saw the gold at the house. And made up your mind ——"

"No."

"You followed them out there on the east prairie. Or maybe you were lying there, waiting for them."

"I never — done it."

"Say, Doctor Martindale! If my father should have another heart attack and die while you're questioning him ——"

"Now, Mr. Goble, you ——"

"I'm a physician, Vincent. And Eli's my patient. I'll look out for him if he starts to faint. . . . Eli, you killed them from ambush."

"I never. Never did."

"Then you left the bodies in the wagon, took the team, and drove out to the north hill. It was a long drive — must have taken hours to get out there. But you figured that nobody ever went up there, and it was away from the beaten track, and would be a good place to hide the bodies."

"I — I — George, I'm an old man. I ——"

"Damn you, Martindale! You ——"

"Sit down, Vincent, and shut up. I'm not going to fool with anybody today. . . . Let's take your pulse, Eli. . . . Hm. Guess you can stand it. All right. You buried them out on the north hill. Maybe you drove the wagon back and forth over the grave — an Indian trick. Trick you learned from the Sioux. And probably you scattered lots of grass and brush around."

"No. *No.*"

"Titus had his gun strapped on; you left them in the ground, just as they were. You didn't take anything out of the wagon except those buckskin bags. Then you drove clear around town again, forded the river opposite Salt Creek, and drove over by Little Hell Slough. You left the team there, and skinned out. Took the gold somewhere and hid it, probably."

"Ain't so. Lie. . . ."

"Then you laid low, and waited to join in the search. You were clever, Eli. Clever as an Indian. . . . You helped me search, too. Oh, how we searched! We even went right across that north hill. But we never saw anything that looked like a grave. . . . You kept it covered up, Eli. You were smart."

"Don't. . . . Don't talk so — I can't ——"

"By God, you let my father alone! ——"

"Now, Mr. Goble. Please. Control yourself. Please ——"

"You concluded that seven thousand dollars was a big fortune. Well, it was. Worth waiting for. So you enlisted in the army, took your chances — I'll give you credit for nerve there, Eli — and turned up after the war with that story about finding your relatives and your family property back in Ohio. Yes, you were smart."

"I never — never done it."

"Why did you give this park to the city?"

"Mmmmm. I ——"

"The *Herald* carried that Arbor Day announcement, night before last. And right away you had a heart attack. And the next morning you came out with that gift to the city. *Provided* ——"

"Vincent. Vincent. Make 'em let me ——"

"I'll ——"

"Here, hold him!"

"I've got him. Now, Mr. Goble, you'll have to sit down."

"Don't be a fool, Vincent. This is true — all true. It's taken me sixty years to find out, but I've found out. . . . You gave that park to the city of Cottonwood, Eli Goble, *provided* that they set out the memorial grove

over there, on the east hill, instead of on the north hill. You didn't want anybody digging on the north hill, did you? It had never occurred to you to buy Louis Wilson's farm, so there wouldn't be a chance of people digging that ground up."

"No. . . . Don't talk so, George! . . . Old. I'm an old an' ——"

"Well, it was the first thing you ever gave away, in your life. And it set me to thinking. I thought, 'Why didn't Eli want that memorial grove planted up there?' And then, I began to understand things. I went up there this morning. Doctor Patterson was with me — I have a witness to what I am now about to relate. He saw me dig; he saw me find things. I found *them*, Eli."

Vincent Goble was slumped forward, his head buried in his hands. Eli sat there in the sheriff's big chair, staring across the table. He seemed to be looking squarely through the opposite wall.

"They were murdered, Eli. Their skulls had been broken. A heavy, sharp blow at the back of each skull. I found them."

The old man's lips were gray and rubbery. He whispered. "No, I never done it. Can't prove it was me."

"A hatchet, Eli. Someone had thrown a hatchet — or maybe two hatchets, in quick succession. They were sitting on that wagon board, in the bright moonlight. It would have been easy for anyone who could throw a tomahawk."

Doc fumbled in the breast pocket of his coat, and brought out three folded squares of yellow paper. "I'll read to you all," he said calmly. "Three telegrams. The first one I sent myself, early this morning, to Clell Howard, in Long Beach, California, and to Ephriam Spokesman in Portland, Oregon. . . . Remember those names, Eli? . . . Clell was mayor here, once. And Eph Spokesman — everybody knew him. Here's my telegram: 'Please reply by wire completely and at my expense. During the old days at Cottonwood, what man was skillful at throwing a knife or hatchet. Search your recollection and reply at once.'

"Here's the first reply I got. It came from Ephriam Spokesman's niece. Came about eleven o'clock. You can read it yourself, gentlemen. It says, 'Uncle Eph very sick but says man named Goble thought to be a half-breed was only one who could throw hatchet. Wants to hear full details why you ask.'

"Along about eleven-forty-five, I got a telegram from Clell Howard. Here it is: 'Hello old neighbor regards to you. Am almost ninety but recall perfectly how I lost five dollars betting Eli Goble couldn't stick hatchet ten times in succession in big tree by Halsey blacksmith shop.' "

The room was perfectly still, except for the hoarse sputtering in Eli Goble's throat. "No," he whispered tremulously. "No."

Doc Martindale pointed to the further corner of the dusty old room. There was a table, which none of us

had noticed before, and on that table was a white sheet, rumpled and bulky. . . . "Eli," said Doc, quietly. "They're over there. In the corner."

The aged man stiffened in his chair. His back arched up, the shoulders quaking; his claw hands seemed wrenching a chunk of wood from the table in front of him.

"Father!" his son cried.

Eli Goble shook his head, and dropped back in his chair, his deep-set eyes dull with a flat, blue light. "The dead," he whispered. "They found me. . . . They're here in this room. I done it. I killed them. Titus and Bill. Yes. Yes."

Vincent Goble dropped down, his head buried in his arms, and began to sob — big, gulping sobs. The sheriff twisted nervously in his seat.

"George. You — you gonna send me to — prison? You gonna have them — hang me? I'm old . . . I done it. Yes."

Doc Martindale cleared his throat. "Yes, you are old, Eli. Lot older than I am. It's too late, now, to do anything about it. I told my mother I'd get the man, and — But I can't see what good it would do, now, to send you to jail or even try you for murder."

Sheriff Maxon wiped his forehead. "The law," he said shrilly, "the law must take its course! Eli Goble, you must ——"

"No," said Old Doc, decisively. "I'm running this show, Ed. Without me, without my testimony and the case I've built up, there isn't any show against Eli. I won't prosecute him, or furnish evidence."

"But he confessed to this murder!" shrilled Maxon. "He ——"

Doc nodded. "Orally. Yes, but what if Vincent and Dr. Patterson and myself all swear that he never confessed? What if I destroy — the evidence!"

Maxon shook his head and bit his lips.

"How much is your father worth?" asked Doc of Vincent Goble.

The banker lifted his face, on which the weary, baffled tears were still wet. "Couple of million, I guess."

"All yours," whispered Eli. "All yours . . ."

"Maybe," Doc nodded. "Seven thousand dollars. Quite a nest egg, in those days. Like fifty thousand, now. Or even more. . . . No, gentlemen. Money won't do me any good. It can't bring back Titus and my father. But it can still do good. Yes."

Eli Goble's eyes had closed, like dark windows on which ragged curtains had been drawn. "I've seen 'em — I've seen 'em. Always. Since I got old — they come back. . . . I had to give in. Yes."

"You'll go home," said Doc. "I'll give you something to put you to sleep. Then, after you have a little rest and get your strength back, you'll have a lawyer up at your house. . . . You will give, to this county in which you live, one million dollars for the purpose of founding and endowing a modern hospital, where every in-

habitant can secure the best medical and surgical attention, free of charge. How does that sound?"

Head still buried in his arms, Vincent Goble nodded drunkenly. His father had opened his eyes and was shivering, still staring through the blank wall ahead of him. "Yes. Anything. . . . I give — anything. But take me away. I want to go — home. . . . I'm old. I don't want to stay in — this room. I don't want to stay with — *them.*"

After Eli Goble was in bed, and asleep, Doc and I came out into the damp warmth of the spring afternoon. Martindale looked ten years older than he did the day before. "After this," he said, "after everything is taken care of, I'll let things go. . . . You look after the practice beginning next Monday."

Our feet sounded flat and talkative, echoing on the long sidewalk. "One thing," I said. "I can't understand how you found the place. I can see how you reasoned out the rest — about that grove and about Eli Goble's not wanting the trees planted up there. But how did you know where to dig? We could have been up there for days, turning the soil."

Doc felt in his pocket for a cigar which wasn't there. "Wind-flowers," he said quietly. "They were scattered all over that hill. Beautiful, like you said. . . . But I knew enough to dig where there were no wind-flowers. The grass on that hill looked pretty much alike, all over, but there weren't any flowers growing in that place I marked off. Those little purple flowers are funny. They only grow on native soil. You can't get them to grow where the sod has ever been turned."

(Continued from back cover)

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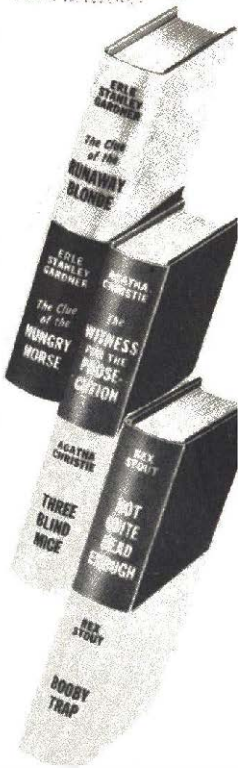

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