



THE BEST IN CRIME FICTION

15¢  
JULY

# NEW DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

**THE SONG  
OF THE  
DEAD**  
*AN NOVEL OF TERROR  
IN THE NIGHT*  
by **FREDRIC  
BROWN**

**DENNIS • STRATTON  
KIRCH • MANY OTHERS**

**IT'S  
BEEN A  
LONG, LONG  
CRIME**  
by **THORNE LEE**





47<sup>50</sup>

**BENRUS**  
Benrus "Singing Star". 17 jewels; Yellow rolled gold plate. Expansion Bracelet. Send \$1, pay 14.84 after Examination, \$5 a month.



\$45

**BENRUS**  
Benrus "Ellison". 17 jewels; 10k yellow rolled gold plate. Basket Weave Bracelet. Send \$1, pay \$14 after Examination, \$5 a month.



\$35

**PARKER**  
Ladies' Parker Watch. 17 jewels; 10k yellow rolled gold plate case; matching link bracelet. Send \$1, pay 10.67 after Examination, \$5 a month.



32<sup>50</sup>

**PARKER**  
Parker Watch. 17 jewels; 24 hour Dial. Yellow rolled gold plate. Send \$1, pay 9.84 after Examination, \$5 a month.



24<sup>75</sup>

**KENT**  
Ladies' Kent Watch. 7 jewels; 10k yellow rolled gold plate case; link bracelet. Send \$1, pay 7.25 after Examination, \$5 a month.



**KENT 24<sup>75</sup>**

Kent Watch. 7 jewels; 10k yellow rolled gold plate. Send \$1, pay 7.25 after Examination, \$5 a month.

SEND FOR FREE CATALOG

# L.W. Sweet

MAIL ORDER DIVISION FINLAY STRAUS, INC.  
25 W. 14th St., NEW YORK 11, N. Y. Dept. P1

## Send Only \$1

### WE WILL SEND ANY ITEM YOU CHOOSE FOR APPROVAL UNDER OUR MONEY BACK GUARANTEE.

Simply indicate your selection on the coupon below and forward it with \$1 and a brief note giving your age, occupation and a few other facts about yourself. We will open an account for you and send your selection to you subject to your examination. If completely satisfied, pay the Expressman 1/3 Down Payment (required by U. S. Government Regulations) and the balance in Easy Payments of \$5 a month. Otherwise return your selection and your \$1 will be refunded.

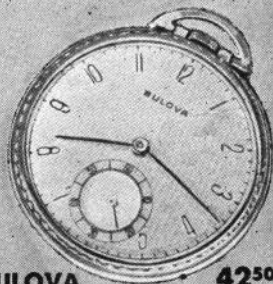
PRICES INCLUDE FEDERAL TAX

*Mido*



\$60

Mido Self-Winding, 17 jewels; Waterproof. Shock Resist; Radium Dial. Sweepsecond Hand. Stainless case. Send \$1, pay \$19 after examination, \$5 a month.



**BULOVA**

42<sup>50</sup>

Bulova "Filmore" 17 jewels; 10k yellow rolled gold plate case. Send \$1, pay 13.17 after examination, \$5 a month.

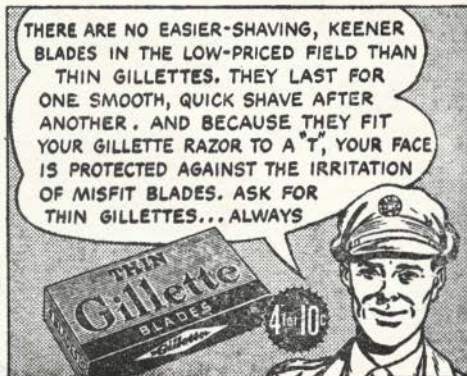
SEND \$1 WITH COUPON—PAY BALANCE OF 1/3 DOWN AFTER EXAMINATION

L. W. Sweet, 25 West 14th St. (Dept. P 1)  
New York, N. Y.

Enclosed find \$1 deposit. Send me No. ....  
Price \$ ..... After examination, I agree to  
pay \$ ..... and \$5.00 monthly thereafter  
until full price is paid, otherwise I'll return selection and you will refund my dollar.

NAME .....  
ADDRESS ..... STATE .....  
CITY .....

# BILL SCORED A DOUBLE HIT WHEN...





ALL STORIES NEW—  
NO REPRINTS **15¢**

# **NEW** **DETECTIVE** MAGAZINE

Vol. 8

Contents for July, 1946

No. 4

## TWO NOVELS YOU'LL REMEMBER

**IT'S BEEN A LONG, LONG CRIME**.....**Thorne Lee** **6**  
Put smoke in their eyes, baby, and we'll make one last killing—with you playing the corpse!

**THE SONG OF THE DEAD**.....**Fredric Brown** **68**  
I had never thought of a grave right next door to the woman I loved—yet someone had thought of it for me—to be dug by my own hands!

## A "WHEEL" WAINWRIGHT NOVELETTE

**DEAD MAN'S ROLL**.....**James A. Kirch** **32**  
The Wheel was all gambler—he could make bones talk—but not the girl who died protecting him... nor the cadaver who killed her!

## SHORT STORIES

**SLOW SLAY**.....**Robert C. Dennis** **24**  
"You made your bed, copper—now die in it!"

**BURNING ISSUE**.....**Ted Stratton** **43**  
If you've got to hang—it's good to know the ropes!

**THE CORPSE CAME LATE**.....**Jack Bradley** **48**  
Out in Hollywood, where they cook with gas, I was just the bright lad to cover up a kill—only, they don't care who they cook.

**IT'S A WISE CADAVER**.....**David Goodis** **53**  
It took a dead man who knew all the answers to unravel the riddle when they riddled Dominic!

**DRESSED TO KILL**.....**Dean Owen** **56**  
Back from the Pacific wars, Jeff remembered Dolly very well as a gal you could love—as somebody had—to death!

## CRIME FACT STORIES

**THE LADY SAID—DIE!**.....**Zeta Rothschild** **88**  
In all the annals of crime there is no stranger story than this, of the cop who had to prove his killer innocent—in order to send him to the gallows!

## SPECIAL FEATURES

**STRANGE TRAILS TO MURDER**.....**Lee** **62**  
The Necklace of Death.

**SOLVING CIPHER SECRETS**.....**M. E. Ohaver** **64**  
Come in on this never-more-timely feature—and meet the secret code-makers. More Club news in this issue!

## THE BEST IN CRIME FICTION!

Published every other month by Fictioneers, Inc., a division of Popular Publications, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago 16, Illinois. Editorial and executive offices, 205 East 42nd Street, N. Y. 17, N. Y. Henry Steeger, President and Secretary. Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice-President and Treasurer. Entry as second class matter pending at the post office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright 1946 by Fictioneers, Inc. The publishers cannot accept responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts, although care will be exercised in handling them. All rights reserved under Pan American copyright convention. Price per copy 15¢. Yearly subscription of six issues in the U.S.A. \$3.00. Additional foreign postage \$.50. Printed in the U.S.A.



Where GOLD  
was king...  
and LOVE  
was queen!

Out of the turbulent  
era when the West  
was coming of  
age... here  
is thrilling,  
romantic  
adventure!

# IN OLD SACRAMENTO

starring  
**WILLIAM ELLIOTT** and **CONSTANCE MOORE**

with  
**HANK DANIELS** • **RUTH DONNELLY**  
**EUGENE PALLETTE** • **LIONEL STANDER**

and  
**JACK LaRUE** • **GRANT WITHERS**  
**BOBBY BLAKE** • Screen Play by  
Frances Hyland • Adaptation by Frank Gruber  
Original story by Jerome Odum

Associate Producer & Director - Joseph Kane

A REPUBLIC PICTURE

Put smoke in their eyes, baby, and we'll make  
one last killing—with you playing the corpse!

# IT'S BEEN A LONG, LONG CRIME

## CHAPTER ONE

### Death Gets in Your Eyes

HE SPUN the dial to 18, dropped a nickel in the slot. To a man in Ladd Chamberlin's position that was a precious nickel. It would have bought a cup of coffee, a doughnut, a good fresh egg, or a big juicy orange at the market. Instead it went down the music slot. There had to be music too.

Ladd wandered back from the juke box to the corner stool and his glass of beer. In the glass above the bar his own face squinted at him. It was a pleasant face, but there was something lacking, something that distinguished the doers from the bums.

Not that he actually looked like a bum. The hair was trim and black, the face a clean, hard white, decently shaved. No ragged edges on

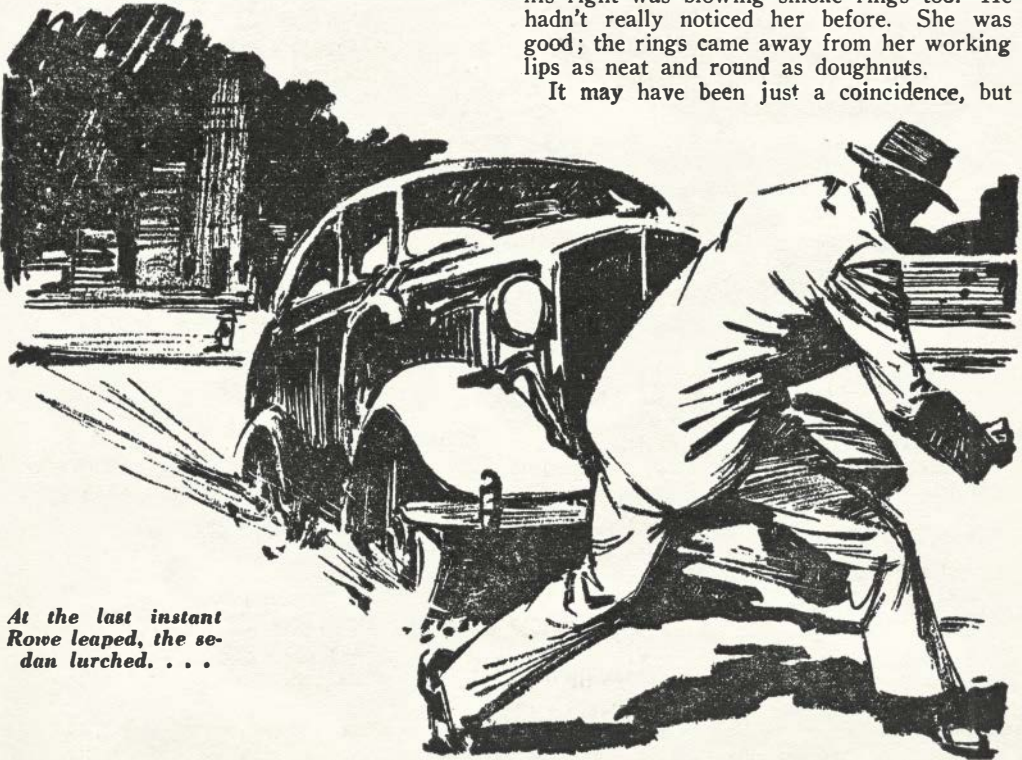
the blue shirt collar. Everything was there except the spark. There was no spark!

Ladd shrugged and switched his mind to the music. The record was Glen Gray's *Smoke Rings*, an old one, tangled up with memories. College stuff. Above the bar the fog of tobacco smoke seemed to take suggestion from the melody, forming a soft, fuzzy halo overhead.

Ladd felt mellow. He lit a cigarette and blew some rings to the sentimental rhythm. He could do that, blow smoke rings. That was one of the brilliant accomplishments he brought out of university. That and the Phi Beta Kappa key on his watch chain.

He discovered suddenly that the woman at his right was blowing smoke rings too. He hadn't really noticed her before. She was good; the rings came away from her working lips as neat and round as doughnuts.

It may have been just a coincidence, but



At the last instant  
Rowe leaped, the sedan  
lurched. . . .

## By Thorne Lee

her eyes were aware of Ladd up there in the glass. He found himself blowing larger rings that drifted up, spreading rapidly to engulf hers. She was joining the game now, without any pretense. He wondered if this was a new kind of pick-up, or just a little alcoholic sociability.

She hardly looked the type. Little red bird of a hat parked on a nest of black hair. Grim whiteness edging the lush red mouth. The brown eyes kept shooting out fine little darts of nervousness. Her hands were shaky on the whisky glass. Aside from that she was all nice, too nice to be exchanging smoke rings with a stranger.

"I like that song, *Smoke Rings*," Ladd ventured. "It reminds me."

She didn't even hesitate. "Of what?"

"It just reminds me. You know how songs are."

"Sure." Her voice was husky, tight.

They blew some more smoke rings, timing them to interlock in sinuous embraces. There



was something almost sensual about it, but Ladd didn't feel disgusted. He felt warm.

She broke it. "Do you like smoke?"

"It's my favorite color," he said. "Grey against black. And it goes nowhere."

She inhaled. "Where there's smoke there's fire."

*This, Ladd thought, is beginning to get corny.* Oh, well, let the girl have her fun. "I like fire," he said, turning coolly to look at her instead of the mirror.

Her eyes concentrated on the stiff line of his jaw. "Fire is dangerous to play with."

*You've been seeing too many movies, girlie,* Ladd thought. He killed a smile at the corners of his mouth. "I like fire," he said. "And I'm not playing."

**H**ER eyes closed and her head swayed back for an instant, exposing the white line of throat. The eyes came open and she glanced cautiously around. The bartender stood dreamily at the far end of his stall.

She lifted her drink and spoke across it. "In the phone booth at six-four-five. The classified directory. Section X."

She drained her glass, crushed out her cigarette, drew on black gloves. She no longer seemed aware that Ladd Chamberlin existed. She paid for her drink and strolled up to the telephone booth, stepped inside without a glance back at Ladd.

He sat there limply, trying to figure that one out. A telephone booth might make a cozy rendezvous, but the classified directory would be a trifle cramped.

Ladd chuckled. Probably there would be a phone number marked in the directory. In the classified directory? A business phone? He turned back to his beer, snorted, "Sister, I'm not in business any more!"

He heard her come out of the booth and leave. He didn't even look at her. He noticed a clock over the bar. Past 6:44. She had said six-four-five, the idea being that in less than one minute Ladd was supposed to follow her into that booth.

It was a silly play and Ladd wanted none of it. A lot of men would have taken her up on it, even a lot of good men. She looked good. But Ladd Chamberlin was not exactly a man of action. Afterward he would get to thinking about that invitation and be sorry, but now he couldn't move. Below the neck he was dumb.

He watched the minute hand around the clock, fascinated. Then her face got up there between him and the clock. He took a good look at the eyes and found himself getting off his stool, walking down to that phone booth. He felt silly, a little drunk. What was it about her eyes?

He stepped into the booth. Light came on with the closing of the door. The yellow classified directory was underneath the green book. He drew it out, thumbed toward the back. The first page in the X section felt heavy; on the back of it he found a long sealed envelope, lightly glued. He jerked it off, ripping away thin strips of yellow.

This was not at all the thing he had expected. The envelope was light but slightly bulky; the front of it was blank. Ladd felt equally blank.

He slid the envelope under his coat, went out and looked up the street. No woman was in sight. He came back, ordered another beer and walked down to the end booth where the bartender couldn't see him. For a while he just sat there trying to make up his mind. He would open it eventually of course; so why not get going?

He pried up the seal carefully with his pocket knife. Inside the first envelope was a second one, also sealed. It had passed through the mails, showing the postmark on a three cent stamp. An address was typewritten on the front—the local post office, Box 4815. There was no name with the address, and no return.

If the letter had not shown a postmark, Ladd might have dropped the thing in a mail box, gotten rid of it, but now, with curiosity tugging at him, he had to open that second envelope. There was money inside that one, wrapped tightly in brown paper, rubber banded. Five bills—one thousand dollars apiece.

Ladd didn't yell or get up and do a little dance. He put the money back, noted the postmark—Arnheim Postal Station—replaced the small envelope in the larger one and put the whole thing back in an inside pocket.

Five thousand dollars, just like that! What for? He had done nothing worth five thousand, was going to do nothing.

The answer was right there of course, though he didn't care much for it: The girl had given the stuff to the wrong man.

In that case she might discover her error and come back. Ladd ordered a whole quart of beer and waited. He was a patient man.

**A**N HOUR later he had played every record in the juke box and his mellowness had merged into a deep and abiding love for every creature in the world. Then a tapping finger on the shoulder jarred him out of bliss into hard reality.

It was the girl again. A white flash of relief—a strange fleeting glimpse of terror—crossed her face and the effect was as coldly shocking as a bucket of water dumped on his head.

"Hello there! Remember me?" she said tightly.



"Yeah." He waved her into the booth, pressed a palm over each eye, clearing it. Then his face came up sharply, studying. "You're the gal who walks out just when things begin to get warm."

Her giggle sounded like a fake. "I was drunk," she confessed, black lashes flickering. "I do the most incredible things when I'm drunk!"

"You certainly do!" he agreed.

She was trying to be coy but it wasn't going very well. "You'll give it back, of course?" she said, smiling vaguely.

On an impulse Ladd decided to stall. After all, this was the most interesting thing that had happened since he got out of the army. "Give what back?" he asked blankly.

"The envelope."

"The envelope?" He scratched his chin. "You're still a little drunk, aren't you?"

Her eyes showed that trace of fright again. "Probably. But not that drunk! I remember everything."

"You do? Shall we try the whole thing again? It might come out better—"

"Oh no!" Her hand darted out, touched the back of Ladd's. "Please give me the envelope. Don't make trouble for me!"

"Trouble?"

"I'm in a very embarrassing position. I delivered a sealed envelope to you tonight. Later I received word that you were—the wrong man."

"You keep talking about some mysterious envelope. Could you describe it a little better?"

"Just a plain white envelope. There was a second envelope inside with an address."

"What address?"

"Box four-eight-one-five."

"What was in that second envelope?"

Her jaw fell. She had trouble working her mouth shut without rattling the teeth. "I don't know what was in it," she whispered.

"You don't know?" He lit a cigarette. "Do you realize you're getting pretty ridiculous? This weird yarn about an envelope and you don't even know what's in it!"

"It was sealed," she said. "I was only the delivery agent. Please don't try to deny that you got it! I saw you go into the phone booth!"

"If you didn't know the contents, weren't you being pretty careless with other people's property?"

"Oh yes, I was careless!" Her lips trembled. "I—I didn't care, any more—"

If this gal was acting, she was plenty good. "How did you get the wrong man?" he demanded.

"It was the time, the wrong time," she said quickly. "I made a mistake!"

"Was the time all you had to go by?"

"Oh no, I had a description. Dark hair, medium tall, thin—"

"Just call me skinny!" Ladd grinned, thinking it over. "That's still pretty weak identification for the delivery of anything as important as you make this out to be."

She looked down at her hands. "You followed the cues," she said quietly.

"What cues?"

She didn't answer, directly. Her head swung out of the booth, surveyed the lounge. There was only one other customer, an elderly man. She sat back, nervously lit a cigarette. Slowly her head twisted up in a peculiar, graceless position. The throat and the mouth worked carefully and he could sense what was coming. Smoke passed her lips, boiling up into a perfect pinwheel of white.

Smoke rings! There was the cue, the identification. He had walked right into that one.

"A lot of men blow smoke rings when they get in a mood," Ladd commented.

She looked fiercely at the end of her cigarette. "You didn't fit perfectly, but you were almost right. I was overanxious, and I—I didn't care!"

SHE seemed to be apologizing. Vaguely he felt she was trying to convey something beyond words. Not actually trying perhaps, but there was some submerged terror in her that was crying out, clutching for a straw of sympathy, of comradeship. Ladd's guess was that this woman had wanted something to go wrong with her assignment, that this inner want had guided her to a false move and she had leaped into it.

Her hand came out again, caught his wrist. "You will forget all about this and let me have the envelope?"

"Tell you what: You bring me a signed receipt, stating the exact contents, from the rightful owner, and I'll let you have it!"

"Oh no!" she gasped. "Don't make me do that! Please! This has nothing to do with you!"

Ladd looked up at the ceiling to avoid being influenced. He was susceptible to eyes, nice brown eyes. "It has something to do with me now. I'm in it up to my neck. I just want to get out of it neatly, all clear. Do you understand? I don't want anyone to say I robbed that envelope."

She tried to argue, but it was futile. Ladd could be stubborn, especially when forces were coming in at him.

She gave up finally, crushed out her cigarette. "All right. I'll see what I can do. Whatever happens, don't blame me. I gave you your chance to get out— Can you meet me here again tonight?"

"Sure. I'm footloose."

"All right, then. Just before midnight. Eleven-fifty. The bar will be open then."

"Right."

There had been a veiled threat in her words, but there was no threat in the slump of her shoulders as she walked out, the cheap little black coat, the red hat, the small, graceful figure dragging a little. No spark in the beat of the heels.

*No spark—*

Ladd stood up finally, straightened his shoulders. "What's a matter, buddy?" The bartender winked one redshot eye. "Didn't you make the grade?"

Ladd laughed emptily.

The barkeep chuckled. "Tell you what, buddy, I think she's got a husband. Drinks like a fish!"

Ladd felt a sudden chill he didn't want to analyze. The clock over the bar read 8:30. A long wait until midnight. He went out. The street seemed deserted. He had gone a block toward home when a man stepped out of a dark alley behind him, jabbed him hard in the ribs.

"That's a gun on your spine!" a taut voice explained. "Step back in here!"

They went into the black depth of the alley. Ladd felt dry mouthed and queer. He had gone through the whole war without being prodded by a gun muzzle; now he was getting it at home.

"Get your arms up and no talk!" the man snapped. "Not a word, or I'll let you have it!"

Ladd obeyed. An arm looped around him, hand dipping deftly under his lapel and out with the double envelope. Behind him a flashlight glowed dimly. He could hear fingers crackling paper.

The arm reached around again and got his billfold. Then solid steel struck him, blindingly, in the back of the head. He went flying down on his face. Painfully he tried to push away the flood of dark concrete that seemed to be rushing up to drown him.

The billfold thudded softly beside his ear. "Let that one soak in, buddy!" a voice said.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Slay You Later, Pal

**H**E HAD to nurse his head for twenty-four hours; it hurt that bad. Lying in bed he thought over the things he might have done, but hadn't. Husband or not, he had let that girl get away from him with the terror in her eyes. He'd been just a little late on the uptake.

*Little Late Laddie* they ought to call him; that fitted Ladd Chamberlin right down to the ground. Even in the army, where some men find themselves, he had been a washout.

Coasted through officer's training, but he wasn't the kind of officer that got promoted. Just couldn't seem to work the angles. He did a good job so mechanically that nobody ever noticed him doing it.

"Your time is running out, Chamberlin," he groaned, wrestling with his bed sheets. "You're in a power dive and you've got to pull out!"

That was no kidding. His discharge pay and savings were dwindling. There were jobs to be had, of course, but he had a mortal terror of being a square man in a round hole like a lot of people he had known.

The friendly landlady brought in some tea and the evening paper. He finally dragged out of bed, gulped the tea, and began the usual attack on the news, postponing the agony of searching the want ads until last.

Only a half-dozen headlines arrested his attention. The last one read:

### WAR FACTORY TOTAL LOSS IN HUGE FIRE

A fire of unknown origin razed the Hanover Small Arms plant in South City this morning, breaking out shortly after midnight and sweeping through the highly explosive store rooms before an ocean gale. Estimated loss in surplus stock was placed tentatively at \$200,000.

Arthur Kelly, night watchman, could not account for the exact source of the blaze, but early reports by officers of the city arson squad indicate spontaneous combustion.

The paragraph at the very bottom of the column caught Ladd's eye.

The owner, George Hanover, of the exclusive Arnheim Drive set . . .

That Arnheim struck a distant note. It drifted away from him and then came up slowly out of his memory: The postmark on that inner envelope had been *Arnheim Postal Station*. Arnheim was a small suburb, way out on the million dollar fringe.

He was beginning to feel sick again, so he crawled back into bed. The sickness went away but Arnheim still stuck there, clogging his brain.

*Smoke is my favorite color*, he had said to that girl. *Grey against black . . . and it goes nowhere. . . .*

*"Where there's smoke there's fire!"*

*Fire of unknown origin, breaking out shortly after midnight. . . Exclusive Arnheim Drive set. . . .*

*Arnheim Postal Station.*

*Arnheim.*

*Smoke.*

*Fire.*

*Five thousand dollars.*

*"Can you meet me here again tonight . . . just before midnight. . . ."*

*Fire . . . shortly after midnight.*

*Five thousand dollars.*

*Exclusive Arnheim two hundred thousand fire.*

*Oh, to hell with it! Chamberlin, you're nuts!*

Ladd went to sleep.

It was still on his mind in the morning—the girl was still on his mind—and it still did not make sense, but a man had to be moving, doing something.

Just to satisfy his restlessness Ladd took a bus trip down to the site of the burned-out factory in South City. It was early dawn. The usual sightseers were not out yet. The long brick factory was a charred ruin of grey and black.

There were no human guards around the dead factory, only a few warning signs. It reminded Ladd of some of the shelled-out towns he had seen in France, a futile epitaph to civilization.

He walked into the mess, not because it was necessary or even safe, but because the twisted, blackened steel, the tortured splinters of wood, the crumbled mounds of brick cried out to him in mortal terror, like the cry in a woman's eyes. He strolled around the cement floor, avoiding the swept-up piles of ash and the heaps of shattered glass. There was one huge mound of fallen brick that reminded him especially of a grave and then he stood rooted in horror because a body seemed to be digging itself out of that grave and there, unmistakably, was the white, clawing arm of the enlivened corpse!

The arm did not move—it was only imagination that had made it move—but it really was an arm, a hairy forearm, protruding stiffly from the mass of brick, a gruesome white flag of the last surrender.

**T**HE local variation of the third degree was not as tough as Ladd had imagined, or was it that he himself felt tougher than usually? Anyway, the police couldn't shake his story.

"Sounds almost fishy enough to be true, Inspector," commented Detective Sergeant Rowe, a short, stocky man with a bull head carried tightly against the shoulders.

"My own opinion," grunted Inspector La Mont. His grey, remote eyes regarded Ladd Chamberlin distastefully. "Fella, we're temporarily agreed to believe your story, though it's an insult to the intelligence! You haven't the slightest idea who the girl was?"

"Never saw her before in my life!"

"And you just sat there blowing smoke rings?"

"That's right."

"Now, ain't that cute!" sneered the lieutenant from homicide.

La Mont scowled. "Chamberlin, we've got to locate that girl! It's the first break we've had in a deal that's giving us grey hair! I'm going to turn you over to Sergeant Rowe, here, of the arson detail. Rowe has a special interest in this case; it was his buddy, Sergeant Dempster, you found buried under those bricks. Rowe will tell you what to do."

"Inspector, I was thinking—" Rowe swung toward Ladd—"Did you say you were out of a job, son?"

Ladd nodded.

Rowe snapped his fingers. "I got an idea. Wait for me a minute."

Actually it was fifteen minutes before Rowe returned with a pale, mustached, shy little man carrying a brief case.

"This is Fred Reiser," Rowe said. "He's a private operative hired by a pool of insurance companies. Inspector, Reiser thinks he can get his boss to hire Chamberlin!"

**I**T SEEMED to Ladd that his fortunes suddenly had gotten out of hand. Here he was with a new job, a new, exciting assignment, and he hadn't even lifted a finger.

Here he was, in fact, eating lunch at the expense of an ugly, friendly detective sergeant.

"You ever hear of Murder Incorporated?" the sergeant asked.

Ladd was startled. "Sure. Who hasn't?"

Rowe's mouth was fleshy, drooping. His tongue stirred speech like a ladle in thick soup. "If a guy can incorporate murder, I guess he can incorporate anything."

Ladd fingered a water glass nervously, waiting.

Rowe lifted one shaggy eyebrow. "How do you like Arson Incorporated?"

"Arson?"

"That's just an idea. La Mont and the Fire Chief cooked it up between them. There've been a lot of unexplained fires."

"I don't quite get the angle."

"Well, insurance is one. We're trying to think of others."

"I can't fit the word 'payoff' into it either. That five thousand was passed to me before the Hanover fire," Ladd noted.

"Sure. When you're dealing in risky goods you get an advance payment, don't you?"

Ladd felt an odd ball of pain at the back of his neck. "Do you think the girl was really one of the gang?"

Rowe's eyes peered up sharply over a forkful of pie. "What d'you think?"

Ladd consulted his coffee cup. "I don't know. She seemed scared, scared to death."

"Like she wanted help, but didn't dare to ask for it?"

"That was it!" Ladd said eagerly.

Rowe's eyes took on a look of friendly cunning. "Laddie, how would you be as an actor?"

Ladd scowled. "Why do people call me Laddie? I get that all the time."

"Well, kid, it's probably that name of yours on top of the fact that you look so innocent."

"Innocent!" Ladd protested.

"No offense. At my age you wish you had the same look. Laddie, you given me an idea how to operate. If we find this girl again, let's play it like this: Let's you pretend that you have gone overboard for this gal. You ought to know the moves, having been in the army. Give her a rush, and you'll find out a lot more than you would by acting like the law."

Ladd shut his eyes, felt strange, cold waters closing around him. He had already swum out too far.

"I don't know. I—"

"If you really like her, kid, the better the act! You got to be hard in this business. Let me tell you now, you got to be hard!"

Ladd's eyes snapped open. "Tell me one thing: Has anybody ever died in these fires?"

**A** RED flush crept up Rowe's neck, engulfed the chin, flooded through his cheeks. "Yeah," he said thickly. "Six months ago. A whole family got themselves trapped in an apartment house. We figure the apartment was not on the program but the fire was swept over to it from a burning warehouse by a heavy wind. Then you saw what happened last night to Sergeant Dempster."

"Do you think that wall falling on him was really an accident?"

Rowe glanced sharply at Ladd, surprised, perhaps, at the rapidity of his ideas. "I don't know," he grumbled. "Dempster and I went all over that wall during the day. What was Dempster doing back there at night? He knows enough to watch out for those gutted walls. He's been in this business as long as I have. We come in together."

Ladd could see the picture. "It wouldn't have been so hard to murder him at that. Beat in his head with a brick, then drop him in there and push the wall over on his dead body."

"You talk like a man of some experience."

Ladd gulped. "It seems obvious enough."

"Except what would be the object of bumping Dempster?"

"He might have found a clue and followed it up."

"Yeah. He might," Rowe agreed.

Ladd did some thinking. "How would they make contact with a man who would benefit by a fire?"

Rowe snorted. "How did Murder Incor-

porated get its business? I don't know how, but they sure got it!"

"Somewhere they'd be bound to strike an honest man."

Rowe laughed out loud at that. "An honest man in this town I got to see!"

Ladd laughed. "Rowe, you strike me as a professional cynic."

Rowe's eyes were suddenly shrewd, withdrawn. "Laddie, this is a rough business. Sometimes it will make you sick. There'll be times you'll get awful sick!"

**L** ADD began his quest for the mystery girl at the cocktail bar where he had first met her. The bartender recognized his description.

"Yeah, I remember you and her. Still making a play there, buddy?"

Ladd scowled. "I'd like to locate her."

"I think I could point you out her husband, if I'm not mistaken. He's a sort of barfly around this town. I've seen her when she had to lead him home."

"Do you keep your eye on the barflies or their wives?"

The man grinned, displaying ragged teeth. "We like our customers to get home alive. When they're not alive, they're not good customers."

That, Ladd thought, is one way of looking at it. "If she comes in again, would you tell her the man who likes *Smoke Rings* was looking for her?"

"Sure. Dan Cupid, Junior, that's me." That ugly display of teeth again. "Where will you be?"

"I'll be around."

"What'll I tell her husband if he comes in?"

The bartender thought that was hilarious, but Ladd didn't laugh. He went outside, haunted the downtown streets. This hunting a lost woman was a new experience and he felt slightly at a loss. Late in the afternoon he went back to the same cocktail lounge and was surprised to get a sign from the bartender. The man leaned knowingly across the bar, polished vigorously.

"She's back there in the last booth," he whispered. "I told her about you."

"Did she ask for me?"

"Nope." The man smirked unpleasantly. "Was you expecting her to?"

Ladd shrugged, ordered a drink. It had been easy to locate her, much easier than he expected. From now on it was going to be rough.

He went over and dropped a nickel in the juke box. The number was *Smoke Rings* and it yanked her head out of that booth like an apple on a string.

Ladd tipped the barman, took his drink

down to the booth. "You must live here," he remarked, sliding in.

"No, not really!" she said quickly. "I'm not—like that. I mean I—"

"Sure," Ladd offered. "You're a nice girl and you don't drink much. Now that's settled. What else do I like about you?"

Her brown eyes swept over his face. "Is that why you came back?"

"How do you know I came back? Maybe I live here."

"The barman said—

"Sure, I asked him to say that. I wanted to see you again."

Her breath came in tight, swift, rushes. "I wanted to see you, too. I was—I was afraid they might have hurt you."

Ladd felt the back of his head. "They did, a little."

She winced. Her hand reached out at him, then stiffened, withdrew. "I was afraid of that," she repeated.

"Afraid? Why? Am I different from the others?"

"What others?"

"Those rough boys you swap smoke rings with."

She looked down at her black gloves. Her face was pretty, even when it was wretched and uncontrolled. For a moment he thought the twitching lips and the corners of the eyes were going to get away from her. She finally wrenched out, "I can't talk here. Would you walk home with me?"

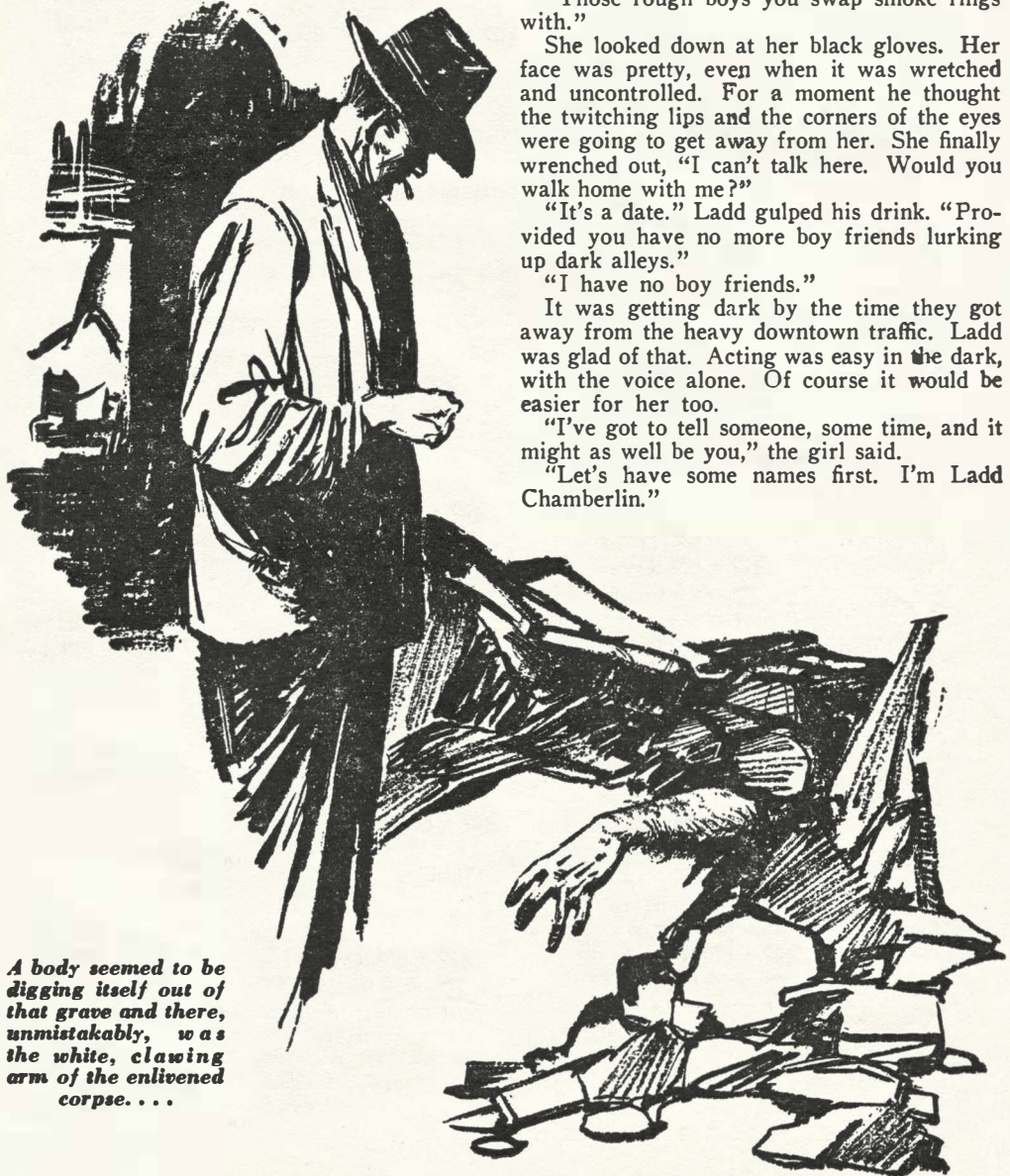
"It's a date." Ladd gulped his drink. "Provided you have no more boy friends lurking up dark alleys."

"I have no boy friends."

It was getting dark by the time they got away from the heavy downtown traffic. Ladd was glad of that. Acting was easy in the dark, with the voice alone. Of course it would be easier for her too.

"I've got to tell someone, some time, and it might as well be you," the girl said.

"Let's have some names first. I'm Ladd Chamberlin."



*A body seemed to be digging itself out of that grave and there, unmistakably, was the white, clawing arm of the enlivened corpse....*

"Ladd? Like in Laddie?"

He winced. "That's me! Who are you?"

"Eva Renner."

"Eva? Like in Little Eva? You troubled by bloodhounds, Eva?"

IT WASN'T much of a joke and neither one laughed. Where the street dipped into a tunnel of darkness under thick evergreens her hand came out and caught his wrist.

"You were right," she said. "I am troubled by bloodhounds. Whatever I do, wherever I go, I can't get away from them. Every move I make—oh, it's impossible!"

"They trailing us now?"

"I'm not sure, but I have a feeling that they know everything about me as surely as if they were looking in a crystal bowl—" She hesitated.

"You might as well tell me the whole thing," he suggested. "The way you've got me roused, I'll find out anyway."

"Aroused?"

"The hair on the back of my neck."

"Then you must know how I feel."

"I have an idea," he admitted.

"No one has ever known how I feel. I only wanted to live, to make my living. I just went to the employment agency for a job."

"A job? And they put you on this?"

"They sent me to a man. I'll never forget him, that devil! He was so nice. A detective agency, he said it was, and so did the sign on the door. They needed a woman, an ordinary looking woman—"

"Ordinary! Did you hit him?"

She laughed, a bitter, wintry laugh like the stirring of late autumn leaves. "A woman who would fit into scenes without attracting too much attention. He offered—it sounded to me like an awfully good salary for a girl with no experience. He said I would carry messages and things between their detective agents." Ladd could feel her shudder. "Mostly it's been between saloons. I have to go shouldering up to men, striking up conversations—ugly, hard-eyed men I wouldn't dare to be alone with."

"Like me?"

"You were different. I should have seen that. I was too anxious to get it over with. Every time, every new job, has been like dipping my hands deeper and deeper in some unseen, dreadful filth!"

"Are they men you would recognize again?"

"Oh, I don't know. It seems to me they were never the same twice, but I wouldn't swear to that. You were the first one who ever looked me square in the eyes—at first I did exactly as I was told, made the contacts, delivered the messages and kept my mouth

shut. Then—I don't know how it happened—I began to get afraid. I felt as if every minute of my life were haunted by those men."

"Couldn't you quit?"

"I tried to. I did try to! I told the man over the phone—they always gave me orders by phone—that I wanted to quit and he said, 'Sister, to quit us you got to belong to the union.' 'What union?' I asked him and he said, 'The union down on ninety-fifth street.' . . . He gave me the address and I actually went down there, and do you know what it was?"

Ladd figured it out before she spoke.

Her voice sounded like wind at the corners of a window, trying to get inside. "It was a cemetery!"

It did get inside of him—the terror. He had known moments like this in the army. A guy would be doing all right and then some other poor devil would let the fear come out and it would seize upon the rest, a darting Simon Legree of fear, whipping their souls.

His hand shot out automatically and gripped hers. "Do you remember the name of the detective agency?"

"Yes. The Ryan Detective Association."

"Ryan?"

"It's not in the phone book. I went back there once when I first became suspicious, and it—it wasn't there!"

Ladd whistled. "How about that employment agency that sent you to the job in the first place?"

"Oh! oh, I didn't even think to go back there!"

"Do you remember the name?"

"I could if I thought about it—" he let her think and she came up with—"the Private Home Employment Agency."

"Why didn't you try the police?" he asked.

Her voice was flat, sardonic. "Here? In this town? I wouldn't go to the police with anything!"

## CHAPTER THREE

### Crash Value

SEVEN blocks from the business district she stopped off at a little market. She thought it would be better if he waited outside for her. She came out with two sacks. The one he carried for her was jammed tight with four loaves of rye bread.

"That's a lot of bread," he remarked.

"My brother eats an awful lot."

"Brother? You're not married?"

She laughed. "You thought all this bread was for a family!"

"Oh, sure. You look like the mother of five at least."

She laughed again. The tightness went out

of her voice like water breaking from a dam. So that bartender had mistaken a drunken brother for her husband! Ladd felt himself going warm all over. "Couldn't a brother give you a little help in your trouble?"

"My brother is—he's not well."

That, Ladd thought, is one way of putting it. "Pardon me for being personal, but you got me into this and I'm trying to get us both out. Do you have to support your brother? Is that why you took this crazy job?"

Her answer was abrupt, sharp. "You have the most wonderful, penetrating mind I have ever known!"

Ladd was taken back. He was glad his

blush was unseen. "That," he muttered, "would be a matter of opinion. If I'm not too penetrating, why do you put up with him?"

"With whom?"

"Your brother."

"Oh! Well, if you have a cripple in your family, you usually put up with him."

"Sure," Ladd said. Funny about family ties. Ladd had gotten away from them in the past ten years, so far away that he had been ashamed to reach for them again.

They came to a big frame house, at least fifty years old, which had survived the decades by conversion into an apartment. There seemed to be four flats, two up, two down.



THIS CLOSE HARMONY IS FUN -

NATURALLY - I USE SMOOTH STAR BLADES!

**FOR DOUBLE EDGE RAZORS**



Available again! The modern, amazing blades that make your double edge razor perform miracles. Try Star Double Edge Blades.



4 for 10¢

**FOR SINGLE EDGE RAZORS**

Single edge Star gives the shave without a struggle—no burn, no nick, no scrape. For a smoother shave that lasts longer, reach for a Star!



4 for 10¢

Star Div., American Safety Razor Corp., B'klyn 1, N. Y.

They went along a tightly fenced driveway to the back stairs. She went up first by herself and quickly came back down.

"I guess you can come up for a minute," she said thickly, as if she were afraid he would get away.

He walked up quietly into a small, clean kitchen. There were signs of a haphazard meal on the table, a dirty knife, a loaf of rye bread, half gone, slices spilling out of the wax wrapper, crumbs. He followed her into a small living room. The furniture seemed dull, ragged, a little tired. There was a table serving as a sort of desk, littered with papers, envelopes, pencils, a telephone.

She had gone out into a hallway, rapped at a neighbor's door. Her own voice was inaudible but the other woman had the shrill tongue of deafness.

"Yes, he did, dearie. He went off just a little while ago, about fifteen minutes. There was a phone call woke him up, I guess—you must of hid it good, dearie, because he sure couldn't find it. Said he'd go out and get some more—and he cursed you, dearie. It was a fright how he cursed you! Enough to shake down the walls, it was! Honestly darling, if I were you—"

THE voice thinned down like a noisy radio suddenly switched low. Ladd slipped back to the kitchen. He and another man, a tall, thin shadow of a man, came into the kitchen light at the same time through opposite doors.

The man lurched, caught a chair, dragged up on it. His black hair hung raggedly, veiling the red-veined, furious eyes. The face, if it were twisted into shape, could very well be handsome.

"What're you doin' here?"

Ladd spoke easily, riding his temper. "I just helped your sister carry some—"

"Eva? How'd you know her? Are you where she goes to at nights?"

"I just met her."

"Just met 'er? The little—" Ladd must have looked threatening, because the man staggered back. "Does she pick 'em up off the streets now?"

Ladd felt himself burning from the collar up. Why couldn't he get his hands up there and smear the guy?

The long man beat him to it, spilled loosely across the table, snatched at a ketchup bottle, came up again, waving it. "Don't want guys, see! No guys—"

Ladd hit the lean wrist sharply with the side of his hand. The bottle shot out of the sprung grip, skipped across the floor, trailing ketchup.

Ladd had handled drunks, but he'd never fought one. He just pushed at the face and

the man folded at the knees and came down loosely, flat, soft. Except for the cushioning limpness, the fall might have knocked the fellow out, the way he slid across the floor and head on into the cupboard. The lean face twitched sharply and then settled, loosened. The breath came out with saliva through the open, mouth.

The girl came in while Ladd was on his knees, rolling the man over, lifting up the head. He could feel her panting breath, warm behind his neck.

"You'd better go," she whispered. "I didn't expect him—so soon."

"I'll help you get him to bed."

"No—Just leave him," she said angrily. "A floor, or a bed, or a gutter—what difference does it make?"

"He doesn't get tough with you?"

"Tough?" Was that a curl or a tremble on her lip? "He's not that much of a—you'd better go. I'm sorry I brought you into this, into our lives."

Ladd stood up stiffly. His hand jerked down toward her bent head, the soft, black hair, but didn't touch it.

"I'm not sorry," he said.

Before he left he went into the other room and memorized the number printed in the little white circle at the base of the telephone.

She glanced up as he passed through the kitchen on his way out. Her lips worked, producing only a husky, "Thanks!"

A SMILE, thin as a pencil mark, traced across Inspector La Mont's cold face. His fine, pale hands were spread, tapering, palm down, on his desk.

"Could I trade a worn-out lieutenant and one grade-C sergeant for your services, Chamberlin?"

Lieutenant Dan Corey of homicide and Sergeant Rowe, at opposite ends of the desk, laughed politely.

"Chamberlin," the inspector went on, "your stuff is good. In one day you've produced as much as my boys have gotten in six months. I'm thinking of all the taxpayers' money we could save."

"The girl wanted to talk," Ladd explained hastily.

Sergeant Rowe dropped a hand on Ladd's shoulder. "Never make excuses for being good, Laddie. You got to brag in this business."

The inspector nodded in agreement. "I would like to see one of my men get as much out of a girl in one evening. I'm thinking this department needs more youth, more—a—"

"Glamor is the word!" drawled Lieutenant Corey, a tall, slouching blond.

"Glamor then!" snapped La Mont. "The fact is, Chamberlin, that the girl's story



checks, right down the line. There was a Ryan Detective Agency that went out of business a year ago. There was also a Private Home Employment Agency that folded up about two hours before our boys moved in."

"Two hours?" Ladd felt an unhappy constriction at his waist. "You mean the girl warned them?"

"I didn't say so."

"Would that make you unhappy, Laddie?" Sergeant Rowe asked.

"It would make me wrong, all wrong."

La Mont broke in. His voice was smooth as ice. "Keep feeling right about her, Chamberlin. It will help your work. We've also checked that Will Renner, the girl's brother. Her story is straight on that score. He's a no-account, a drunken deadbeat. Every patrolman in town knows Renner. He favors no particular gutters."

"To finance a sop like that she would need money," Ladd defended.

"She's working with money," La Mont reminded him. "So you stay with her. Make love to her, if you have to."

Ladd grimaced. "This is a nasty business you're in."

"We deal with nasty people."

On the way out Sergeant Rowe's big feet shuffled along beside Ladd's through the gloomy outer corridor of City Hall. "La Mont likes you, Laddie. It might be a job. When you tabbed that Private Home Employment Agency, La Mont was like a goose with a golden egg. He thinks that agency was the contact end of the arson business. By planting domestic help in private homes they could gather information on prospective customers. In fact, it has opened up a whole new angle of this thing—theft."

"Theft?"

"Sure. A fire is a beautiful setting for robbery. A planted house servant gets wind of a big cache of cash or other valuables. From there on he may handle the job himself, but more likely he calls in the fire specialist. While no one is home they lift everything in sight that would be inflammable, then light up the house, and the owner thinks his valuables have burned up!"

"It sounds good," Ladd admitted.

"It is good! Most of those houselifters get caught somehow with the stolen goods, but if nobody knows the goods were stolen, the boys ride along as free as air. This thing has so many angles we haven't begun to figure them all. Business competitors is another."

They went out swinging doors. The steep steps of city hall fanned out before them. A lone cab was parked down at the front curb.

"Come down here, Rowe," Ladd said. "I want you to meet someone."

There was a girl sitting in the back of the

cab. She rolled down the glass, smiled. "Miss Renner, this is Sergeant Rowe—"

Rowe paled, hunched up as if Ladd had suddenly kicked him in the chest. "Laddie, you damn fool!"

Rowe's big hand spaded Ladd into the cab and then his head came up cautiously, surveying the street. Ladd saw him strike off at an angle, behind the cab, cutting through traffic, crossing the street. There was a long black sedan parked over there, facing the other way.

Rowe was in the middle of the street, moving fast, when the sedan broke from the curb, sliced traffic in a wild, screaming arc, and then raced back. Rowe stood alone in a broad arena of open street.

He crouched, weaving desperately, as the thing skidded, straightened, and then hurtled down on him. Eva Renner screamed. Ladd flung out a futile hand. At the last instant Rowe leaped, the sedan lurched, missed, whipped his coat tails with the wind of its passage.

Rowe sprawled. A big truck braked, slid along a collapsing accordion of space—and stopped.

Ladd let his breath out when Rowe came up, seemingly right out of the wheels of the truck. Rowe waved the terrified driver ahead and ran back to the cab. The black sedan had vanished.

ROWE slid into the seat beside Eva Renner.

"Shall we follow them?" Ladd gasped.

Rowe's grin was a little pasty. "Where?" he asked, waving a hand at the flow of traffic.

"It looked like they tried to kill you!" Eva Renner whispered.

"Who?" Rowe inquired coldly.

The girl turned to Ladd. "We must have been followed here. They must know everything about me!"

Rowe switched the subject. "Would you explain this little party, Laddie?"

"Well Rowe, I've been talking to Eva—Miss Renner—and I've convinced her the police aren't all so bad. She's come to witness against the gang. Show her your badge, Rowe; she wants to be sure."

Rowe groaned, flipped his lapel, revealing a flash of silver on the back. "Aren't you a little late getting here?" he asked the girl angrily.

Eva stared at her black gloved hands. "I didn't know I was involved in—in such a terrible thing!"

Rowe was sarcastic. "I suppose, Laddie, you've given her a play-by-play report of the whole business?"

"No, I just gave her an idea that she was in a spot and it was time to talk."

"Did you have any contact with Hanover?" Rowe asked the girl sharply.

"Hanover?" Her mind didn't seem to connect.

Rowe pursued another angle. "Where did you get those envelopes you delivered?"

"Oh!" The girl stiffened. "They came to my post office box. I went to the box every day. Usually on the day an envelope came I would get a phone call at home telling me where and when to deliver it."

"Any names?"

"No. They would give me a very general description of the man. Then I would go to the place of delivery, which was always a cocktail bar, and watch for a cue. The cue was—"

"Smoke rings?" Ladd cut in.

"Yes, and a certain number of words of conversation on the subject of smoke and fire."

Ladd was surprised. "Did I actually hit the right number of words?"

"I'm not sure. I was excited. I may have miscounted."

Rowe groaned. "Wonder what weird mind thought that up?"

"Not mine!" Eva's chin was up, defending herself.

Rowe's ugly face relaxed a little. "Do you think you would recognize any faces?"

"I might."

"Good. Come inside and have a look at our album."

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Go Soak Your Dead. . . .

THEY were easy on her at headquarters, even though she identified none of the photographs or spotlighted faces. Then they put her in Ladd's custody—and for a week he wasn't mad at anybody.

Then, late on a Saturday evening, Ladd was reporting to Rowe at headquarters when a call came in on a fire. He went along in a fast patrol car, holding his breath as they whistled through the foggy streets.

"It's a gun shop," Rowe told him. "Those things are bad. They go up like firecrackers."

Rowe's driver was pumping the siren and it picked up the wail of other sirens. They all came together, baying on a single note, like wolves on a scent. Smoke rolled out first to meet them, racing the fog. Then a swift, skidding turn brought them into the glow. White glaring floodlights contested the black pall veined with red fire. Live snakes of hose darted along the street. The big red trucks kept roaring in, wheeling into position, black and white men spilling from their flanks, running.

Rowe and Ladd had to get out a block away. Policemen had their hands full, backing the crowd, warning: "Gunpowder in there! May explode!"

Rowe hit the crowd like a fullback, working his shoulders. Ladd ran into his swath. They broke the line. Rowe was recognized and they ran down until the heat came against their faces like raw desert wind. Fifty feet past the gun shop police were clubbing, beating the crowd back. It was a crazy crowd, each face a leering flame.

The fire was at the back of the shop, working toward the front.

"Wait'll the ammunition starts to pop!" Rowe muttered.

They stayed close to the protection of a big truck until a muffled explosion sounded above the roar of flame. Sharp gold knives of fire shot across the street on the force of the outburst. Windows rattled in a chain of sound along the street, like a dwindling clap of thunder. Then the night went to pieces. Boxes of shells went off like machine gun bursts. The air was full of whistling bullets. A truck headlight splintered at Ladd's elbow. In the street before him a fireman buckled, went down.

The direction of that deadly hail was confusing. Ladd crouched, saw Rowe lying flat on the ground. Rowe's hand shot out to his ankle, tripped him. Ladd toppled to hands and knees and Rowe kicked the stiffened arm, flattening him. A bullet rang harshly against the truck fender, whined off at an angle.

"Crawl!" Rowe hissed. "Get under the truck! This is murder!"

They both turned, wriggled frantically between the wheels. Ladd felt chipped cement needle his face from another ricochet. Rowe gave a crazy jerk beside him, swore. "Got my leg!"

They went the whole length of the truck, worming, chafing, ripping their clothes. At the end they broke for the crowd which had milled into a riot. Ladd broke the way this time, along a cement wall. Rowe was limping, but he kept going.

A block away they caught a roving patrol car with two men inside. "Around the block! Other side of the fire!" Rowe roared, piling into the back seat after Ladd. "There's a gunman over there!"

While the car threaded traffic Rowe switched on an overhead light, looked at the long red groove on his hairy calf. The blood was just finding the surface. He began to wrap it with a strip of shirt.

"How did you know it was murder?" Ladd panted.

"That fireman. The way he fell. There's a lot of impact in a bullet. He was hit in the left side. The crowd was on that side, not

the gunshop. Someone was shooting from over there, shooting from his pockets . . . Laddie, when bullets are flying you want to get down!"

"I know," Ladd grumbled. "I was like that in the army. I don't react promptly to fear. Always late. Just a little late."

Rowe regarded him with close interest, then went back to his leg. "The fire was a plant, it looks like. The explosion that set off those loose cartridges probably was timed for about fifteen minutes after the first outbreak. By that time the trucks and the racket and the excitement would be there—to cover up a murder. Whoever did the shooting would have the same caliber bullets as those going off inside. It was a neat trick. Those boys have thought of all the twists."

Ladd's tongue felt dead. "Who do you think they were after, Rowe?"

Rowe's eyes slanted up, steel blue knives. "You, Laddie. It strikes me that murder, in this case, would be for you."

**T**HE old deadly indecision was coming back. It had been like this in the war. A man would get into a tight spot and freeze. Somehow when the test of life and death came he would break the ice.

This was the old freeze again. The enemy had gotten Ladd's range. He had to keep drinking to melt that cold slush in his veins and it was a bad habit. He kept winding up at the same cocktail bar, as if this new life of his centered around it. When he wasn't with Eva Renner in person, her image could always be found up there in the mirror above the bar.

On Monday morning, on his way into the bar, Ladd collided with a happy drunkard. A red face leered into his, mouthing apologies.

He walked on to the bar, ordered a beer. His winking friend, the bartender, and a customer were discussing the good and bad of heavy drinking.

"I tell 'em when they ought to go home,"

the bartender whined, "but they won't listen to me."

"Seeing 'em get like that, I suppose you never drink yourself," the customer said.

"Oh sure. I drink if a man wants me to. Some people try to warm me up, get me exchanging drinks."

"How can you take it all day long and stay on your feet, keep your head clear?"

That ugly wink again. "Tricks o' the trade."

"I know one of the tricks," Ladd remarked. "Knew an army lieutenant once who was a bartender."

Ladd felt a twinge of homesickness for comradeship of the army. He tried to recall that particular lieutenant's odd, mournful face, but it kept getting mixed up with Eva Renner's. He couldn't get Eva off his mind.

Was it really terror in Eva's eyes or something deeper, something unhealthy and vicious? If a man could only be sure of the girl's story. Had she really hooked up with that gang thinking it was only a detective agency? That explanation sounded reasonable. A woman had to eat, make a living for herself and her no-good brother—there had to be bread and butter.

Suddenly he forgot his beer, forgot even to pay for it. His mind had finally caught hold, forced some action—fired him out the door like a bullet from a gun and now he was on the target.

He walked rapidly out of the business district down a side street. He timed himself by his wrist watch. Within a block of an old frame house he stopped and then struck off at a right angle, timing himself again. For a whole afternoon he walked a weird criss-cross pattern of streets. The center of that pattern was a house.

He hit police headquarters at dusk. "Rowe's eating dinner," the desk sergeant informed him.

"Where can I find him in a hurry?"

"In case of fire he's at Charlie's Diner."

Ladd squinted. "In case of fire?"



**TOPS FOR  
QUALITY**



"Sure. Rowe never misses a fire. He's our little fireboy."

LADD was out on the street again, a weak, sagging sickness in his knees. The elements of this thing were coming at him too fast. He leaned against a lamppost, got himself straightened out, then walked down to Charlie's Diner and found the detective in an end booth.

Rowe's big, ugly face was six inches above a thick steak. Ladd sat down. Rowe's blue-grey eyes shifted upward; he crowded a mouthful of food into the sack of a flabby, wrinkled cheek. "I told you to keep under cover, Laddie."

Ladd's eyes slanted off into distance. "Rowe, I don't think the girl belongs to the arson gang."

Rowe bolted the food. "Why?"

"Because the weak spot in a gang like that would always be at the payoff end. Take that man Hanover for instance. What would have happened if he had refused to do business with them?"

"Not much."

"Exactly. He couldn't do them much harm because no deal had been made and the arson had not yet been committed. But some time a Hanover might come along with an honest streak up his spine and he might play it clever. He might pretend to do business with the gang, pay the first installment, and then set the law on the trail of that installment. The police might have been there at P. O. Box four-eight-one-five waiting for the girl to get the payoff. Then they would either nab the girl or follow her. If they followed her, the gang's scouts would be watching, would take warning, and leave her strictly alone. If the police nabbed the girl, they might have ways of making her talk, but she couldn't talk very well if she didn't even know the kind of business she was in. In other words the link between the payoff and the gang was a false link; if the police grabbed it they still would not have the chain!"

Rowe's eyes bulged to match his loaded cheeks. "Laddie, if I had your brain I would be a good copper."

"Do you think I'm right?" Ladd's eyes were bright, almost feverish. "Do you think that puts Eva out of it?" Rowe shrugged, wiped his hands and mouth on a napkin. "Could be."

"Rowe, do you carry a gun?"

Rowe's eyes tightened. "Did you think I wouldn't, Laddie?"

"Can I see it?"

"Sure." A big right hand slid under the detective's plain grey coat. It came up with a small, black automatic.

Ladd felt of it tenderly. He had nursed

many of these babies during the war. He held it down in his lap, turned it over a couple of times.

"Looks good, don't it?" Rowe said.

"Looks hard, cold, and unnecessary."

"I hope you live to bear that out," Rowe muttered. "You can have one if you like."

"You keep it. I just wanted to be sure you had one. We're going to pick up the man tonight."

"What man?"

"The firemaker. The arsonist. The one at the dirty end."

Rowe was choking over his coffee cup. "Are you telling me you know who it is?"

"I know," Ladd said quietly.

"Laddie, I—" Rowe's tongue fumbled around his cheeks. He stood up stiffly. "Come on!"

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Little Late Laddie

THEY went down in Rowe's black and white car, left it a few blocks away, walked in. Rowe still limped from the bullet wound in his leg. The street lights were scattered, dull, staining the night a sickly yellow.

Ladd talked rapidly. "Rowe, when I was first hired to find that girl again I went back to that cocktail bar and all of a sudden there she was. What was she doing back there? After she delivered that money she had no excuse to haunt the bar; it was the last place in the world for her to be seen again. She told me she came back to be sure I hadn't been hurt; she was afraid 'they' might hurt me. Okay, I think she was afraid, but how did she know I would be back at that bar? She didn't even bother to ask the bartender if he knew me; she just sat there and waited, as if I was bound to turn up. Rowe, I think she knew I was going to turn up. I think she had an inside tip."

"An inside tip?" Rowe's limping feet did a one-two halt. He swung stiffly. "What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that somebody at police headquarters knew who the girl was and phoned her, told her to meet me at that bar. She told her story without much prompting from me, as if she had been warned to tell it straight and save her own neck. I hope that was it."

"Laddie, are you making accusations?"

"I guess so. Let me finish." Ladd's tongue was dry, the taste of it was bad. "Rowe, I think that whole gang folded up too fast after I appeared at headquarters. Sure, they may have seen me talking to the girl again; she may even have told them what I said to her; but there wasn't enough threat in me to ex-

plode the whole gang overnight. I think the leaders also were warned by an insider."

"Laddie," Rowe said hoarsely, "there were only four insiders. There was Inspector La Mont, Dan Corey of homicide, Fred Reiser, the insurance man, and me, your pal, Ted Rowe."

"That covers the field," Ladd said coldly. "Rowe, didn't it ever occur to anybody that there must be some sort of payoff inside the department to keep this arson thing from being discovered? Sure, arson is hard to trace, but I don't see how the gang could do a hundred per cent perfect job every time. Suppose some detective did get wind of arson, found a clue. Suppose he traced the man who was setting those fires and that man made him an offer. Suppose that detective was an ordinarily straight man, but he had seen every other cop around him collecting a few extra tips on the job? Suppose the detective got a little cynical and decided to collect his own share—"

"I'm still supposin'," Rowe muttered.

"Well then, suppose one of those big fires gets out of hand and kills a poor, helpless family and this detective becomes very angry with himself and the whole business and he goes to the gang and tells them there will be no more payoff and no more arson, to get the hell out of town and stay out! Right then, of course, that detective would be marked for murder. There would be another fire, the Hanover factory, for instance. The detective would become violently angry and go to the gang and tell them this was their last chance to get out. He would go to them but he would not come away alive. A carefully selected brick would strike the back of his head and he would be carted to the scene of the fire where a whole wall of bricks would be pushed over on him, as if he died by accident in line of duty. You see, Rowe, this detective would be a member of the arson detail—"

"You mean Dempster!" Rowe said.

"Yes, I mean Dempster. I think that is how and why he was murdered."

"But you claim the gang was warned after you brought your fairy story to headquarters. Dempster was already dead."

"Dempster had a partner." Ladd's voice was deathly thin.

Rowe shifted his shoulders, walked stiffly ahead.

"You see, Rowe, the whole arson detail would have to be in on it to make a thing like that effective. You and Dempster were the arson detail. . . . There was one thing that finally tied it up for me, Rowe. That was that last fire in the rifle shop. You said that fire was set to cover up a gun killing. You said the bullets were aimed at me, Rowe, but how would anyone know in advance that I would be at that fire? I don't belong to the arson squad—Rowe, the only man in the police department who was always sure to be at a fire was you. Those bullets were for you, Rowe! You were marked for murder from the time I took Eva Renner to headquarters and those men who had trailed us in that black sedan saw you come down the steps to meet her. That rundown with the sedan was a threat, Rowe, to keep you from talking. They didn't want to kill you openly like that. They postponed murder to a time of their own choosing. They're your sworn enemies, Rowe! They'll get you or you'll get them."

THEY walked fifty yards, feet thumping in rhythm, before Rowe spoke. His voice was gentle, like a lullaby. "Laddie, I got a gun! Don't you know I got a gun?"

Ladd let a little distance drift between their bodies, distance for open, swirling action. "You're not a murderer, Rowe. I'm staking my life on my judgment of men. I know people. It's the only thing I do know, my only gift. I'm not making any offers or bargains. I just say that I'm going after the head of that gang and you're going along because they killed your partner, Dempster, and you are, after all, the law. I'm so sure of you that I'm walking ahead of you from now on. I'm taking the lead."

It was a terrible, sweating exertion to do it, step ahead like that, not looking back, with only a thread of conscience back there between a man and his gun. If he had misjudged the thickness of that thread—

He turned into a driveway. They went around the house and up the back stairs.

Eva Renner leaped to her feet, whirled,

---

**JOEL TOWNSLEY ROGERS — whose book-length, best-selling novel, THE RED RIGHT HAND, you first read in NEW DETECTIVE, is back with us with a new smashing crime-mystery thriller—**  
**THE HANGING ROPE**

**Look for it in a future issue on your newsstand—the magazine that brings you "The Best and Newest in Crime Fiction!"**

when they came in. "It's you! Oh, Ladd, it's you!"

The men stood uncertainly. "Whom did you expect?" Ladd said.

She didn't answer directly. Her eyes fluttered desperately from man to man. "I—I can't stand this any longer! I've got to get away. Ladd, help me get away!"

"Come down on the front porch. We'll talk there," Ladd said harshly. "Leave the light on."

There were five chairs down there. Ladd selected three, spaced about ten feet apart. Eva sat in the middle. The lower house was dark. Street lights were so distant that the three sat in separate invisible pouches of dark.

"We'll wait here for our man. It may be a long wait," Ladd said.

"Laddie, you're a smart, smart boy. How did you figure it?" Rowe muttered.

"I should have caught on the other night, the first time I came to this place. I heard the neighbor upstairs tell Eva that her brother had been gone only about fifteen minutes when we arrived, that he had gone out after being waked up from a nap by a phone call—gone out because there was nothing to drink in the house. A few minutes after that Will Renner came back, drunk, and passed out at my feet, limp as a rag. I've been doing some checking on distances today and there's no liquor store or cocktail bar within fifteen minutes' range of this house, let alone the drinking time it takes for a man to get as tight as that. In other words, Will Renner was not drunk, he was faking drunkenness because he wanted me to see what kind of a man he was. Renner had been warned by telephone just as his sister had been warned. Somewhere out on the street he saw me with Eva and knew the stage was set for his act."

"Ladd!" Eva Renner gasped.

"Shut up! There were other things. I handled Renner a little, after he passed out. There was no whisky smell about him, not the kind of breath you would get from a souse like that."

"Not drunk?" Eva persisted. "Ladd, he must have been—"

"Shut up!" Ladd repeated. "Today I hit on something that gave me the cue to Renner's act. He was a terrific bread eater, his sister said. I knew an old bartender's trick—lining the stomach with rye bread to sop up the alcohol so it doesn't permeate the system and the brain. Will Renner used the trick in his impersonation of a drunkard."

"Impersonation?" Eva cried.

"Will Renner gave himself a reputation as drunkard around this town and it had to be authentic. He really had to be seen in the bars gulping it down. When he wanted an alibi he had to be seen in a drunken stupor,

sitting on curbs, decorating lampposts. In between lampposts Renner would be racing off to his night's work and back again."

The girl refused to be hushed. "Laddie—Ladd, do you mean Will was in this—this thing? It was Will! Will all the time—Will?"

Ladd's voice was down in his throat, sore and tight. "Renner picked his sister for the payoff job so he could always have an eye on her, watch for slips. If she was tagged he would still be in the clear because he was well-known to the police as a chronic drunk."

"Ladd, I didn't know! I had no idea it was Will—my brother!"

She was weeping. He couldn't tell if it was shock or fright. It occurred to Ladd that Ted Rowe, sitting quietly over there, should know whether the girl was really a full-fledged member of the gang. Rowe had been in contact with the inside, with Will Renner. Rowe would know.

Ladd's mind had been automatically recording the sound of quick male footsteps a half block down the street. Now he caught the sudden change in their rhythm—shuffling, weaving, erratic—imitation of a drunkard!

"Quiet!" he said.

THE man seemed to float along now, a grey-black illusion of night. In front of the house he stopped. Ladd was crouched deep in his chair.

A sound broke the tension, a ringing, metallic scurry of sound across the cement of the front walk. The man stiffened, seemed to bend down and then he was leaping away, running.

Ladd was always late in action. It took him a long moment to gather himself. He vaulted the railing, sprawled on the grass. "Come on, Rowe! This is it!"

He came up low, toes digging sod, and shot out to the walk in full stride. Their thudding steps—his own and those of the man he pursued—were faint, light toe sounds; two phantom men racing wildly along a dark, paved tunnel.

Ladd's eyes could just make out the rushing shape ahead. He gained about fifty feet in two blocks. The man was only thirty feet away when he seemed to vanish from the walk. Ladd slid to a halt at the corner of a thick hedge, hesitated. Steps thudded across a porch, a door slammed.

Ladd waited for Rowe to come up, limping, panting. Metal gleamed in Rowe's hand.

"He's in that house."

"That would be the headquarters," Rowe muttered. "Makes his fire bombs in there. I better take him now, from the front. With one gun against him he'll get out of there quick if he has time to think. Here Laddie, you take

this flashlight. Hold it away at the side of your body. Don't try any fancy work. Don't ever try any fancy work, Laddie!"

Ladd stayed back. He saw Rowe reach the porch, start up the steps.

Rowe shouted, "Renner! This is Rowe, coming in. We got to talk, Renner!"

The whole house upheaved, thundered, burst like a split tomato, red flame spilling from the seams. Rowe staggered back from the explosion, toppled to the grass. The house walls shuddered, sagged against the miraculous fury of the fire. Along a ragged fringe of blazing light at the rear of the house a grey shape shot out of black space, down low by the foundation, slid along the grass, gliding like a snake. Ladd ran after it. His hand squeezed the flashlight and a thin spray of light shot out ahead of him. The thing on the grass squirmed in the light, turned. A black arm came up, ending in a stump of gleaming steel. Fire—a thousand red splinters of fire spurted at Ladd. He seemed to go down at the knees even before the bullet jarred into his shoulder, crushing the bone.

The flashlight spun out of his paralyzed grip, rolled out in front of him. That black arm out there and the steel stump were aiming again, straight over the flashlight—

The dark legs of Sergeant Rowe leaped out into the white swath of light.

"Rowe! Rowe, your gun!" Ladd shouted.

He could see Rowe's hand working at the gun but nothing happened. The man on the grass raised his aim, fired.

Rowe was folding up. The gun finally answered to the pressure of his hand. Flame answered flame and the head of the farther man snapped back on the neck. The body of Will Renner stiffened, spread itself flat.

The gun dangled from Rowe's limp fingers. Slowly he eased forward on his face. His body relaxed, draped loosely out over the ground.

Ladd dragged himself over, biting down the agony in his shoulder. He tugged at Rowe, rolled the body over, face upward. "Rowe."

he gasped. "Rowe, was the girl in it too? The girl, Rowe? What about her?"

Rowe had no answers left. Ladd gently let the head down on the cushion of grass.

"Ladd!"

He swung painfully and the girl was there. She came to him, kneeled down.

Ladd's brain swung dizzily on his shoulders, trying to gather up the ends. His good left hand felt under Rowe's lapels. There was no detective badge. Ladd talked it out with himself. *He tossed his badge out there on the sidewalk to give the guy a warning, give him a chance. He didn't want to capture Renner because Renner would tell how Rowe himself was tied into it; but he wouldn't shoot the man down in cold blood. Rowe had his code, for both sides. He could break all the codes but his own—*

Eva Renner was working at Ladd's shoulder. She turned him gently, got his head down in her lap.

Ladd's tongue was loose, babbling. "I killed Rowe! I emptied two chambers of his gun in case my hunch about him was wrong. I didn't warn—"

He groaned. Tangents of his mind kept shooting off like skyrocket into darkness, exploding. "I was—late. Little late. Rowe had to—Little Late Laddie—"

"Shhh!"

The last skyrocket took him all the way with it, brought him back with a wail like a siren. That siren sounded real.

His eyes came open on a very real face. "Damn it, I'll never be sure. I'll never know—about you—now." He tried to laugh and it choked up like thick mud in his throat. "What a couple! I can't trust you. You can't count on—never quite there! Little Late Laddie. Got no spark. No spark!"

The whisper in his ear was strong, alive. "Oh, Ladd! Laddie, you have. You have it now!"

She pressed his head against her heart and he could hear it beating. He went to sleep.

CAN YOUR SCALP PASS THE

\***F-N TEST?**



\*The Famous  
Finger Nail Test

1 "It's F-N, the test for men!" Scratch your head—if you find dryness or loose dandruff you need Wildroot Cream-Oil. Buy the large economy size.

YOUR HAIR CAN LOOK LIKE THIS WITH NEW **WILDROOT CREAM-OIL**



2 Only a little Wildroot Cream-Oil can do a big job for your hair. Keeps your hair well-groomed all day long without a trace of that greasy, plastered down look! Your hair looks good and feels good too!



CREAM-OIL CHARLIE SAYS: "IT CONTAINS **LANOLIN!**"

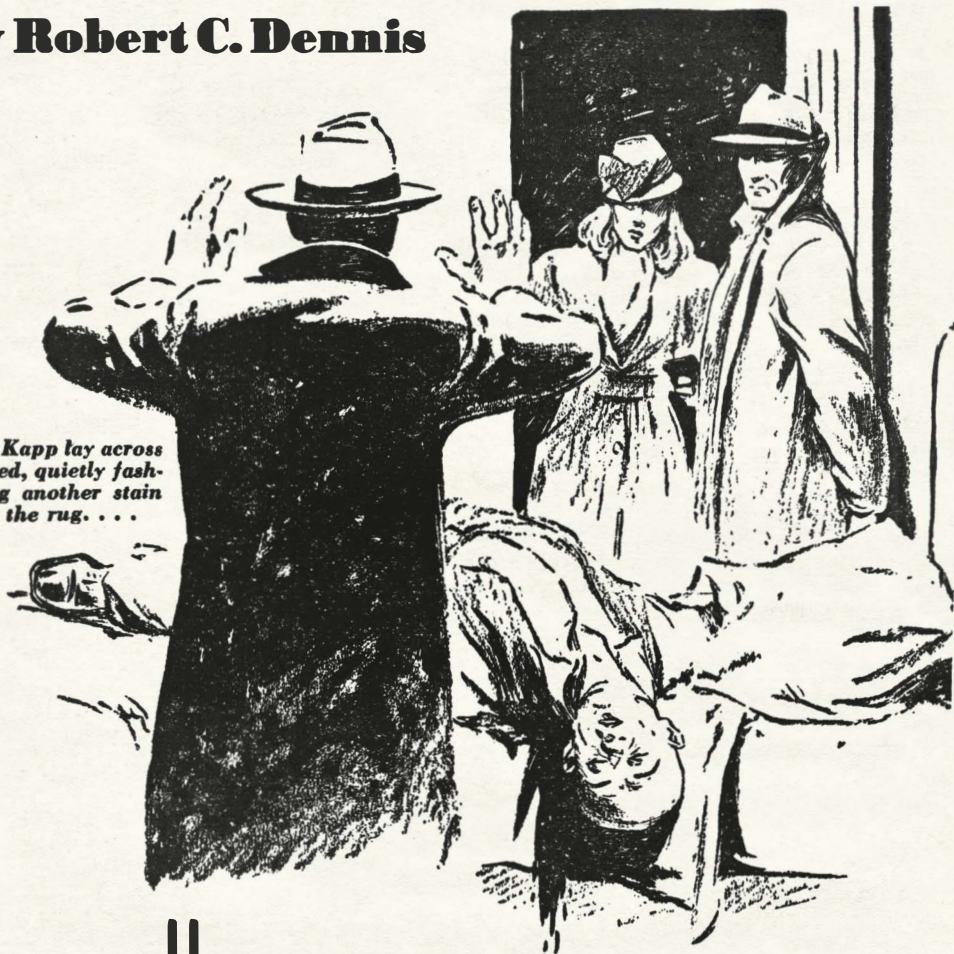
3 Get Wildroot Cream-Oil from your barber or drug counter and... Tune in the **Woody Herman Show every Friday night on ABC (Blue) Network.**



# SLOW SLAY

By Robert C. Dennis

*Dave Kapp lay across the bed, quietly fashioning another stain on the rug. . . .*



||  
"You made your bed,  
copper—now die in it!"  
||

CROWLEY leaned a blue serge elbow on the desk and said, "Dave Kapp?"  
"Room seven-eleven," the clerk said.  
"I'll see if he's in."

"I'll take a chance," Crowley said, and the clerk nodded disinterestedly. The Hayden's guests were the quick-rich kind and by the same token, quick-broke. Here a man's source of income was his own business and so were

his visitors. Crowley went across the large plush lobby to the elevator.

The operator put away a copy of the *Racing Form* and asked, "Floor?"

"Seven," Crowley said briefly. He was a big, slow-moving man but it was a deceptive bigness, requiring some medium for comparison, such as the cramped space of the elevator. Then his solid proportions became more apparent. His face was a little too thin and seemed to have been drawn with nothing but straight lines. A smile might have broken the angularity of his features, but he seldom smiled. He was not smiling now.

Room 711 was two doors down from the elevator. Crowley flapped the knuckles of his big hand against the panel. When the door opened he went in, leisurely crowding the



smaller man out of his way. He moved on across the room, making sure no one else was there or in the adjoining bathroom. Behind him, Dave Kapp expressed his indignation by slamming the door.

Silently Crowley roved about the room, his dark, sharp eyes noting most of the details he'd come to see. He discovered the stain on the rug and studied it carefully. His deliberate movements made Dave Kapp flush with anger. Kapp had once been a furrier, a bald, undersized man with a little man's ego, far too big for his puny strength to defend. He was in a constant state of rage and it was always one of frustration.

"What the hell do you want?" he snarled.

Still prowling, Crowley said briefly, "Donnie Garmon died two hours ago. That makes it murder."

Kapp's anger wilted. He went into the bathroom and got a bottle of scotch out of the medicine cabinet. He poured himself a stiff shot and ran some water into it, the glass clicking a tune against the faucet. He tossed the drink down, gagged, and recovered some of his belligerency. Crowley watched him expressionlessly from the doorway.

"Garmon ain't much loss to the world," Kapp growled.

Crowley shrugged. "His family think he is. And they've got the dough to make what they think mean something. You feel like answering some questions?"

"You're Crowley, ain't you?" Kapp said. "We've met before. Yeah, I'll answer your questions. I don't know nothing, but I'll answer 'em. I ain't got nothing to hide."

"Where were you the night Garmon was shot?"

"In Philly. I went down to see the Vella-Cardinalli fight. I got plenty of witnesses."

Crowley took out a narrow loose-leaf note book and asked the next question out of that. "Who was here that night?"

"How do I know?" Kapp yelled. "I wasn't here all day. I lent the room to Tommy Mahlstead for a poker game. That's all I know! I don't even know if they played or not."

"They did," Crowley informed him. "Five of them—from the number of chairs and glasses and piles of chips. That'd be Mahlstead, young Garmon—and three others." He paused but Kapp refused to be baited. Still reading from the notebook, Crowley went on, "At eleven-twenty, two shots were fired. By the time the desk received complaints and sent up the house dick, there was no one here but Garmon. Both shots were in him."

"Didn't he talk?" Kapp demanded. "Hell, that was two nights ago. What's he been doing all this time?"

"Dying," Crowley said. He consulted the notebook again. "It seems the police didn't

find any playing cards. You wouldn't know about that, would you?"

"I never seen them," Kapp said curtly. "The room was cleaned up when I got back. Except for that," he pointed a toe at the bloodstains on the rug.

CROWLEY shook the notebook and a single playing card fell out, face up. It was the joker. Crowley retrieved it, turning it over to reveal a pink back in a well-known bicycle design. "Standard brand," he pointed out. "D'you suppose somebody marked up the rest of the deck?"

"When I play," Dave Kapp said cynically, "I know that the seal ain't broken on the box before it's opened." He got a crushed and crooked cigarette off the bureau and lit it with a show of nonchalance. "Looks to me you're in the grease, Crowley," he said. "If the Garmons don't see somebody in jail pretty quick, they'll have a cop's scalp instead." He shrugged his narrow shoulders. "Course it ain't my grief but I'm in'arested in you, Crowley. You probably don't remember it, but we met once before."

"I remember," Crowley said dryly. "Two years ago, less time off for good behavior."

Kapp retained his temper well this time. He gazed thoughtfully at the lighted end of his cigarette. "I thought they broke you down to a beat for that one. You worked yourself back up, eh?"

The corners of Crowley's mouth were white. "No," he said steadily. "They didn't break me. I got transferred."

"You had connections, then," Kapp declared. "Letting Bernie Watters get outa that trap was the boner of the century. You'll never get Bernie in a spot like that again!"

There was no expression on Crowley's face. Dave Kapp couldn't help but know what this was doing to him inside.

"Yeah, it was some let-down, I betcha—thinking you had a big shot like Watters on the hook. And watcha get? A punk like Dave Kapp!" The little furrier rocked with false laughter. "And whadda I get? Two years! If you coulda hung those fur robberies on Bernie it'd cost him ten to twenty!"

Crowley said in a low tone, "Where does Tommy Mahlstead live?"

Kapp didn't seem to hear him. "They say it was a dame that jammed you up. Trixie Davis, wasn't it? You gotta admit that's a laugh, Crowley. You thinking Trixie was some poor, innocent little kid and letting her fade out. Only she was Bernie's girl-friend and she took Bernie along with her." He laughed his high, false, hearty laugh. "I caught a rap for it but I can see the joke! Where's your sense of humor, Crowley?"

"Where does Mahlstead live?" Crowley's

voice was hard now. He still hadn't changed expression, but his face was white and his eyes shadowed. Crowley knew the smaller man had been turning the knife in him, hoping to break off the questioning. There was something Kapp didn't want to answer. Maybe this was it.

"I don't know," Kapp said sullenly.

"You know," Crowley said. "Don't make me have to take it away from you."

Frustrated rage mottled the man's face. "The Pelton Arms," he snarled. "But you're wasting your time. He ain't there. I've been trying to call him for two days."

That checked with the address which the police already had for Mahlstead.

Crowley snapped shut his notebook.

"Say, what do you hear of Bernie, these days?" Kapp asked, giving the knife in Crowley one last turn.

"Retired, I hear," Crowley said evenly. "He made a fortune off the black market while you were out of circulation. You missed out on a prosperous era, Dave."

Dave Kapp's eyes were murderous as he watched Crowley move leisurely toward the door. "Seven-eleven," Crowley said, looking up at the room number, "maybe it'll bring you luck."

"You'll need the luck, flat-foot!" Kapp said viciously. "I'll give you odds the Garmons get your badge before you find out who gunned the kid."

Crowley shrugged. "If it's luck I need, I'll have it," he said and walked out. Kapp demonstrated his futile anger by slamming the door again.

**T**OMMY MAHLSTEAD'S apartment at the Pelton had been searched before, but Crowley never had the faith in anyone else's ability to do a job that he had in his own. He spent an hour prowling around the place. According to the description in his notebook Mahlstead was thirty; weighed one-sixty; medium height and blondish. Crowley's own acquaintance with the man added good looks, very good clothes and a likable personality. Outside of a penchant for beautiful women and an aversion to any kind of work, Mahlstead had never seemed like a bad guy. He gambled well, whether with cards, horses, or the fights. If he gambled crookedly, nobody had ever caught him.

The apartment was comfortable and well-furnished. Several pipes and a can of good tobacco sat on top of a radio as big as a small piano. There was also a photograph of a girl in a sheer black negligee. Crowley studied it for a short minute.

She was a blonde, apparently, slender and shapely. She missed being beautiful by the narrowest margin. The inscription on the pho-

tograph said, "To Tommy—from Sunny."

Crowley wrinkled his forehead. There was something wrong about that, but he couldn't quite put a finger on it. Finally he took the back off the frame and worked the photograph out. Stamped across the back was: SEVALSTAD PROFESSIONAL STUDIO. Crowley noted down the address, found a magazine and slipped the picture into it.

Then he prowled some more, hunting now for playing cards. He found only one deck with the bicycle pattern but it had a blue back. As far as he could tell, the deck had not been marked. After a time he gave up, folded the magazine under his arm and left the apartment.

The receptionist at the Sevalstad Studio was inclined to argue with him. "Most of our clients are professional people," she said. "We can't give out their addresses to just anyone. Why don't you try some of the theaters or night clubs. She might be an entertainer."

"She might be," Crowley agreed. "But I'm not interested in getting her autograph." He showed the girl his badge. "Her name and address will do."

"All right," the receptionist said, subdued. She dug into a card file. "She is Miss June Mallory. I don't have her home address but she works as a model for Madame Beatrice. That's an exclusive dress shop. You'll find it in the phone book."

Crowley said his thanks, put the photograph back between the pages of the magazine and departed. He wondered if he might catch Miss June Mallory modeling a sheer black negligee.

Crowley shoved through Madame Beatrice's revolving doors into a huge circular room full of thick rugs, deep chairs—and glass. In everything possible, glass had been used. There were so many mirrors Crowley saw himself coming and going in three distinct directions. Indirect lighting put a soft glow over everything.

Feeling his size Crowley moved gingerly toward a smartly dressed young woman whose dark hair was piled high on her head and shellacked.

"Madame Beatrice in?" he asked.

"She's out to lunch," the young woman said, sounding quite regretful. "Perhaps I could be of assistance."

"There's a young lady around named June Mallory?"

"Miss Mallory? Yes, of course. I'll get her for you."

Crowley watched the girl's slim, silken legs twinkle across the floor. Since Trixie Davis, he did nothing more than just watch. Trixie had hung one on him that still hurt when he thought of it. If she had meant anything to him it wouldn't have been so bad. But she'd been just a wide-eyed girl he had never seen

before, inadvertently caught in the middle of a far robbery, and the tabloids would give her a bad time. That was what Crowley had bought and he was still paying for it.

Bernie Watters' girl-friend! It was a classic in every precinct in the city now.

A blonde girl with nice square shoulders and a model's stately walk came toward Crowley. She wore a black and white print dress instead of a negligee, and she seemed a little younger than in the photograph. In this glittering background, tailored essentially for feminine proportions, she fitted perfectly. Crowley seemed too tall, too broad, even too awkward. He was conscious of how frail and narrow her shoulders were against his own.

Her eyes were anxious and vigilant. "I'm June Mallory," she said. "You wanted to see me?"

"You're a friend of Tommy Mahlstead's."

"Why—yes, I know Tommy. Used to at least."

She wasn't good at it. Watching her lie, Crowley felt old and cynical and tired. He'd come a long way since Trixie Davis, he thought, or perhaps this girl wasn't very adept at deceit.

"When did you see him last?" he asked.

"Oh, weeks ago." She looked him in the eye but it was an effort. "Why?"

"Want to ask him some questions," Crowley said. "I'm from the homicide bureau." His mouth twisted thoughtfully. "Where do you live, Miss Mallory?"

"Four-sixty Broughton."

"Alone?"

She nodded. She got her nickname from her hair, he thought. Sunny. It fitted.

"Here's the situation, Miss Mallory," he said. "Mahlstead is holed up some place. I've got to find him. Now down at headquarters they will want more than just your say-so that he isn't staked out in your apartment. See where it leaves me? I've got to go there and look. You can make it difficult or you can make it easy."

She gave a small, exasperated laugh. "I suppose I might as well make it easy. Give me a minute to fix it, and I'll take my lunch hour and show you. It's only twenty minutes from here. But you'll be disappointed," she warned over her shoulder.

CROWLEY liked her apartment. It was feminine and graceful and the small rugs spotted about on the gleaming hardwood floor didn't slip when he walked on them. Nothing broke when he sat his weight on it.

"See?" she said triumphantly, throwing open the swinging door to the kitchen and then going over to the bedroom and opening that door, too, "There's no one here."

Crowley rose ponderously. "Mind if I take a look?"

"No, if you'll hurry. I have to get back to Madame Beatrice's. I'll miss my lunch as it is."

"I'm sorry," Crowley said. He didn't prowl much in the bedroom. There'd be nothing there. It was her room—cheerful, bright, as sunny as herself. Crowley was abruptly impatient with himself.

He went back to the living room. Removing all evidence of a man's presence was never easy. There was bound to be something for the trained eye to find. Crowley turned up three indications in five minutes.

Tonelessly he enumerated them. "Rings on the table left by beer glasses. A woman as neat and careful as you obviously are would have used a coaster. A carton in the waste basket that once held a tube of shaving cream. And this," he pointed to a blackened dottle in an ashtray. "Do you smoke a pipe, Miss Mallory?"

A thin breath escaped her and her shoulders went down with it. "It could have been some other else," she said, almost hopelessly.

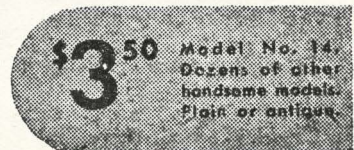
Crowley shook his head. His eyes were clouded. "Normal curiosity would have made you ask why I wanted to see Tommy. You didn't ask. You knew."



### Check List of Pipe Value



Made by L & H Stem Inc., makers of LHS Sterncrest Pipes \$5, \$7.50, \$10



"All right." She gave in, but defiantly, her chin tense and high. "He was here. I phoned from Madame Beatrice's and warned him to leave."

"He's your brother, isn't he?" Crowley asked gently.

The defiance went out of her. She accepted defeat. He was too smart for her. "Yes, Mal-lory is a professional name. How did you know?"

"A lot of little things," Crowley said. "A family resemblance, of course. But mostly the picture in his apartment. It was the only one there so it had to be someone important to him. But the inscription on it was too im-personal for such an intimate pose." Crowley twisted his mouth wryly. "A girl friend would have written, 'All my love to Tommy, for-ever and ever.' Something like that."

"Second," Crowley said, "you weren't in-sulted when I guessed a man might be living here with you. And just now when you ad-mitted he had been here you were quite mat-ter-of-fact. If he'd been a boy-friend you would have been less brazen. You aren't the type for it." He said it to cheer her up, al-though he didn't know why.

"Thank you," Sunny Mahlstead said in a low voice, and her eyes were soft. "I'm sorry it had to be this way. What has Tommy done this time? He didn't tell me much."

"He was in the poker game when Donnie Garmen was killed. Others, too, but we don't know who."

"Is that what you want to know?" she asked. "Just who the other players were?"

"I hope so," Crowley said. "We know there were three, though they could have been to-gether. A big shot gambler, maybe, with a couple of henchmen." Nick Bondurant or Phil Coby, possibly, but there was no proof. No clear fingerprints on the poker chips; only Mahlstead's on the box and single playing card left behind; none at all on the glasses. They had all been encased in straw holders.

The phone began to ring. Sunny looked at Crowley with frightened eyes, almost as if hoping he didn't hear it. Then she moved quickly towards it. Crowley put an arm across in front of her, his big hand gently closing on her small rounded shoulder.

"Let me," he said.

He grunted unintelligibly into the mouth-piece.

"Tommy?" a voice bleated. "I gotta have that fifteen grand, kid! All hell is popping. I think they're on to me—Tommy, is that you, kid?"

Crowley grunted again but it didn't take this time.

The connection was broken sharply.

Crowley stood there holding the phone, thinking. Fifteen thousand dollars, where did

that fit in? That was Dave Kapp's voice, so Dave Kapp had a finger in the pie even if he had been in Philadelphia the night of the shooting. That had been established beyond doubt. Crowley replaced the receiver. He'd get Dave Kapp to explain it.

"I've got to go," he told Sunny Mahlstead.

"That was Tommy, wasn't it? I'm coming, too."

"It wasn't Tommy," Crowley said gently. "There's no need for you to come."

"Yes, there is! He's hot-headed. If you try to arrest him he might fight. If I'm there you won't get—nobody will get hurt. I can reason with him." She seized the lapels of his shapeless, styleless blue serge coat and tried futilely to shake him. "Take me with you. I've got to go back uptown anyway."

Crowley almost smiled at her. The effort hurt his face. "Okay," he agreed.

They wouldn't see Tommy Mahlstead. Crowley could leave her out in the hall when she was convinced it wasn't Tommy. And he didn't want her to leave him so quickly. She wouldn't be in the way.

"It'll be a ride for nothing, though," he warned.

She flashed a bewitching smile over her shoulder as she ran for the bedroom to get her purse and hat. "No," she said. "No, it won't."

CROWLEY leaned his elbow on the desk and asked, "Dave Kapp still in?"

"I'll see." The clerk turned toward the switchboard.

"Never mind," Crowley flashed his badge briefly. "Just give me a pass key. I don't want to talk through the door."

The clerk shrugged, handed over a key. The guests of the Hayden were on their own if it were police business. They understood that. Crowley herded Sunny Mahlstead into the elevator.

The operator put the pencil he'd been using on the Racing Form back of his ear, "Floor?"

"Seven," Crowley said.

He left Sunny in front of the elevator on the seventh floor, walked two doors down to room 711. There wouldn't be any trouble. Dave Kapp was just a little frustrated man with all thoughts of physical resistance long since driven out of his mind. Crowley unlocked the door and went in.

Kapp had a visitor. The blond man turned around, his eyes startled, his hands jumpy.

Crowley reached toward his gun. "Don't do anything rash, Tommy."

Mahlstead put his hands up, shoulder high, palms out in a wordless gesture of restraint. Back of him Dave Kapp lay across the bed, his head hanging over, quietly fashioning another stain on the rug. Blood was still drib-

bling in large, slow drops from his lax face. A faint wave of pity passed through Crowley. He thought perhaps the little furrier might never have gone crooked if his ego had not needed it.

"If Dave had ever punched somebody in the nose, and made it stick," Crowley said aloud, but to himself, "he'd have been all right. . . . What about it, Tommy?"

"I didn't do it, Jim," Mahlstead said quickly. "I just got here—found him like that. Somebody used a pillow to kill the shot."

Crowley went over and frisked the blond man. He wasn't armed. Then Crowley saw the murder gun on the floor, part way under the bed. "Unless they find somebody else's prints on it," he said, "you'll have trouble selling it, I'm afraid, right on top of the Garmon deal."

Mahlstead took his hands down, his handsome, sharp features earnest. "Jim, I know it sounds screwy, but I didn't do it, either time. I know who did, of course. And I'll get your man, if you'll give me two hours."

"Let me," Crowley said. "You just make it easy by saying your piece."

"No," Mahlstead said stubbornly. "Dave was a friend of mine. I've got to do it. There's another reason. Even if you do get him, he's got friends. This town will be too hot for me if I'm not just as tough as they are. You can see that, can't you, Jim."

Crowley shrugged. "You're the gambler, Tommy, not me. Why should I take a chance? You can do a lot of things in two hours. Better tell me."

"I haven't any proof," Mahlstead said desperately. "If you take me now, what kind of

a break will I get? The Garmons are important people, they want some action for Donnie. The D.A. will throw me to the wolves! You—" He broke off, his face whitening.

From the door Sunny Mahlstead's quick little gasp turned Crowley around. She came running into the room, her eyes on the dead furrier. "Tommy, you didn't—no, Tommy!"

Mahlstead patted her shoulder. "Of course not, hon."

Fascinated, she moved closer to the bed. "Why, it's Mr. Kapp!"

"You know him?" Crowley asked, surprised.

She nodded her sunny head. "I used to work for him a long time ago when he had the fur studio. I introduced him to Tommy." She stood there, staring down at the dead man as if trying to think of something to do for him.

"Two hours, Jim," Mahlstead's voice was frantic. "The moment you book me I'm in the chair! They'll fry me to satisfy the Garmons. You've always been a good cop, Jim. You've got a heart. Give me a chance."

"The words are familiar," Crowley said harshly, "but the tune is wrong. Maybe you just haven't got the voice for it." A woman's voice, he thought, like Trixie Davis'. "Give it to me, Tommy. I can do the job better than you."

"No, Jim," Tommy said earnestly. "I'm the right man and even I'll need plenty of luck."

Crowley shrugged. "If I need any luck there's a lot due me." He hadn't had any two years ago and this was his first big job since. It would even up this time, for sure.

A Full-Length Murder Novel

By Day Keene

## IF A BODY MEET A BODY—

"Till death do us part," Corliss had said as all brides do, when they were married. And now, just six months later, Johnny Stanton realized, with increasing dread, that when his lovely new wife had made that solemn contract, she meant that death would indeed part them—with Johnny as the murderee!

## HANG AND GO SEEK

A Hacienda Hide-Out Novelette

By W. T. Ballard

—Also—

Novelettes and short stories by

Don James  
William Rough  
Ken Kessler

Cyril Plunkett  
Wilbur S. Peacock  
William R. Cox

and others!



The Big June Issue Is On Sale Now!

America's Most Unusual Detective Magazine

# DETECTIVE

## TALES

15c

Sunny was bending down near the dead man's head. Crowley spoke sharply, "Don't touch anything."

She straightened again. The murder gun was in her hand. Her voice was steady. "Go on, Tommy. I believe you. Two hours."

Mahlstead circled Crowley toward the door. Crowley moved sharply. Sunny said in a dead even tone, "I've shot revolvers before, Mr. Crowley."

Crowley halted. He turned an expressionless stare on her lovely, young face and left it there. Tommy Mahlstead's footsteps crossed the room, the door opened—closed.

Trixie Davis did it with tears . . . Sunny Mahlstead used a gun. But Crowley would never sell anybody that. He just never learned, they'd say. A pretty girl could always talk him into anything. Otherwise he was a good cop—once.

"Give him fifteen minutes start," Sunny whispered. "You can arrest me if he doesn't come back."

Crowley looked at her numbly. The corners of his mouth were white and tense. "I won't arrest you," he said. "I thought you would have known that."

A little cry broke from her. "Don't look at me like that, Jim! I had to do it. He's my brother! But he'll come back, I know he will."

Crowley said flatly, "He hasn't a chance in hell. He'll last about as long as my job."

She burst into tears. The gun dropped to the rug but it was too late. Tommy had too big a start. "I'm sorry, Jim," she said. "I'll make it up to you, if you'll let me."

Crowley looked deep into a vague distance. His face was bleak, his thoughts lonely. He hadn't been ready for defeat. He had been positive he would be lucky, this time.

From some protected remoteness Trixie Davis was laughing herself sick.

"I'll take you back to the shop," Crowley said tiredly. He couldn't do anything for two hours. He had no illusions—Mahlstead was gone. All Crowley could do was wait and pray. There was nothing left but prayer.

He locked the room behind them, trying not to look at the numbers leering down at him. Room 711. Seven come eleven. Seven come heaven. Maybe that's where it all balanced up.

They took the elevator down. The Racing Form had disappeared. The operator had made his choice but he didn't seem too happy. "You got anything good for the sixth at Rockingham?"

"Play your hunches," Crowley said and his voice was only faintly bitter.

**I**N FRONT of Madame Beatrice's revolving doors Crowley paused. With eyes that were curiously gentle he looked down at the girl's sunny head. He was just a big dumb

cop but she had seemed to like him. And he liked her.

"Jim, come inside for a minute, please," she pleaded.

Crowley's mouth twisted but he let her lead the way through the revolving doors. Across the room a young woman started toward them, then paused, recognizing Sunny. It was not the same woman as this morning. Crowley reached for Sunny's arm, his eyes bright. Turning so that his back was to the woman he said swiftly, "Is that Madame Beatrice?"

"Yes, of course. Miss Devon—"

"Seven come heaven!" Crowley breathed. "Does she have a private office—very private?"

"The office upstairs." Sunny looked puzzled. "No one is ever allowed up there."

Crowley gave her shoulder a gentle, awkward pat with his big hand. Madame Beatrice was just behind him. Crowley turned around.

"It's a small world, Trixie," he said softly, "but it's people who make it small."

Shock and fear rippled over her face, stripping Madame Beatrice in one brief second all the way back to Trixie Davis.

"I forgot Trixie was short for Beatrice," Crowley said.

"Crowley!" she gasped.

Crowley moved around her and his speed was startling for a big, slow man. "Watch her, Sunny," he tossed back. "Tommy is upstairs."

He didn't have time for anything else. He ran through the heavy curtains into the back rooms, hunting the stairway. A thick velvet cord roped it off. Crowley vaulted that just as the firing started upstairs.

He had his gun out as he hit the top step. At the far end of the hall a man came running, gun in hand. He spotted Crowley and banged away.

Crowley cut him down with a snap shot. The firing, in a room to the left of the stairs, started again, sounding a little frenzied now. Crowley hit the door with his shoulders, simultaneously twisting the knob.

Then the whole room was under his gun. Bernie Watters, crouching behind his overturned desk was neatly flanked, a sitting duck. With his gun still lined up on Tommy, barricaded behind a big chair, he had to look sideways at Crowley. He froze like that. To hit Tommy he had to look away from Crowley. To fire on Crowley he had to swing the gun around.

Crowley said, "Your deal, Bernie. But be sure you've got plenty of luck. I've waited a long time for a chance like this."

Watters relaxed his fingers, shaking the gun loose. He didn't want a gamble with that kind of odds.

"Use the phone, Tommy," Crowley said.

THE place was quiet now, except for the noise of drawers opening and closing as Crowley pawed through each methodically till he found what he wanted, a used deck of bicycle cards. He riffled through them. There was no joker. Crowley took the joker from his notebook and added it to the deck. Then he studied the backs of the cards. As far as he could discover they were not marked.

"It's there," Tommy Mahlstead informed him. "But it's neat! Nothing amateurish about Bernie—he counterfeits whole decks! Standard brands with the marks right in the die. So having a fresh deck with the seal unbroken isn't any protection at all. It just seems so."

"How did you get it?" Crowley asked. "Dave Kapp?"

"Sure. He had a beef with Watters over that fur deal two years ago and he wanted revenge. More than revenge—this used to be Dave's fur shop. I guess you worked on the other end of those fur robberies, Jim. But this was where Watters pushed the stuff he stole."

"I worked here when Mr. Kapp owned it," Sunny said. "I stayed on when Madame Beatrice took over."

"That was what Dave was so sore about," Mahlstead explained. "Not only did Dave take the rap, but Bernie euchred him out of the store because Trixie was having so much fun playing Madame Beatrice she wouldn't give it up when Dave was released."

"So Dave rigged the poker game and told you about the marked decks?" Crowley asked.

"Yeah. He didn't have the nerve himself so he sold it to me and beat it down to Philly. It was through Dave I met Bernie, and Dave

knew I'd lost plenty to those counterfeit cards so it was a chance to get well. To make it look right, we invited Donnie Garmon." Mahlstead laughed in secret amusement. "It was wonderful—Donnie was always a wild man, made every pot worth getting. If I saw I had the best hand I stayed in and won it. Otherwise I folded. But the cards were running my way and Bernie spent all evening trying to bluff me out of big pots."

"How much did you take?"

"Thirty thousand," Tommy laughed again. "Most of it was Bernie's because the other two players were his stooges and they were playing his dough. Oh, it was a picnic, though I had to play it plenty close so Bernie didn't tumble to the fact I was reading the backs too. When he did, he wanted his money back."

"That's when the shooting started?"

Tommy nodded. "Garmon was banker and he'd just paid me off when Bernie pulled a heater. I was ready, though. All the lamps were plugged into the same socket and I kicked it out. In the dark Watters mistook Garmon for me. I went down the fire escape."

Crowley could make the rest of the report himself. Watters had taken his phony cards and used the elevator—the operator would come through on that—then after brooding about it he'd realized that only Dave Kapp could have tipped off Tommy. So he had Dave taken care of.

Tommy said, "You'll get your picture in the paper for this, Jim. But you got it coming. You had plenty of bad luck that first time with Bernie, I guess."

Sunny watched him with glowing eyes.

"It evens up," Crowley said quietly.



## SHROUD WITH A SILVER LINING

"I don't pretend to be rugged and I don't like dead people. Give me a north light and an amiable model and I'm the happiest guy in the world. That's why I'd come to Redondo Beach, to do a painting of death for C. C. Waldorph, the mortician magnate. I didn't know then that they provided models . . . *Waldorph & Nestle, the Mortuary With a Motive—We Even Supply the Stiff!*" Don't miss this unusual murder novelette by CAMFORD SHEAVELY.

D. L. CHAMPION brings back Rex Sackler, the penny-pinching private peep, in *Two-Death Parlay*. Sackler was too smart to bet on the gee-gees. But a sure thing, a return of 1100%, tempted him right out of his golden shell. The results were spectacular: two very dead jockeys, a crooked racing ring exposed, and—most startling of all—Sackler voluntarily using a coin telephone. The old Scrooge trapped the killer all right, but he never forgot that squandered nickel.

Plus: New novelettes by JULIUS LONG, and DALE CLARK; and exciting shorts by W. LEE HERRINGTON, ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON and others.

This great July issue on sale now!

# BLACK MASK



*"I haven't killed nobody  
—yet." The big man's  
voice was steady. . . .*



*The Wheel was all gambler—he  
could make bones talk—but not  
the girl who died protecting him  
. . . nor the cadaver who killed her!*



## CHAPTER ONE

### Live Bones

**"D**EAL," I said.  
Markey slid the cut halves of the deck together with one hand and then just sat there, his yellow teeth grinning at me. He looked at the half-eaten hamburger on the table at his elbow, and then across at the untouched one next to me.

"Wainwright would rather play than eat," he said. He tried to make his voice kidding, but everything Pete said came out of his mouth in a half sneer.

I didn't say anything. I wouldn't have been



# DEAD MAN'S ROLL

By James A. Kirch



in this game at all if the itch hadn't been on me. It was strictly small-time. Pete Markey would take your eyeteeth if he could slide a coke needle into your gums while you were sleeping. If you stayed awake, he was nothing to worry about. Fats Carlin was all right, but gambling was a hobby with him. Hal Weston had money and card sense, but no real nerve. The fifth man, Curt Rasher, was my house dealer. In a game like this, a small, "friendly" one. I let the deal pass any time

they wanted it. But I didn't want tea party chit-chat.

Curt said professionally, "Deal the cards, please."

That's when the girl came out of the dice room and stood behind my chair. "Wheel," she said, tightly, "I've got to talk to you."

She knew better than that. Anybody who'd been in my place more than once knew better than to bust in on me in a game. And Val had learned it long ago.

"Deal," I told Markey.

His eyes went up and studied Val Hudson and his lips pursed in a soundless whistle. "Eat?" he said. "Hell, he'd rather play than anything." He started flipping the cards out and I kept my eyes on the deck, not paying any attention to the soft hands that gripped my shoulders.

"Wheel!" Val's voice sounded almost hopped up. "I've got to talk to you."

I had tens backed. Fats had already pushed a buck out on his jack high and I called the play. The rest of them rode with us for one round.

Curt Rasher said, "Leave him alone, Val. If it's something big, see Tony."

I'd caught a queen for my third card and Markey had dealt himself a king. He pushed a five buck chip out without saying anything and Fats Carlin, with jack three showing, made it ten. I didn't know. If I had the hand figured right, my play was to push now, to save on the next round. I made it twenty. Markey laughed as Hal Weston dropped out, but his eyes flickered when Curt Rasher folded his nine-night.

He said, "Tens, eh, Wainwright?"

I didn't answer him. I wasn't sure of Fats, even though he'd called me. Fats played them close. He might have johns wired.

The thing Val didn't seem to get was that there was no use talking to me. I was in a game, and even though the stakes were peanuts, right then it was *my* game. It was the only thing that mattered.

Curt told her that. "You're wasting time, Val," he said. "Wheel's busy. Leave him be."

Val said, "But this is—" and just then Markey hit me with the third ten. I shoved ten blues to the center and watched Markey sweat.

Maybe that was why I was in the game; I don't know. That and the itch, I guess. My hands had just gone hungry on me and I'd walked into the back room and cut myself in. But maybe the thought of watching a chiseler like Pete Markey sweat out a spot had had something to do with it. He was on one now.

Pete's trouble was he didn't even believe himself. He'd figured me for two tens before I'd caught the third, but he was beginning to wonder.

Fats was waiting his turn, but I knew he'd fold as soon as Markey made up his mind. That would leave me and Markey. Which was all right with me.

Markey hoisted ten blues and held them in his hand, hesitating. His green little eyes

were half closed and his teeth were dug into his thin lower lip. "I don't know," he said.

Val said, "Wheel, you've got to—" and Markey opened his hand and let the chips spill out to the center. There were damp rings on the top and bottom ones. He scaled my card across to me and dropped a king for himself. That made him high on the board, with a pair of men.

"Kings check," he mumbled.

I pushed a hundred out to the center.

Val's voice was thick with urgency and her fingers dug into my shoulders, but I hardly felt them. I was watching Markey and wondering which way he'd fall. Val said, "It's big, Wheel. Remember that. Darn big. And I tried to tell you. But I can't stick around." Her hands snapped loose and I heard her heels click a little unsteadily across the room. The vague thought hit me that she might be high.

Markey broke the wrong way. He didn't trust himself, so he couldn't trust his judgment. He pushed a stack of chips out to the center and his face went white when I flipped over the hole ten.

Hal Weston laughed. "Sometimes it pays off better than eating," he said.

**I** WATCHED MARKEY'S eyes glued to the chips as I raked them in, and felt pretty good. I liked to see a chiseler like him taken, even if I had to take him myself.

He rang for a new deck, and Sam came in so fast he must have been standing outside the door waiting for an opening. Sam dropped an unsealed deck on the table and spoke hurriedly, as if he were afraid I'd cut him off.

"Mistuh Wainwright, they's a man outside looking for something good." His black hand made a shaking motion, as if he could already feel the ivories in it. "He says we're small potatoes, Mistuh Wainwright. He wants we should raise the limit. Mistuh Tony told him we'd see the boss."

"What's he like?" I asked.

"Hot," Sam said. "And it ain't no short streak. He's big time. He's a big man, too." He hesitated, his thick forehead wrinkling in thought. "I tell him you're busy, he'll take off, maybe. He's a big man, and he wants something big."

Curt Rasher said, "Doesn't sound like anyone we know, Wheel. You'd maybe better lay off him. No use buying trouble."

Curt was all right. He knew even before he'd finished saying it that he was wasting his breath. He'd been around me too long not to know when the itch was on me and that I'd have played with Satan himself if he'd showed in the Wheelhouse.

"Tell him I'll be out, Sam," I said. "And

get some more dice boxes. This should be good."

I went into the back office to pick up some cash. While I was getting it, the unusualness of Val's busting in on me during a game registered, and her words came back to me. *It's big, Wheel. Remember that. Darn big.* I wondered if she'd been trying to tell me about the big man outside who wanted to roll them. If she had, I decided, she'd picked one hell of a funny way.

Sam had been right about the man. He had me on size and weight. He topped six feet by a good margin and carried well over two hundred pounds. He'd just finished rolling his point as I came in and he was humming, very softly . . . *Come to Baby, do.*

He looked up as I entered, but his dark eyes didn't change expression. "So you're the big Wheel," he said softly. It wasn't a question, but I gave it an answer.

"I'm Wainwright," I told him. "I hear you've been asking for me."

He shook his head. "For a game," he corrected.

I nodded. "You've got it," I said. I moved down to the head of the table, taking Tony's place, weighing the big man in as I did it. I knew I'd been right when I'd said this should be good. This boy was a gambler. It was in his eyes, in his hands, in the quiet set of his mouth. There was no lip-wetting or hand twitching about him.

I rolled a new set of dice down to him and said, "What'll it be?"

"Five hundred," he said quietly. He rolled a nine.

"The hick takes the house," I said smoothly. "The man's new, the dice are new, and the money's new. And the point is nine."

He nined out without saying a word.

I wasn't sure. It might be an act. It might be I could get him thrown off, playing over his head. If I could get him so the dice were running him, instead of the way it was, I'd have him. He'd start pushing his luck too

hard, and when it backfired on him, he'd crack. That was my play, so I tried it.

"Easy money," I said. "This boy never had it so good."

"Five hundred," he said.

He talked to the dice, but he wouldn't talk to me. And he didn't talk to the money. He was right, still; it was the dice he watched. When he sevens out, his eyes didn't even come up as I raked in his bet. He crapped twice before he doubled, and then he dropped back to his five hundred.

His luck was nice and steady. He'd win three and drop one. And whether he won or lost didn't bother him. So I had to face it. He was a gambler who wasn't going to crack. Like Sam had said, he was big time. And I'd stepped into him when he was hot. He was going to take me.

The poker game in back had broken up, the players drifting around the dice table to follow the play. Curt Rasher had elbowed his way near the big man and was watching his hands like a hawk. Curt had been around too long for anyone to slip dice in on him. He just stood there, rocked back on his heels, never taking his eyes from the big man's hands. Fats Carlin and Hal Weston stood together. Fats' round face was wrinkled in disbelief at the amount of money changing hands. Weston was scared stiff; even though the game meant nothing to him, the stakes were big enough to hit his nerves. The only one who was enjoying himself was Pete Markey. He leaned against the wall, his green eyes darting from me to the big man, his thin lips cracked in a smile. When the big man rolled his point, Pete would nod his head, as if in confirmation.

The big man didn't seem to notice any of them, or any of the rest of us. His eyes stayed with the white cubes as I rolled them down and as he spun them out on the table; but he didn't look at any of us, and he didn't look at the money. The money would come to him in the end and he knew it.

FOR QUICK RELIEF FROM

TIRED, ACHY MUSCLES

SPRAINS • STRAINS • BRUISES • STIFF JOINTS



What you *NEED* is

SLOAN'S LINIMENT

## CHAPTER TWO

## A Frame to Fry In

I KNEW it, too, now. It was all right. It was just his day. It was the sort of thing you had to expect, that you never knew when was going to happen. It was all part of the fierce urge that would come over me and the hunger in my hands. I could take it, all right. Could? I *had* to take it.

I'd stopped trying to needle the big man now. It was his show, and I let him have it. I said to Tony, "I can always get a room," and Tony said, "He'll break us, Wheel. I can feel it."

The big man said, "Five hundred dollars,"

Maybe it was Tony's crack that made me try it again. I said, "The gentleman is eleven thousand up. Maybe he'd like to increase the bets."

For the first time, he looked up at me. "Eleven thousand?" he said, tightly.

I smiled at him. "That ain't hay," I admitted. "But twelve thousand is more."

Pete Markey said, from his spot against the wall, "So's fifty thousand."

The big man turned a little, and his eyes hit Markey. Pete had stopped smiling and was leaning against the wall, his eyes on the gambler. He knew what I was trying to do, and he was bucking me. He was that small a guy, I figured. He knew I was on the hook, and he didn't want me wiggling off.

It didn't matter for my money. This guy was playing his own game, and no amount of needling would throw him off balance. So Markey was just being nasty for free.

The big man looked at the stack of bills before him for the first time, then at Markey, then at me. He nodded his head slowly and said, "Five hundred."

He made two straight passes.

Tony said, quietly, "He's not human, Wheel."

"He's hot," I said. "And he knows it. He's got me, Tony."

The big man said, "That's all."

You could hear the men stop breathing. Nobody believed him, at first. Not even Hal Weston. It didn't add.

Curt Rasher was the quickest. He'd been standing next to him, never taking his eyes off the big man's hands, but as soon as he said, "That's all," Curt moved to my end of the table like a cat. His voice cut the silence, "The limit is now fifty dollars, gentlemen." He reached for the rack, and beads of sweat rolled from his hand to mine. "He had you, Wheel," he said. "And he quit. This is your lucky day. That boy could have owned the house. Don't let him start in again."

I didn't say anything. I let Curt take the

rack and just stood there, staring at the big man. It didn't make sense to me.

His eyes met mine for a half-second and there was a look in them that told me it didn't make sense to him either. He looked like a man who's had his big chance, his big day, and chucked it. He stood there for a moment, as though he couldn't make up his mind what to do, as though he had to force himself to move. When he moved, he moved like a man in a daze. He picked his winnings off the table and stuffed them in his wallet. He shook his head slowly, not looking at anyone, and then he turned slowly and left the room.

Like I said, it didn't add. The guy was a gambler, with plenty of nerve. He'd come in with a hot streak and started taking me, playing the game his own way. His luck was still running—he'd never had a sign it was beginning to crack. He couldn't quit that way, just pack up and leave. A man like that couldn't do it.

But he had. That was the hell of it—he had.

Tony followed me into the back office. "You're lucky his nerve cracked, Wheel," he said.

"His nerve didn't crack," I told him. I was sure of that. I'd watched him too closely. He'd known what he was doing every minute of the play. And he'd known that he could run his winnings up to twenty or thirty thousand if his luck held. It was the sort of spot a good gambler lives for. And the big man had been good.

"He quit," Tony said.

"Yeah," I admitted. "He quit. But there's something screwy about it. It's not right." I put the money I'd taken out with me in the safe and twirled the dial. Val Hudson's words came back to me and began whirling around in my mind, looking for a slot to fit into. I got my hat and coat and went out through the card room. Fats Carlin and Weston had started a new game and Fats pointed to an empty seat, but I shook my head. The hunger was gone, now. I wanted to see Val.

HER place was only a few blocks from the Wheelhouse and I walked it, liking the feel of the damp night air against my face. I wondered if the big man was walking alone someplace, trying to wash out the self-contempt that must have built up in him for failing to give his luck the play it deserved.

Val's lights were out, so I rang the buzzer to let her know I was coming up, and then used my key on the downstairs door. I climbed two flights to her apartment and let myself in. Her lights were still out.

I sat down in a chair in front of the fireplace and yelled, "Val! It's Wheel. Get yourself decent."

She didn't answer.

I said again, "Val!" and then suddenly the chill hit me. It was just like the times I'd gotten caught in fixed games, and hadn't found anything wrong until suddenly the chill had caught me in the middle of the stomach and I'd known something was off. It was my warning, hunch, intuition—whatever you want to call it. It meant the deal was sour. I got up and walked to the door of the bedroom, throwing it open.

I guess I expected it, I don't know. But you can't brace yourself for something like that. Val was too much of a woman—too full of the joy and zest of living. She'd been too much alive. You couldn't picture her stretched out on her bed, her head half over the edge so that her soft blond hair hung to the floor. You couldn't picture her legs twisted crazily and one white hand clutching the face towel that covered her heart. A face towel with a knife hilt under it. You couldn't brace yourself for that.

I couldn't even look at it.

I said, "No!" Without realizing I was saying anything, and then I swore. Not softly, not quietly, but heavily, with all the hatred that surged suddenly inside me. The emptiness, the grief would come later; right now, all I could feel was a fierce, burning hate for whoever had killed her.

"I'll square it, Val," I said tightly. "I promise you that. I'll square it for you." I stood there, trying to make myself look at her, and knowing if I did I'd grab her in my arms and try to shake life and laughter back into her eyes. I stepped back and pulled the door shut with my foot and telephoned the police.

I didn't know how long I'd been sitting there beside the phone waiting for them when it hit. It had been kicking around in my brain from the first, but it hadn't registered. The towel. Why would the murderer leave a towel on the knife?

I forced myself back into the room and next to the bed. I kept my eyes on the towel in the center of Val's chest, not letting them shift off it. When I heard the shrill whine of the squad car siren, I reached my hand out and jerked the towel off, and I had my answer.

The murder knife had come from my office.

Nice, that. Very nice. It had my fingerprints all over it. It was a letter-opener, an ornament that I'd never thought of as being sharp enough to kill. But it had been. Val's flesh had been soft.

I didn't have much time. The police siren had stopped, which meant they were on their way up. There was a long cylinder of bronze on the bedside table which had been converted into a lamp with a modernistic shade.

I unscrewed the top, dropped the knife inside, and screwed it back. It wasn't good; it wouldn't pass a final shakedown, but it was the best I could do. It would let me stretch the hand out a while. As I went to answer the demanding squawk of the buzzer, I realized this was one hand that was going to need plenty of stretching.

I was glad it was Lieutenant Saxon. My in with him wasn't big; but I had one. His brother was the precinct sergeant who helped us keep the Wheelhouse running.

He was a short man, with close-cropped hair. Everything about him was short, even his speech. He looked at the body and shook his head in a quick movement.

"Tough, Wainwright," he offered.

So it had started all right. He figured it like I'd told him, that I'd just walked into it. He'd maybe keep figuring it that way until they found the knife. And I still had one out. Motive. There was no reason for me to kill Val, and nobody could dream one up. So even if they built up a case, it wouldn't hold.

I felt better, thinking of that. I moved out into the living room and let the men who'd come with Saxon take over. I sat there for an hour before Saxon came out and started questioning me, making notes in his little book.

His questions were all right. Where had I been? When had I seen Val last? Had we had any trouble, any arguments? How long had I waited before I'd called the police?

He nodded when I answered the last. "Couldn't have been long," he said. "She was still warm when we got here."

I said, "If I'd been a few minutes earlier—" and Saxon said, "Cut it, Wainwright. If's don't pay off."

One of his men came in with a small chamois pouch. "Found it under the bed," he said. He handed it to Saxon.

Saxon said, "You find everything under beds." He untied the string and opened the pouch, catching the cubes that fell out in his left hand. He studied them for a moment. "Funny place to keep dice," he said. His eyes came up to mine. "Yours?" he asked.

I took the pouch and dice from him, shaking my head. I palmed a pair in my right hand, shaking them, getting ready to roll, but I didn't have to roll. I could tell from the feel. With Saxon at my elbow I went into the bathroom and filled a tall tumbler with water. When I dropped a die inside, it rolled once then dropped like a plumb to the bottom. The second one sank the same way, without turning.

Saxon said, "Loaded?"

"But shoddy," I told him.

He said, "What would she have been doing with loaded dice?"

I shook my head. There wasn't any answer to that. And then, suddenly, there was an answer. There was an answer to the knife and the dice and Val's body. It was a nice, neat answer for everything.

And it left me with snake-eyes.

"I don't know," I said, slowly, forcing the words out.

Saxon would get it in time. Right now he was busy. And he was through with me. He told me that. "Stick around, of course, Wainwright. Your finding the body makes it kind of bad. But you called us right off, and there's no murder weapon here. It won't be too rough on you."

I nodded, starting for the door with the dice and pouch still in my hands. At the door, Saxon reached for them. "I'd better keep those," he said, mildly.

I gave them to him. My hands were damp and there was a cold damp feeling inside me, but I handed them over without saying a word. He didn't know at all what I was giving him.

It was my motive for murdering Val.

CURT watched me bust the solitaire hand open. "Your luck's out, Wheel," he said. "That's what makes it bad." "That's not all that makes it bad," I told him.

He nodded. "This guy Harrington from the D.A.'s office was messing around. I don't like him."

"You're not supposed to," I pointed out.

"Yeah," Curt said, "but it's more than that. He found out about the game last night, about this big guy who took you. He's getting ideas."

"He'll have company," I told him. "Saxon is smart. When he hears about the game, and how Val came in to tell me about the guy, he'll figure the two of them took me with coked dice and when I found it out I killed her. He's smart enough to figure that."

Curt said, "I know twelve guys smart enough to figure that." He picked up the cards, riffled them once, then lay them down again. "If they could just find the knife—"

"Don't push it," I said. "They'll find the knife. That's when it gets really bad."

"That way?" Curt said.

I nodded.

He cut the cards and turned up the club queen. He slapped them back together, made a one-handed cut for the widow of spades.

He said, "You sure stepped into it, Wheel."

"I was pushed," I reminded him. I took the deck away from him and tossed it on the side table. I didn't like the way he cut. "If we could just get a better line on the big guy," I said. "If the boys could dig up something more on him."

"They've got a line," Curt said. "And they're good boys. They'll find him. A guy like that can't hide. They already dug up his contact with Val."

"Yeah," I admitted. They'd discovered that he'd been to the White Parrot, where Val sang, four times in the past week. He'd been there with a scrawny little man the night of the murder, before the game. And his table had been near enough Val's piano for her to overhear them, if she'd listened. She evidently had. So we had Val's tie-inked, but we couldn't find the big man, and we didn't know who the scrawny one had been. Every friend we had in town was working on it. That was all we could do. But it might not be enough.

The phone rang. Curt picked it up, said, "I'll check," into the mouthpiece, and then palmed it. "Saxon," he said. "Wants you down at the morgue. Okay?"

I said, "I hope to hell it's not the big guy." I reached for my hat and coat and took off. All the way down in the cab I kept hoping it wasn't him. There was some unfinished business between us.

Saxon met me at the door, steered me down the long corridor. "This may not tie," he said. "But I got to be sure. There's an angle to it."

He must have just been brought in; he hadn't even been tagged yet. The body lay on a cold white table, the clothes in a heap on the floor next to him. He was medium height, maybe five eight, and had carried a little extra around the middle, which didn't make much difference now. I'd never seen him before.

You could practically smell the salt in his hair, so I didn't need the blue clothes to tag him.

"Sailor?" I asked.

"Merchant marine," Saxon said. "Fished him out this morning. He was maybe conked, or maybe hit his head going over. I don't know."

He had me puzzled. "What's the angle?" I asked.

"This," he said. He drew a chamois pouch from his pocket and dropped it on the slab. "Open it," he said.

I untied the string and dumped the contents of the pouch into the palm of my hand. I cupped my fingers to keep from dropping them. There were six, all the same.

"Well?" Saxon asked.

I shook my head. "I don't make them," I told him.

"Somebody does," Saxon said.

I refilled the pouch and handed it to Saxon. "It's out of my line," I said. "And so's the sailor. And this place gives me the creeps. Sorry." I started for the door and Saxon

didn't call me back. When I reached it, a thought hit me. "Loaded?" I asked Saxon.

He nodded. "Like the ones at Val Hudson's," he said.

Which was just the way I'd figured it would be.

Curt Rasher hailed me from the curb in front of the morgue. "Anything?" he asked as I slipped into the seat next to him.

"A dead seaman with a pouch full of loaded dice," I told him. "And he fits pretty. Once they break it, it'll look like a three-way squeeze, with me caught in the middle. So I killed them both. It doesn't hurt much, though. You can only hang once."

Curt said, "The boys have a line for you. They've screened the guy who was at the White Parrot with the big guy. It was Ralph Simmonds."

"Simmonds," I repeated. "Ralph Simmonds." My mind kicked it around a few times and then came up with it. "Jewelry," I said. "Simmonds Importers, Inc. Big money. Big time. Not too clean."

"I thought we might pay him a visit," Curt said.

"You thought right," I told him. For the first time, it looked like we had something. Simmonds brought the whole picture into focus. The big guy quitting the play, Val's death, the sailor, and the two little bags full of loaded dice. It was all there for me; all I needed to fill it was Simmonds. Once I had him, I could call the play and bust the hand wide open.

"You think he'll talk?" Curt asked, as he drew his roadster to the curb in front of Simmond's apartment. His eyes met mine and his lips slid to a half smile. "Okay," he said. "Okay, Wheel."

## CHAPTER THREE

### Dead Man's Talk

HE WAS wrong, though. Simmonds wouldn't even answer the bell. And it took Curt twenty minutes to crack the lock, even with his sensitive fingers and a batch of skeleton keys. Simmonds had been a cautious man.

But not quite cautious enough.

This one had been smarter. There was no tie in to it. It had been built like an accident. We found him in the bathtub. He was nice and clean, except for the ugly bruise on the side of his head where he'd struck the edge of the tub. Struck it, or had his head banged against it. You pays your money. And I took my choice. Simmonds wasn't due for an accident. He was ripe for a murder.

The killer had made him take his clothes off before he'd hit him, which was a smart move.

It left the clothes nice and dry so he could pile them on the chair near the window. I couldn't figure how he'd persuaded him to do it, until I noticed the narrow crease around the body's waist—the sort of crease a money belt would leave. Curt got it at the same time.

"The old boy figured it was a stick, and he was smart enough to hand over his dough. Only he was too smart. He undressed himself for the kill."

I nodded absently. I was checking the clothes. I didn't know what I expected to find, but I was looking for something. One thing I was sure of; there'd be no loaded dice on this one.

I went over the stuff twice, even digging my fingers inside the shoes. Simmonds was smart; he'd been around. He should have left something. It wasn't until I held the white shirt up to the light and turned the collar that I saw the numbers on it and knew I had what I wanted.

Curt looked at the shirt, then at me. "White shirts are hard to get," he said softly. "We'd maybe better take that along."

I stuffed it in my coat pocket. "Let's get out of here," I said. "We're running late." We left Simmonds body in the tub where we'd found it, and we locked the door after us. This time I didn't call the police.

When we reached the Wheelhouse, Curt's hand caught my arm. "I don't get it at all, Wheel," he said. "It'd maybe be easier to back you if I did."

I shook my head. "It plays better this way," I told him. What I meant was, I didn't know whether it was going to play at all.

I needed the big guy. I told Tony that the minute we got in the club.

"The boys are trying, Wheel," he said. "They've found a couple of his hangouts. He plays once in a while at Manny's. They found a bar where he seems to like the beer. They're closing in. A guy like that can't stay cooped up. He's bound to show someplace."

"He better show fast," I said.

"I know," Tony said. "Sergeant Saxon called. It's his brother who's handling the case. It looks like they've got it figured the way you expected; that you killed Val for steering a crooked player in here. He says you need a lawyer."

I said, "I can't use a lawyer. I can maybe use the big guy. I don't know. But I can try."

I went through the back room and stopped at the poker table. I needed two men for this—Fats Carlin and Pete Markey. "There'll be a little game in room thirteen," I told them quietly. "Sam'll show you the way." I went out without waiting for an answer.

I don't know who hung the "thirteen" tag on the room, but it had stuck. The Wheel-

house had originally been the home of a big time bootlegger, a man who wasn't too sure of his pals. He'd had a bulletproofed, cell-like room built in the basement. It had a separate exit to the street and double doors. He'd put in an air conditioning system, so he wouldn't need windows. The hideout hadn't paid off for him—he'd bought his in broad daylight on a main street—but it came in handy for a gambling house. Whenever the stakes got high enough to worry about holdups, or when one of the local mobs was on the prowl, we held our private games in room thirteen. It wasn't impregnable; but it took a lot of finding and a lot of getting into.

Curt followed me down the stairs, a box of unopened cards in his hands. He threw a cover over the table and brought out a rack of chips.

"We'll use cash," I told him. He put the chips away and drew five chairs up to the table. Before he'd finished, Sam showed Fats Carlin and Pete Markey into the room.

Pete said, "From what I hear, you'd be better off on a fast freight." His little green eyes were laughing at me, but he was puzzled. In my spot, he'd have run like hell.

"The trains are crowded," I told him. "It might be I couldn't get a game."

Before we'd started to deal, the phone rang. Curt picked it up, listened, and handed it to me. His eyes were bright.

It was Tony. "They found him," he said. "What next? You want they should jump him?"

I hesitated. I could be wrong, but I didn't want him jumped. "Tell him that Wheel wants a rain check," I said. "Have them bring him down here. I think he'll come along."

Tony said, "That don't make sense, but you're the dealer."

Curt had already started dealing the cards. I felt a sudden sick fear that maybe I'd been wrong. I couldn't get the feel of the game—I wasn't right for it. I lost three pots to Pete, one on a bluff, and saw his little eyes light up as he pulled in the greenbacks. I didn't mind that; right then I wasn't interested in Pete Markey. But I had to be right when the big guy showed. I couldn't be cold. He'd be too good for me, if I didn't have the feel.

I was out three hundred bucks when the phone rang again.

"IT'S bad," Tony said over the wire. He was trying to whisper, but he was having trouble with his voice. "Saxon has teamed with Harrington from the D.A.'s office. They've got a murder warrant for you." "So?" I asked.

"They're searching the place now. And they mean business. They found the knife at Val's,

Wheel. They figure that about tears it."

Right then, right at that moment the street door opened and the big guy stood framed in the arch. I cradled the phone.

"You want a game?" he asked.

"You ran out on me," I told him. "You're loaded with my cash. I'd like to get some of it back."

He said, "I don't run out on nobody." He moved into the room, let his eyes case the players once, then sank into the empty chair, his huge bulk overflowing. "I don't run out on nobody," he said again.

I started dealing, and the itch came back on me. My fingers felt tense on the cards, but they weren't tense. They were just alive. I knew then that I'd been right, that this game was the payoff. I forgot about Saxon and Harrington upstairs, forgot the murder warrant and the knife with my fingerprints on it. All I could think of was that I had him back in a game and maybe this night was mine.

Fats Carlin was worried. He figured I'd roped him in over his head. But his steady eyes studied me for a moment and then he shrugged his shoulders. He'd stick.

Pete Markey wanted out. He said, "This smells too big for me." He started to push back his chair.

I got a mental picture of the cops seeing Pete Markey leave room thirteen. They'd be in on his heels.

"Nobody leaves," I said, curtly. "If it gets too big, you can kibitz."

I dealt him in the first hand.

It went right. It went the way I'd wanted it to. I was hot—my luck was running again.

I didn't push it. I didn't try to crowd Markey out, or take Carlin. I laid for the big guy. And I had him.

I filled flushes and straights on him. I busted two pair and came up with three men to top his widows. I caught him in the middle when Markey had a pat flush and squeezed hell out of him. He was going down fast.

He knew how to take it. He hadn't said a word to me, except to ask for cards, since we'd started to deal. He played his hands for what he figured they were worth and tried to sweat out my streak.

He was feeling it, though. Anybody would feel it. I'd felt it myself the night he'd had me over a barrel. But he couldn't run away from it, any more than I could have. He went on playing steadily, paying no attention to anything but his cards, not even noticing the noise upstairs, the sound of Harrington's men scurrying like ferrets, hunting my rat hole.

When he opened a pot and I held four to a straight flush, a chill hit me. This was the hand. It had to be the hand. It was getting too close.

Markey called and I raised it fifty.



The big man studied his hand for a half second, then placed a hundred in the pot. He didn't throw it, he put it out carefully, knowing he was bucking my luck, but that his hand deserved it.

Markey said, "Ow!" and folded.

I grinned. "Five hundred," I said. I said it half-sneeringly, wanting him to get the idea I was egging him on.

It rolled off him. He was still playing his hand. He counted out five hundred, looked at the few bills he had left, and laid the money in the center.

I had seven, eight, nine, ten of hearts. I needed a six or a jack.

Curt said, "Cards?"

The big man tapped the table. He had his. I took one.

I felt his eyes on me. He was puzzled. For the first time I had him thrown off. He said, "I knew a guy once used to draw one to fours. Somebody got sore and conked him."

I grinned, but I didn't say anything. It was his bet.

He counted the money in front of him. It came to close to three hundred. He laid it in the center of the pot.

I hadn't looked at my card, and I didn't look now. I said, "That's not the kind of money you took from me. That doesn't even cover the rain check."

I tossed two thousand dollars on the table in front of me and just sat there and grinned at him.

He couldn't figure it. Neither could anyone else. Fats Carlin's face was beaded with sweat and Pete Markey's lips were drawn back over yellow teeth. Only Curt was impassive, his eyes glued to the big man's hands. Curt—and the big man. The big man was all right; he had hold of himself. He was just trying to figure it.

His eyes didn't even flicker when he made up his mind. He laid his cards away from him, towards the center of the table, in plain

view, and reached for his belt. When his hands came back up they were filled with greenbacks.

He placed four thousand dollar bills in the center.

"I raise," he said, quietly.

The outside door crashed. Saxon and Harrington were closing in.

I tossed four thousand out like it was paper. "Raise," I said. I was still grinning.

That was enough for him. He matched it and sat there, waiting for me to show my hand.

I picked it up, flipping the cards over, one by one. I wasn't even surprised when I turned the last one. It was my night. It had to be right.

It was the heart six.

The big man said, "I figured you for four. I never saw a four flush played that way." He looked around the table as if for confirmation of his judgment, but nobody said anything. He shook his head and said, "Well, it's your money."

"No," I said, quietly. "Not mine. It's Simmonds' money."

I pulled Simmonds' shirt from under my chair and laid it on the table, pointing to the numbers written inside the collar. "Serial numbers. When Simmonds made a big cash payment like that, he made a note of the numbers, in case something went wrong." I tossed the shirt and one of the bills to Fats Carlin. "That check?" I asked.

Carlin nodded, not saying anything. He was beginning to understand why he was there.

"**T**HAT ties it," I said. "The rest is easy. That's why you quit when you won twelve thousand dollars. You needed the stake for bigger play. You needed the twelve thousand to buy the stuff you sold Simmonds."



\$71.50  
GOTHIC "JOAN"  
17J - 14 K case  
2 Diamonds

**Gothic**  
JARPROOF



The only watch whose **HEART\*** is  
**GUARANTEED A LIFETIME**  
Protected by a patented mechanism,  
GOTHIC JARPROOF watches "can  
take a licking yet keep on ticking."  
Precision built, exquisitely styled.  
Priced from \$33.75 to \$1,000 Write  
for free booklet "PP"



BALANCE STAFF  
AND ITS JEWELS

GOTHIC JARPROOF WATCH CORP., NEW YORK 19.



\$71.50  
GOTHIC "COLONEL"  
17J - 14 K case  
Prices include Fed. Tax

The big man's hands were flat on the table. "That's my business," he said. "It's police business," I told him. "You bought some jewels from the sailor for twelve thousand, then sold them to Simmonds, for more like fifty. Val heard you and Simmonds discussing the deal in the White Parrot. So you killed her."

The big man didn't move. "You killed her," he said.

I laughed. "That doesn't sell," I told him. "This is too open and shut. You killed Val, because she was on to your play. You left the pouch with loaded dice in her apartment to frame me. And you killed the sailor, maybe for his twelve grand, maybe because you were afraid he'd figure the murder. You filled the other pouch with coked dice and planted it on him. You figured that settled it. Val and the seaman were supposed to have steered a crooked gambler into the Wheelhouse and when I found it out I killed both of them. You thought it was smart, until your nerves started jumping. Then you realized using the pouches hadn't been smart. There was one guy who could place them, who could tie you and the sailor and the pouches together. So you had to kill him. You tried to kill everyone who could finger you for Val's death."

The gun came out too fast to stop it. It was trained on the table—not on any one of us, but covering us all.

The big man's voice was steady. "I haven't killed nobody—yet," he said. "You guessed right on the jewels. They were pearls—matched black pearls. I don't know where the sailor lifted them, but he smuggled them in. He wanted twelve grand. My contact lined up Simmonds, who offered fifty. But we needed the stake. I took you for it, and Simmonds paid cash for the pearls. You can ask him."

"Simmonds is dead," I said, flatly. "Everybody who could tie up the murder any way but the obvious is dead."

His eyes hit mine for a half-second. "Dead" he repeated. "Then you're right. If Simmonds is dead, and the sailor is dead, it adds up. It—" He pushed his chair back and his finger whitened on the trigger. "Nobody frames me," he said.

Curt Rasher shot the gun out of his hand, sending it spinning under the table. Nobody said anything.

He sat there, staring at his wrist. "All right," he said. "But I didn't kill nobody. I'll give it to you straight." He moved his left hand toward his injured right and Pete Markey came alive, diving under the table for the gun.

"Watch him!" Pete yelled. "He's got another one." Pete came up with the big guy's gun in his hand.

I caught Pete's wrist in my right, twisted and took the gun with my left. I spun him across the room to the big man. "He's yours," I said.

The big man held him with his left hand and smashed him in the face with his right. He kept it up, even when blood from the bullet hole in his wrist spattered across Pete Markey's shirt front.

Outside, men were banging harder on the door.

"It had to be Markey," I told Curt and Fats Carlin. "The big guy didn't quite fit. He's a gambler, and murder is a bum gamble. There had to be somebody else in it. And Pete Markey was the guy who stopped him at twelve thousand dollars. When I tried my build-up, saying twenty thousand was a pile of cash, Markey cut in on me. At the time, I thought he was just bucking me. But he was reminding the big guy of the fifty thousand they'd get for the jewels. He was the contact, the one who steered him to Simmonds and to me. And he wanted his cut. I should have figured Markey earlier—he was in the room when Val tried to warn me. He was the only one who knew she was on to it who left the Wheelhouse before I did." It was a little involved, but it made sense.

Curt said, "The greedy little—"

"That's what caught him," I said. "Greed and no nerve. He couldn't stop. He couldn't let the sailor walk off with twelve thousand bucks. So he killed him. Then he went haywire and killed Simmonds, trying to blot it all out."

When the big man dropped Pete Markey to the floor, I flung the door open and let the police inside. Harrington, the D.A.'s man was in the lead.

I said quickly, "This is Fats Carlin, Harrington. He's the guy who puts men like your boss in office. So you better listen, while he puts you straight."

I went over and sat down at the corner table, waiting for them to finish.

Curt Rasher dropped his bony hand on my shoulder.

"The only thing I don't get, Wheel," he said, "is the way you played it. We had Simmonds' shirt, with the serial numbers on it. We could have taken the big guy and stripped him down. You didn't need a game to make him bring out those bills."

I grinned at him. "My hands got hungry," I said. "That guy had twelve grand of my dough. He'd taken me over. I can't let a guy do that to me."

Curt scowled. "Yeah," he said. "But the D.A.'ll impound the money. You won't get a cent."

I stared at him blankly. "Money?" I said. "Who gives a damn about money?"

# Burning

## ISSUE

*He drew forth a slipper,  
washed it clean. . . .*



By  
**Ted  
Stratton**

---

*If you've got to hang—it's good to  
know the ropes!*

---

A BROWN thrasher on a Lombardy poplar V-ed its long bill and spilled music over the sun-drenched garden. Three men by the lily pond ignored the liquid interruption. Will Howard, smallest of the trio, wiped the sweat off his weathered face and the badge on his shirt front swung loosely.

It was the body of a strikingly beautiful young woman that held Will's attention. Her hair was blue-black, somewhat stringy. A tanned neck extended from the collar of a trailing housecoat tailored from some expensive, red material. The legs were slender, the calves muscled like a dancer's.

The long shadows cast by the poplars, he thought, were like a line from the poet, Browning—what was it again? The line escaped him momentarily. Black as night, the shadows striped the water inside the pond where the buoyant body of young Evelyn Schley floated amidst the disordered lily pads.

"Not right to leave her there any longer," Will said, the immensity of the tragedy thickening his speech.

Gar Schley, her husband, towered over the other two men. "We did not dare remove her because she'd been missing for hours," he explained soberly. "Isn't that the law, Howard?"

Will nodded. "Could she swim, Mr. Schley?"

"She held the pool record at the country club."

"Guess we'd better phone the coroner," Will decided. "Doc Walstead may insist on an autopsy."

Schley's handsome face clouded. "An autopsy? What for?"

"It's not sure just how she died."

"She drowned." Schley spoke in the manner of one whose words become township law. "I oppose an autopsy, Howard."

"She wouldn't have drowned," Will said stubbornly, "if she'd been stunned by a fall."

"A remote possibility."

"What about a prowler?"

"Nonsense."

Will tried once more. "What about suicide?"

"You're trying to make a mystery out of an unfortunate accident," Schley snapped. "I'll phone Walstead—and Doffman."

Paul Doffman was mayor of Bernards Township and Will's boss. Doffman had one creed. A millionaire from the exclusive Somerset Hills colony could think or do no wrong. In the past, Will had fought Doffman whenever the mayor killed a traffic ticket involving some millionaire. A puppet, that was Doffman.

Schley stalked purposefully along the flagged walk that circled rhododendrons and evergreens, then straightened to parallel artificial rock ledges that hid the distant mansion. Unnoticed, the brown thrasher continued to flood the scene with rippling melody.

"Sure as a dead cat," Will decided, "he'll phone Doffman and tie my hands. And I want to know how she died."

Then he recalled the Browning line. Lombardy poplars *like death's long, lean-lifted fore-fingers*. Funny that he should remember that simile from high school, particularly since the spired poplars against the hot sun seemed like fingers lifted in warning.

THERE were more important lines to remember now. The ones from a book called *Police Procedure*. Those directions afforded him, as police chief, no choice. They superseded any orders that Gar Schley or Paul Doffman might issue.

Briskly he went about the task of learning exactly how young Evelyn Schley had died. A swimmer doesn't drown in two feet of water. There is a more specific explanation like a heart attack, suicide, shock, or a murderous attack.

The third man spoke in precise accents. "An unfortunate accident. Howard. Drowning, the master said."

With distaste Will surveyed the stocky man clad in a collarless white shirt and pin-striped overalls. "Cut the airs, Totten," he advised. "You and me both work for a living."

"The master will hear of your remarks," Thomas Totten intoned.

"I'd expect all servants to be stool pigeons. I'm interested only in how she died and not what you report to Schley."

"Mr. Schley," the servant corrected.

"We'll forget about the Carr millions," Will said. "Schley didn't have a dime until he married Evelyn Carr and that makes us even. As long as I'm police chief, it's what I think that counts. When did you discover the body, Totten?"

"Eight o'clock this morning."

"Why'd you look out here?"

"Madam often walked alone here at night."

"When was she last seen?"

"At twelve o'clock. I'd been waiting up

until she returned and at that time she told me to go to bed as I wasn't needed."

"What was she wearing then?"

"A green evening dress, I believe. Mrs. Totten, who's been her maid for years, could be more specific."

"So she changed her clothes after arriving home."

Totten's lips curled. "People of means," he said, "do not attend the theater in housecoats."

"Just so I get it straight."

Will studied the broad flagstones that rimmed the low rocks set at the pool's edge. Opposite the body, the stones widened to parallel a single step that led to the water. Cement filled the interstices.

"Nothing to trip over," he decided, "unless it was the hem of the housecoat. Totten, did you hear a scream?"

"Our quarters are over the garage beyond the house. Mrs. Totten had the radio turned up when I went to bed. We heard nothing," he finished carefully.

"Any other servants?"

"A gardener, a laundress, a cook, and two cleaners. They all work by the day, except cook who is on vacation." Totten cleared his throat unctuously. "The master says she drowned. That should end the matter."

"Begins it. That's the law, Totten."

You see a body floating in the water, he thought, and conclude the person died accidentally. In shallow water? He sat on the flags, took off shoes and socks, rolled his trousers knee-high.

The water was tepid. His feet sank into several inches of mud. Nauseous, escaping swamp gas sickened him and he called to Totten, "You ever clean this pond?"

"I'm the inside man," the servant answered loftily. "Last week the gardener did use copper sulphate to kill the algae."

Will's bare foot struck something solid. Thrusting one arm into the muddied water he drew forth a slipper that he washed clean. It was for the left foot, high-heeled, green in color. He pocketed the shoe, waded forward.

The agitated water floated the body clear of the dense lily pads. A similar shoe was on the right foot. Why had she lost one and not the other? Had she had no chance to swim? He examined the rigid fingers. There were no roots or lily stems or even mud on the flesh.

*Not suicide*, he thought. *To drown, she'd have to hold onto something to keep under till her lungs filled with water.*

There were no marks or abrasions on the back or front of the head. He floated the body to the stone step just as a stout woman dressed in a white uniform hurried up to Thomas Totten. "Oh," she gasped, spotting the body. "T-the poor thing!"

Totten snapped, "I told you to stay in."

"The thought of her here," the woman sobbed. "Isn't there something we can do? Artificial respiration! Or—the inhalator?"

Will said gently, "We were too late, Mrs. Totten."

Aided by Totten, Will lifted the body onto the flagstones. He began to don his shoes and socks. Sobbing quietly, the maid knelt and smoothed the folds of the housecoat over the legs. She brushed the watery hair off the forehead.

At least one person here acts human, Will thought. Brusquely he ordered, "Totten, stay here until the coroner takes charge. Uh—Mrs. Totten, will you come back to the house with me?"

As they passed the rock ledges, he whispered, "Was she happy?"

The question startled the maid. "W-why do you ask that?"

"There's been a lot of gossip in town about Schley."

"If it's that chorus girl you're thinking of," she said venomously, "that's ended."

"What about Mrs. Cowderthwaite?"

"He had many women," she said bluntly.

"Would Schley's affairs drive her to suicide?"

"No!" She shook her head so vigorously that a strand of hair came loose and draped over her left eye. "Madame often spoke of divorce as a solution to her marital difficulties. Lately, she's been quite taken with horticulture, particularly lilies. She had a new species, White Velvet I think, that opened only at one o'clock and she may have come to see it." She smiled grimly. "All women have their troubles, Mr. Howard. I—I listen to the radio."

"What time did Mrs. Schley arrive home?"

"Twelve-thirty. I remember because Totten went downstairs just as the spot news came over WLIB."

"Had she been out with Schley?"

"No."

"Where was he?"

"Drinking somewhere. I think at the Whitmores last night."

"Not the Cowderthwaites?"

"It could have been the Cowderthwaites."

"She was wearing a green dress?"

"Yes. She was partial to that color."

He drew the slipper from his pocket. "Ever see this?"

"Why, it's wet! Where did you find it?"

"In the pool. The mate was on the right foot."

She nodded slowly. "I remember now. I—I was so upset, Mr. Howard!" Puzzled lines ridged her forehead. "She's so careful about her dress. She should have worn red slippers with the housecoat."

*I'm learning about rich women, he thought*

*idly. They wear green slippers with a green evening dress if they're partial to that color. They switch to red slippers and a red housecoat if they take a midnight stroll to study lilies.*

He brushed the facts from his mind as unimportant, said, "I'll check her bedroom now."

ENTERING the rear of the Tudor-style mansion by the kitchen, they ascended a back staircase to a broad upper hallway where Mrs. Totten entered a spacious room and switched on wall lights. Drapes, rug, upholstery were rose-colored.

On the modernistic bed lay a green evening dress. A bra set and nylon stockings splotted the rug. *Matching underwear, too?* he thought.

The maid fetched a pair of high-heeled red slippers from a closet the size of an apartment house bedroom.

"These match the housecoat," she explained. "I can't imagine why she didn't wear them."

Neither could Will. He tried to picture Mrs. Schley entering this room about twelve-thirty last night. The underthings suggested that she had stripped hurriedly. He circled the room like an inquisitive beagle.

No conventional suicide note stood propped on the vanity beneath ornate triple mirrors. There was no note on the bedstand, or on the chaise longue and matching side table. An ashtray with two butts smeared with lipstick cluttered the table, together with an unfinished pack of Raleighs, a box of chocolates, crumpled candy wrappers, and a book, *Lily Culture*, opened face down at page 16.

"Messy," he told the maid.

"But I cleaned everything," the maid said defensively, "after madam left for the theater."

He thought, *She cleaned everything.* Very, very slowly, things began to add up and little, unimportant facts told their story. Butts, wrappers, the opened book—had she read before her date with the White Velvet lily in the pool?

"She usually visited the lily that time at night?" he asked.

"Oh, yes."

Suddenly he crossed to the lavatory and switched on the lights. There were the usual accessories, including a stall shower. He ran one finger speculatively around the inside of the tub, knelt and fingered the metal grain. He turned over the perfumed cake of soap in the rack. He touched the towels. Next he examined the stall shower.

"Before she dressed for the theater," he asked, "did she tub or shower?"

"She took a shower."

He teetered slowly, his face tense with concentration. Retreating into the bedroom and kneeling on the rug, he bent his head and studied the bathroom floor.

"And did you wipe up the tile after her shower?"

"No."

"Who was the last person to wipe the bathroom tile?"

"Mrs. Van Arsdale, the upstairs cleaner. This morning."

"Is she a thorough worker?"

"There's been no complaint, ever."

He nodded slowly. "That's all up here."

But she grabbed his arm. Except for spots of glaring rouge, her face had no color. "If—if she was k-killed," she stammered, "there'd be a motive?"

"Why do you say killed?"

She ignored the question. "Would five thousand dollars be enough for a m-motive?"

"People have been killed for less," he said.

"Madam was always so good to me and Totten. He—gambles. He's heavily in debt. In her will, madam left us—"

"Five thousand dollars?"

She fled from the bedroom and he listened to the rapid *clack-clack* of her heels down the back staircase. Then he followed her downstairs and left the house. He met a bald-headed man with a double chin near the path to the rock garden.

"Where you been hiding?" the man growled. "I been waiting for you! Gimme that badge!"

"What's the charge this time, Doffman?" Will asked.

"The last one!" Doffman said grimly. The mayor grabbed the badge on Will's shirt. There was a ripping noise as the badge came off with a piece of the shirt caught in the metal clasp.

"That'll cost you three dollars," Will warned. "For a new shirt."

"I told you a hundred times," Doffman brayed, "not to bother millionaires! They can drown and you don't have to throw your weight around and make a stink!"

"You don't make a stink throwing your weight around."

"You're fired!"

"So I gathered. You're taking over?"

"Damned right." Doffman glared. "And you're trespassing, Howard. Get the hell off this place and don't come back!"

Will turned and walked off. Doffman roared, "You drive that patrol car and I'll arrest you for stealing!"

*Sure, Will thought, I'd be a thief and he'd let a killer go free! Now to do some checking. . . .*

**W**ILL leaned against the window in Doc Walstead's neat office, the late afternoon sun hot on his back. Walstead shook his head vigorously. "Not a chance, Will," was all he said.

He was a grey-haired man with pince-nez. He took a nervous turn about the office, took off the pince-nez and used them as a pointer to emphasize his words. "You'll never learn," he advised, not unkindly, "to stop pestering millionaires. You got fired for your meddling. And you with a wife and two children!"

"I want them to be proud of me," Will pointed out.

"Proud? Not when they go hungry, Will Howard. You've got to be careful whose toes you step on in this township."

"I'm stepping on your toes now, doc. Will you test the water from Mrs. Schley's lungs like I want you to?"

"She wasn't murdered. She drowned, Will!"

Will shrugged. "I guess I'm a glory hog, doc. I wanted to solve the murder by myself. Now I got to phone the state police." He picked up the desk phone.

Hurriedly Doc Walstead wrested the phone from Will's hands. "I've already signed the death certificate," he pleaded.

"Do I get the water test?"

"You stubborn fool!" Walstead exploded. "By God, I believe you were going to phone the state police."

"I was," Will grinned. "How long will the test take?"

"Ten-fifteen minutes."

"Good. Try the phenol first. Then barium chloride on the other."

Fifteen minutes later Doc Walstead re-entered from the laboratory. He carried two stoppered test tubes. In the bottom of one was an inch of pinkish-colored liquid; the other was clear except for a whitish precipitation. Sweat dotted Walstead's forehead. He had trouble with his breathing and sat down hard at the desk.

"Satisfied?" Will asked, pocketing the tubes.

Walstead slumped. "She drowned in the tub like you said." He mopped his forehead. "Will," he whispered, "what are they trying to cover up—suicide?"

"I told you it was murder."

Walstead clenched and unclenched one hand rapidly. "Don't step on the wrong toes again, Will. Who killed her?"

"That'll come later. Doc, there's one more favor you'll have to do."

"Not another damned thing! I got calls to make and—"

"Rip up that death certificate you signed."

Slowly Doc Walstead shredded the certificate and let the pieces flutter to the desk top.

**T**HE rose-colored bedroom was crowded. Will Howard sat on the edge of the chaise longue. Thomas Totten and his plump wife hovered discreetly near the door

to the upper hallway. Doc Walstead fidgeted by the modernistic bed.

Gar Schley glowered at Doffman. "You're his superior. I want you to order him off the case immediately!"

Doffman edged toward Will. "Will, you gotta stop pestering—"

Will looked up. "I'll take care of you later." He stood and faced Gar Schley.

"A good swimmer," he continued, "doesn't just drown in shallow water without a reason. It wasn't suicide and she didn't fall." Will faced Thomas Totten. "You knew that Mrs. Schley had you and your wife down in the will for five thousand dollars, didn't you?"

Totten licked his lips. "Yes," he whispered. "You owed Spider Kearns in town a big gambling debt, didn't you?"

Totten nodded. "That has nothing to do with her—death!"

"I'll decide that." Will let his eyes run over the others. "She came home last night, entered this room, undressed, smoked two cigarettes while she read on the chaise longue and—"

Doffman blared, "And that makes it murder? You can't prove it!"

"There's an unwashed ring on the porcelain of the tub," Will continued. "There're drops of water by the metal drain. The soap is spongy. Doc—you talk now the way you'll testify in court."

Walstead advanced two steps. "I tested the water from her lungs with phenolphthalein," he explained softly. "The water turned pinkish, indicating the presence of soap. I tested a sample of the water from the lily pond. Barium chloride caused a whitish precipitation denoting the presence of copper sulphate." Walstead paused. "She drowned in the tub, not the pond."

"One thing the killer forgot," Will said, his eyes hardening. "The gardener treated the lily pond with the sulphate to kill the algae. No sulphate, only soap, came from the water in her lungs."

"I knew about the sulphate!" Totten bleated eagerly.

Gar Schley lifted his head. "I—" he began.

Will turned. "The Whitmore's butler swore you left their house at twelve-forty-five last night. You could drive home in five minutes. Nobody heard you come home!" His words seemed to bounce off Gar Schley's big frame. "You came up here and found her taking a bath in the tub. You knew she planned to divorce you and cut you off without a penny. You drowned her in the tub."

"Nonsense," Gar Schley said through clenched teeth. "Absolute nonsense!"

Will laughed derisively. "For all your fancy education, Schley, you're just a dummy. You forgot that your wife was a careful dresser.

But you were a killer in a hurry. You dressed her in the housecoat and green slippers. Mrs. Totten saw your mistake. She knew that poor Mrs. Schley would have donned the red slippers."

Will whipped something wrapped in tissue paper from his pocket. He opened it tantalizingly, while his eyes measured Gar Schley's reaction.

"This evidence will seat you right in the electric chair," he said grimly. The paper came off. Will held up a green-colored slipper. "Any kid in grammar school," he mocked, "could have told you about fingerprints, Schley. When you forced this slipper on her foot, you left three perfect prints on the soft material. You—"

Gar Schley lunged. His hands clawed wildly for the slipper. Will backed away hastily. He stumbled over the chaise longue and did a backward somersault. The table lamp crashed. Mrs. Totten screamed.

Doc Walstead shouted, "Will! There he goes!"

Will scrambled up. He plunged across the room, out into the hallway. A door slammed. "Which room?" he shouted.

"L—last on the left," Totten babbled.

Will was a dozen feet from the door when a gun boomed hollowly. He wrenched on the door knob, but the door was locked.

"I've a master key," Totten said.

Will stepped back. Totten fumbled at the door, opened it. Will shoved the servant to one side. As he entered the room, the acrid odor of burned powder stung his nostrils.

"Doc," he called, "you take over."

It only took Walstead a moment at the body on the rug. "He's dead, Will. Maybe it's better this way."

Will nodded. "Yes," he admitted soberly, "it is. Those fingerprints on the slipper were a bluff, doc."

"Bluff!" Mayor Doffman bleated. "Why you fool idiot—you went and killed a millionaire!"

"Not a millionaire," Will said. "Mrs. Schley's lawyer told me this afternoon that he'd be completely cut off in her will. She planned to divorce him." He jabbed a finger into Doffman's fat stomach. "Give me three dollars," he ordered.

"Three dollars?"

"For the shirt you ruined when you yanked off my badge. One thing you got to learn, Mayor Doffman." Will Howard punctuated his words with hard jabs to Doffman's ribs. "From now on in this township, a millionaire has no more rights than a poor man. Or I'll run for mayor."

Doc Walstead took off his pince-nez, leveled them at the quaking mayor. "Believe me, Doffman, Will means what he says."

# THE CORPSE CAME

*Out in Hollywood where they cook with gas—I was just the lad to cover up a kill and make a couple of cadavers myself. Only, they don't care who they cook. . . .*

HE'S SITTING across the room from me now, sprawled out in a big chair in front of the fieldstone fireplace, his sandy hair tousled, a rough briar pipe on the table beside him. Exactly the way you've seen him in a dozen or more pictures.

The only thing that's different now is the bullet hole right over his heart, where my .25 caught him.

That interests you, huh? You wonder what a movie star is doing, sitting before the fireplace with a .25 slug in his chest. Well, that's what we hacks call a narrative hook, an opening designed to catch the readers' interest at once. I've written hundreds of them. Fifty or more for him.

Only this time I can't yank the sheet of paper out of my typewriter and change the plot. *This guy is dead!*

And I'm blind drunk, insanely drunk. There's the remnants of a case of brandy beside my desk and I've been sitting here, drinking steadily, for nearly twenty-four hours. I know that I am very, very close to the d.t.'s. Everything seems fantastic and far away and every now and then the walls of the room buckle into slow waves. I realize I'm writing wildly but I can't think straight and there's a roaring in my ears like the pounding of the surf at Malibu Beach.

*I used to go to Malibu with them and lie there on the hot, white sand and watch her come running in out of the surf with the sun shining on her yellow hair and the sea water streaming from her slender body. She was the loveliest thing on earth, the only thing I ever wanted and she had to go and pull a 789-J on me!*

Pardon, I forgot. A plot 789-J is a term used by writers to describe a very corny plot or situation. And they both acted like characters out of a genuine 789-J, the night I first met them.

That was back in 1934, when every hack in the country was strictly from hunger. I was working as leg man for a newspaper called the *Mountain City Herald*, away in the Ozark mountains. I was working there because I knew the assistant editor, a very charming divorcee named Hortense Raymond. And how I knew her! Dear, little Hortense would never have collected one dime of her very excellent

alimony if Stephen Wayne had ever talked out of turn—and how well she knew it.

Yeah, my job was safe, depression or no depression and a wise lad can always make more by *not* turning in certain stories than he can by turning them in. I was doing all right.

Anyway, I came home to my rooming house that night half drunk and when I opened the door of my room, there they were, sitting on my bed with her head resting on his manly shoulder. All that was needed was an orchestra, playing hearts and flowers. He was a big, sandy-haired gawk of a farm boy and he was sitting there with a pistol in his hand. He looked up, as I came in.

"My name is George Griffin, mister," he said, "and this is my wife Evvy. I just killed a man. I was robbing his house and he caught me. He had a gun and I grabbed it and while we was scuffling, the gun went off. I didn't mean to do it, but I killed him.

"I run out of the house and down the street to where Evvy was waiting for me. Then we seen a woman looking at us kinda funny and we climbed in here through your window. Well, we've had a long talk and Evvy thinks the only thing to do is give myself up and pay the price. I guess she's right." He looked up at me dully and laid the gun down on the bed beside him.

The girl spoke up then and I saw that she'd been crying softly all the time. "It's all my fault, mister," she said. "Every bit of it. George is a good, hard working man and we could have stayed right there share cropping. But I've wanted to go on the stage and be an actress ever since I was nine years old. Seems like I just couldn't get the idea out of my mind. It wore and wore on me, year after year, until I finally told George I was going to be an actress or I was going to leave him.

"George finally give in and we come to Mountain City and then we went broke. Mister, we ain't had a thing to eat for two days now and George was just about out of his mind. That's why he broke into that man's house—to get something for us to eat. Just the same, the Good Book says thou shalt not kill. So it's up to us to atone our sin."

Will you get a load of that pure, hillbilly corn? Didn't I tell you this was a 789-J? Why, I'd have broke right out laughing if I hadn't



# LATE

*I shot him right  
above the heart....*



**By  
Jack  
Bradley**

been racing my brain trying to think how I could peddle this story for more than the lousy fifteen or twenty bucks Jerry Walsh would give me for it.

**J**ERRY WALSH was the City Editor of my paper. Being himself a crook at heart, he knew me for what I was—and couldn't do one damn thing about it because dear little Hortense owned a big chunk of the *Herald*. Lord! How Jerry and I loved each other!

When the girl had finished with the succotash, I reached up and turned on the overhead light to get a good look at her—and it was like touching a live wire! I stood there just *looking* at her for a full minute—me, Stephen Wayne, known and remembered from Times Square to Hollywood. The girl's beauty was absolutely incredible.

She had a little heart-shaped face with the biggest eyes I'd ever seen on a woman and her body was slim and willowy, even with that hillbilly dress she wore. Actress, she'd said. Well, give her a Manon frock—and I knew what the cameras would do with that mop of hazy, yellow hair. But it wasn't just that.

It was the sheer, magnetic allure of her. I'd put in five or six years out on the coast as writer-producer, working for Sol Gruner. I was headed for the heights when Gruner caught me knocking off a few extra commissions. All right. So Sol didn't like me. Just the same, he knew that I knew my stuff and if I told him I really had something, he'd listen.

And I did have something now. I had it right here in this stinking Ozark furnished room and I knew damn well I had to put on an act to keep hold of it.

I let go with a soap opera sigh. "And, out of all the places in Mountain City, you came to my room," I crooned. I turned to him. "Young man, have you ever stopped to realize that giving yourself up to justice isn't going to help the unfortunate widow of the man you killed? Have you? Wouldn't it be better to help her than merely to let the law exact a senseless vengeance?"

"Mister, I'd work my fingers to the bone the rest of my life to help that poor woman."

"Then do that, George Griffin! I'm leaving for Hollywood in the morning. I have connections in the moving picture industry. I can get work for you both out there. Come with me."

All right, so it wasn't quite that simple, but, so help me, it worked. Yeah, I know how that sounds but you just don't know those hill-bills. In half an hour I'd packed and we were in my car, leaving Mountain City behind. I made just one stop. That was to ring Hortense Raymond's doorbell. When she came to the door, still half asleep, with a robe over her nightgown, I shoved her back into the vestibule and talked—fast.

"Get this and get it straight," I told her. "I've got something big and you're going to help me with it. Act nice and you'll never pay me another cent of blackmail. Not only that, but I'll even slip you a century note now and then. But get nosy or try to cut in and, baby, you're going to die! I'll have that fixed even if something happens to me. I gotta go now but I'll phone you some time next week." I felt like a million dollars when I went back to join the kids in my car. I knew what Hortense would do.

We drove up to St. Louis through a mountain dawn and every mile we drove I could feel her slender body pressing against me on the seat. I'd known her less than two hours and I was already half nuts with her nearness. I thought. *Give me just one month—two at most—*

*He's sitting there by the fireplace now, grinning at me as though he wanted to say, "Sure, I knew how you felt, Wayne, and so did she. How'd you make out?" It's only the brandy, of course—dead men can't break out grinning—but I do wish so much that I could get drunk enough to pass out. I'm so damned lonesome, here, with that dead jerk grinning at me.*

Well, it worked out about the way I figured it would. Sol Gruner called me some dirty names and then, when I told him what I had, he agreed to give her a test. And fifteen minutes after they'd run the test, he was grabbing

for a contract blank. Everything was lovely.

Yeah. Sure. Until they shoved her through a couple of weeks of school and put her in front of a camera in a real role instead of a screen test. Then Sol came to me yelling nine kinds of bloody murder.

"A nice lemon you bring to me! That I should listen to a dirty crook like you! A dame that walks in front of the camera like an old maid at a stag party!"

It was quite true. She was self conscious and all the school's training just couldn't get it out of her. She photographed like a million dollars, just as I'd known she would, but when it came to acting, she just didn't have it in her.

But what about my pal, George? Why, that lousy jerk took to the camera like a duck to water. I'd practically pulled a gun on Sol Gruner to give him a one year contract, with chicken feed salary, and after his first picture I wanted to kick myself down Hollywood Boulevard.

I suppose you've read how they gave him a small part in *The Winds Blow* and how he walked away with the picture? Every fan magazine writer in Hollywood was pawing through his thesaurus, after the preview, trying to find new adjectives for the guy.

Simple, wholesome charm. . . .

The biggest find of the year. . . .

Stephen Wayne's new discovery to be groomed for stardom. . . .

Now I ask you. Was there ever a set-up as screwy as that? I'd already figured out an absolutely foolproof "accident," so simple it would have been a joke. Yeah, a joke on me. She'd be washed out at the end of her contract; George was headed for the big time. Once I let him have it, I was kissing a marvelous meal ticket good-by.

And, truly, those two kids were a marvelous meal ticket. I suppose you've read about the way they lived? A small apartment, inexpensive clothes, no servants. How could they have servants?

The first week after the contracts were signed, I came to them. "I've just made some inquiries by long distance telephone," I told them in a hushed voice. "The widow of the man you killed is in a bad way. Her name is Mrs. Hortense Raymond and her husband was heavily in debt. That's something to make up."

Yeah, they atoned, all right. Even that first year I managed a convertible coupe and a nice apartment for myself. I had a good job as a writer and I could always tell them about cleaning up in a stock market deal. Then they started giving George leading roles and I really went to town. There was a big town house with a swimming pool and servants who knew how to make a man comfortable. Then this cabin, way up in the mountains.

And parties at Ciro's and the Brown Derby.

**I**F ONLY I could have got her out of my mind. What in hell was the matter with me, anyhow, I'd ask myself sometimes. I'd leave a party and go to their apartment, ostensibly to talk about her work in her current picture. I'd snap at her for the way she'd carried a basket of flowers in her latest, near-extra role and she'd hang on my every word. She knew, by now, that I knew what made pictures, she knew that I could make her what she wanted to be. So she listened. But let me ever put an arm across her shoulder and I could feel her freeze up.

"I'm still a married woman, Mr. Wayne."

I think I'd have gone nuts that first year out there if it hadn't been for the brandy. About the first or second month I learned that brandy could make me forget her—a little, at least. After that there was one case a week delivered at my town house. By the end of the second or third year I couldn't have lived without it. But that didn't matter too much. The money was still rolling in from George and Evvy—via Hortense Raymond—and I was making something besides as a script writer. Yeah, I was doing all right.

And then the whole damn thing blew up in my face. They made a short, *How Movies Are Made*. The usual stuff. Extras coming onto the set. Make-up men working on George. Writers putting the final touches to the script. And, since it was one of my pictures, there was a shot of me, sitting tensely at my desk, with a couple of dummies looking over my shoulder. Routine stuff. I'd forgotten all about it ten minutes after they'd taken the cameras out of my office.

Yeah. And just one month later I picked up my telephone and heard a mocking voice say, "Hello. Is this the famous Mr. Stephen Wayne?"

I thought at first it was one of my Hollywood pals. "Yeah, this is Wayne," I said, "but make it short, will you? I'm pretty well tied up right now."

"Oh, I'm sorry about that, Wayne," the voice said. "I'm Jerry Walsh and I thought we might have a nice, long talk about a guy that used to work for me back in Mountain City."

"Keep on talking," I said. *Yeah. Keep on talking, jerk. You're digging your grave with every word you say.*

"Listen, Wayne, the game's up. I knew something was rotten in Denmark, right after that murder but I couldn't do anything about it. Then I saw that movie short, *How Movies Are Made*, with you sitting there at a desk, looking important and I finally doped it out.

I took Hortense Raymond out to a night club and got her blind drunk and she told me everything. They've still got the fingerprints of the guy that did a murder, that night back in Mountain City, and I have a hunch they might match with George Griffin's. How would you like to split some of that heavy sugar you're raking in, or would you rather tell me to go to hell?"

"All right, Jerry, we'll talk it over." I tried to put a sort of panic-stricken resignation in my voice. "I can't take you to my home because there's a mob there. But I've got a cabin up in the hills and we can drive up there for a talk."

It was the rainy season in California and half the roads were already washed out. Maybe—the next moment I thought the lousy rat had read my mind.

"Swell," he said. "But just in case you've got any ideas about accidents along the way, Wayne, I'm leaving word with the hotel clerk that I'm meeting you, see?"

My secretary was beginning to look at me curiously. I had to get out of there where I'd have a chance to think. "All right, Jerry. I'll pick you up in front of Ciro's in about one hour."

All the way over to George Griffin's apartment I was trying to think of a safe way to murder Walsh and I couldn't think of a damned thing. I found George alone.

"Evvy's gone to get some groceries," he said.

"It's just as well, George," I said. I told him about Jerry Walsh's call. "You'd better go up with us. There may be a little trouble."

"No, there won't be, Mr. Wayne," he said decisively. "All these years I've kept the gun that killed that man back in Mountain City and every time I see it I feel like giving myself up."

He opened a bureau drawer and showed me the gun and I felt like shouting with glee. This was absolutely perfect! I flicked out the cylinder and saw that it was still fully loaded, except for the one shot that had killed that damned fool back in Mountain City. I hoped it would still fire after all these years, but if it didn't I had an unregistered .25 automatic in my pocket. I dropped the big gun into the other pocket of my rain coat.

"Maybe you're right, George," I said. "We'll see."

**I**T WAS still raining cats and dogs as we drove up into the hills. We passed over one bridge that was sure to go out within the next hour or two and I remember thinking that whatever happened up there, the

**ARE YOU BUYING VICTORY BONDS?**

law couldn't reach us for a day or two. Actually, I hadn't the ghost of a definite plan. All I knew was that two men stood between me and her and that they were both riding to their deaths with me.

We finally made it to my cabin and we hadn't more than started on our first round of brandy when George turned to face Jerry Walsh.

"I know what you're here for, Mr. Walsh," he said, "and I'd rather just give myself up than to cause any more trouble. Fact is, I'd have give myself up and got this over with a long time ago, only Mr. Wayne said I ought to help out that poor Mrs. Raymond, the widow of the man I killed in Mountain City. So I've been sending most of what I made back to Mrs. Raymond. I put her kids through college and now I'm setting one of them up in business."

Jerry Walsh jerked himself erect and I saw a look of utter astonishment on his face. "You mean to tell me that all these years you've been sending money to Hortense Raymond?" Griffin nodded.

"And the damned little tramp's been sending it right back to the guy that was blackmailing her," Walsh murmured in an awed voice. "It's right out of this world."

"Like you, pal," I said. I pulled out the murder gun and let go. The roar almost deafened me. The first time I'd fired a gun since I was a kid and, so help me, I caught him square in the puss. I felt like yelling with glee when I saw him go down.

George Griffin swung around like a flash—and stopped short when he saw my face. "He was telling the truth, wasn't he, Mr. Wayne?"

The brandy was beginning to take effect and the drumming of the rain on the roof was like a million feet marching over my brain.

"Yes, you fool!" I shouted at the top of my voice. "Yes, he was right! And you can go and tell him so!"

I yanked the .25 automatic out of my pocket and shot him right above the heart. Then I wiped my fingerprints off both guns, put the .25 automatic in Jerry Walsh's hand and the other gun in Griffin's. Everything was in a hazy blur and I was racing as though seconds counted. I didn't even know what kind of a story I was going to tell the cops when they got there. I just wanted to get it over with and get another drink. . . .

I looked up and saw her standing there in the doorway. She was wearing a raincoat, but she was bareheaded and the raindrops made little, glistening pearls in her yellow hair. She walked slowly into the cabin and her face was like the face of a dead woman.

"I heard what you said." Her voice was dull and lifeless. "I guess George and I were both fools. But you didn't need to do this, Mr. Wayne. I told George, over a month ago,

that I was going to divorce him and marry you because you could make me a great success and I wanted that more than anything else in the world." She kept on staring blankly at the body of George Griffin.

And suddenly the brandy was rising up and exploding in my brain like a million rocket bombs. Before I realized what I was doing, I had reached out and swept her into my arms, pressed her dear, rain-wet face against my own. I was suddenly laughing triumphantly.

"Then I *did* win you, after all! You *did* know what Stephen Wayne could do!"

I was laughing and crying and pressing her mouth to my own, all at once. At that moment I didn't care what the law did to me or what happened afterward. I only knew that I had had her and nothing in the world mattered except that.

She drew back and slapped me hard across the face.

For a moment she stood there looking at me. Quietly. Absolutely unafraid. Then she turned and walked slowly out of the cabin.

I stood there stupefied for a moment. Then I jumped over, bent down and picked up the .25 automatic from Jerry Walsh's dead hand, aimed it squarely at her back. One tiny segment of my brain was telling me to hurry and squeeze the trigger. Telling me I could still dope out some kind of a story to tell the police.

I squeezed the trigger, all right. Squeezed it so hard the sweat stood out on my forehead. And I couldn't squeeze it hard enough to send a bullet into that slender back that was marching away from me. Walking away to send destruction down upon me.

Why? Yeah, sure. Why? Go ahead, Wayne, tell the reader just why you couldn't squeeze that trigger hard enough. Make him understand exactly how you felt. Make him realize that here was the only thing that had ever been pure and lovely in your whole rotten life and that you couldn't destroy it even when it meant your own destruction to let it live. Go ahead. It may be hard to put over but you can make him understand. You're Stephen Wayne, remember? Sure! You can make him understand. . . .

The rain's been coming down in torrents all day and night. But now it's slackening up a bit and the sheriff will soon be here. As soon as I see him coming I'm getting this thing over with—I've still got the .25 beside me. No dreary months of trial and jail for Stephen Wayne. Hell! I'm on my last bottle of brandy, anyhow.

Say! I've just thought of something. There's only one thing missing from this. And that's the two little words that a good hack puts at the bottom of every 789-J—THE END.

By David Goodis



"I got it figured out," Al said. "Play nice..."

## IT'S A WISE CADAVER

IT WAS on the desk, waiting for him. Renner cursed. He liked this habit that the boss had of going out on a case and leaving him nothing except one of these notes with a brief—too brief—description of the deal plus a few careless directions. Renner picked up the note, scowled at it.

"On that Village kill—big dough involved. Believe it or not, I'm working for Calotta."  
Al.

And then an address— Renner swore and walked heavily out of the little office, chewing imaginary gum.

Driving downtown he worried, as usual,

||

*It took more than a private eye and a red hot racketeer to unravel the riddle of Dominic's corpse—it took a dead man who knew all the answers!*

||

about himself. There was no getting away from the fact that he had been a fool to punch a certain house sergeant in the mouth. The unfortunate incident had occurred little more than a year ago and it had resulted in his being toed off the force and into the lap of Al Reid. Reid, a wise guy, had been kicked out a year or so before that and had started his own little agency. Upon hearing of Renner's trouble, he had offered to take his ex-colleague in, on the premise that two could starve to death as cheaply as one.

He brought his sour speculations back to the present. *If Calotta is mixed up with us and if Reid is working for Calotta, then the pay-off has been reached.*

Calotta, in legal, technical parlance, had no visible means of support—but the technicality was only in force because the police from Miami to Manhattan assiduously kept their eyes shut. Five years earlier Reid had engaged one of Calotta's boys in a gun duel and had killed him. A week later Al Reid had narrowly missed a trip to the morgue when somebody put a time bomb in his apartment—and if the two had become bosom pals and co-workers since, Renner hadn't heard about it.

However, time heals all wounds.

Renner's destination was a typical Greenwich Village tenement. A lot of kids on the street and a lot of noise and thick air. He saw a few loiterers in the doorway and muttered, "Calotta," figuring it would work as a password.

It did and he found himself taken inside, up a dark flight of steps, through a dark hallway, and into a room. Al was there, along with three frightened women, a frightened old man, a heavy-set man who looked sore and mean—and a corpse.

The corpse was stretched out on the floor and it was almost swimming in its own blood. The blood came from a big hole in the head and an axe leaning against a dirty bed told the rest of the story.

Al grinned at Renner and said, "The guy on the floor is Dominic Varella. He is a very intelligent kid of twenty who got the idea that he could get rich quick. Imagine, in times like these!"

"Then what?"

"He was not very original, even alive. He told a lot of nice people that a boat loaded down with gold is sunk off the Asbury Park beach, and he is organizing a diving expedition, and do they care to share in the box office receipts?"

"That is an old one," Renner agreed.

"Quite true," Al smiled, "but Dominic had a new angle. He went to a printer and had a fake newspaper story made up. Then he had other literature prepared, including accounts of his success as a deep-sea diver on the Pacific

Coast, together with photographs. Pretty smart and thorough, don't you think?"

"It wouldn't take me over," Renner said.

"It took me," Calotta snarled.

Renner looked him over. He and Calotta were about of a size—which was big. The other was forty if he was a day, and he had a low forehead, a heavy blue beard, a broken nose and thick lips. With a face like that, Renner thought, a man couldn't stay honest.

Al said, "Yeah, what do you think of that? This Dominic actually hooked our Calotta for ten grand. Imagine that! And there are several more personages who have been taken over for even larger sums."

Renner said, "Who killed this guy?" He looked at Calotta and right away they parted friendship.

"Here's what I know," Al said. "Calotta called me down here. This is Dominic's room. He says that someone murdered Dominic and he wants me to find out who done it. He don't want the cops in on this deal because the cops are sore at him, and besides, he is sore at the cops. Is that right, Calotta?"

"Yeah," the gangster said. "I want to find out who killed Dominic, because whoever did it knows what I want to know."

"And what's that?" Renner said.

"Use your head!" Al suddenly yelled. "This Dominic has salted all the dough he took in on this swindle away somewhere and Calotta wants to know where it is. Do I have to draw you a picture?"

Renner shrugged. "Well," he said, "what do we have to work on?"

Al gestured toward the three frightened women, the frightened old man. He said, "These three girls are all tenants in this place. Our friend Dominic nicked them for a few hundred bucks apiece with his Asbury Park treasure story. The old guy is the printer who set up the phoney newspaper story."

"That all?" Renner asked. "Who found out about the printer?"

"I did," Al said, "and believe me, pal, it was a neat piece of work. No sooner does Calotta call me in on this case and shows me the newspaper clippings, than I put two and two together and get four. I visit the three printers who are situated within convenient radius of this neighborhood and one of them turns out to be this happy lad, who did the job for our friend Dominic."

"Well, that's something," Renner said, without the least glimmering idea of what he was talking about.

Al turned to Calotta. "Tell you what," he said. "We'll need a little time to work on this. We'll go back to our office and figure on it. We ought to have an answer for you by tonight."

"Okay," Calotta said. There was a smart

grin on his face. "You go back to your office and figure the job out. I'll stay here and wait for you to come back. Of course you won't go to the cops?"

"Of course I won't go to the cops," Al smiled.

He and Calotta grinned amiably at one another. Calotta's face reminded Renner of the hyenas he had seen at the Bronx Zoo.

**I**N THE coupe, before he kicked the car into motion, Renner said, "We go to the cops, of course."

"Yeah? And from there to the cemetery," Al replied. "You're a moron."

"Why?"

"Because Calotta has more than dough wrapped up in this deal. That should have been obvious even to you. And he isn't taking any chances, particularly with us. Right now he has guys following us."

Renner looked in the rear-view mirror and saw a big black convertible swing out as he pulled from the curb. He swore uncomfortably and said, "Look, Al, are you tryin' to kid me, or something?"

"How?"

"This thing all points to Calotta. What are you stalling with him for? Forget that car behind us. Go to the cops and tell them that Calotta killed a guy. That's all there is to it."

"I called you a moron," Al said. "I wasn't kidding about that."

"Have it your own way," Renner said.

He drove the rest of the way in silence and parked the car a block away from the office.

Al said, "Just act natural and dumb. We're going upstairs."

They went into the office and Al shut the door and then he said, "They're out in the hall and waiting for us. They'll want to know what we're doing, so they won't start anything unless they get suspicious."

"That's nice," Renner said. "What do we do, stay here and wait until they do?"

"You stay," Al said. "In the meantime I'm taking a chance with the window. I'm going back to the Village. I just pulled this gag to get Calotta's boys out of the way. Now I'm going back there and finish the case. You sit here and talk out loud and argue with me."

"But you won't be here," Renner said.

"That's just the point," Al smiled. "I won't be here."

He walked over to the window, opened it and looked down. Then he climbed out, and Renner heard him making his way down the fire escape.

**T**HE three frightened women were still there. So was the frightened man. So was the corpse. Calotta was master of ceremonies. He had a revolver in his hand.

He was telling the four frightened people to keep quiet. That was when Al came in.

Calotta looked at Al and said, "Well?"

"I got it figured out," Al said. He looked at the revolver in Calotta's hand and he said, "Play nice."

"Don't stall," Calotta said. He leveled the revolver at Al's chest.

"Put down the toy or I don't talk," Al said. He sighed and then he added, "You're not a very trusting employer, are you, Calotta? I'm telling you that I got this case all figured out and I'm ready to earn my pay check as soon as you put the revolver away."

Calotta frowned and put the revolver back in his shoulder holster. As soon as he was sure that the rod was in its leather, Al jumped. He had to do this fast and he couldn't depend on his fists, because of Calotta's size. He kned Calotta in the stomach and when the heavy man doubled, Al kned him again in the chin. Calotta went up against the wall, but he didn't go out. He threw fists, cursing, spitting teeth and blood as Al jabbed fast. Then it was the knee again, and this time it caught Calotta on the point of the chin and knocked him cold.

While the three frightened women and the frightened old man were jabbering like peacocks in a typhoon, Al took the revolver from Calotta's shoulder holster. He waved the women out of the room. Then he brought his arm up slowly and aimed the rod at the frightened old man.

"You killed Dominic, didn't you?"

The frightened old man began to shiver. "No—no—not me. I—"

"Aw, cut it out," Al said. "You oughta be glad I saved you from Calotta. You know what he would have done to you? He would have cut off your nose, and then he would have cut out your tongue, and then he would have cut your eyes out, and maybe he'll still do it, unless—"

"All right," the frightened old man said. "I'll tell you. I killed Dominic. I made an agreement with him. I would fix up the newspaper clippings, and in return he would give me a share of the money. It was my idea to start with. He told me that he had it in his room—"

"And you believed him," Al said. "You came up here with an axe and you killed him and then while you were looking for the money Calotta knocked on the door and you got away while the getting was good. You didn't know till then Calotta was mixed up in it. You went back to your print shop and you were minding your own business at the press when I came in."

The frightened old man said, "How—how can you know all this?"

*(Continued on page 92)*

# DRESSED TO KILL

By Dean Owen

**T**HE paper was over three months old but he had seen it for the first time today. He reached out a big brown hand to crumple it in anger, then changed his mind and read on.

Tragedy struck Bay Beach Amusement Pier yesterday when a holiday crowd witnessed the sudden death of Dolly Haines, high wire performer who apparently lost her balance. . . .

Sam Blake, pier manager, told police Miss Haines had been drinking prior to her evening show. This was substantiated when police found a half-filled whiskey bottle in the dead girl's dressing room. . . .

"She was murdered," he said in a voice that was tight and husky.

The other employees of Acme Publicity looked up from their desks, then glanced at each other, and suddenly he hated this office with its chrome and wide windows that let in the California sunshine. On a clear day you could see Bay Beach from here and imagine you could see the pier where Dolly Haines had died.

Loren Tighe, a young old man with a tanned face and prematurely grey hair, came up smelling of cologne and tweed.

"Take it easy, Jeff," he told the big brown man. "You've had it tough over there." He waved a hand carelessly in the general direction of the Pacific. "But it's time to settle down, old boy. Forget Dolly Haines and concentrate on Acme. Don't spoil your first day back with us."

Jeff Arnold stared up at his boss, folded the newspaper and put it in his coat pocket. And he realized that Loren Tighe looked more like a greying sophomore than ever.

Typewriters were stilled as everybody stared.

When Jeff Arnold stood up you could see how tall he was. Those long legs had won him a berth as All-American end at U.S.C. The dent in his nose had been put there by a Stanford cleat.

"It was murder," he told Loren Tighe. "Dolly Haines knew her act. She wouldn't fall."

"I'm sorry you found that paper," Tighe said. "Knowing the details will only make you feel worse."

"It's the details that make me sure she was murdered."

A patient smile formed on Loren Tighe's lips. He leaned on the cane he always carried and shook his head.

"But she was drunk—"

Jeff Arnold brought up the flat of his big hand like he'd done on occasion when disposing of an opposition tackle. It caught Loren Tighe on the chin. He flipped gracefully over a steel-top desk to land on the floor amid a shower of Acme Publicity releases.

The girl at the switchboard said, "Oh, poor Mr. Tighe," because she thought that was what she was supposed to say.

The sound of her voice, coming on the heels of dead silence, made everybody jump.

Unshaken, Loren Tighe got up and pulled some bills from his pocket. "Here's two hundred dollars, Jeff," he said. "Get drunk. Good and drunk. Then come back to work. I have a New York assignment that will take you away from things." He put the money on the desk, then turned to the other employees. "The mailer's due to go out in forty minutes. I'll be at Parker-Brace if anybody wants me."

He went out of the office, closed the door behind him with his cane.

Jeff knew Parker-Brace was the brokerage firm where Loren Tighe did business. Tighe spent his leisure time there or on a golf course. He only bought enough stock to make him welcome, or so he said. But some said he plunged now and then and had missed bankruptcy by a shade, a time or two.

Anger dropped a few degrees in Jeff Arnold, to be replaced by shame. Loren Tighe, the man who had given him back his job, had allowed himself to be pushed around in front of the other employees. And Tighe had repaid that courtesy with two hundred dollars.

On his way out, Jeff dropped the money on the switchboard girl's desk. "Give this to the boss, Marge," he said stiffly.

He felt their eyes on him when he went out the door.

In the hallway he found Liz Barclay who did fashions for Acme. She was running a



---

---

*Back from the Pacific wars, Jeff remembered  
Dolly very well—a gal you could love, as some-  
body had—to death!*

---

---

*Tighe leaned on his cane, his  
gun's muzzle overgrown with  
a silencer. . . .*



comb through long golden hair that touched the tweed collar of her jacket.

"I was just going to lunch," she told him.

And he had to smile at her in spite of the way he felt. "You're a liar," he said softly and took her by the arm.

**O**VER cocktails at the Derby, Liz cupped her chin in her hand to look across the table at Jeff.

"I didn't know you were in love with Dolly Haines," she said, her hazel eyes intent on Jeff's sun-blackened face.

"It wasn't love," he told her slowly, thinking of Dolly Haines and her brother, Johnny, and Papa. Only their name wasn't Haines, it was Hanskowsky or Hanolisky or something that Jeff never did quite catch. They had come from some place in Central Europe, leaving the insane political circus where they had spent their lives, one jump ahead of the little man with the mustache.

Jeff met them his first year out of college when he was press agent for Bay Beach Amusement Pier. And he remembered the midnight snacks in the apartment off the

Strand, when the kids had finished their act. Jeff and Dolly and Johnny and Papa—the wine and the laughter and the concertina Johnny played while Papa danced.

Then the night the old man died and Johnny remembered strong, steady hands that clutched his own, hands that had made Papa one of the top aerialists in any land.

"You watch my kids, huh, Jeff?" he said. "They are alone in strange country. Don't let nobody hurt my kids. I go smiling if you promise, huh, Jeff?"

Jeff had promised and watched the light fade in Papa's eyes.

And the next year when Dolly and Johnny wound up their winter with the circus and came for the summer engagement at Bay Beach, Johnny said, "Jeff, I like this publicity business. You wear clean shirt—you somebody, Jeff. I want be like you."

"You're too smart for that, Johnny," Jeff had said with a laugh to ease the blow. "You make more in a month than I do in six."

"It ain't money, Jeff," Johnny said, laboring over each word. "I can learn. You teach me, huh? Maybe I work for Loren Tighe like you."

Jeff had turned away to hide the pain in his eyes, for he knew what Loren Tighe would say. Acme had to consider its prestige. Johnny wanted to be somebody, but he had never been to school. And Jeff knew there was something wrong in the world when a kid like Johnny couldn't go to school.

For now Johnny was working for Loren Tighe. Tighe had wanted a man who knew the amusement business and Jeff Arnold had signed up with Acme, taking the Bay Beach account with him.

After that the war and Dolly's letters proudly telling how she and Johnny were citizens. Johnny was going in the army. She was proud of him.

Liz Barclay's voice brought Jeff Arnold out of the past.

"A nickel, Jeff."

He forced a laugh. "A penny's the usual price. Why a nickel?"

"Maybe your thoughts are worth more," she told him softly. Then her red-lacquered nails tapped the rim of her cocktail glass and she said seriously, "Was it news about Johnny that upset Dolly that—that day?"

He shook his big head slowly. "Dolly was steel wire," he said. "Nothing could throw her off. Not even hearing that Johnny had been wounded."

"Maybe she was in love," Liz said and watched Johnny's face. "That sometimes does things to a woman."

"Johnny always said if Dolly ever loved a guy she'd go all the way. There'd only be one in her life."

Loren Tighe came in with some network-time salesman and paused at Jeff's booth to lean on his cane.

"Get on a good one, Jeff," he said, indicating the cocktail with a nod of his head. He smiled at Liz. "Take the afternoon off. Acme clients can do without fashion news today."

And when he had moved on, Jeff said, "How can you dislike a guy like that?"

"It's very easy," Liz answered and gave her nose a swipe with the powder puff.

He gave her a quick, hard look, but she covered up the remark by waving at someone Jeff did not see.

THEY got out of the Derby and Jeff had her drive him toward the beach.

"What did you mean by that crack at Loren?" he asked her.

They were riding along Sunset Boulevard with the top down. The sea breeze ruffled his blond hair and the salty tang of the air should have relaxed him. But he gripped the door handle tightly with strong brown fingers.

"For one thing he has an axe to grind," Liz finally answered. "Loren Tighe loves Loren Tighe. He wouldn't have let me have the afternoon off unless he had a good reason."

"He gave me back my job," he reminded her.

"That was strictly for appearances' sake."

He chewed that over in his mind, trying to make something out of it. They came to Beverly Hills. White stucco and tile roofs. Palm trees and green lawns. Girls in shorts, with fat brown legs, rode bicycles down the bridle path. This was peace—this was home—yet he felt no elation.

"Who handled Dolly Haines at Acme after I went in the army?" he asked her suddenly.

Her knuckles whitened on the steering wheel. "Stop it, Jeff." She nodded at the newspaper he still carried in his coat pocket. "I'd never have left it on your desk if I'd known you'd go off like this. That's why I didn't write the details while you were still out there. I didn't want you to brood."

His eyes slid to her face and he studied her thoughtfully. He watched the wind blow her golden hair, saw the glow of sunlight on her cheeks. He'd always said that Liz Barclay should have been a model. He'd thought that since college.

"You put that paper on my desk for a purpose, Liz," he said softly above the purr of the motor. "You got me out here to tell me something and now you're backing out."

There was a hysterical edge to her voice. "When I was a Freshman at S.C. I wondered what it would be like to go out with the great Jeff Arnold. And here I wind up working three years in the same office—"

He reached over with his left hand, turned off the ignition and put the keys in his shirt pocket.

"Let's have it, Liz," he said and her hazel eyes showed momentary panic as she guided the big convertible into the curb.

They sat there in the hot October sunlight while traffic passed, retread tires making their peculiar humming sound.

Liz Barclay's chin trembled. "Give me back the keys. You're acting like a boy."

He shook his head, then opened the door. He tossed the keys on the red leather seat beside her and crossed the street.

"Jeff—"

But he cut across a hotel lawn and found a cab in the driveway. When Liz drove up she got caught in traffic and he had gone.

In the cab he pulled that old, wrinkled newspaper from his pocket and re-read the story about Dolly Haines.

. . . Sam Blake, pier manager, told police Miss Haines had been drinking prior to her evening show. . . .

It was still early afternoon when he paid off his cab. Most of the pier was shuttered, with many of the concessions closed for the winter. He found Barney Rinker sitting in the ticket booth in front of his Bamboo Slide, reading a racing form.

At sight of Jeff, Barney cried a greeting. They shook hands through the opening in the glass.

"I'm glad you got back, Jeff," Barney Rinker said and he meant it.

Jeff asked him, "What about Dolly Haines, Barney?"

Rinker shrugged and sold two tickets while Jeff moved aside to let a sailor and his girl go up the steps which led to the top of the slide.

"I was watchin' Dolly that night," Rinker said. "Lights were out with only a spot on her. She was halfway down the wire when she fell off." He snapped his fingers. "It happened like that."

Jeff looked up into the foggy sky, visualizing that tight wire that stretched from the high pole at the end of the pier, slanting down to its anchor on the ballroom roof.

"Dolly didn't drink," Jeff said, lowering his eyes to stare at the little man behind the ticket window.

"Sometimes they lose their nerve," Barney Rinker said. "Maybe hearin' about Johnny upset her—"

"Sam Blake told the police she was drunk." Johnny stared at him.

Barney Rinker's eyes looked big through the glass of the ticket booth. "Sam Blake would put the gaff on a marble game at an orphanage if he thought he'd get a take."

SAM BLAKE wasn't due in his office for an hour, so Jeff Arnold went to a bar that smelled of fish and chips and stale beer. He bummed paper and an envelope from the bartender and wrote a letter.

Dear Johnny—Haven't been able to find out much. But you hurry up and get well. . . .

He mailed the letter and drank another rye. He hadn't told Johnny Haines, lying back in a Tennessee hospital, that the bank account he and Dolly had was empty. Those insurance policies had been cashed in, too.

It was tough on Johnny, for the kid would never do his act again. He used to do the Devil's Slide, too, only Johnny did it the hard way, upside down, his head in a small cushioned cup that slid along the wire, his legs straight in the air.

First Dolly, to give the buildup, sliding daintily down the wire. Then the climax when Johnny took over. It was good showmanship and brought them back to Bay Beach year after year.

But no more of that. Dolly was dead. Johnny had a silver plate in his knee.

As he sat there in the bar, Jeff wondered if maybe Liz and Barney Rinker were right. Maybe the news that Johnny had been wounded had upset her. He'd never believe it, but all things were possible.

Making a sudden decision, he rounded up Pop Clarkson, who headed the cleanup squad for the pier. Besides supervising the janitors, he had charge of the dressing rooms.

"I reckon I can do it for you, Jeff," he said and waggled his old grey head. He led Jeff in back of the ballroom and into a long, musty corridor with half a dozen doors standing ajar.

The pier shook beneath their feet as the surf pounded against the pilings.

Clarkson unlocked a storeroom that smelled of spiders and dust. "I never knowed what to do with her stuff, Jeff. Seein' as how Johnny was over yonder—"

Jeff went through the contents of a cardboard hat box with trembling fingers. There was an ache in his throat when he saw a faded spangled skirt she had discarded . . . a pair of the special shoes she used for the slide. Dolly, delicate, yet strong—so full of the love for life when he had left. Now so dead.

He found an old Acme publicity release about her, building her up to being European royalty, preferring the dangerous life of a high wire to that of ease and luxury. *Tripe*, Jeff thought, angry that Acme had done no better than this by Dolly while he had been gone. He turned the release over and saw figures and writing, but they didn't make much sense to him then. He dropped the paper back in the box.

"Any other papers?" he asked Clarkson.

"Didn't you find the telegram?"

Jeff pawed through the box again. There was no telegram. Clarkson, looking over Jeff's shoulder, scratched his grey head. "Funny," he said. "It was there when I bundled up the stuff."

"What was in the telegram?"

"Come for Dolly day after she was killed."

"What was in the telegram?" Jeff demanded and seized Clarkson by the arms and shook him gently.

"Why, it was about Johnny. I figured you knew. I just put it in her stuff, that's all—"

"The date would show it came after she was killed. And now the wire's gone." A cold smile worked across Jeff Arnold's lips.

"You tryin' to make out there was something funny about her gittin' killed? Sam Blake said maybe she was drinkin' 'cause of Johnny."

"But she didn't know about Johnny. Remember?"

"Yeah, Jeff," Clarkson said worriedly and watched the tall man go down the pier.

**T**HIS time Jeff found Sam Blake in his office over the ballroom. Blake sat in front of his roll top desk, his fat legs crossed, manicuring his nails with a jack-knife. When he saw Jeff, his face went the color of the old varnish on his desk.

"Jeff, boy!" he cried and got to his feet, extending a fat hairy hand.

"Hello, Sam." Jeff Arnold sat down on a dusty table stacked high with old copies of the *Billboard*.

A bit ruffled at Jeff's refusal to shake hands, Sam Blake sank into his swivel chair and closed his jackknife. Blake's Adam's apple slid up and down above a dirty collar.

Jeff Arnold just sat there, swinging a big foot, staring out the dirty office window. He could see the roller coaster like a grey, old skeleton rising against the foggy sky. Dolly's high wire always went past the office window, about six feet away. It would be too far out for a man like Sam Blake to reach. Or would it?

"You still have that thirty-eight in your desk?" Jeff asked casually.

"Sure," Blake answered, then clamped his lips tight. Perspiration oozed out on his face and dripped over his long nose. "Why you want a gun, Jeff?"

"I don't want it," Jeff answered, that cold smile still on his lips. "I just wanted to know where it was in case you started to reach for it."

"I wouldn't reach for a gun on you," Blake said and ran a dull red tongue over his lips. His laugh sounded dry and harsh and wheezy, as if he had asthma.

"Why did you steal the telegram, Sam?"

"I never took it." Then he caught himself. "What telegram?"

"The one Dolly got the day after she died," Jeff said. "You've been telling it around that Dolly was drinking because she learned Johnny was wounded. You knew it was a lie, didn't you, Sam?"

"I—" Blake pressed his fat body back in the swivel chair as if he were afraid of falling out on the floor.

"You got panicky when I came back because somebody tipped you off that I wasn't satisfied with the way she died."

"That's wrong, Jeff," Sam Blake answered. He pulled out a bottle from a pigeonhole with a shaking hand. "Let's drink to old times and quit this."

"Is that the brand of liquor you planted in Dolly's dressing room?" And Jeff was off the table to grab Sam Blake by the lapels of his greasy coat. "Talk, damn you!" he cried.

He saw the stark fear in Sam Blake's eyes, then the sudden hope. He was like a man on the gallows step who hears the warden coming with a reprieve.

Sensing another presence, Jeff Arnold turned and saw Liz Barclay standing in the doorway.

"I got tired waiting, Jeff," she said calmly and turned her back to go out. "Coming?"

He released Blake and let the man fall limply into the swivel chair. He felt weak and shaky when he went down the stairs with Liz. Halfway down he heard Sam Blake's frantic dialing in the office, his muffled voice and the slam of the receiver on the hook when he evidently didn't get his party.

Out in the rolling fog, Jeff breathed the clean salty air into his lungs. "I'm glad you knew where I'd be, Liz."

"You might have killed him," she said and looked straight ahead as they walked down the pier. "You're an ex-All American and you're an ex-hero. But they'd put you in the gas house for killing Sam Blake."

Off the pier, they got into the convertible parked at the curb. The fog rolled in thicker, obscuring the pier, even the roller coaster.

With a trembling hand, Liz shook a cigarette out of her pack and reached for the lighter.

"I've got to tell you something, Jeff."

She dropped the cigarette in her nervousness and he bent over to pick it up off the floorboards.

He heard the sound like a buzzing bee. Then the little *plunking* noise.

Liz turned to him, her hazel eyes wide and frantic.

"Oh, Jeff," she whimpered and fell sideways into his lap.

He saw the neat round hole in her tweed

jacket and the blood. A deep dark fear drove through him. He picked her up, limp and lifeless, her long hair hanging down over his arm. He fumbled the door open.

A man standing in front of a barber shop said, "These drunk dames." Then he saw the frozen look on Jeff Arnold's face.

"A doctor!" Jeff gasped. "Where's a doctor? This girl's been shot!"

**T**HEY gave Liz first aid in the drug store. The ambulance finally ground up with a dying siren. Liz didn't open her eyes and her face was white as the sheet on the stretcher.

"Will she be all right?"

The male nurse who rode with the ambulance said, "Can't tell till the shock wears off. I'd say she's not doing so well. You better wait for the law. They should have been here before this."

The ambulance went off and the siren came alive again. He went into the alley beside the barber shop and was very sick. While he stood there a radio car pulled up in the street. He could hear the static and the monotonous drone of the police dispatcher's voice over the loudspeaker.

"Where's the guy that was with her?" he heard one of the cops ask.

There was a mumble of voices. Jeff staggered off down the alley in the fog and went behind the pier.

*That bullet was meant for me, he thought. I bent over to pick up the cigarette and she got it.*

His brain cleared somewhat and Dolly Haines and Johnny were shoved back into a recess of his mind. It was Liz Barclay now and it had taken tragedy to make him realize that if she died, a big piece of himself would die with her.

He went back to the pier, walking with his hands in his pockets, his head bent low, collar turned up. He could still see the radio car a block away through the fog. And the knot of morbid people around the cabriolet that had so recently held Liz Barclay, vibrant and alive.

He found Sam Blake's office locked. As he started down the narrow steps, he was aware of something projected on the screen of his mind. The thought came from nowhere and for no reason—the Acme publicity release he had found in the store room—he went to look for Clarkson.

He couldn't find the old man, so he went behind the ballroom alone. He picked up a rusty iron chair and broke the door down, then tossed the chair over the rail. In a moment he heard the splash as the chair struck the water.

The hasp that held the lock on the store room door was easy to pry out of the rotted

wood. Feverishly he tore open the cardboard hat box and found the publicity release. Again he read it, this time conscious of the stilted, precise style in which it was written.

"Drivel," he said aloud, and a sudden fear began to eat its way up his backbone.

He had missed, missed badly. He turned the release over. What had appeared as mere figures before, began to make sense.

Those two sets of figures at the top could be numbers of insurance policies, with the amounts of each. Then in the center of the page, the word, "Bank," and another line of figures.

It was Dolly's writing all right, he was sure of that—and he began to see the whole ugly picture.

The surf, booming beneath the pier, obliterated all sound save its own. Then the voice, the precise voice in his ear.

"You knew it was I, didn't you, Jeff?"

Jeff Arnold turned. Loren Tighe leaned on his cane, a gun in his hand, the muzzle overgrown with a silencer.

Jeff still held the publicity release in his hand. "You handled Dolly personally," he said. "I'd recognize your lousy style anyplace. You had an axe to grind—"

"Interesting," Loren Tighe said and tightened his grip on the gun.

"Johnny always said if Dolly ever fell for a guy, she'd go all the way," Jeff told him and anger made his throat ache. "She gave you all her money—"

"The end of the war came suddenly, Jeff," Loren Tighe said patiently. "I had too much out in war plant stock."

"So you made love to Dolly Haines. And the pood kid fell for you. What did she buy with her money?"

"A third interest in Acme Publicity. It was all very legal, but undercover."

Jeff bared his teeth. "She did it for Johnny."

"Very touching, Jeff," Loren Tighe said and straightened.

"You waited till she did her act. I see it now. You waited in Sam Blake's office. You could reach out with that cane and hook the wire with the end. Nobody would see you because the spotlight would be on Dolly. Just enough to jiggle the wire. Just a touch. Her balance would be off. She wouldn't know what happened. She'd never know."

"I'm not very interested, Jeff."

"You wanted Dolly's money," Jeff went on relentlessly, "but you didn't want Dolly. Your friends wouldn't approve of her as your wife. Acme's prestige, Loren, remember?"

"If you hadn't come back, Jeff, it would have been forgotten. Or even if you'd kept still and gone to New York. The five hun-

*(Continued on page 93)*


# STRANGE TRAILS

## The NECKLACE of DEATH

ELDERLY JACQUES HODOYER, PROMINENT LAWYER OF LYONS, FRANCE, RETURNED HOME FROM HIS OFFICE ONE EVENING EARLY IN 1929 EXPECTING TO BE GREETED AS USUAL BY HIS PRETTY WIFE, MARGUERITE.


INSTEAD, THE MAID MET HIM EXCITEDLY WITH: "MON DIEU! A STRANGE WOMAN BROUGHT WORD YOU HAD BEEN INJURED & MADAME DROVE AWAY WITH HER."

ALARMED, THE LAWYER NOTIFIED THE POLICE WHO, DUE TO THE DISPARITY IN THE COUPLE'S AGES, SUSPECTED A RUSE TO COVER A CLANDESTINE LOVE AFFAIR.



TEN WEEKS LATER MARGUERITE HODOYER WAS FOUND FLOATING IN THE RHONE, AN UNEXPLAINED, CURIOUSLY BRAIDED SILKEN CORD ABOUT HER THROAT, UNMARKED BY CUT OR BRUISE, NOR HAD SHE DROWNED OR BEEN STRANGLED.

AN AUTOPSY FINALLY DISCLOSED THAT A BROKEN VERTEBRA IN THE NECK HAD SEVERED THE SPINAL CORD, ALTHOUGH JUST HOW WAS A MYSTERY.



INQUIRIES REVEALED THE HODOYER'S MARRIAGE HAD APPARENTLY BEEN HAPPY AND UNEVENTFUL; A DRUGGIST RECALLED SELLING THE TWO WOMEN BANDAGES--AND THERE THE TRAIL ENDED. BAFFLED, DETECTIVES SENT THE STRANGE NECKLACE TO DR. EDMOND LOCARD, FAMOUS CHIEF OF THE LYONS POLICE LABORATORY.



# to MURDER by LEE



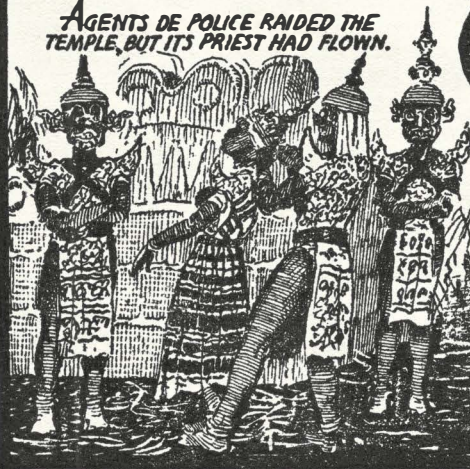
*THEN THE RIVER YIELDED ANOTHER PRETTY CORPSE SIMILARLY DECORATED.*

*BOTH SILKEN CORDS, DR. LOCARD DISCOVERED, WERE HAND-WOVEN AND FROM INDO-CHINA. LYONS' POLYGLOT POPULATION FOLLOWED STRANGE CULTS, & HIS DOSSIERS SHOWED THAT A TEMPLE TO LOKAPALA, A DEVIL-GOD OF ANNAM HAD RECENTLY BEEN OPENED WITH ONE KAO-DANWAR NAMED AS HIGH PRIEST.*

*DR. LOCARD CONFRONTED THE HODOYERS' MAID. "WHY DID YOU NOT TELL ME YOUR MISTRESS HAD JOINED THE CULT THAT WORSHIPS LOKAPALA?"*

*THE SHOT IN THE DARK BROUGHT A FRIGHTENED ADMISSION THAT FOR 2 YEARS THE GIRL HAD AIDED MME. HODOYER'S INTRIGUE WITH KAO-DANWAR.*

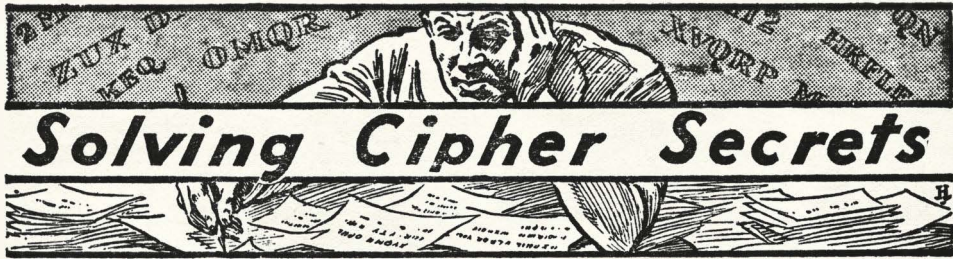
*AGENTS DE POLICE RAIDED THE TEMPLE, BUT ITS PRIEST HAD FLOWN.*



*BENEATH THE ALTAR SLAB THEY FOUND A PARCHMENT TELLING HOW ANCIENT PRIESTS OF LOKAPALA ADJUSTED THE SILKEN CORD AND WITH A DEFT TWIST BROKE THE NECK THEN STARTED THEIR UNBLEMISHED HUMAN SACRIFICE ON ITS WAY TO THE OPEN SEA WEARING ITS UNHOLY NECKLACE OF DEATH.*

*THE SECOND VICTIM NEVER WAS IDENTIFIED, & ALTHOUGH POLICE BROADCAST HER DESCRIPTION & WATCHED ALL PORTS, KAO-DANWAR MANAGED SOMEHOW TO ELUDE THEIR NET.*

19-26



By M. E. Ohaver

**A** CIPHER is a secret writing. The way to solve ciphers is to experiment with substitute letters until real words begin to appear. In solving, notice the frequency of certain letters. For instance, the letters e, t, a, o, n, i, are the most used in our language. So if the puzzle maker has used X to represent e, X will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clues. Thus, the affixes -ing, -ion, -ally are frequent. Helpful hints appear in this department each month. Study them carefully.

### CRYPTOGRAMS

No. 45—Gaining Weight. By Cameo. Single-letter words G and S provide initial letters for GAT and SA. Follow these openers with OGAO and OGSAPT.

KPUU, OGAO, S NGLP ZPPA SA BNP \*GHYD G KPPE,  
 GAT NGLP GUHPGTD OGSAPT RSRBD XVFATC. DPGN!  
 ZFB RVHBD-RSLP VR BNPY GHP SA G XGME.

No. 46—Monastic Order. By †Alphamega. Start with one-letter word T. Continue with phrase TGV TLS, noting GSKSL. Next, ESKSLTN ZNTEESE, etc.

YX ESKSLTN ZNTEESE YX PSLAOH LSZYBGOQSV OG  
 \*HOUSH, HPS PYNOSHEH ZYGEOEHE YX NTATE RPY SGHSL  
 AYGTEHSLOSE TGV TLS RTNNSV FD OG T EATNN ZSNN,  
 KYROGB GSKSL HY ZYAS YFH ETKS TE T ZYLDES.

No. 47—Eastern Equivalent. By Cosmopolite. Comparison of NXPL, LH, and NXTF will afford quick entry. Next, supply first letter in SH, SHFT, and SHNF.

"NXPL ZHD SH FHL BYAT NXTF SHFT LH ZHDGOTBU SH  
 FHL SH LH HLXTGO," \*VHBSTF \*GDBT YF FTVPLYET  
 UHGC, NPO BPYS SHNF QZ \*RHFUDRYDO, \*RXYFTOT  
 KXYBHOHKXTG, FTPGBZ LNTFLZ-UYET RTFLDGYTO PVH.

No. 48—Taming the Tempest. By Scheherazade. Phrase ZFK EPK, noting EPKB and EPKNF, will start you. Thus to ZGR and APKG, UT and TUF, and so on.

"YKZY ZFK EPK TNKHRY UT VULXZE TUF EPK ANGRY,  
 XDE APKG EPKB YAKKS ZHUGO YULK THUAKFB VUZYE,  
 EPKNF ANGOY LUCK LNHRHB ZGR EPKNF FZOK NY HUYE."



No. 49—Female Bluebeard. By \*Chi Valor. Make tentative assumptions for GO, noting its use between starred words. Check by applying to phrase OGBUV GO YFB. Next, HYF LSL DGU.

\*FORE \*TENS, \*USAFB \*CRFFD GO \*EHYEDUS, \*AGKL  
\*ZGEHU, \*EOBSZE, TSKKFL OGBUV GO YFB YRHNE DLH  
NFZERHF HYF LSL DGU KGP F UYFX EDV XGBF.

No. 50—Not without Ease. By †Acahti. Symbol P occurs 52 times in this 144-letter message! Compare LIP and LIOPP, SPOP and SIPLIPO, PUPO and FPUPO.

"APE SPOP FPUPO YPOXPRL; JPL LIP LIOPP WOPLIOPE  
\*UPOPZ SPOP PUPO PZLPPAPT, OPZYPR LPT, OPUPOPT,  
PUPE SIPE LIP OPZL, SIPLIPO LIP ZVPRL XPS,  
SIPLIPO LIP APOP IPOT, SPOP VPXL EPNVPR LPT."

No. 51—Midnight Patrol. By °Gregory. Guess the right word for pattern VDDVHO and you will have the last two letters of YBVD. Next, HYUGV.

GRFFL M DFFHZ NDEYBUAL VDDVHO PGYXVAH. HYUGV  
KTOOYHX GTZZYHO RXXYXVRBMH. SDTBO SREH HARZC.  
KTBOAHO NDEHZ YBVD PRUDB. "KLH-KLH, FRA!"

No. 52—In 'Forty-Five. By Zadig. Compare 3-letter endings of first and last words. Then substitute in \*HYEFZX \*YTFEPYD and fill in missing letters.

FGBEAAEYO ZKZYFD: \*SBZDEXZYF \*BPPDZKZAF STDDZD;  
\*HYEFZX \*YTFEPYD PBOTYECZ; \*OZBNTYJ VPAATSDZD;  
\*TFPNEV \*ZBT PSZYD; \*RTSTY DHBBZYXZBD; UAPPXEZDF  
LTB FZBNEYTFZD; SPDFLTB ATUPB DFBEMZD UZOEY.

No. 53—Roughrider Reforms. By †Sara. Here are nine alliterative pairs of words, with nine different initial letters! Try for endings -O, -G, and -OG.

ELKTROT EKVO GHEESOG GULLOS. YUKTXOL YKXRG,  
XHKGOG XJHUG. PFVVSOL PKDYSOG. LOGKSPG LOBFGPOL.  
AFOLXO AHLXO JKDYSOG JKDYKBBOL. HYHTEUTG HSXUJUS.

No. 54—A Weighty Proposition. By °Chemystic. Note the eleven-letter word used three times in succession! Asterisks in cryptograms indicate capitalization.

WIDUEBOR MYEXPHUP, UBEPYZE\*UZ PUZEKOZPU, MUEYN  
\*OKPHEBOY YTZOZETYOR UDUZPKU, BTYZOEYU KOZZPH  
ONNHPN OZEYN OFTMZ PENIZPPY ZITMUOYC ZAT IMYCHPC  
SMOCHERRETY SMOCHERRETY SMOCHERRETY ZTYU!

**A**N intriguing cipher within a cipher, †Jim Jackson's No. X-11, fills out the current group of unusually interesting cryptograms! Solve No. X-11 as an ordinary cipher, and you're only half through! For the external or surface message thus found must be subjected to still further treatment before the actual or hidden message appears. In discovering this doubly concealed communication, our readers are left entirely upon their own resources. Solve it if you can, fans! The full explanation will be given in the next issue.

the rectangle, and providing both the plain-text and numerical key-series. Full translation of No. X-10, the key, and partial encipherment, are given herewith. Answers to current cryptograms will appear in the next issue. Any reader may submit puzzles for publication. Keep your contributions and solutions coming, fans!

No. 55—Cryptic Division. By °Jay-En-Ess. Value of symbol A is revealed by multiplication AVY x A, duly noting first subtraction. The key-phrase is numbered: 0123 456789.

No. X-11. Under the Surface. By †Jim Jackson.

KRXL \*RKPX:  
 LRXUUQ VXGVRL  
 HPGXFRY—DTFXHP NXPKYDGR  
 LRYHKRPAR, HGGRPYR  
 XVXLFGPRF, DLZXP, UHTLXLQ,  
 FLHUHFN, RYVUXPKRY,  
 GRUDKLXGX, UHTRLXU  
 RKHTURY, FXVRYFLHRY,  
 ADSLHRL, XHLYNHV, YDBX,  
 PDP-LXFHDPK EXLKLDTR,  
 XLGANXHL, LRVUHAX.-

\*ZSY.

And now, the explanation of H. L. Kruger's No. X-10, transposition cipher published in the last issue. In solving a cipher of this type, the dimensions of the rectangle may usually be found by factoring the intervals between letters forming common digrams. For illustration, let's consider digrams BY and QU.

No. X-10. Benito, shot, hung up by heels, arms stiffly extended in grotesque inverted Fascist salute; Adolf, suicide, gasoline-soaked carcass charred in funeral fire—these await you, jaunty Tojo!

**Key:** V A N Q U I S H E D  
 10 1 6 7 9 5 8 4 3 2

**Text:** B E N I T O S H O T  
 H U N G U P B Y H E  
 E L S A R M S S T I  
 etc.

**Cipher:** EULFD UFUII ARAEA  
 etc.

Letter B occurred as 107th and 136th letters in the cryptogram; and Y as 47th, 59th, 75th, and 94th. Upon examining the eight intervals supplied by letters of this digram, B (107) and Y (47) would show a difference of 60, evenly divisible by column-lengths of 2, 3, 5, 6, 10, 15, and 30 letters. Again, Q (141) and U (6), with a difference of 135, would show a column of 3, 5, or 15 letters. The most probable common factor here would be 15, indicating a rectangle of 15 lines and 10 columns. And other trial digrams would of course substantiate this assumption.

Transcribing the cryptogram on "shuffle strips" of 15 letters each, column combinations 8-4 and 10-1, just found, would yield probable text sequences in all fifteen lines. Whereupon the remaining six strips could readily be placed, completing

A V Y ) L S W E O ( A O W  
 O W L  
 R W E E  
 R Y L O  
 R A Y O  
 R G S A  
 R W Y

ANSWERS FOR LAST ISSUE

34—A short time ago you printed a cipher of mine, but I had failed to keep a copy and had to work it out like the other fans. The joke's on me!

35—Transmutation, meaning transformation of one element into another, has long been the goal of chemists. Accomplishments at the present time lead to belief of success in the near future!

36—Over the river in Dover, rovers, take cover, beware! For John Law will not pass you over; so keep clear of old Delaware!

37—That "that that," that that "That that is, is; that that is not, is not!" sentence employs, here permits the correct grammatical use of the word "that" seven times in succession.

38—Tatar curses, instead of consigning their objects to infernal regions, simply express the wish: "May you stay in one place forever!"

39—Proud rooster, strutting across road to join flock, is struck by speeding auto. Hens, chicks, other barnyard fowl, gather mournfully about fallen patriarch. Voice plaintive lament.

40—Ten yearly rules for motorists: check battery terminals, generator, distributor, spark plugs, starter, ignition, carburetor, valves, timing, compression. Result: trouble-free operation.

41—Camera fan snaps charging buffalo; lingers overtime, gets tossed sky-high. Undaunted, takes more snapshots en route. Ultra-realism!

42—"Oxygen," vital gaseous element; "oxygen," acute-angled triangle: "exogen," plant with annual annular cross-section accretions—just make grist for quibbling puzzle mill!

43—Jocular cowboy, unduly drunk, would climb aloft pygmy broncho found behind public building. Grouchy owner brought police. Culprit mournful.

44—Key:

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
 O L D T H E R A P Y

All answers to current ciphers will be duly credited in our *Cipher Solvers' Club*. Address: M. E. Ohaver, *New Detective Magazine*, Fictioneers, Inc., 205 E. 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y.

## CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB FOR JULY, 1945

(Continued from last issue)

\*Mrs. James Wallen, 2888; \*P. Wee, 1762; †Ruth E. Weiss, 130; \*James H. Williams, 769; \*Wilray, 1288; †Doctor X, 3776; \*Yarbie, 800.  
*Ten Answers*—\*Ajax, 2380; Lee Ander, 10; \*P. W. B., 1161; Rita D. Colman, 10; \*Darn Cross, 915; Mrs. James Gregg, 10; \*Gregory, 1699; \*L. S. H., 2276; †S. A. L., 256; \*Lucille E. Little, 1945; Lydia, 10; †O'Hicky, 177; †Cat's Paw, 466; \*Rekroywen, 1386; Sandy, 27; \*Sherlac, 1255; \*Ella P. Sibley, 954.

*Nine Answers*—\*D. H. Holcomb, 1280; \*Pearl Knowler, 2337; \*Betty S. P., 603; H. Pool, 67.  
*Seven Answers*—Marshall J. Martinson, 24; Stephen Silipigno, 7; †J. A. B. Tuthill, 143.  
*Six Answers*—†J. E. L., 209.  
*Five Answers*—Edward Nickerson, 7.

*Correction*—J. N. D., 11 answers for May, 1945, not previously credited.

## CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB FOR SEPTEMBER, 1945

*Eleven Answers*—\*Aachen, 3183; \*Agatha, 1706; \*Age, 2705; †Amoroj, 270; \*Bert, 1899; \*S. H. Berwald, 859; †Harry Blank, 138; †Florence B. Boulton, 254; \*Mrs. C. G. Burroughs, 3750; May C., 34; \*Carso, 1761; \*Ceebee, 787; \*Chemystic, 1599; \*Ciphermit, 3386; \*Judson H. Clark, 2764; \*R. C. C., 527; \*Codela, 1307; \*Floyd E. Coss, 1495; \*Jos. M. Crosby, 2620; \*Darn Cross, 926; \*Cryptox, 1816; †M. E. Cutcomb, 297; \*Kay Dee, 504; \*J. N. D., 1109; \*Gunga Din, 668; \*Silver Dollar, 1171; \*Drol, 1939; \*M. E., 3599; †Mr. E., 180; \*Ecila, 751; \*Engineer III, 1632; \*Arty Ess, 3755; \*Jay-En-Ess, 1995; \*Estece, 1707; †Evie, 207; †Ewlee, 264; \*Femo, 558; Sally Fischer, 44; †Allah Gator, 256; Fern G., 35; †Gus, 110; †Gyrene, 159; \*O. H., 854; \*Hayrake, 1212; \*T. Hegarty, 3309; \*Jack-Hi, 936; †Jim Jackson, 265; \*Jayel, 3872; \*D. V. J., 1130; †June, 393; \*Kate, 2721; \*J. C. K., 2856; †S. A. L., 267; †F. Mack, 169; †Martoy, 198; \*Lee A. Miller, 1663; †Ready Money, 122; †E. L. M., 11; \*Mossback, 2316; Naidanac, 12; \*Nelyah, 2455; †Clarence Neilsen, 221; \*Panpoundo, 644; \*W. F. P., 2890; \*Kee Pon, 1006; \*Abe C. Pressman, 1344; \*B. E. R., 1021; \*Kenny R., 121; \*Rekroywen, 1397; \*Ray F. Richer, 1388; \*Wm. G. Ringer, 1241; \*Ty

Roe, 1432; †Rush, 145; \*Mrs. H. A. Seals, 2847; \*O. I. See, 2905; †W. E. S., 176; \*Sherlac, 1267; \*Sam Spiegel, 2527; \*M. G. S., 1664; †Statist, 494; \*Sunny, 538; †Dad S., 320; Ann Teek, 52; \*P. H. T., 1519; †Tot, 207; \*Tyro V., 2882; \*Chi Valor, 960; \*Volund, 1719; \*Mrs. James Wallen, 2899; †Ruth E. Weiss, 141; \*E. H. Werner, 1281; †Bret Harte Whitman, Jr., 223; \*Doctor X, 3787; \*Yarbie, 811.  
*Ten Answers*—John Aitken, 31; \*P. W. B., 1171; \*Alpha Bet, 1633; †Cryptocal, 102; †Marguerite Gleason, 392; Arnold Grayson, 43; \*L. S. H., 2286; M. Lando, 94; \*Jesse C. Leach, 1094; \*Theo. W. Midlam, 3117; \*Betty S. P., 613; \*P. Wee, 1772.  
*Nine Answers*—\*Gregory, 1708; \*Lucille Little, 1954; H. Pool, 76; Sandy, 36; Wilray, 1297.  
*Eight Answers*—\*D. H. Holcomb, 1288; \*Pearl Knowler, 2345; †J. E. L., 217.  
*Six Answers*—†J. A. B. Tuthill, 149.  
*Two Answers*—Edward Nickerson, 10.  
*Corrections*—\*Ajax, 11 answers for July, 1945, instead of 10; \*Volund, 11 answers for July, 1945, not previously credited; \*Cap Elliott, 11 answers for August, 1942, not previously credited.

## CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB FOR NOVEMBER, 1945

*Eleven Answers*—\*Aachen, 3194; \*Agatha, 1717; \*Age, 2716; †Amoroj, 282; \*Bert, 1910; \*S. H. Berwald, 870; \*Alpha Bet, 1644; †Harry Blank, 150; †Florence B. Boulton, 266; \*Mrs. C. G. Burroughs, 3761; May C., 45; \*Carso, 1772; \*Ceebee, 798; \*Ciphermit, 3398; \*Judson H. Clark, 2775; \*R. C. C., 539; \*Codela, 1319; \*Floyd H. Coss, 1507; \*Jos. M. Crosby, 2631; \*Darn Cross, 937; †Cryptocal, 114; †M. E. Cutcomb, 309; \*Gunga Din, 679; \*Silver Dollar, 1182; \*Drol, 1950; \*M. E., 3610; \*Ecila, 762; \*Engineer III, 1644; \*Arty Ess, 3766; \*Jay-En-Ess, 2006; \*Estece, 1718; †Evie, 218; †Ewlee, 276; Sally Fischer, 55; †Allah Gator, 267; Fern G., 47; †Gus, 121; †Gyrene, 171; \*I-dan-ha, 2352; \*Hayrake, 1224; \*T. Hegarty, 3321; \*Jack-Hi, 947; †Jim Jackson, 277; \*Jayel, 3883; \*Kate, 2732; \*J. C. K., 2567; †S. A. L., 278; †J. E. L., 228; †M. Lando, 105; †F. Mack, 180; \*Theo. W. Midlam, 3128; \*Lee A. Miller, 1674; †Ready Money, 133; \*Frank Morris, 613; \*Mossback, 2327; †Clarence Neilsen, 232; \*Betty S. P., 625; \*Panpoundo, 655; C. E. Parker, 12; †Cat's Paw, 478; \*W. F. P., 2907; \*Kee Pon, 1018; H. Pool, 87; \*Abe C.

Pressman, 1356; \*B. E. R., 1033; \*Rekroywen, 1408; \*Ray F. Richer, 1399; \*Wm. G. Ringer, 1253; \*Alice Routh, 3686; †Rush, 156; \*Mrs. H. A. Seals, 2858; \*Sherlac, 1279; \*Sam Spiegel, 2538; \*M. G. S., 1676; \*Statist, 506; †Dad S., 331; \*P. H. T., 1531; †Tot, 218; \*Tyro V., 2393; \*Chi Valor, 972; \*Volund, 1731; \*Mrs. James Wallen, 2910; \*P. Wee, 1783; †Ruth E. Weiss, 152; †Bret Harte Whitman, Jr., 234; P. G. Whitmore, 35; \*Reg Williams, 1034; \*Doctor X, 3799; \*Yarbie, 823.  
*Ten Answers*—John Aitken, 41; \*Femo, 568; †Clarence P. Greeie, 1192; \*Lucille E. Little, 1964; \*Kenny R., 131; Rebbina, 22; Sandy, 46; †Seegie See, 502; \*Nick Spar, 3140; M. E. T., 10.  
*Nine Answers*—†Marguerite Gleason, 401; \*Gregory, 1717; \*Pearl Knowler, 2354.  
*Five Answers*—\*D. H. Holcomb, 1293; †J. A. B. Tuthill, 154.  
*Four Answers*—Dennis Patton, 36.  
*Correction*—†Mij, 7 answers for Sept., 1945, not previously credited.

## CIPHER SOLVERS' CLUB FOR JANUARY, 1946

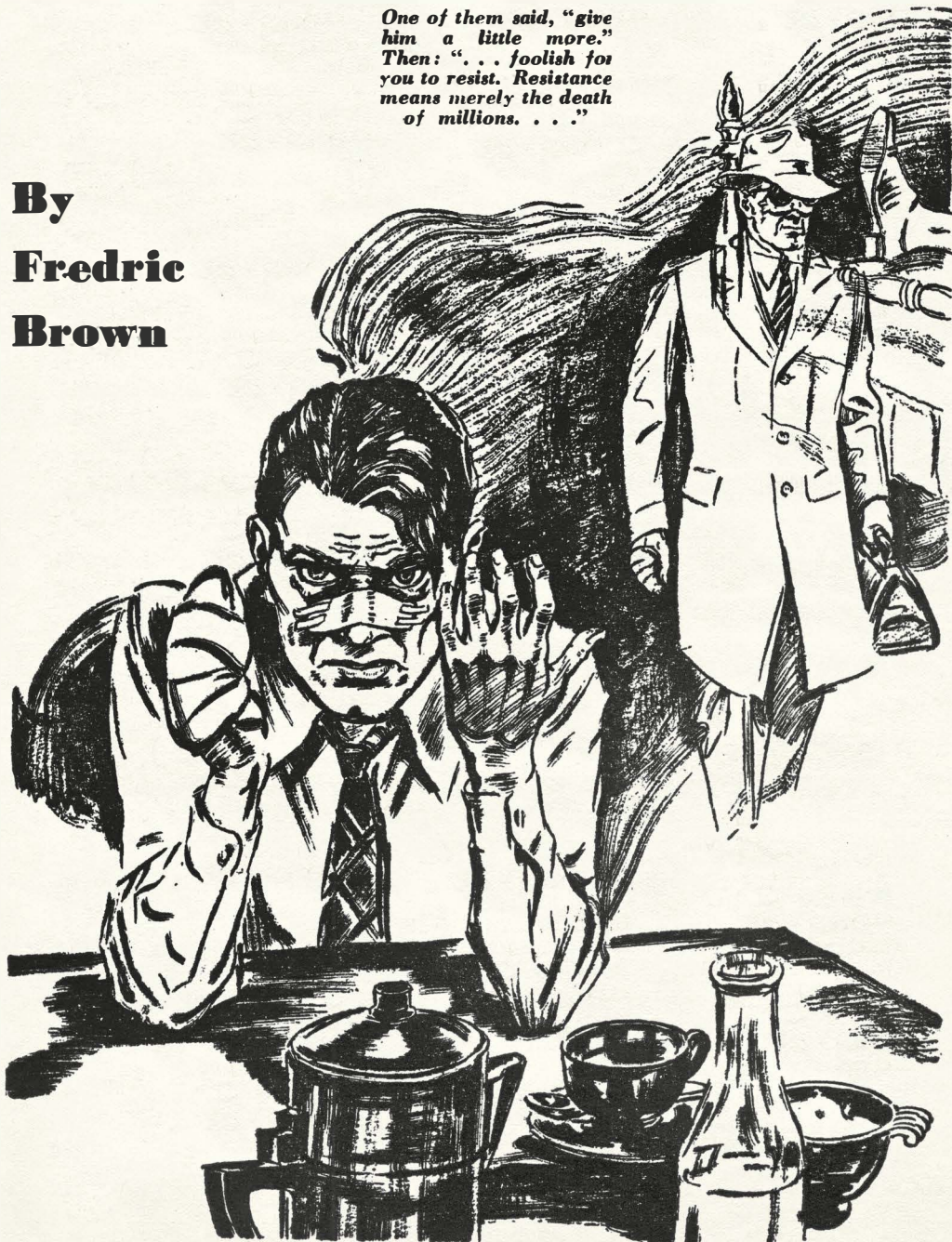
*Eleven Answers*—\*Aachen, 3206; \*Case Ace, 1090; \*Agatha, 1728; \*Age, 2728; †Amoroj, 294; Apache, 58; †Mrs. H. H. Bailey, 170; \*Bert, 1922; \*S. H. Berwald, 882; \*Alpha Bet, 1655; †Harry Blank, 162; †Florence B. Boulton, 278; \*Mrs. C. G. Burroughs, 3773; May C., 57; \*Carso, 1783; †Bessie Casey, 480; \*Ceebee, 810; \*Ciphermit, 3410; \*Judson H. Clark, 2786; \*R. C. C., 550; \*Codela, 1331; \*Floyd E. Coss, 1519; \*Jos. M. Crosby, 2643; †Cryptocal, 126; †M. E. Cutcomb, 321; \*Kay Dee, 516; \*Gunga Din, 690; \*Silver Dollar, 1194; \*Drol, 1962; \*M. E., 3721; †Mr. E., 192; Harry W. Ebner, 1147; \*Envy El, 1946; Glen Elgin, 12; \*Engineer III, 1656; \*Arty Ess, 3777; \*Jay-En-Ess, 2018; \*Estece, 1729; †Evie, 229; †Ewlee, 288; \*Femo, 579; Fern, 59; Sally Fischer, 67; †Allah Gator, 278; Arnold Grayson, 55; Moe. Gubitz, 11; †Gus, 133; †Gyrene, 183; \*I-dan-ha, 2364; \*Henry J. Haewacker, 1805; \*Hayrake, 1236; \*T. Hegarty, 3333; \*Jack-Hi, 959; \*L. S. H., 2297; †Jim Jackson, 289; \*Jayel, 3895; †June, 405; \*Kate, 2744; \*J. C. K., 2578; †S. A. L., 289; †M. Lando, 116; †F. Mack, 192; Van Magonigle, 12; \*Theo. W. Midlam, 3139; \*Lee A. Miller, 1686; †Ready Money, 145; \*Frank Morris, 625; \*Mossback, 2339; \*Nedyah, 2467; †Clarence Neilsen, 244; \*Betty S. P., 637; \*W. F. P., 2918; \*Kee Pon, 1030;

H. Pool, 99; \*Abe C. Pressman, 1368; \*B. E. R., 1045; \*Rekroywen, 1419; \*Ray F. Richer, 1411; \*Wm. G. Ringer, 1265; \*Ty Roe, 1456; \*Alice Routh, 3698; †Rush, 167; Sandy, 58; \*Mrs. H. A. Seals, 2869; \*Sherlac, 1291; \*Sam Spiegel, 2550; \*M. G. S., 1687; †Dad S., 342; \*P. H. T., 1543; \*Tyro V., 2405; \*Chi Valor, 983; \*Volund, 1743; \*Mrs. James Wallen, 2922; \*P. Wee, 1795; †Ruth E. Weiss, 164; \*E. H. Werner, 1292; †Arthur Whitfield, 257; †Bret Harte Whitman, Jr., 245; P. G. Whitmore, 47; \*Doctor X, 3811; \*Yarbie, 835.  
*Ten Answers*—John Aitken, 51; \*P. W. B., 1182; Corbeau, 22; \*Darn Cross, 937; Huza Daup, 10; †Marguerite Gleason, 411; †Clarence P. Greene, 1202; \*Jesse C. Leach, 1104; \*Lucille E. Little, 1974; †M. C. Seward, 130; \*Nick Spar, 3150; †Tot, 229; \*Reg Williams, 1044.  
*Nine Answers*—\*Gregory, 1726; †J. E. L., 237; T. S., 10.  
*Eight Answers*—\*Pearl Knowler, 2362; †X-31, 141.  
*Seven Answers*—\*D. H. Holcomb, 1301; Q. T. S., 8; \*Ubez, 1447.  
*Three Answers*—Diana Forrest, 4.  
*Corrections*—\*Ty Roe, 11 answers for Nov., 1945, and \*Sue de Nymme, 11 answers for Sept., 1945, not previously credited.

**I had never thought of a grave right next door  
to the woman I loved—yet someone had thought  
of it for me—to be dug by my own hands!**

*One of them said, "give  
him a little more."  
Then: "... foolish for  
you to resist. Resistance  
means merely the death  
of millions. . . ."*

**By  
Fredric  
Brown**





# THE SONG OF THE DEAD

## CHAPTER ONE

### Madman's Answer

**I**T WAS dusk when I reached the corner. I stood there a moment, looking down the little dead-end half-block which someone with a sense of humor had named King James Court. My cottage, the smallest of the five houses facing on the court, looked neat and white and inviting. I'd lived there almost a year now; it was as near to a home, I thought, as I'd ever know again.

I whistled the three-note motif that was my signal to Blackie, knowing if he was awake and heard it, he'd come bounding to the front gate to meet me, with the funny lumbering gait of an almost-grown Labrador puppy, his

ears flapping, his dog eyes shining with joy.

I watched the white front of the cottage to see his blackness in silhouette against it as he came around the corner. *Sound asleep*, I thought, *the big lummox*. But I envied Blackie his ability to sleep about sixteen hours out of the twenty-four. Seldom did I get more than a fourth that much myself.

Lights had already gone on in the other four houses fronting the court. They looked peaceful and homelike, all of them.

I thought, *I'm going to be sorry to move out—it's peaceful here, with neighbors who are friendly and yet mind their business, who*

*don't kick about a little noise when the meemies get me.*

I turned in the court and walked the forty paces back to the gate of my yard. I whistled again as I opened the gate, but no Blackie came. I began to worry a little, then.

I went into the house, flicking on the light switch inside the door, and went right on through to the kitchen and opened the back door. I called, "Blackie!" and there wasn't any answer. I turned on the kitchen light and opened the door wide. The yellow light made a long rectangle of diminishing brightness out into the dimness of the yard. Out almost at the end of that yellow area was a blob of blackness.

I called his name again, and hurried out to him. He stirred a little and looked up at me, but I couldn't tell whether he knew me or not. There was no outer sign of an injury, no froth or blood at his mouth.

I picked him up gently and carried him into the kitchen, put him down on his sleeping pad in the corner. Then I hurried outside and to the fence between my yard and Doc Schmid's. "Doc!" I yelled. I could see Mrs. Schmid moving around in the kitchen. She came to the window and shaded her eyes to see through the screen.

I called, "Mrs. Schmid, is doc in?"

"No, Mr. Baran."

"Back soon?"

"I—I don't think so. He just left, and it's a confinement."

"Oh," I said. "Can you tell me a good—never mind."

I hurried back into the house. I'd remembered that I had a phone—purely because it had been in the house when I'd moved in, and as I rented on a furnished basis the phone was included. I'd used it only a few times.

I looked at Blackie as I went through the kitchen. He was still alive and he didn't seem to be suffering. Thank God for that, anyway.

There were several veterinaries listed in the classified section. One was only a few blocks away and I dialed his number. When he answered, I said, "Can you hurry around to number three King James Court, Dr. Gaylord? I think my dog's been poisoned. I think he's dying, so hurry."

"Right away," he said. He didn't waste time asking questions.

I went back to Blackie in the kitchen. His eyes were closed now, and he didn't open them when I stroked him gently. He wasn't dead yet, but I knew it was going to be too late to save him, that it had been too late when I got home.

After a minute or so, I felt him stiffen and then relax.

When the *rat-tat* of the knocker came, I

hurried to answer it. A man with a bandaged right hand and a thick bandage on his nose, and wearing glasses with bright green lenses, stood there. He carried a small satchel in his left hand.

He said, "I'm Gaylord."

"Baran," I said. "Jan Baran. The dog just died, so I'm afraid you're too late, doctor. But come in."

"Sorry, Mr. Baran," he said. "I came as fast as I could."

"Of course; you made excellent time. I'm afraid it was too late even when I called you. I—I just got home too late, that's all. Just the same, I'd like to have you look at the dog, now you're here."

He nodded and stepped into the living room. "Had an auto accident last week," he said, casually. "Got my face and hand cut up a bit, and ordinarily I'd have referred you to another vet. But it sounded like a hurry call, and since I was the nearest one—"

I told him, "I appreciate your coming," and led the way to the kitchen. He bent over the dog. I stood in the doorway watching him, wondering about the green glasses; I'd never seen ones like them. He was well dressed, I noticed, about fifty years old, and built almost as slightly as I am.

He stood up and asked, "How long was it since you saw him in good health?"

"Middle of the afternoon," I told him. "He was frisky as the devil when I left. Could it have been anything but poison?"

He shook his head slowly. "Under those circumstances, I don't see how. And there is a rigidity of the abdomen and a contraction of the pupils—well, I'll assure you it was poison. No sign of injury, and there's no canine disease could act that fast. If you want me to take the dog along and make some tests—well, I'm not a toxicologist, but if it's a common poison I can probably tell you what it was."

I said, "I guess that won't be necessary, doctor. It can't make much difference now just what the poison was. What do I owe you?"

"Three dollars."

God help me, I paid him. I paid him, and he left. I don't remember for sure, but I think that I thanked him, too.

**S**O SIMPLE was the beginning of horror. The death of a black dog. I had lived through the rape of a city, and it had begun as simply—with a faint drone, as of bees, in the sky. The city had gone through hell, but it had lived, and it would be rebuilt. Even now it was being rebuilt. Could one rebuild a black dog? Only a madman would answer yes. Yes.

I played piano for a while after the veter-

inary had left. I hammered the keyboard until I felt human again. Then I went down to the cellar for a spade and went out into the back yard and dug a grave under the big lilac bush. A little grave, three feet long and three feet deep. I took Blackie from his corner in the kitchen and buried him there.

I went back into the house, undressed to go to bed, then decided to read a while. And I couldn't find my bathrobe.

It was a little thing, but a puzzling one. I had worn it the night before, and I'd hung it in the closet when I dressed in the morning. It wasn't there and it wasn't anywhere in the house. It couldn't have gone out, by mistake, with laundry or dry cleaning for I'd sent nothing out for at least a week.

Possibly because a minor worry helped side-track my mind from worse things, I sat down and puzzled about the bathrobe. I remembered clearly that I'd worn it that very morning while I'd fried myself an egg for breakfast. Then I'd gone into the bedroom and dressed and I'd hung it on the usual hook in the closet.

I searched the house again and did a good job of it. That second search wouldn't have overlooked a handkerchief, much less an object the size of a bathrobe.

It was gone.

It was absurd to think someone would have entered the house, stolen the bathrobe and nothing else—yet nothing else was missing. I'd not solved the problem by midnight. Still, for a wonder, I slept soundly until eight o'clock the next morning.

I dressed and went out into the yard for a breath of air before breakfast. The widow Haley was hanging up some clothes, and she called out a cheerful good morning to me.

I said, "A beautiful morning, Mrs. Haley."

"I have some coffee percolating," she said. "Will you have a cup with me?"

"Gladly," I said. I had a hunch what she wanted to talk about, but it was all right; I really felt I owed her an explanation.

Over the table in her neat kitchen, she said, "Must you leave, Mr. Baran? You've been a good tenant and a good neighbor; I wish you could stay. Is the rent too high?"

I said, "I couldn't let you, Mrs. Haley. You see—well, a slight reduction wouldn't help. My income has fallen to a point where I can't possibly hope to keep a house of my own. I'm sorry to leave, but there's no alternative."

She said, "I see," in a puzzled sort of way. She didn't, of course.

I said, "What income I have is in the form of royalties from a few musical compositions. I expected those royalties to hold up better than they have, or I wouldn't have taken the responsibility of a house. Also I'd hoped—that I could create something new, but I over-

estimated myself there. I'm afraid that I'm washed up as a composer."

"But you play so beautifully, Mr. Baran."

"Thank you. I'm afraid that's what I'll have to do to live, go back to playing. There's no opening here for a pianist—a classical pianist, anyway—so I'm afraid I'll have to leave Northport for some larger city. Ready or not, I must go back to work."

She leaned across the table to refill my cup. For a while neither of us said anything. I looked at her and thought how wonderful it would be to be able to stay here, to feel myself whole again some day so I could ask Amanda Haley to marry me. To sit across the table from her like this every morning. She was everything a wife should be. Then I stopped thinking like that.

I said, "I wonder what you and the other people on the court have thought about me, Mrs. Haley. I've never talked about myself. You must have thought I'm a little crazy, haven't you? Be honest."

"N-no," she said, "not that, I'll admit we've wondered. If you were a little younger we'd have thought you were a veteran, suffering from—I guess these days they call it battle fatigue."

I nodded slowly. "Not far off, either about the age or the—the difficulty. I happened to be in London in nineteen thirty-nine when the war started. I was pianist with a London orchestra—not the Philharmonic, but a good orchestra. I was forty-three then—I'm forty-eight now. I tried to enlist, but I was rejected. But I—"

"You aren't English, are you?" she asked next.

"No, I'm Belgian by birth, Mrs. Haley. But I was, and am, an American citizen. Anyway, I stayed in London. When the blitz started, I became a warden. I did my best to help. Two years ago one hit too close and I spent a year in a hospital. I was released last year, fairly sound physically, but pretty much of a neurotic wreck. I came back to America and, looking for a quiet place to convalesce and to try composing again, I came here—and, well, that's the whole story."

She waited.

"And you feel you have to leave? There's no way?"

I smiled at her. "I only wish there were. I still can't see, though, why anyone will miss me. I've been a terrible neighbor, playing in the middle of the night and—"

"But we've enjoyed it. If it wakes me, I like to lie and listen, and it doesn't keep me awake if I want to go back to sleep." She laughed a little. "Even when you play that one that makes Blackie howl—that Tschai-kowsky thing." She laughed a little. "He really outdid himself last night."

## CHAPTER TWO

## Gibbering Night

I MUST have looked at her stupidly. "Last night?"

"Yes, about two o'clock. Oh, you didn't wake me up. I happened to wake up hungry about a quarter of two, and I was in the kitchen spreading a slice of bread and jam when you started to play."

"Not last night," I said. "I didn't play last night after ten o'clock and—Blackie is dead, Mrs. Haley. Someone poisoned him; he died yesterday evening."

She stared at me and slowly the color went out of her face, leaving it almost as white as the cloth on the table between us. She said, "But it was last—" and then stopped.

"You might have dreamed it," I suggested.

"But—" Her face changed. "Yes," she said, "I must have dreamed it, Mr. Baran. Oh, I'm so sorry about Blackie."

The rest of our conversation was awkward and uncomfortable and after a few minutes I excused myself and left.

Back home, I tried to think it out. I hadn't played the piano at two o'clock last night—Not unless I'd got up and played it in my sleep. If I had, then I was a worse psychic mess than I thought. And she'd heard Blackie howling and that was really impossible, last night. God! God, I couldn't have played and howled both—if *that* were true, then. . . .

I got to worrying about the bathrobe again. A small thing, but annoying. I went through the house systematically, and it wasn't anywhere. It occurred to me as a possibility, a remote one, that Blackie might have dragged it out into the yard yesterday while I had been gone.

I went out and searched the yard from the front fence to the back one, but there was no sign of it.

As I was walking back toward the kitchen door, Dr. Schmid came out into his yard. I waved to him and, when he came over to the fence, I went to meet him there.

He said, "Wife tells me you asked for me last night."

"Yes," I told him. "Someone poisoned Blackie." I told him how I had found the dog, and what had happened.

He shook his head slowly. "Too bad, Baran," he said. He looked at me speculatively. "You were in the war, weren't you, Baran?"

"London."

He nodded. "I thought you'd seen something of it. Lose any relatives?"

"Friends. I haven't any relatives."

"You're lucky," he said. "I have—on the wrong side."

"You mean in Germany?" Somehow, in spite of his name, in spite of his slight accent, I'd never thought of Doc Schmid as a German.

"Yes," he said. "Haven't heard of or from them since thirty-nine, though. Don't even know if they're alive or dead. Not too good a chance—they lived in Cologne and—hell, what got me started talking about that?" He seemed to shake himself a little. "About the dog—do you have any enemies?"

"Lord, no."

He said, "I just asked. There's a type of warped mind that might want to take vengeance second-hand on a man's dog."

I shivered a little. I said, "Not in my case. I don't know anyone in Northport except the people right here in the court. I haven't enemies anywhere else, for that matter."

Doc turned to look at his house, then back to me suddenly. "Isn't that your telephone ringing?"

I hadn't noticed it. The phone had rung so seldom since I'd lived there that my ear wasn't attuned to the sound. But it was the ringing of a phone, and it did seem to be mine.

I hurried into the house and answered it.

A voice that was vaguely familiar asked, "Is this Jan Baran?" And when I said yes, "The Jan Baran who used to play with the studio orchestra at Acme in Hollywood?" And I said yes again; that had been from 1930 to 1936, before I'd left Hollywood for New York, then London.

"I'll be damned," said the voice, enthusiastically now. "Jan, this is Dave McCreary. What the so-and-such are you doing in Northport, New Jersey?"

It was swell to hear his voice again; Dave had been one of my best friends in those days. Neither of us was much of a letter writer, though, and we'd lost contact.

I gave him a thumb-nail sketch of what I was doing in Northport and then demanded the same of him. He said, "On business. A few days, maybe a week. I'm still running errands for Acme. Talent scouting and such. Ran into your name by purest accident—looking in the phone book for a man named Barker and running my finger down the B-a-r's. I hadn't an idea you were even in this part of the country, but Jan Baran's an unusual name, so I called to see if it was you."

"It was and is," I told him. "Can you come here or shall I meet you downtown?"

"I'll be out either this evening or tomorrow. Still play piano?"

"Sure."

"I still sing baritone. I'll bring a bottle."

I went back out into the yard, feeling better than I had for quite a while. I'd almost not signed for the telephone when I'd moved in; I was glad now that I had. Getting in touch



with Dave McCreary was worth more than the phone bills I'd paid.

**D**OC was still working on his garden by the fence. Seeing him reminded me of a question I'd been wanting to ask. "Doc," I said, "what kind of eye trouble would require a man to wear glasses with bright green lenses?"

He straightened up and looked at me. "Green? I don't know of any. I've seen green sun-glasses, but it's an unusual shade, not the best one. Why?"

"Just wondered. The vet whom I called last night for Blackie wore them. I'd never seen—"

"Excuse me," he said, starting for the house. "My phone this time. Hoped I might have a morning free, but no luck."

I went back into the house and a minute later I heard doc taking his car out of the garage.

A little after lunch there was a soft knock on my door and I called out, "Come on in, Jerry." The door opened slowly and Jerry Weber came in, cautiously, bashfully. He always came in like that, like a shy, wild thing. It was perhaps the hundredth time he had come to see me; he was always as doubtful of welcome, apparently, as he had been the first time.

Moron is a horrible word; we have come to associate it with viciousness and vileness. Technically, Jerry Weber was a moron—he had the mind of an eight-year-old child in the body of a young man of nineteen—yet I have never known anyone less vicious or less vile than Jerry. He had not only the mind, but the attitude of mind of a child of eight. And eight is a delightful age. True, it requires a mental readjustment to overlook the body and to perceive the mind for what it is, but in Jerry's case I had made that adjustment. I was able to think of him as a child and, as such, to like him and to get along with him.

He said, "Hello, Mr. Baran."

I said, "Hello, Jerry. Sit down. What have you been doing?"

"Making a battleship out of sand, in my back yard. I used a broomstick for masts. I broke it in two. Will you play piano for me, Mr. Baran?"

"In a little while, Jerry."

"Play the one that makes Blackie howl. I like that one."

I said, "I'd rather not, Jerry, not today. Some other time. I'll play you a new one, one you haven't heard before. The *Emperor Concerto*."

"Emperor—that's like a king, isn't it? Where is Blackie, Mr. Baran. In the back yard? Can I let him indoors?"

"Blackie isn't here, Jerry," I said. "He's

gone away for a while. A very long while."

"Oh. Are you going to get another dog, or wait until he comes back?"

I went over to the piano bench and sat down. I said, "Neither, Jerry. You see, I'm going away soon myself, so I won't be able to get another dog. Not right away, anyway."

"Are you going where Blackie went?"

I said, "No, Jerry. Some day, yes, but not this time."

I ran my fingers idly along the keys, getting the feel of them, and then started to play. But it wasn't the *Emperor*; I'd drifted into the *B Flat Minor Concerto* of Tchaikowsky—the first movement of which was Blackie's howling motif. I almost stopped, then thought, *Why be a fool about a piece of music*, and finished the movement.

When I stopped playing, Jerry said, "But that isn't what you said you'd play, Mr. Baran; that's Blackie's—"

"Yes, Jerry. I changed my mind and played it. Do you want to hear the other one too?"

"Gee, yes, Mr. Baran." He laughed a little. "Gee, didn't Blackie howl last night?"

I took my hands off the keyboard. I took out a cigarette and took my time lighting it, and my hand didn't tremble much.

I said, "Last night?"

"Sure, when you played that piece in the middle of the night. I heard it."

I took a puff and inhaled deeply. I said, "Are you sure it was last night, Jerry? Not night before, or some other time?"

"'Course it was last night. There were fog horns in the harbor and then you started to play and Blackie howled and I sat up in bed and listened, and then after you were through playing one or two more pieces you quit and the fog horns kept going wooo-ooo-ooo wooo-ooo-ooo out on the water. They're kind of scary, but I like to hear them at night. Don't you like fog horns?"

I said, "Yes, Jerry."

I sat there looking at him. A young man of nineteen curled up on the sofa, his feet under him, his hair mussed, his head pillowed in his arms.

After a minute he looked up. "Aren't you gonna play the one about the emperor?"

"I guess not, Jerry," I told him. "Some other time. I don't want to play any more now."

"All right, Mr. Baran. I'll go look for Bl—oh, I remember. He went away. Look, Mr. Baran, if you've got to go away anyway why don't you go see Blackie, go where he is?"

"If I went there, Jerry, I could never come back. I'd like to come back some day."

"Oh, yes, yes. We want you to come back. Don't go there, then." He stood up. "Have

you got some cookies?" he wanted to know.

I got him some cookies, and he left.

I went over to the telephone and did some hunting through the directory until I found a number. I called it.

"Office of the harbor commissioner," the receiver said.

I said, "I hate to bother you with this; it's just to settle a bet. But was there a fog last night? Did the fog horns blow?"

"Yes, from one o'clock until four o'clock in the morning."

"Thanks," I said. "Thanks a lot."

I went back and sat on the piano and played a little. I improvised, and the result was weird and startling. I almost went to get score paper and pencil to try to capture some of it. Then I thought, *What does it matter?*

I stopped playing and ran my finger around inside the collar of my shirt. I was sweating.

I felt sticky and sweaty inside and out and went to the bathroom and turned on the water in the tub. I pulled down the shades in my bedroom and undressed there. From force of habit I started for the closet to get my bathrobe.

It wasn't there.

I sat in the water, soaking, a long time. I got to feeling doxy and almost went to sleep in the tub. Then I remembered: This is a treatment they give in psychopathic wards. Put the patient in a tub of warm water.

I got out of the tub and dressed.

**A**FTER it got dark I went out and sat on the front steps. The stars came out, like rhinestones in the sky, and a cool breeze came in off the ocean a few miles away. It was very quiet in King James Court; the only sound was the soft playing of the radio next door and the occasional honking of an auto far away, or the far whistle of a train.

*Darkness is a wonderful thing, a beautiful thing, I thought, but not darkness of the mind.*

I tried to talk myself out of it. I said to myself, they could have heard a radio; someone somewhere could have been broadcasting the Tschaiowsky *Concerto in B Flat Minor*—but I didn't believe it. Nobody near here ever had played a radio loudly at night; nobody nearby would have been playing one so loudly that both Mrs. Haley, next door, and Jerry Weber, across the court, would have thought it was my piano.

No, last night, without any recollection of it, I must have been up playing the piano. The howling of the dog—well, some other dog in the neighborhood had howled; there couldn't be any other explanation of that. Blackie was dead.

I told myself, people have done things in their sleep before. Somnambulism isn't insanity. And one swallow doesn't make a sum-

mer and a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, haste makes waste and so what? Nuts.

I had just about decided to go indoors when I heard a door open and shut across the way. I saw Mrs. Weber come down the walk to her gate, come through it, and waddle across the street. Obviously, she was coming toward me, so I walked forward to my gate to meet her.

She said in that wheezing voice of hers, "I thought I saw you sitting there in the dark, Mr. Baran. I felt you sitting there, rather, even though I couldn't see you."

"Yes?" I said. "Will you come in?"

"No—thank you, though. I just wanted to ask you what happened to your dog? You told Jerry he had gone away. What did you mean?"

"He's dead, Mrs. Weber. He was poisoned last night."

She nodded slowly, somberly and kept nodding her head for what seemed an interminable time. I couldn't see much of her face in the darkness.

"I thought it was that," she said, "something like that. There's a shadow, Mr. Baran."

"A shadow?"

"Yes, over this court. I've felt it. There's going to be death here. Coppelia said so."

"Coppelia?"

"Of course, my control. That's what my husband says she said; of course I don't hear her at all. When I'm in a trance I don't hear the spirits speaking through me, of course. I know only what others tell me afterward that I said. Coppelia said there was going to be death here."

I said gently, "I hope she is wrong, Mrs. Weber."

Surprisingly, she put her hand on mine, which was resting on the gatepost. Her hand was warm and moist. I didn't like the feel of it, but it would have been insufferably rude to pull my hand away.

"Who do you think poisoned Blackie?"

"I don't know," I told her. "And, in a way, I don't want to know. I guess you know I'm going away soon. If I were going to stay, I'd want another dog, and—well, that would be different. But it's happened and I'd rather forget about it, try to think it was an accident or a mistake."

She said, "Maybe that's best. I wish you were staying. Jerry will miss you; he almost worships you."

I said, "I wish I were staying, too. I'll miss seeing Jerry." But I could miss nothing as badly, I thought, as I would miss seeing Mrs. Haley.

Mrs. Weber took her hand off mine, turned away, then turned back. She said, "Don't worry too much about Blackie, Mr. Baran. He is all right."

Then she waddled back across the street to

her own house, and the porch steps creaked as she climbed them. For a moment I had thought her last remark terribly strange; then I realized she meant he was all right in the spirit world.

Do animals have souls, I wondered. Do we, for that matter?

I HAD always been an agnostic, but standing there in the dark I began to wonder. Who was the bigger fool, Mrs. Weber or I? Was even Jerry, who had a mental age of eight, smarter than I, for Jerry believed in a god who was as real to him as his own father, and as close and as personal.

I stood there by the gate a while, watching down the court, seeing the occasional traffic going by on Poplar Street, hoping that Dave McCreary would come yet this evening. It was going to be wonderful to see Dave again. I thought, *How awful it would have been if he had been only a few weeks later in coming to Northport; we would have missed connections entirely, might for that matter never have seen each other again.*

I heard the Randalls get up from their porch swing and go into the house. There was a light on upstairs in their bedroom for a while, and then their light went out.

Doc Schmid went out on a late call; I heard his phone ring and then he came out of the house and got into his car. He waved to me as he drove by.

I went in, put on my pajamas and got ready for bed and then, as usual, fixed myself a nightcap in the kitchen, and went to bed—to lie there thinking.

I thought, *I want to know. If I get up in my sleep and play the piano I want to know it in the morning, for sure.*

I thought of lots of ways—of scattering corn meal on the floor of my bedroom or around the piano, so I could tell if it had been walked in. I thought of putting a thread across the doorway of my bedroom or across the keyboard of the piano.

Nothing seemed to be foolproof. Granting that my subconscious mind would remember the things in my conscious mind, I could reset any trap that I had set in the first place. I could rescatter corn meal and brush it off the bottoms of my feet; I could retie threads.

The problem intrigued me, despite the fact that I was getting sleepy. I got up and sat in the armchair in the living room to think it out and finally I had an answer. There was a bit of sealing wax in the desk; that and a dime would give me a foolproof—or a self-proof—answer.

I tied the piano shut with a single piece of string and a single knot. I melted sealing wax with a match and put a blob of it over the knot and into the wax I pressed the imprint

of the fasces, the vine and the motto of a dime.

So far, so good, except that my subconscious self could do the same thing—if it had a dime. I'd see that it didn't.

There was only the one dime in the change loose in my pocket, and there was no change anywhere else in the house. I opened my back door, stepped outside, and threw the dime far out into the night.

I went back to bed feeling rather pleased with myself for the way I'd solved the problem. I must have gone to sleep the minute my head touched the pillow.

I woke up somewhere around eight o'clock, still feeling pleased with myself. I went into the living room even before I dressed and looked at the thread and the seal. The thread was unbroken and the seal still intact.

I dressed, made myself coffee and drank it, and then went out into the yard, into the warm morning sunlight. It was nice outdoors; I decided to stay out in the yard a while and read. I went back and got a book, rejecting the volume of Schopenhauer I'd borrowed from Doc Schmid in favor of something considerably lighter.

I read a while and then put down the book and strolled back and forth the length of the yard, just enjoying the sunshine and the clean air, not thinking, not worrying. Satisfied for the moment just to be here. I was feeling as near happiness as I had since Blackie had died.

And that's what I was doing, at about ten o'clock in the morning, when Blackie came home.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Keys to Blood

I SAW him coming down the alley when I was at the back of the yard, and I thought, *There's Blackie. How did he get out?* And then I remembered that Blackie was dead and it couldn't be he, only it was.

He saw me at the same time I saw him, and his trot changed to a run. He yipped joyfully once as he ran.

I stood there frozen, unable to go to the gate, unable to think, let alone to move. He jumped up, putting his forefeet against the slats of the gate and whined. The gate swung inward and he was upon me in a single bound, his forefeet catching me in the stomach and almost knocking the wind out of me.

I crouched down and tried to catch and hold him. I could catch him all right, but it was like trying to hold a cyclone. He was wriggling all over, wagging not only his tail but every muscle of him, straining to get through my hands and lick my face with frantic tongue.

He was Blackie, all right. No other dog—despite the fact that all black Labradors of about the same age look pretty much alike—could have reacted like that. Inside me was a cold fear and a great gladness. This was Blackie. There wasn't any doubt, not any doubt at all.

This was Blackie, and he hadn't come back from the dead. He wasn't any ghost dog.

I had to think. I went into the kitchen, Blackie running so close to me that I had to be careful not to trip over him or step on his big awkward paws.

In the kitchen, I went to the refrigerator, and he was right there with me. I got food for him and I didn't worry, just then, about shortages. I fed him and he was ravenous. He couldn't have eaten for at least twenty-four hours, possibly longer.

I put water in his bowl and went down cellar where I had put the pad on which he slept. I took it to the kitchen and put it in its place in the corner. He'd finished the plate of food, and his eyes asked for more, but more just then would have made him sick.

All this time I'd been trying not to think. Not even when, in the cellar, I'd seen the spade leaning against the furnace, with black earth still sticking to it. Just as I had leaned it there after I had buried Blackie beside the bush in the back yard.

I stood there watching him as he drank thirstily and then went over to his sleeping pad in the corner and lay down.

I went into the living room, closing the kitchen door behind me, and sat down on the davenport.

*I must think clearly, I thought, or I shall go mad.*

Two days ago I had come home and found a dying dog in my back yard, a poisoned dog. It had been a black Labrador puppy about seven months old, the same age as Blackie.

But it hadn't been Blackie, for this was Blackie. The other dog had been dying. It had, now that I thought of it, shown no sign of recognition; it had been too far gone for that. It had opened its eyes and looked at me—that was all.

*But—coincidence?*

Northport, I thought, is a fair-sized little city. There can easily be dozens of black Labrador retrievers in town. There could be several of approximately Blackie's age. Possibly from the same litter.

But could it be a mere coincidence that the day Blackie had got out of the yard and run away, another dog, his double, should have come into my yard to die?

But it had happened. The alternative was too horrible to think about.

I sat there thinking about it, until I had to know.

I got the spade and went out into the back yard. I went to the lilac bush and looked around; no one was watching me. I was afraid to dig.

I left the spade there and went back to look at the gate leading to the alley. The catch was broken. That, of course, was how Blackie had got out and how he had got back in. How the other dog could have got in to die.

I got tools and fixed the catch. I put the tools away again.

I went back to the lilac bush and sat down on the grass. It was a beautiful day; the sun warm and bright, the grass an almost incredibly bright green. The grass, I saw, was getting a bit long; I'd have to cut it before I left.

I heard a screen door open and close. Mrs. Haley had come out into her yard. She smiled at me across the fence. She said, "It's a marvelous day, isn't it?"

"Yes," I said, "even for June, it's marvelous."

I thought she was as beautiful as the day itself, as clean, as fresh, as warm. I watched her as she worked a while in the little garden at the back of her yard.

She spoke a few times, of nothing important, and I answered, but I didn't go over to the fence to talk. It was as though something invisible chained me to the lilac bush near which I sat. Something invisible, but monstrous.

After a while she went back into the house.

I sat there a few minutes longer, enjoying what I knew might be the last of the sunlight. Then I took the spade and dug up what was buried under the lilac bush.

It was my bathrobe.

WHEN it got dark I decided to go out for a walk. I fed Blackie again, and this time I left him locked in the house. I put a note on the front door telling Dave McCreary to wait, that I'd be back soon.

I wasn't, but when I came back, Dave hadn't come and the note was still there. Blackie was still there. Everything was still there.

Even the silly seal I'd put on the piano was still there, the thread unbroken. I thought, if I don't break it, I can tell whether I play the piano in my sleep tonight. *What do you care?* I asked myself. *What does a little thing like somnambulism matter compared to burying a bathrobe, thinking it was a black dog.*

I reached out to break the thread, and then pulled my hand back. Might as well leave it on, I thought; I don't want to play now. I don't feel now as though I'll ever want to play again.

The phone rang, and I jumped so I nearly fell off the piano bench. I went to answer it. It was Dave.

He said, "It's almost eleven, but I can get

away for a while. I thought I'd phone and be sure you were still up."

"Hurry," I told him.

"On my fastest horse, Jan."

I sat there with the telephone in my hand, thinking. Handling it had made me remember calling the veterinary. What was the name—oh, yes—Gaylord. The man in the green glasses. Had he really come? No, he couldn't have—he couldn't have vetted a bathrobe, he couldn't have pronounced a verdict of poison upon a figment of disordered imagination.

I'd looked the name up in the phone book, the classified section. I dialed the number. I didn't hear ringing; instead after a few seconds an operator cut in, "Are you dialing Main four-three-four-zero?"

"Yes."

"That telephone has been disconnected."

"Recently?" I asked. "Today or yesterday?"

"I do not have that information," she intoned. "I can connect you with the business office."

"Please," I said.

The business office told me, "According to our records, Dr. Edward Gaylord died two months ago. His family moved to Atlantic City; we have the address to which the final bill was sent there. If you wish, the long distance department can find out for you whether there is a phone listed at that address."

"Never mind," I said. "Thank you."

I heard Blackie whining in the kitchen and let him out into the yard. I stood in the doorway staring out into the dark, from the dark, and after a few minutes I called to Blackie, but he didn't come.

I thought, *Maybe he isn't there. A black dog in the dark. You can't see him, so maybe he isn't there. Maybe he didn't come home this morning. Maybe I didn't let him out just now. How do I know what is true and what isn't? Maybe he did die two days ago.*

"Blackie!" I called again. There must have been urgency in my voice.

He came running, a blacker form out of blackness. I leaned down and patted him, rubbed his ears. He licked my hand, then ran back into the yard.

It didn't matter; in weather like this, he could sleep outdoors or in. Maybe someone would poison—but no, I remembered; there had been no poisoning. The only poison was in my mind.

I went into my bedroom and started to undress for bed, then remembered Dave McCreary was coming. I left my tie off, but rebuttoned my shirt and went back into the living room.

Why doesn't Dave come, I wondered.

It was very quiet outside. Almost strangely

quiet, I thought. Everything seemed strange. I stood there looking around me, as though I had never been in the room before. It was not a large room; it had been tastefully furnished and decorated—Mrs. Haley's doing, of course—before I had rented the studio grand that took up at least half the room and made it seem crowded and off balance. I thought, *I'll tell the piano company to come tomorrow and take it; I don't want to play any more while I'm here.*

The davenport, covered with petit point, the maroon rug, the Vlaminck prints on the wall, landscape and seascape, the scratch on the piano bench, the buff wallpaper, the door to the kitchen, the door to the bedroom, the door to the dark outside.

I thought, I'm standing now just where I stood when I talked to the man in the green glasses who wasn't Dr. Gaylord because Dr. Gaylord is dead, because Dr. Gaylord died two months ago.

The air of the room seemed thick; I seemed to swim through it as I went to the door and went outside, leaving the house lighted behind me, and sat down on the front steps.

Blackie heard me and came running around the house. He lay down beside me on the step and put his head in my lap.

I thought, *He isn't coming.* I looked at my wrist watch. The luminous hands pointed to luminous figures, the short one to eleven, the long one to three. It was only eleven-fifteen; Dave had phoned only twenty minutes ago. It had seemed hours. I put my watch to my ear and it was still ticking.

A CAR came slowly along the street at the end of the court, as though the driver was almost stopping to read the street sign. It was a black sedan with one man in it. It turned into the court, and I walked out to the gate.

It stopped at the curb in front of me and Dave popped out like a jack-in-the-box. "Jan! Lord, it's good to see you again," he said. His grip nearly crushed my hand.

"Come on in, Dave," I said.

"Wait, got a couple of things in the car. One's a bottle. The other's a portable recorder—I'll explain about that. Here, you carry the bottle; I'll bring the rest."

Inside, he put down the suitcase-size machine he had carried and fell, almost, onto the davenport. "Lord, I'm tired," he said. "You open the bottle, Jan. Three guesses what it is."

"If you put it that way," I said, "it's gin."

He grinned. "Right. Only this isn't from a bathtub, like the old days. It's so smooth we won't need chasers. How you been?"

"Swell," I told him. "Back in a minute."

I went out into the kitchen and opened the

bottle. Maybe, I thought, before Dave leaves I'll tell him. But not right away. I want to pretend, for a while, that everything is what he thinks it is. I want to be sane, to kid myself I'm sane and normal, for just a little while.

I took the bottle and glasses back to the living room. I poured two shots, sizable ones.

We toasted old times and talked of them. Neither of us seemed to want to talk of the present, not even Dave. I brought up the subject of what he was doing in Northport twice, and he avoided a direct answer. He was still connected with the movies, still talent scouting and general contact work, dickering with writers or actors or what not.

"And the portable recorder?" I asked him.

He laughed. "Mostly it's a prop," he said. "For brush-offs. If somebody breathes too hard on the back of my neck, I cut a disk and let 'em recite something, tell 'em I'll send it to the boss for consideration. Cheaper and less trouble than a screen test. And occasionally I have legitimate use for it."

We had another drink. The gin was really smooth. I'd forgotten how good gin can taste, taken straight and sipped.

I said, "You don't need to brush me off, Dave. I won't breathe on your neck for a Hollywood job. I—well, I don't feel I'm ready for it, even if I had a chance."

"Sure?" he said. "I couldn't offer you much of a job, but I think I could get you back with the studio ork."

"No," I told him. "I'm not—ready."

He sighed. "Well, that was only part of the idea, anyway, even if the rest won't do you any good. I'll give you the story." He put down his glass. "But first, do you still have the score of that *Dance of Terror* by Manuel de Falla, from some ballet—I forget which."

"From *El Amor Brujo*," I said. "It's a weird little thing. No, I haven't a score, but I think I remember it. It's rather short."

He nodded. "Too short for what I had in mind, but maybe it could be expanded. Have you read *Queen Morgue*?"

"No. Heard of it, though. A best seller, a bit on the horror side."

"More than a bit. It's one of the best things since Poe. Well, Acme's bought movie rights, for a sweet sum. You know the plot?"

I shook my head.

"Story of a man going insane. A musician. One of the big scenes in the book is when—insane and knowing he's insane, ready to give himself up to the authorities—he sits down at the piano and improvises. The author gives a nice description of that music, a dilly of a description, but he doesn't provide a score."

"Acme's hunting for something to use. My best thought was that de Falla thing. Have

to be stretched a bit, of course. I thought maybe you could do the transcription—you wouldn't have to go to Hollywood for that. But first I got to sell 'em on the piece itself, and I want you to wax it for me. If you can do it tonight, swell. If not I can phone for a score from New York and have 'em airmail it. I'll be around at least a few days more, off and on."

I saw that my knuckles were white around the glass, and forced my fingers to relax. I drank the rest of my gin and refilled us both.

I said, "I won't need a score. I remember it."

"Swell. You'll play it now and get it out of the way?"

I nodded. "When I finish this drink."

Dave lifted his glass, "To horror," he said. "Give it schmaltz."

"I'll give it schmaltz," I told him. "I'll give it hell."

HE PUT the suitcase flat on its side and opened it. From a velvet-lined compartment he took a twelve-inch disk and put it on the turntable. "Runs slow speed," he said. "Good for plenty long—you could get a whole concerto on here. You say the *Dance of Terror* thing is short, so if you feel like playing we'll wax some other stuff, just for fun. Where's a juice outlet?"

I pointed to it and he plugged in the cord, turned the switch to let the tubes heat up.

"Better let me run through it first," I suggested.

"I'll wax the practice, too," he said. "We've got lots of platter. Then before you play it a second time, I'll play back the practice session and see if the mike is placed right and the volume okay."

He plugged the mike into the recorder and looked around for a place to put it. I suggested the mantel, almost directly over the piano, and he nodded and put it there.

"Ready when you are," he said. "One more gin first?"

"Right," I said.

I poured our drinks and then carried mine over to the piano and sat down on the bench. I was glad that Dave was around back of the piano where he couldn't see the thread and the seal I'd put on the piano to be able to tell if it had been opened it.

The seal wasn't broken. I broke the thread and stuffed it and the seal into my pocket. I opened the piano.

I stared at the keyboard.

The keys had been clean and white when I'd closed the piano—or when I remembered closing it. They weren't clean and white now. They were smeary.

They were smeary with something dark red, almost black. Something that could have

been dried blood, as though someone with bloody hands had played it last.

Dave, bending over the recorder, was out of my range of vision, so I couldn't see his face, nor could he see mine.

He was talking. "Try to get the mood of it, Jan. The horror that must be in a man's mind, knowing he is going crazy. Improvising, putting that thought into music. A madman's concerto."

It was blood on the keys; somehow I knew that. I held my hands out and looked at them. There wasn't blood on them now.

When had they been bloody? And with blood from—what? Whom?

Dave was still talking. I wanted to tell him to shut up for God's sake or I'd kill him.

Instead I put my hands on the keyboard and hit a chord. Softly, experimentally. I let my fingers find it—I didn't know what chord it was. Maybe it wasn't a chord at all.

Dave stopped talking in the middle of a word. *Keep playing*, I thought, *so he won't talk any more. Play anything, anything, to shut him up.*

My hands were doing it, my mind—oh, God, my mind—was just watching, listening.

My hands—muscular, long-fingered hands that were the hands of a madman, that might be the hands of a murderer for all I knew—hit that soft chord again, but hard. Almost hard enough to rip the guts out of the piano. Then softly again, so faint as to be almost inaudible.

And for a while I sat there watching and listening while my hands played. Anything, I didn't care, just so Dave didn't talk.

I played the kind of notes that should come from bloody keys. I sent discord crashing after dissonance like the shrieks of the damned and changed, without modulation, into a soft padding up and down the keys that might have been the footsteps of a black dog, a thing that was monstrous because it had never been. Then again dissonant sounds and—well, it wasn't music, maybe. Then again maybe it was.

The music a madman would make, upon a blood-smear keyboard.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### White Room

**I** DON'T remember stopping, but after a while, a long while, I wasn't playing any more. I was bent over on the bench, holding my head in my hands and Dave had hold of my shoulders, trying to get me to stand up.

I shuddered and opened my eyes. The piano, I saw, was closed. I didn't remember doing it. Dave hadn't seen that keyboard.

He had been talking, I think, but I didn't know what he had been saying. I remember his bringing me a glass of gin, and my drinking it as though it were water. And I remember getting away from the piano and sitting on the davenport.

Things began to come in focus again. I said, "I'm sorry, Dave. Things just went—haywire. I hope you didn't record it."

He stared at me oddly. "I certainly did record it. I won't stick my neck out, Jan, by saying what I think of it. But maybe it'll be just what they want for the Queen Morgue picture. It was what I asked for, all right. But don't play any more if it does that to you."

I finished the gin I had in my hand; some of it spilled because I shook so, but most of it got down. I said, "Dave, I'd better tell you. But—give me a little time, first. I think I need to walk around the block and get some fresh air. Alone, to get hold of myself again. Mind?"

"Go ahead," he told me.

I went out, and Blackie heard me and came running. I patted his head, and then went out the gate and into the night. I walked a few blocks and then walked back. I felt a little steadier.

I sat down on the davenport again, and started to talk. I told Dave most of it. I told it quietly and calmly, and then I sat waiting. He didn't say anything for what seemed a long time.

Then what he said sounded strange. "Jan, isn't there any other explanation?"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I mean, couldn't there be some logical explanation—couldn't these things actually have happened?"

"Coincidence? That's silly and you know it. Any explanation other than that I'm—off the beam, would mean that someone is going to a lot of trouble to drive me crazy or to make me think I'm crazy. And who would do that and why?"

He shook his head slowly. He said, "It does look as though you've been—imagining things, then. Have you had anything on your mind lately? More than usual, I mean?"

"No, except the fact that my finances are getting low, and as of the first of next month, June, I'm leaving here and going somewhere where I can live more cheaply, and possibly make some money playing. At least I'd intended to try to play professionally again. Now, I don't know—"

"Can't I lend you some money, Jan, so you can stick it out here a while longer?"

"No," I said. "Thanks, but if I'm going to make a change anyway, I'd as soon get it over with. I've given notice and made arrangements to leave. Anyway, I couldn't, Dave."

He stood up, walked around to the front of the piano and opened it. He said, "You didn't imagine the keys being smeared. And it looks like blood all right." He looked back at me, "You haven't had a cut hand, or nosebleed, or anything like that recently, have you?"

"No," I said. I looked at him squarely. "On the other hand, there haven't been any murders reported in the paper. That's one reason I took a walk just now. I bought a paper and looked."

He shook his head slowly. "You poor guy," he said. "Jan, don't worry about that; you're not the type to turn homicidal, even if—I mean, you're kind and gentle by nature."

I poured two more drinks of gin. I don't know whether I was scared to contradict him or not. I said, "Let's not talk about it tonight, Dave. Let's talk about old times, Los Angeles. Let's forget everything else. Nothing's happened since. Remember the time Hoagy fell in the swimming pool?"

He grinned reminiscently. "That was an evening," he said.

*So is this, I thought. This is the last evening. I'll never know another. Drink and be merry for tomorrow—no, not tomorrow, tonight; when you go to sleep tonight, Jan, it's for keeps.*

I'd decided that when I'd taken a walk half an hour before.

**I** KEPT on talking about Los Angeles, and finally Dave fell into the spirit of it, and—well, maybe we were aware of the things we didn't talk about, but outwardly at least they were forgotten.

It was about half past one, in the middle of a silence, as it happened, that the phone rang.

I answered it and a man's voice said, "Is Dave McCreary there?"

"Just a minute," I said, and to Dave, "It's for you."

He swore softly. "Left the number at my hotel," he said, "but I told 'em not to use it unless—oh, damn."

He said, "McCreary talking," into the phone, then listened a while and said, "Yes, I'll be there," and hung up.

He stood up and reached for his hat. "Sorry, Jan," he said. "I've got to rush. There isn't even time for me to explain, except that it's business."

"You'll be back?"

"Not tonight. Tomorrow, late afternoon or evening. I'll leave the recorder here; I can't take time even to put it together now." He already had the door open. He turned. "Jan, about what we were speaking of before. Don't take it too seriously—you know what I mean. We'll talk it over, and maybe get some answers."

I said, "Don't worry about me, Dave. I'll be all right."

"Sure you will," he said. "See you tomorrow evening."

I heard him run down the walk and get into his car. He drove off fast, barely slowing down for the corner at the end of the court.

Suddenly I relaxed and the relaxation told me how much strain I'd been under, talking normally to Dave. I was glad he'd gone; I was glad I could let down and quit pretending.

I just sat quietly for a while, thinking. I poured myself another drink of gin and sipped it. Almost a third of the bottle was left, I noticed. Dave had brought a full quart, and up to now we'd taken drink for drink. I'd had over two-thirds of a pint, then, but I felt it hardly at all.

Or did I? I felt numb, mentally, which was just the way I wanted to feel, and without having drunk the gin I might not have felt that way at all.

*Tonight, I told myself. I'll get it over with tonight. I'll get everything over with tonight, so there won't be any tomorrow to worry about. Tonight, while you're numb; that's the time to do it.*

But there didn't seem to be any hurry. I just sat there, utterly relaxed, not thinking at all. My glance fell upon the portable recorder, still open on the floor, with the disk still on its turn-table. I thought, *I don't want to leave that as a record. There is enough horror and madness in the world without a waxed recording of a madman's concerto.*

I took the record off the turntable and broke it in half in my hands, then went into the kitchen and broke it into smaller pieces and dropped them in the step-on garbage can under the sink.

I noticed that my steps weren't quite steady; I was feeling the gin more than I realized. Now that I'd done it, too, I felt a little sorry I had broken the record. Maybe it had been good; maybe I had destroyed the one really good thing I had ever done. But it was too late now, and it would never matter anyway.

I went back to the recorder and started to put down the lid. I remembered the mike on the mantel, unplugged it and wound the cord around it, preparatory to putting it in the case. I looked to see where the playing arm locked, for closing.

I don't know just what made me look inside the velvet-lined compartment in the lid, but I did. There was a record there, a little six-inch one, grooved on one side only, and without a label. I have even less idea why I was curious what was on that record. I don't think it was curiosity—really, I was stalling. When I'd straightened everything up, I was going to kill myself. Nobody really wants to die and I was probably, subconsciously, look-



ing for as many things to do as I could find.

I put the little disk on the turntable and changed the arm for playback. I put the needle in the groove and sat back to listen.

It was a man's voice. Talking, not singing. It started in the middle of a sentence:

" . . . foolish for you to resist. Resistance means merely the deaths of millions more of you, under the rain of bombs that shall fall upon your cities, killing, destroying until no stone remains upon another. And the deaths of those millions shall be the result of your folly in—"

What the devil, I thought. A propaganda broadcast?

"—resisting the irresistible might of the German army and the Luftwaffe. Soon it will be too late. London and your other cities will be destroyed utterly, and your own air force is impotent. Ask your leaders why not a bomb has fallen upon a German city. Ask your leaders why—"

It was almost funny, listening to that, with the shambles and shams of war a part of history. But I'd heard them in London in the fall of 1940 and they hadn't been funny then. With London in flames, they hadn't been funny. You heard broadcasts like that and it took all you had not to believe them.

**W**HAT was Dave McCreary doing with a transcription of a German broadcast that must be at least four years old? With growing wonder, I listened to the rest of it, trying, mostly, to place the voice. It wasn't Lord Haw-Haw, but it was someone who had made more than one broadcast to England in those terror-filled days of the blitz.

I had him placed, finally, just before he identified himself in signing off. It was Reinhold Neumann, who at one time had been the Reich's Minister of Propaganda, although not under that title. He was a high-ranking Nazi who had been with Hitler from the days of the beer-hall *Putsch*. He'd been educated in England and America and spoke fluent English without the trace of an accent.

I put the record back in the compartment where I'd found it and finished packing up the portable. I took another drink of gin and sat there wondering how a record of a five-year-old German broadcast would happen to be in Dave's possession.

It was utterly incredible—until I thought of the answer, and then it was so simple I wondered why it had taken me more than a second. Dave must be looking for someone to play the role of Neumann in some new picture. The record might be genuine, a real transcription of a Neumann broadcast, and he was looking for an actor who could approximate Neumann's delivery—or it might be

merely a reading, recorded by Dave himself, of some actor who was trying out for the role. If the latter, it was good. The inflection, the arrogance, the cold menace, were there. Neumann's broadcasts, I recalled, were just like that—icy and analytical, not taunting like Haw-Haw's and some of the others.

I put the recorder in the living room closet. *I'm still sober*, I thought. *That gin must be like water*. I even picked up the bottle and looked at the label. It took my eyes a second to focus on the small print—it was eighty proof.

I had another drink; there wasn't much left in the bottle now. I thought, maybe this is going to sneak up on me. But maybe I'll fool it. Maybe it will be too late.

I laughed a little, thinking of the poor gin imagining it was waiting to hit me like a ton of bricks, all at once, and then being too late because a corpse can't get drunk.

Or have a hangover, I thought. This one is on the house; this time I won't have a hangover.

*Might as well finish it*, I thought. *Where I made one, turn down an empty glass. Rubaiyat. Nice guy, Omar. Did a lot of drinking himself. He sometimes wondered what the vintners bought one half so precious as the stuff they sold. Wake, for the dawn has scattered into flight the stars before him from the field of night. . . .*

Only it was night now, and not dawn. And I was getting drunk. I was drunk, but there was one shot left in the bottle and I managed to pour it into my glass and drink it without spilling any.

I got up, bracing myself on the arm of the davenport. I was plenty drunk. I didn't try to stand without holding on to something.

I worked my way around the piano. I got hold of the frame of the bathroom door, got through it. Holding onto the washbowl with one hand, I got the medicine cabinet open. There were things in there that would do it. A bottle of iodine, a straight-edge razor. . . .

I reached for the latter, and missed. My hand came away with something that had been lying next to it. I stared at it blankly; for a moment it didn't register at all. It was squarish and solid, wrapped and labeled. It was a bar of flea soap.

It saved my life.

By closing one eye so I wouldn't see double, I could read the label—Kenmore Surekill Flea Soap. Then I remembered; a few months ago I'd thought Blackie had fleas. I'd bought the soap, then discovered I'd been mistaken. I'd never used it, never taken off the label.

But seeing it now, I remembered Blackie. Blackie out there in the yard. Without a home, without a master, if I killed myself. Maybe he'd go to the pound. I couldn't do

that to Blackie. How had I forgotten him? I couldn't die until I'd found a home for him, someone who'd promise to take care of him.

Surekill flea soap. By reminding me of Blackie, it saved my life. Drunk or sober, mad or sane, I couldn't cash in my chips when Blackie depended upon me.

I put the flea soap back. Not quite far enough back; it fell into the wash basin and I left it there. I slammed the door of the medicine cabinet. I pushed off the bathroom light and went out of there. Blackie, Blackie who had come back from the blackness of death—or the blackness of my mind.

I staggered across the kitchen and opened the back screen door. I called him, and he came running, wagging all over, his stubby tail seeming to wag the rest of him. I leaned down to pet him, and fell. He licked my face. He loved me, drunk or sober. He licked my face.

But the kitchen floor wasn't level or steady. I thought, *I've got to get to bed*. I was drunk as hell. I crawled across the kitchen, and managed, at the door, to leave Blackie behind me. I shut him in the kitchen and used the piano bench to get up. I remember sitting on the piano bench.

I got into my room. I remember that. I remember sitting on the edge of the bed, and getting my shoes off. I'd left a light on in the living room, maybe one in the kitchen. But to hell, I thought with trying to get them off again.

Instead, I sat on the edge of my bed in darkness, for I'd closed the bedroom door behind me, and stared at the window. A little light, coming in at the crack under the door, showed me where the window was, but the panes themselves were utter blackness. Outside, there must be no moon, no stars. Darkness.

Thinking of darkness, that's the last thing I remember. Except my dreams.

There were two men, I dreamed, who lifted and moved me. Gently, not roughly. I was in a hospital, in the dream, a white room with white walls and ceilings and the men were in white, too. Everything was white. A white room in a hospital on a merry-go-round, for it kept turning. There was the hospital smell. They were going to operate on me; they were going to take out my brain because it was a mad brain and put in a sane one. I wanted them to, and then I remembered that the same brain wouldn't be me, and I tried to sit up.

One of them said, "Give him a little more." Then, in the same voice, he went on talking, ". . . foolish for you to resist. Resistance means merely the deaths of millions more of you, under the rain of bombs. . . ." And I was back in London four and a half years before

and there was the hellish drone in the sky and the mad crescendoing whistle of falling bombs and fire—red fire instead of white walls. Then that faded into grey mist.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Grey Death

SOMEONE was shaking my shoulder, crying, "You're hurt, Mr. Baran, you're hurt." It was Jerry Weber's voice. He was sobbing.

I was lying face down on the floor. I lifted my head and there was broken glass under it, on the carpet. There was blood on the broken glass.

I tried to push myself up off the floor, exclaimed in pain and rolled over instead. There was broken glass under my right hand, too. I rolled out of the glass and sat up. I looked at my right hand; the fingers and palm were cut, rather deeply. One of the cuts was just starting to bleed—I'd done that when I'd tried to push myself up a few seconds ago.

Jerry was saying, "Your face, Mr. Baran, you cut your face too. It's all bloody."

He sounded so worried that I said, "I'm all right, Jerry. I'm not hurt badly. Just scratched a little."

I got to my feet and went into the bathroom. In the mirror of the medicine cabinet my face looked terrible at first glance. A second look showed me that all of the blood was from a single cut, fairly deep but not dangerously so, across the ridge of my nose, midway between the tip and the bridge.

Jerry said, "All the broken glass, Mr. Baran. Should I pick it up for you?"

"Don't touch it, Jerry," I said. "Listen, Blackie is shut in the kitchen. Will you let him out and—"

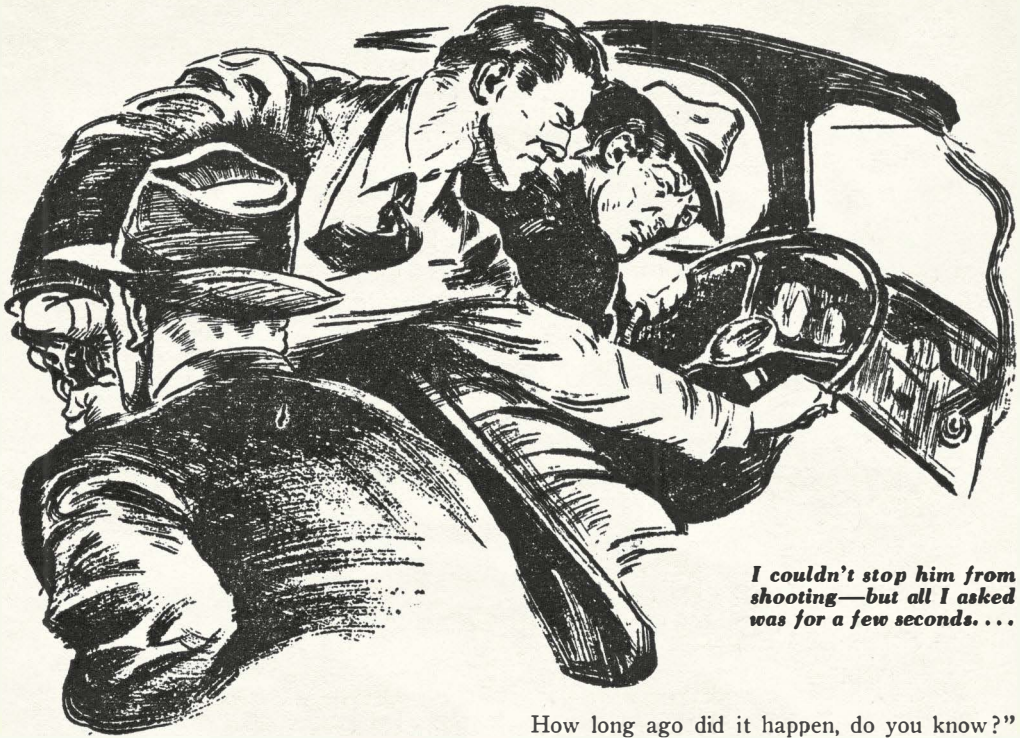
"Blackie! Gee, you mean Blackie is back? I thought you said he wasn't—"

"I'll explain some other time, Jerry. Listen, I'll go have the doctor fix these cuts. You take care of Blackie for me, will you? Let him out a few minutes first, then see that he has water to drink and—you know where I keep the dog food, don't you?"

"Sure. Gee!"

I watched to be sure he shut the kitchen door again, so Blackie wouldn't come in and get cut on the glass. Then I wet a washrag and sponged the dried blood from around the cuts on my face and hand.

I seemed to be fully dressed, except for a necktie and coat; even my shoes were on. That puzzled me, for I thought I remembered taking them off, sitting on the edge of the bed. But maybe I'd been wrong about that; I wasn't too sure. This time I couldn't blame sleep-walking, necessarily. The gin had blacked me



*I couldn't stop him from shooting—but all I asked was for a few seconds. . . .*

out enough that I couldn't be sure exactly what I'd done or hadn't done.

At any rate, I must have found the bottle, dropped it, and then fallen on the broken pieces. Must have been at least a little left in the bottle, for my clothes smelled of it. And the carpet. It had dried long before, of course, but the smell of gin had survived.

I heard Jerry and Blackie playing in the back yard and knew that department was under control, so I went out the front way and out my gate and in at Dr. Schmid's. I knocked on his door, and he answered himself. He said, "Come in, Baran. What happened to your face? Push it in the lawnmower?"

He led the way into his office and opened his roll-top desk.

I said, "Fell in some glass last night. Cut my hand a bit, too."

I held out my hand and he looked at it and said, "That's really bad."

"Bad?" I was puzzled. "Just a few cuts, aren't they? Nothing dangerous, is there?"

He looked up at me. "Of course not; I didn't mean that. I had your playing in mind. One of those cuts is right across the pads of three fingers. I'd say it would be at least a month before you can play piano again."

"Oh," I said. I hadn't even thought of that.

He cleaned the cuts with cotton soaked with antiseptic. It hurt, but not too badly. He said, "I don't think you need worry about infection.

How long ago did it happen, do you know?"

The clock on his desk showed a quarter after eight. "Six or seven hours ago," I told him. "I didn't want to bother you in the middle of the night; didn't think it was that important. The glass shouldn't have been septic, incidentally. It contained gin."

He chuckled. "From other evidence I'd say you didn't spill all of it. I'll give you something for that, too."

He did, and I felt a little better physically. He bandaged my hand and taped a bandage over my nose.

I went home. Jerry Weber was still playing with Blackie in the back yard.

I cleaned up the broken glass. I cleaned the piano keys. I straightened up the house as well as I could, and then made myself some coffee. I sat drinking it a long time, watching out of the kitchen window.

Outside, it was a dull grey day, the sky filled with clouds, the air muggy. It was something like that inside me, too. Last night's storm of emotion had blown over, leaving emptiness and only that. I didn't even know whether or not I was glad that I hadn't killed myself.

After a while Jerry Weber went home.

**T**HERE was a knock at the door and I answered it. Mrs. Weber stood there. I said, "Hello," and didn't ask her in. I don't know whether she expected to be asked in or not.

She said, "I hear that Blackie has come back. I thought you said—said he'd died."

"I was wrong."

"Oh," she said. She looked at me strangely. "You've hurt your hand, and your face."

I said, "Yes. I fell."

"Oh," she said again. It didn't sound as though she believed me. "Well, if there's anything I can do, Mr. Baran—"

"No," I told her. Then I remembered she meant well. I added, "Thanks." I even expanded it. I said, "There's nothing anybody can do, Mrs. Weber. But thanks."

I watched her waddle back across the street. I thought, *She's crazy, too. She believes in ghosts and there aren't any ghosts. Maybe everybody is crazy in some way. Maybe I can just keep living as though nothing has happened.*

Then I remembered the blood on the piano keys. It was there before I had cut my hands on the glass. It couldn't have been blood from my hands, for my hands hadn't been cut then. And it had really been there. Dave had seen it, too.

I went back to the kitchen and heated the coffee. I drank a cup of it, and then after a while it got cold again.

I sat there, staring out the window, thinking I should start asking people, start finding a home for Blackie. It shouldn't be difficult. Maybe Mrs. Haley. . . .

Somehow I knew it was she, this time, when there was another knock on the door. She was smiling, and she looked fresh and cool and beautiful in a simple cotton house-dress. I found myself smiling back at her as I asked her in.

She shook her head. "You come over, instead. Mrs. Schmid told me you hurt your hand, so I made lunch for two of us, and it's ready."

I said, "But—" I thought I wasn't hungry and then I realized I was. I hadn't eaten since supper last night and not much then. "All right," I told her. "Thanks a lot. I'll come."

I went to her house with her. The table was all set and the food ready; she'd counted on my coming. And it turned out to be the best meal I'd eaten in a long time.

I watched her across the table from me and thought, *If it could only be like this always.* She looked up just then and her eyes met mine and she smiled.

"Mrs. Haley—" I said.

"My name is Amanda. Won't you call me that?"

I found I'd forgotten what I'd intended to say. And that, if I didn't watch myself I'd be saving something different entirely, something which, under the circumstances, I had no right to say.

Her smile faded slowly and she said,

"You've been terribly worried the past few days. Is there anything I can do to help?"

I shook my head slowly, not looking at her. I said, "I'm afraid not, Amanda. There's—nothing wrong."

"Why did you tell me Blackie was dead, when he'd only run away?"

I said, "I'd rather not answer that." I still didn't look at her. "All right—I was lying when I told you there was nothing wrong. But I'd rather not talk about it, honestly."

I could feel her eyes on me. I stirred my coffee slowly.

She said, "It's none of my business, maybe, but—it started the evening that man came to see you. That's when you started to act strangely."

"No," I said, "that was Dave McCreary, an old friend of mine. He came around last night to—"

"I don't mean last night, Jack. Several nights ago. The man with the sun-glasses and the bandages on his face and his hand. He carried a valise, like a doctor's bag."

I looked at her, then.

I had a little trouble getting my breath for a moment. *I hadn't told anyone about that.* Nobody. I hadn't mentioned those details of his description even to Dave.

I asked, "You saw him?"

"Of course." She looked at me strangely. "Why shouldn't I have seen him? I happened to be looking out of the window because I was expecting a friend of mine; she was bringing over a pattern I lent her."

"He came in a car?"

"No, walking. He turned the corner from the west. Are you sure you're feeling all right, Jack?"

I closed my eyes for a minute. I said, "I don't know. I guess I am; I guess I'm feeling better than I have for a few days. Would you mind if I left now? I've got to think something out."

"Won't you have one more cup of coffee?"

I didn't want another cup of coffee just then. I wanted a drink and privacy to do some thinking. She wouldn't let me help her with the dishes.

Back home, I started to open the piano to play—sometimes I think best when I play piano—then remembered my cut fingers and that it would be a month or so before I'd play again. Strangely it mattered now; it hadn't mattered then.

I got myself a drink, just one drink. Then I sat in the kitchen, looking out at the grey sky, thinking.

I thought, the man who had come in response to my call for a vet had been real. Had everything else been real, too? Had a black dog died in my yard and had I really buried it, and not my bathrobe? Could some-

body else, not I, have dug up the dog and made the substitution? Could somebody else, not I, have played the Tschaiowsky movement or a recording of it? Could somebody else, not I, have smeared blood on the keyboard of my piano? Could somebody, that somebody, have broken the catch on my back gate, deliberately stolen Blackie and deliberately have substituted another black Labrador pup, and poisoned it?

I WENT to the front window and looked across the street. Jerry Weber was playing in his front yard. I walked across and leaned against the fence.

He looked up grinning. "Hello, Mr. Baran. Want to play mumbletypeg? I'll let you use my jackknife."

"Not right now, Jerry. I want you to think about something for me. Remember the night the foghorn blew and you heard me playing piano—the piece that makes Blackie howl?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Can you tell me any more about it?"

"What more about it?"

I didn't want to prompt him. I didn't want to prompt him at all. If I got anything I wanted to be dead sure. I watched his face and waited.

He stared at me blankly for a while. Then he said, "You played it different, Mr. Baran. Kind of."

"Different in what way, Jerry?"

"I don't—well, you didn't play all of it and part of it was awful soft. And the part I like best came out awful loud like; then all of a sudden it got real soft again. I could hardly hear it, but what little I could hear sounded—different."

Jerry, I remembered, had unnaturally keen hearing. At my place, while we were talking, he would suddenly say, "Here comes the mailman" a full minute before I could hear footsteps.

I tried to keep my voice calm as I asked, "How was that part different, Jerry? Think hard, and try to remember just how it sounded."

"Like—I know it sounds silly, Mr. Baran—like there were violins and things playing the music too."

I let out my breath slowly. I said, "Thanks, Jerry. Thanks an awful lot."

I went back home, and something was singing inside me.

There was a lot of thinking I had to do. But it wasn't the kind of thinking I'd been doing for the past few days, since I'd dug up a bathrobe in my back yard.

I wasn't mad. If there had been a man with a bandaged hand and a bandaged face—just as my hand and my face were bandaged now—and if someone with a phonograph record of

the Tschaiowsky concerto had faked my playing of it that first night, cutting the volume down wherever the orchestra was in and turning on full volume during the piano solo passages, then I wasn't mad. Then someone had done the rest of it deliberately, too.

That day I'd gone for a walk, they'd taken my bathrobe and they'd taken Blackie. They'd left another dog, another black Labrador puppy, dying, for me to find. Somehow, they'd tapped into my telephone and taken the call I'd made for a vet. It wouldn't have mattered which vet I called—the man in the green sunglasses would have come. And, no doubt, if I'd come later and found the dog dead and phoned for the police, he'd have come as a detective.

That night they'd dug up the dog I'd buried and substituted the bathrobe. Later, they'd smeared blood on my piano keys.

And last night—it couldn't have been an accident that I was cut in just the right places—I hadn't got up and fallen with the gin bottle. My dream of two men hadn't been completely a dream. That accident had been staged.

I knew all that now and I was beginning to have a vague hunch why. I thought it out and the hunch got less vague, and I got more scared.

Because it was—it had to be—a build-up to murder. There wasn't any other answer that made sense. Unless they meant to murder me before I left Northport, the whole thing was meaningless.

## CHAPTER SIX

### Murder, M.D.

I THOUGHT of the police—and then I quit thinking about them. From the point of view of the police I had strictly a wild yarn. Proof? The woman next door had seen a man wearing bandages come to my door. A thing meaningless in itself. A half-witted boy across the street thought he heard violins in with a piece he'd heard me play in the middle of the night.

No, I had nothing to take to the police.

What then? I could run—try to get away before they carried through, before they murdered me. They wouldn't be looking for me to run away and I might easily make it. But if I was right in my hunch about what I was running away from, there would be one guy I wouldn't want to live with the rest of my life and he'd be the one guy I couldn't get away from. His name was Jan Baran.

That left only one thing.

I thought about the man in the green glasses, trying to remember every possible detail of his appearance. He'd worn a brown suit and a tan shirt, a panama hat. I could match all of those.

I dressed myself. It was slow work, dressing

with my right hand bandaged so I couldn't use it, but I worked as fast as I could for I was suddenly and desperately in a hurry. I had sun-glasses, amber ones, and I hesitated about wearing them, then decided favorably. Even with the sun behind clouds, it would not be too eccentric to wear them during the day. And the more of my face that was hidden, the better.

I had a lot of territory to cover and I walked fast. He'd turned into St. James Court from the west. A lot of Northport lay that way, but at least the main business district didn't.

I headed straight west first, stopping in at every likely store I passed. It took time, and it was almost six by the time I'd covered ten blocks, working both sides of the street. In the drug store at the corner of Vine Street I got my first nibble.

The druggist, a small, bald man, came from the back of the store. I nodded to him casually and spoke before he got too close. I said, "I want some more of that stuff I bought last time—the—what was the name of it?"

He frowned. "Name of it? Was it a prescription?"

"No," I said. "It was nose drops—I remember, argyrol. May I have another bottle?"

"Yes. But—" He came a little closer, peered at me.

I laughed a little. I said, "Again? People have been mistaking me for someone else all day today. I must have a double. You must have thought I was he, because I never left a prescription here. Who is he?"

"I don't know his name. But you do—I guess it's mostly that you have bandages just like his and wear the same kind of clothes."

I took off my sun-glasses and put them in my pocket. I asked, "Do I look like him otherwise?"

"Umm—not so much, what I can see of your face and his. But you're the same size and build and have the same color hair. I don't wonder people have taken you for him. Anything besides the argyrol?"

I wanted to keep him talking, so I thought of a few more things, and bought them. I leaned against the counter while he was wrapping them. I asked, "Was it long ago you filled a prescription for my double? I'm really curious to find out who he is. Would it be asking too much for you to look up—"

I tried not to sound too interested or eager. He was adding up my purchases and didn't answer right away.

He said, "Four-seventy, sir. I—uh—think the name was Wallace. Just a minute."

He went back of the partition, and was back in half a minute. "Yes," he said. "Carl Wallace."

"Like to look him up," I said, "just for the hell of it, to see if he's been having the same

trouble I have. But of course a prescription wouldn't have the address—wait, what doctor was it?"

"Dr. Schmid. I think he's on King James Court, a bit east of here. Know where that is?"

"Yes," I said. "I know where that is. Thanks a lot."

I started out. He called, "Hey, your package!" and I came back and got it. My poker face must not have been so good, for he was staring at me strangely.

Outside, I got as far as the corner and just stood there, not certain even which direction I was going, let alone what I was going to do when I got there. I started to turn toward home, then turned back. It was only six; I had at least two hours of daylight left. And I had a definite clue I'd been walking in the right direction, thus far.

Two hours. I'd strike a few blocks north from here and then a few south. Then, if there was time, west a bit farther. It would be easier now; I knew what name he was using.

I turned and walked north. This was a rooming house district; this was good. Up on the corner ahead was a tavern sign; I'd try there.

But I didn't. I never got to the tavern.

JUST halfway up the block a car slid into the curb and a man got out of it. He was my size and build and wore a brown suit and a hat like mine. He wore sun-glasses, but there was no bandage on his face. His hands were thrust into his coat pockets.

Past him I saw that the car was Dr. Schmid's car and that Schmid was at the wheel. He sat there rigidly, looking straight ahead through the windshield. I could see only his profile, and his face looked stiff.

All of that, though, I saw out of the corner of my eye, for I was watching the man in the brown suit. The man who had claimed to be Dr. Gaylord, the vet, who had used the name Carl Wallace. But his name was neither of those, I knew now. This time I listened carefully to his voice, and I was sure.

He said, "Get in the car, Baran. The back seat."

His right hand came out of his pocket, bandaged just as mine was. His left coat pocket jutted slightly, showing briefly the outline of the barrel of a pistol. It wasn't his finger; it was a long barrel.

I said, "Aren't you Dr. Gaylord?"

"Don't play dumb, Baran," he said. "We've been following you since you left home. Get in."

The pistol barrel came up again, leveled on my belt buckle. I got into the car. I wouldn't have had a chance, there and then.

I got in and he got in beside me, on my left. The gun came out of his pocket and showed

inside his coat, the muzzle only inches from my side.

He said, "All right, doc. You know which way and about how far."

The car swung out from the curb and headed north out of town. It wasn't far from here to the outskirts. We were there, it seemed, almost right away. We swung onto a highway and picked up speed. Still Schmid hadn't turned around. I caught a glimpse of his face in the rear-vision mirror and it was a mask. He didn't like what he was doing, but he was in too far to back out.

I closed my eyes for a second and knew there was only one thing to do. Mentally I took the measure of that pistol—it was in his left hand and if he was right-handed that would slow him up. My own right hand wasn't far from it and though it was bandaged, I could flex my fingers inside the bandage.

I'd have to move my right hand less than a foot to grab hold of the muzzle of that pistol. I couldn't stop him from shooting it. But all I asked was to deflect it for seconds.

I grabbed, and threw myself up and forward across the back of the front seat at the same time. Somebody yelled—I don't know whether it was I or the man next to me—and the pistol went off. Its roar in the closed car was nearly deafening.

But with my left hand I got hold of the wheel and wrenched it hard as I could to the right. The car lurched to the edge of the road and off the shoulder. Through the windshield I could see the pole coming at us.

I ducked up my head and threw my left arm around it to protect it from the coming crash. With my right hand I was still fighting the gun. It went off a second time and I felt sudden shock in my left thigh. The car wasn't slowing down at all—I think that, once he saw an accident was inevitable, Schmid realized that any accident would lead to exposure and jail for him if he survived. He'd jerked his foot off the gas pedal and onto the brake when I'd first swung the wheel, but I think that once we were off the shoulder of the road, he quit trying to slow down the car.

I don't remember the car hitting the pole.

**I**T TOOK me a long time to decide that I was conscious and alive and that I might as well open my eyes. Whiteness blinded them for an instant and I tried again.

It was a hospital room. There was a nurse

and then a doctor who probed a few places, gently, and asked some questions. I must have answered them correctly because he let me go back to sleep. The next time I awoke I ate some broth. The time after that, before I even opened my eyes, it occurred to me there were questions I wanted to ask.

I opened them and was staring at the ceiling when a familiar voice said, "He's awake. Jan."

I turned my head and Dave McCreary was there, and Amanda Haley. I said, "H-hello. What happened?"

Dave grinned at me, and pulled his chair closer to the bed. He said, "In a nutshell, we got Reinhold Neumann. He goes back to Europe to stand trial as soon as he can travel. He was almost as banged up as you were. Schmid is dead; the steering post went through his chest."

I thought about that.

I said, "I never understood. Was Schmid a Nazi? I didn't think—"

"No, he wasn't, although he couldn't have been very much of an American, either. He was doing it for money."

I said, "How did—"

Dave said, "You're not supposed to talk much, so shut up. Here's what happened. When the German army started to collapse, Neumann got out in time. He had a fortune salted away. He bribed, or ordered, a sub captain to sneak him across the Atlantic and made the coast near Northport early in May. He figured his fluent English would let him hide here. He had Schmid's address as a distant relative, although Schmid hadn't bragged about it.

"He went to Schmid and offered him plenty of money—he says a hundred thousand—to help him. Schmid couldn't resist a fortune that size. But we learned he was in Northport and—I've got a tie-in with G-2, the Army Intelligence. Anyway, the sub was captured and one of the crew, who hated Neumann for good reason, talked. So we knew he was in or near Northport, and we've had a net around the place that a mosquito couldn't get through. And we'd have made a house-to-house canvass before we gave up.

"Neumann must have learned about that and knew he had to get out of Northport or he was a dead duck. Only way he could do it safely was to provide himself with an identity that

*(Continued on page 96)*

## VALOR . . . BLOOD . . . and LAUGHTER . . . the ingredients of ACES!

### Meet:

**LIEUTENANT RICK ALTER**, who won his guns and his right to die—with loaded dice.  
**And SATICOY**, whose Lightning never struck in the same place twice—but who did hit that Jap scuttle-butt!  
**Plus D-FOR DEATH DAVERN**, from whose flights the lucky ones never came back—and who'd always wanted to be lucky!

**In JULY DARE-DEVIL ACES—At Your Newsstand Now!**

# THE LADY SAID- *Die!*

||

**By Zeta Rothschild**

*He was clutching a woman's  
head by its heavy black hair...*





***In all the annals of crime there's no stranger story than this, of the cop who had to prove his killer innocent—in order to send him to the gallows!***

ON THE morning of November 1st, 1917, the sweeper whose job it was to tidy up Regent Square, Bloomsbury, was moving wearily along the walks, putting the least effort possible in his sweeping. He was justly tired. The midnight before German planes had come zooming over the Channel and with hundreds of others he had hurried to the underground, where he had slept but fitfully. His eyes lit with indignation upon a heavy sack, presumably of garbage, on the grass. People, he felt, were inconsiderate—yet he had no idea of how right he was.

With a view to giving someone a bloody bawling out, he studied the printing on one side of the sack: ARGENTINA LA PLATA COLD STORAGE. Next he slashed the cord which held one end. His find was a headless woman, with only stumps for arms. . . .

Inspector Frederick Wensley of Scotland Yard took over and made a careful examination of the corpse. He found no markings that might help in identification. She had been plump, middle-aged, in her forties and probably came from comfortable circumstances. Too many women could answer that description.

The sheet in which the corpse had been wrapped inside the sack provided a laundry mark—11H—embroidered in red cotton. London's laundries keep careful records and it did not take long for Inspector Wensley to learn that the sheet's owner was Madame Emilienne Gerard, of 50 Munster Square.

Within the hour Wensley was at the house. Madame Gerard had a room on the first floor rear, the landlady, Mrs. Simpson, told him. She did not answer her door but Wensley's credentials persuaded the landlady to unlock the door for him.

Wensley's attention focused on the bed; it was in disorder and one sheet was missing. On the counterpane were a few short streaks of blood in the vague shape of a hand. There were a few red smears on the inside of the door and a pitcher at the wash stand was quarter full of water with a pinkish tinge. The wash basin itself had a dried crust that gave off an acrid odor—but the baffling aspect of the whole scene was that, in spite of the evidences of blood, there was no sign of a struggle. Yet a woman of the build of Emilienne Gerard would have put up a fight.

From the reluctant landlady Wensley elicited what little she knew of the late Mme. Gerard. The latter had been living there a year; her husband had been a chef in a Lon-

don restaurant but had been fighting in France now for several months.

"And was Madame Gerard lonely?" prodded Wensley when Mrs. Simpson hesitated.

The woman shook her head, then mentioned the name of a masculine friend of the dead woman, a Frenchman named Louis Voisin.

Mrs. Simpson had heard nothing unusual last night. She awoke with the air raid. Madame Gerard had come into the hall and then gone back to her room. Most of the people had stayed up until dawn, but she hadn't seen Madame Gerard again.

But there was one bit of interesting news Mrs. Simpson now volunteered. "Louis was here this morning—"

She had seen him in the hall on his way out and he had stopped long enough to tell her that Madame Gerard had gone to France for a few days and he would be coming in to feed her cat during her absence. He lived at 101 Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square.

IT WAS practically impossible for anyone to get out of England during the war, but Wensley sent another inspector down to keep an eye on the Charlotte Street house. In the meantime he wanted a talk with Dr. Bernard Spilsbury, coroner's physician, who was performing an autopsy at the mortuary.

The hands had been cut off by some one who knew how to handle a knife, Dr. Spilsbury told Wensley. The cuts had been sure and deft. There were heavy bruises on the right thigh, indications that the woman had been badly beaten before death. Inspector Wensley was impressed by one additional fact—the body had been drained of a large amount of blood—almost two pints. And blood in quantities is not easy to hide.

He hurried to call on Louis Voisin, a butcher. The latter readily admitted knowing Madame Gerard, but said their friendship had lapsed some time ago to casual meetings. He had last seen her on the afternoon of October 31st, when she told him she was going to France to visit her husband. That was all.

Voisin and Wensley were sitting in the front room of the basement. The place seemed neat and well ordered, but sensing an eavesdropper at the door leading to the kitchen, Wensley adjourned there. The listener-in, a woman, retreated to the back yard and pretended not to notice the two men. Wensley stood in the center of the kitchen and stared thoughtfully at the back door; it was spat-

# Get into RADIO ELECTRONICS TELEVISION for YOURSELF!

Get set in the greatest, soundest industrial boom in history. Be independent with YOUR OWN lifetime business or win success in a fine industrial position.



## SHOP METHOD HOME TRAINING

from one of the World's Great Residential Technical Trade schools fits YOU for a profitable present and a growing future. QUICK. MODERN. SOUND speed-up course. Start earning after first few lessons. Above: Elsworth Anderson started his own business before he graduated. Thousands of great opportunities everywhere right now. Television just opening up. Electronics is in its infancy. NOW IS THE TIME FOR YOU to get started.

### FREE LESSON

Find out what you can do yourself. See how easy and practical this training system is. Fill out the coupon for a sample lesson and big Opportunity book. No obligation. No salesman will call.

NATIONAL SCHOOLS  
Los Angeles 37, California



### MAIL COUPON

National Schools, Dept. PP-7  
4000 S. Figueroa Street, Los Angeles 37, California  
Send the FREE Lesson, Vocational Book and details.

Name.....Age.....  
Address.....  
City.....State.....  
Include Zone Number

Paste on a penny postcard

**HERE'S A NEW AND VITAL BUSINESS!**

**LEARN ELECTRICAL APPLIANCE REPAIRING**

## Offers Big Money—Independence

If you are mechanically inclined—can hold and use tools it will pay you to learn electrical appliance repairing. Operate from your garage, basement, etc. Work as many hours as you wish—the appliance repairman is his own boss. On many types of repairs it is usual for a repairman to charge on the basis of \$5.00 to \$6.00 an hour.

## No Previous Experience Needed

Profusely illustrated our new course shows you in simple, easy to understand language plus drawings and photographs, how to make each repair on refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, motors, fans, irons, etc., etc. Explains and gives you a working knowledge of electricity, welding, nickel plating, etc. Shows you how to build the power tools you need and how to solicit and keep business coming to you. Not a theory course but an honest to goodness practical course written by and used by repairmen the country over. Price of course is so low that the savings on your household appliances will pay for it. Act now! Send today for FREE literature. Christy Supply Co., 2835 N. Central Ave., Dept. D-1818, Chicago 34, Illinois.

tered with blood. Voisin noticing his glance, said, "I brought home a calf's head this morning and it got blood over everything."

The explanation might be true and Wensley made no comment. His eye had been caught by a small keg in a corner, which, to his senses, gave off an offensive odor. Voisin, evidently accustomed to it, was unsuspecting as Wensley wordlessly walked over to the keg, quickly knocked off the paper box and papers on top, and thrust his arm down into its briny depth.

When he withdrew his hand, it was clutching a woman's head by heavy black hair.

Voisin was white; his knees shook.

"Get me the hands out of that brine, Voisin," Wensley ordered.

Without a word Voisin pulled out two hands and placed them on the table. He took a deep breath then he said quietly, "I know what you're thinking but you are wrong, Inspector. I didn't kill Emelienne Gerard."

He had gone over to the Munster Street house that morning at eleven, he proceeded to explain, as he had promised Madame Gerard he would feed her cat. To his surprise her door was ajar. He pushed it open and saw the room much as Wensley himself had seen it later. On the table was a bundle wrapped in a flannel skirt. In it were the head and hands. The rest of the body was not there.

"What do you think happened, Voisin?" prodded Wensley.

"Madame Gerard planned to leave to join her husband. I think because of the air raid she was turned back and in the confusion of the raid someone killed her."

"Why did you take the head and arms to your flat?"

"I had been in the room—I knew I would be suspected of killing her. I—I was so frightened I did not know what I was doing."

The woman in the back yard seemed restless.

"Does she belong here?" asked Wensley.

She was his housekeeper, Madame Berthe Roche, explained Voisin.

Wensley decided to take both Voisin and Madame Roche to the Yard for further questioning. During the trip to headquarters Voisin and the woman were kept apart. There they were taken to separate rooms. And while Voisin gave a detailed account of his movements for the twenty-four hours preceding the finding of the body to Inspector Wensley, Madame Roche was making a similar statement to Inspector Neil.

Both men took down a detailed account, hour for hour, of these statements. When they got together to compare notes the results were amazing. Each had accounted for

## The Lady Said—Die!

every hour of the day, alone or together. Moreover each had provided an alibi for the other. Both had been seen in the basement during the air-raid. First Berthe and then Voisin had joined a gathering in an upper hall. Then around two o'clock, they had parted for the night.

**D**R. SPILSBURY'S autopsy on the head and hands indicated that the woman had been beaten on the head with a blunt instrument. The blows had not been heavy, but there had been many of them. It must have taken some time to beat Emelienne Gerard into unconsciousness. She had fought too; there were bruises on her hands and the little finger of her right hand was broken.

Voisin was almost six feet, muscular and strong. If he were the attacker, why so many blows on the head? The question was in Voisin's favor.

The Roche woman's claim that she knew of but had never met Madame Gerard was backed by fellow lodgers of the dead woman.

But Wensley was still looking for two pints—more or less—of human blood.

The blood on his kitchen back door, Voisin explained, was that of a butchered calf. A rug similarly decorated, had also got that way in the course of his laziness. Wensley collected both door and rug for analysis.

In the meantime detectives were gathering odds and ends of information. Someone had seen Berthe Roche washing a badly stained shirt the morning of the finding of the body. It was not unusual for Madame Roche to do early morning washing—still, eight A.M. was a bit earlier than her custom.

Voisin's story that Madame Gerard had expected to go to France was checked up on. Her papers were in order—but none of them indicated plans for leaving the country.

Next word came from Dr. Spilsbury that the bloodstains on the door and the rug came from a human being.

Wensley's reconstruction of the crime was careful—on it would depend his entire case, for no one had seen Madame Gerard in Voisin's company on the night of her death. No one had seen him deposit the body in the square. His explanation about the head and hands, though not very convincing, could not be contradicted by facts—and his strength belied him as the killer.

Wensley built his case on the theory that it was actually the Mme. Roche who had first attacked Madame Gerard. As he visualized the story, Emelienne Gerard, frightened by the air raid, had hurriedly left her rooms to

(Continued on page 95)

**AGENTS—SALESMEN**  
Cash In On This Big Money  
Making Opportunity!  
Sell This Amazing Pen...  
Writes 2 Years Without Refilling

**\$100**  
TO  
**\$150**  
Per Week  
**EASY**

★

**\$5.00 profit**  
per pen. Sales  
waiting in  
every home,  
office, fac-  
tory, school.  
Prospects  
everywhere.

Wonderful  
Gift for  
Fathers' Day,  
Graduation  
and other  
occasions.



Outfit includes:  
pen, safety clip,  
polished alumi-  
num desk stand,  
transparent cov-  
er. 2-year Rey-  
nold's guarantee.

Nationally  
Advertised  
\$12.50

**\$7.50 each**  
in lots of  
4 or more  
F.O.B. Chicago  
Sample \$12.50  
Postpaid

**Reynolds Pen**  
INTERNATIONAL

The most amazing, versatile pen ever created. Writes 2 years without refilling. Writes with satin smoothness, fine, medium or heavy. Writes on cloth, through 6 carbons, under water. Will not drip, leak, smudge or smear. Dries instantly. The Pinnacle of Pen Perfection. . . . Reynolds Pens come in red, blue or black barrels, silver tops, matching jewel caps. Order your supply. Remit with order. No C.O.D.'s. Use coupon.

### STARR PRODUCTS

Dept. P. P., 502 S. Wells Street, Chicago 7, Illinois

STARR PRODUCTS, DEPT. P. P.  
Distributors, Reynolds International Pen  
502 S. Wells Street, Chicago 7, Illinois

**\$7.50 Each**  
in lots of 4 or  
more.  
Sample \$12.50

I enclose \$..... Ship following order:

.....Reynolds Pens, \$7.50 each (f.o.b. Chicago)

.....Sample Pens each \$12.50 postpaid

Name.....

Street and No.....

City.....State .....

# PROVES WONDERFUL

to promptly relieve misery  
and kill cause\* of

# ATHLETE'S FOOT

Helps  
Guard  
Against  
Re-Infection!



Here's a product that *really* does what it claims. It's a Doctor's wonderfully soothing yet powerfully medicated liquid called Zemo. First applications relieve itching and burning between cracked, peeling toes and aid healing. Zemo actually kills on contact the vicious germs\* that cause and spread this trouble. That's why Zemo has such an amazing record of *continuous* success. First trial convinces. All drugstores.

## ZEMO

### MECHANICS • HOME STUDY

- Step up your own skill with the facts and figures of your trade. Audels Mechanics Guides contain Practical Inside Trade Information in a handy form. Fully Illustrated and Easy to Understand. Highly Endorsed. Check the book you want for 7 days' Free Examination. Send No Money. Nothing to pay postman. □ Refrigeration \$4 • □ Radio \$4
  - □ Pumps & Hydraulics \$4 • □ Machinist \$4 • □ Diesel \$2
  - □ Plumbers \$6 • □ Shipfitter \$1 • □ Welders \$1 • □ Auto \$4
  - □ Mathematics \$2 • □ Electricity \$4 • □ Carpenters \$6
  - □ Marine \$4 • □ Blueprint \$2 • □ Sheet Metal \$1.
- If satisfied you pay only \$1 a month until price is paid.

AUDEL, Publishers, 49 W. 23 St., New York 10, N. Y.

### NEW CHEAP OIL BURNER

FOR COOKING & HEATING STOVES-FURNACES  
HEAT YOUR HOME, COOK YOUR MEALS  
WITH CHEAP FURNACE OIL

NO MORE SHOVELING COAL OR  
ASHES. New Fuelizer starter Vapor-  
izing System turns Cheap 130 Flash  
Furnace Oil into Oil Gas heat with-  
out clogging up. LIFE-TIME GUAR-  
ANTEE against defects. \$1.00-  
BONUS OFFER FOR TESTING. We  
will let you try it in your own stove or furnace for  
one month. Get yours for introducing. Big profits.

Be first. Send in your name today.

NORTHWEST MFG. CO., 556-J 5th Ave., Mitchell, So. Dak.

### MAKE MONEY

Selling  
**FLUORESCENT**

Sensational New FIXTURE Screws in-  
to Socket Like an Ordinary Light Bulb

**NOW** you can offer thousands of waiting prospects in your community the beauty and visibility of Fluorescent lighting at practical cost. LITE-KING is tops in Fluorescent illumination. Answers the need for a superbly engineered Fluorescent Adapter. Scientifically produces controlled brilliance at minimum cost. No installation cost—simply plug in like a regular light bulb. Pays for itself in current cost from the moment of installation. Streamlined in design LITE-KING will beautify any room. The money making opportunity of the decade for live forward looking salespeople and distributors. Enormous advance commissions daily possible under order taking plan. Rush name for FREE information.

**FOR**  
HOME—STORE  
—KITCHEN  
—TAVERN—  
—GARAGE—  
—FACTORY—  
MERCHANDISE  
DISPLAY

NORTH AMERICAN MFG. CO., 5042 Cottage Grove, Dept. 507, Chicago 15, Ill.

## It's a Wise Cadaver

(Continued from page 55)

"I'm a smart guy," Al said. "But it's easy when you take a good look at the axe. It's all red from Dominic's blood. But besides the red there's a lot of black on the blade and on the handle. It's printer's ink. You used the axe to crack open the lids of ink barrels. Then you were dumb enough to use the same axe to crack open Dominic's skull."

The old man said, "Dominic was no good—he betrayed an old man's trust. Calotta is a gangster—a murderer. If he goes free, he will do more harm than is left in me. Let me go."

"Sure," Al said, stepping aside. "Still, there wasn't any real reason Dominic couldn't have told about your little deal—to his father."

The old man started, looked at Al oddly with comprehending eyes, then stepped hurriedly past him.

**R**ENNER had been talking to himself for over an hour when the door opened, and Calotta was there. So was Al. And the sharp boys.

"What do you call this?" Renner said.

"It's payday," Al said.

Calotta looked sore and mean, but as he walked into the office he took out a check book. As he made out a check for a thousand dollars he said, "Any other guy I'd bump off, Reid. But I've always appreciated brains, and that's why I'm taking this the right way. I made a bargain with you and I'm keeping it. I told you to find out who killed Dominic. And I told you to keep the cops strictly out of this."

"And the only way I could keep the cops out of it was to knock you cold before you got nasty with the gun," Al said.

"That's right, Reid," Calotta said. He handed Al the check. "You found out who killed Dominic, and you kept the cops out of it, and I'm paying you off. But now, Reid, I'm going back there and I'm getting hold of the old guy!"

He went out and the sharp boys followed him.

Fifteen seconds after the door closed, Renner said, "I don't get it."

"It's what you call a fair bargain," Al said. "And now it's closed. But it's a shame that Calotta don't know about the old guy. He jumped out of that sixth story window just before Calotta came to."

Renner shrugged. "You can give me details later," he said. "Right now we better hurry and cash this check. I don't trust them crooks."

(Continued from page 61)

dred I gave Sam Blake to plant the bottle would have been well-spent. Everybody believed the liquor story but you."

**T**HE booming of the surf and the smell of fog in the air was very real to Jeff Arnold as he stood there in the musty corridor. He wanted to live, for in this tense moment his thoughts turned to Liz.

"You shot Liz Barclay," Jeff said, trying to put off the inevitable moment when Loren Tighe would shoot him.

"I regret that least of all," Loren said in a tight voice. "She suspected the truth so I followed you two. When you went to see Sam Blake I knew I'd have to kill you."

"What now, little man?"

"You'll walk to the rail," Loren Tighe said. "I'll put a bullet in you and watch you drop into the ocean."

"You're making a parlay out of murder."

"So I am. But Sam Blake will be the last. He'll be found dead, a suicide. And there'll be a confession, of course."

Loren Tighe stepped back and motioned with the overgrown muzzle of his gun and Jeff stepped past him.

Loren Tighe was behind him now with a

gun. Loren Tighe, perfectly tailored, smelling of the correct cologne with a white handkerchief just so in the coat pocket of his hundred and sixty dollar suit. The gentleman. Correct in attire. Correct in murder.

"Liz Barclay will talk when she comes around," Jeff said over his shoulder.

"Liz Barclay is dead," Loren said. "She died in the ambulance. I heard the police discussing it. It makes me happy to tell you that, Jeff."

A numbness which had built up in Jeff Arnold suddenly left his body. The chains dropped and his brain cleared. *Liz is dead.* The words burned into his mind like flame.

He turned suddenly and Loren Tighe had a look of astonishment on his face when he fired—and missed.

Before he could fire again, Jeff was in close, gripping the man's fancy belt in his two big hands. He swung Loren off his feet and into the trunks. Tighe dropped the gun.

Then a footstep in the doorway and Sam Blake's fat figure stood outlined there.

"That you, Tighe?"

"Kill Jeff Arnold!" Tighe screamed in panic.

Sam Blake made a frantic movement with his hand toward his coat pocket. Jeff Arnold

## **BLAZING** Intense Heat... **A SPEAKER HEATAB COOKIT** can't be beat for **COOKING... FRYING... BOILING**



MAKES FLAME  
14 INCHES HIGH



**BIG "Bonfire" Size  
HEATABS**

**\$1.00**  
FOR PKG.  
OF 10

**Y**OU'LL be glad to have the **SPEAKER COOKIT** . . . pocket stove that burns Heatabs, fire tablets of concentrated heat. No soot, no smoke—just clean heat. Use it on picnics or camping trips, in home workshops, hotel rooms or at roadside—wherever you need heat quickly. Get your **COOKIT** and **HEATABS** from your leading sporting goods, department, hardware or drug store. Or order direct—\$1. postpaid. No C. O. D.'s, please.

**J. W. SPEAKER CORP.**

MILWAUKEE 12, WISCONSIN

Canadian Speaker Corp. Ltd., Montreal 3

Speaker Spells **SAFETY** in Vulcanized "MATCH PATCH" Repairs

**SPORTSMEN . . .** for a **BIG HOT FLAME** use **GIANT HEATMAKERS**, 30-minute fire tablets. They're sportsmen's specials, good for building bonfires . . . heating abating water . . . starting grill fires . . . cooking meals out in the open . . . frying big fish in a jiffy . . . or boiling a quart of coffee. Get **HEATMAKERS** before that next fishing or hunting trip. If your dealer doesn't have them, order direct—\$1. postpaid. Please, no C. O. D.'s.

# BIG MONEY NOW IN

# LIQUID MARBLE

THREE wonderful new opportunities for your own big money-making business—regardless of your age, sex, or previous experience!

**1. LIQUID MARBLE.** Make beautiful artificial Marble Slabs. Four from liquid state. Glazed or unglazed. This marble may be mottled, veined, multi-colored or left in original snow-white state. The color is actually a part of the marble! Does not fade or wear away. Liquid Marble is unsurpassed on kitchen or bathroom walls. Easy to make and install.

**2. PLASTIC FLOORING.** May be made in any color or combination of colors. Gives a lifetime of wear. Dustproof, Soundproof, Verminproof. Resilient to the tread. Lay out solid from wall to wall or in pattern design of various shaped blocks.

**3. FLEXIBLE MOLDS.** For plaster casting. Make your own moulds for few cents each. \$1.00 in raw materials will make up to \$25.00 worth of finished goods. We furnish names of buyers. Write now for FREE information about our BIG THREE money-making opportunities! Get in on busy season just starting. Send penny postcard or letter. No obligation.

**COMPO-TEX, Box 786-PO ST. LOUIS 1, MO.**

## You Can Be an ARTIST

Learn To  
Trained Artists Are Capable of Earning \$40, \$60, \$75 Weekly. Many of our graduates are now enjoying successful Art careers. By our practical method, famous since 1914, we teach you COMMERCIAL ART, CARTOONING AND DESIGNING in ONE complete home-study course. Two art outfits furnished. Write for details in FREE CATALOG—Are for FREE info and Profit, explains course and commercial opportunities for you in Art. STATE AGE  
**WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART STUDIO 247-C**  
1118 - 18th Street, N. W. Washington 5, D. C.

## Learn to Service and Repair ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

Open your own electrical appliance service shop. Complete illustrated course covering house wiring, motor repairs, house appliance repair. Send today for FREE BOOKLET without obligation.

**PACIFIC TRAINING SCHOOL**  
7217 So. Broadway, Dept. R-7, Los Angeles 3, Calif.

## INVENTORS

Learn now—without obligation—how to protect and sell your invention. Secure "Patent Guide" Free. Write  
**CLARENCE A. O'BRIEN & HARVEY JACOBSON**  
Registered Patent Attorneys  
628-G Adams Building Washington, D. C.

## STAMMER?

This new 128-page book "Stammering, its Cause and Correction," describes the Bogue Unit Method for scientific correction of stammering and stuttering—successful for 45 years. **GET THIS FREE BOOK!**  
Benj. N. Bogue, Dept. 2980, Circle Tower, Indianapolis 4, Ind.

**MAN OR WOMAN WANTED**— Full, or part time Rawleigh Route. No experience or capital necessary. Sales easy to make and profits large. Start immediately. Write Rawleigh Co., Dept. G-190-PBL, Freeport, Ill.

## Train Your Own HORSES!

Colts - Stock Horses - Circus Horses  
Gait Show Horses - Write for FREE BOOK  
**ANIMAL LOVERS' ASSOCIATION**  
Box G-111, Tarzana, Calif.



**LAYMON'S ASPIRIN 10**  
Look for the handy display card in drug & other stores.  
WORLD'S PRODUCTS CO., Spencer, Ind.

## New Detective Magazine

pulled hard on Loren Tighe's belt. The man straightened up, then Jeff, in the same movement, pitched him as he'd pitch a throwing hammer.

Loren Tighe made a blurring shadow in flight. There was a thud as flesh met flesh. The crack of a splintered railing—Sam Blake's scream. Then two splashes, one slightly before the other.

Then there were cops around with flashlights in their hands to spear the fog. They put a gun on Jeff Arnold while a speedboat pulled two men from the water. One was Loren Tighe, the other Sam Blake. Blake was dead. He had hit his head on a piling.

"It's my word against his," Jeff told one of the cops bitterly as they brought a sullen, soaking Loren Tighe out of the water. "The girl is dead."

"What girl?" the cop asked.

"Liz Barclay."

"You're nuts," the cop said. "It's my case. I ought to know. I just checked with the hospital before this happened."

Stunned, Jeff Arnold clenched his big hands into fists. *Loren Tighe wanted me to die thinking Liz was dead. I didn't know he hated me that much.*

**A**T THE emergency hospital, Jeff Arnold looked down at Liz Barclay and she opened tired hazel eyes to smile up at him.

"I wanted to tell you, Jeff," she whispered.

"But I was afraid of what you'd do to Tighe."

"Never mind that, Liz. Get well, just get well. For me."  
The doctor made him leave then because, even though she was out of danger, she needed rest. Johnny borrowed paper from one of the cops and scribbled a note to Johnny.

Johnny: Hurry up and get well, kid. You own a third interest in Acme Publicity. You're the new boss because Dolly and Loren Tighe. . . .

Then he tore up the note. "I'm supposed to be a press agent and I can't even write."

The cop nodded at a long desk. "Sometimes a guy ain't so nervous on a phone," he said dryly.

"I don't have change enough to call Tennessee."

"Who said anything about change? You saved the city plenty by tyin' up this murder case. If you feel you owe anything you can invite me to your wedding."

Jeff looked down the corridor where Liz was sleeping. Then he grinned and picked up the phone.

## The Lady Said—Die!

(Continued from page 91)

take shelter with Voisin, who lived nearby. She probably knew nothing of the Mme. Roche; one or the other had shown resentment and a fight followed. Dr. Spilsbury gave supporting testimony to the effect that the rain of blows on the victim's head had probably been delivered by a woman.

Mme. Gerard had tried to escape through the back door, Wensley contended, and had clung to it while her rival struck her again and again. At last she had fallen, her battered head staining the rug with blood.

Voisin had then gone to work, dismembering the corpse to prevent identification.

Had Voisin acknowledged that this theory was right, he might have saved himself. But he knew that then Berthe would be the one accused of murder with himself as the accessory.

Voisin refused to change his story.

He went on trial at Old Bailey in January, 1918. He was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged the second of March. Berthe Roche was charged with being an accessory after the fact and went on trial the day before Voisin went to the scaffold. Seven years at penal servitude was her sentence, but within two years, she had become insane and died.

## Now for EVERY WORK SHOP! NEW Invention Electroplates by BRUSH



**Easy to Plate CHROMIUM GOLD, SILVER, NICKEL, COPPER**

**... For Pleasure and Profit!**  
If you have a workshop—at home or in business—you need this new Warner Electroplater. At the stroke of an electrified brush, you can electroplate models and projects—you can replate worn articles, faucets, tools, fixtures, silverware, etc. with a durable, sparkling coat of metal. . . . Gold, Silver, Chromium, Nickel, Copper or Cadmium. Method is easy, simple, quick. Everything furnished—equipment complete, ready for use. *By doing a bit of work for others, your machine can pay for itself within a week.* So make your shop complete by getting a Warner Electroplater right away. Send today for **FREE SAMPLE** and illustrated literature. **ACT AT ONCE! Mail Coupon.** WARNER ELECTRIC CO., DEPT. J-1 663 N. Wells St., Chicago 10, Illinois

### FREE Details & Sample!

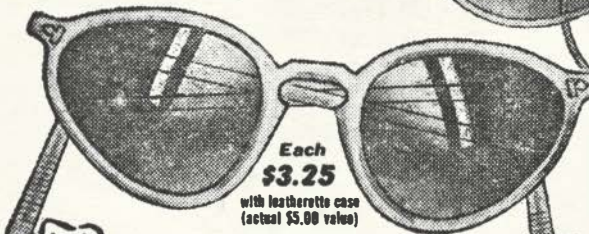
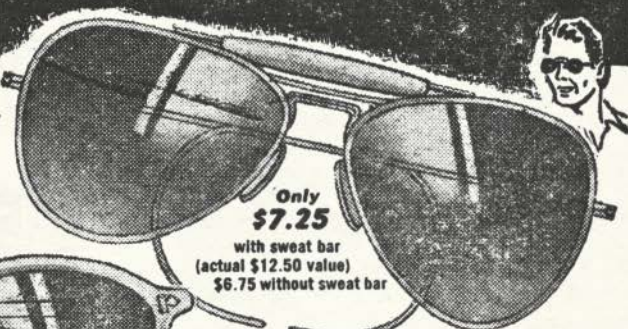
WARNER ELECTRIC CO., 663 N. Wells St., Chicago 10, Dept. J-1  
Gentlemen: Send Free Sample and Details to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

## ZEN-RAY GLAREPROOF • CLEAR NATURAL VISION EYE PROTECTING • PRECISION MADE

### WORLD'S FINEST SUNGLASSES

The same type air flight goggles used by thousands of World War II Airmen. Absorbs 98% infra-red and ultra-violet light. Passes Army Air Corps requirements. Now available for men and women, in styles shown, at amazing low price direct from factory.



Each **\$3.25**  
with leatherette case  
(actual \$5.00 value)

Only **\$7.25**  
with sweat bar  
(actual \$12.50 value)  
\$6.75 without sweat bar

Sage green ground and polished lenses. 1/10th 12 kt. gold filled frame. Guaranteed not to stain, corrode or discolor. Comfort fitting, adjustable nose pads. Smartly styled. Handsome leatherette case with snap-button fastener included.

**SMART STYLE FOR LADIES**  
Beautifully styled flesh colored shell frame. Sage green ground and polished lenses. Leatherette case with snap-button fastener.  
**MONEY BACK GUARANTEE.** You must be 100% satisfied. Otherwise, your money cheerfully refunded. If you send remittance with order we pay postage.

**ORDER TODAY!**  
USE COUPON

**ZENITH OPTICAL MFG. CO.**  
3305 S. Halsted, Chicago 9, Ill. Postage prepaid if you send remittance with order.

Ship Sunglass checked below with understanding that I may return for refund if not fully satisfied.

- Men's style with sweat bar..... \$7.25
- Men's style without sweat bar..... 6.75
- Ladies style..... 3.25

Name.....  
Address.....

**ZENITH OPTICAL MFG. CO.**  
3505 SOUTH HALSTED STREET • CHICAGO 9, ILLINOIS

**SEND FOR THIS**

**FREE!**

**HOW TO BREAK and TRAIN HORSES**

Make money with horses. Every farmer, every lover of horseflesh should have a copy of this booklet. If you want to know how to break, train and make money with horses, write today for full information **FREE**, together with my special offer of a course in Animal Breeding. If you are interested in Galting and Riding the saddle horse check here.  Do it today—now. You'll never regret it.

**BEERY SCHOOL OF HORSEMANSHIP**  
Dept. 847 Pleasant Hill, Ohio

**It's Back Again!**

**WOOD BURNING PEN**

Complete **ELECTRIC** Wood Burning Outfit—Burn Beautiful Designs in Wood—Comes Complete Safe, Constructive, Educational with the Sta-Kool Handle. Burn and etch deeply on wood in rich shades of brown. It's real fun. Comes complete with 10 different plywood plaques, design imprinted, and 1 plain plaque. All for only..... **\$2.50**

Send check or money order to **UTILITY STORES, Dept. 9818** 117 S. Wabash, Chicago 3, Ill.



**LAW...**

**STUDY AT HOME** Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before. **More Ability: More Prestige: More Money** We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL.B. We furnish all text material, including 14-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 48-page "Law Training for Leadership and Evidence" books **FREE**. Send for them **NOW**.

**LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, 417 South Dearborn St.**  
A Correspondence Institution, Dept. 7334-L, Chicago 5, Ill.

**High School Course at Home** **Many Finish in 2 Years**


Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college entrance exams. Standard H. S. texts supplied. Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dpt. HB49, Drexel at 58th, Chicago 37

**Learn BAKING At Home**

Baking is one of America's high industries in wages. Nearly depression-proof. Thorough basic home course lays sound foundation. If you have aptitude, write for **FREE BOOKLET "Opportunities in Commercial Baking."**

National Baking School, 1315 Mich. Ave., Dept. 1418, Chicago 5



**PULVEX**

**FLEA POWDER**

**DDT**

now also contains

Kills the fleas **QUICKLY!**  
Keeps others off for days!  
Still 25¢ and 50¢

Guaranteed by Good Housekeeping



**New Detective Magazine**

(Continued from page 87)

could be checked on safely. And that's where you came in."

"Because I lived next door to Schmid?"

"And because you were Neumann's size and build and were planning to leave. You'd acquired a reputation for mild eccentricity, you were still suffering from a war neurosis, and—well, you were a natural for the purpose."

"Only they had to plant some things first," I said. "A couple of stunts to make my neighbors think I was crazy, and—"

"Let me talk," Dave said. "Yes, Neumann was going to a rest home, a private sanitarium, in your name. A perfect hideout. Your going off the beam was a build-up to that, if there'd been an investigation. And there was the matter of playing piano—you did and Neumann didn't. But he already had an injured hand—unfortunately we didn't know that, or it would have been easy to find him—and that suggested injuring yours to correspond, and he'd been wearing that bandage on his nose as a partial disguise, so of course they cut your nose with the glass, too."

"See what a set-up it was? Just before you were ready to leave, you were to be killed. Neumann would leave in your place, with your identity and identification and go to the sanitarium. It would stand a thorough check-back everything would correspond."

"Only you jumped the gun a few days too soon by guessing enough of it to go out hunting Neumann. Schmid saw you leave and from the way you were dressed and the fact you were wearing sun-glasses, he guessed. He went to tell Neumann and then, in Schmid's car, they went hunting you. They'd have killed you and buried you out in the country—and you'd have left a few days early. That was all, except you twisted the wheel."

I said, "I'd have never guessed if you hadn't left that transcription of Neumann's voice in your recording set case. I played it that night, after you left. Did all the army and F.B.I. men have them?"

He smiled. "No, that was special equipment because I happened to carry the recording set. Incidentally, I do have a roving commission with Hollywood. Swell cover for my other job, besides being my line."

Amanda Haley said, "Tell him the good news, Mr. McCreary."

Dave nodded. "I cleared the decks first. Jan, Acme's taking your improvisation—your *Madman's Concerto*—to use in that picture I told you about."

I tried to sit up, and did manage to lift my head off the pillow. The madness came rushing back. "You're nuts, Dave. I smashed that record."

"The record you broke was a blank. I didn't



## The Song of the Dead

take a chance leaving *that* one on the turntable. While you were taking that walk around the block, I put it carefully away in my car, and put on a blank just in case you felt like playing again before I left.

"But about Acme. I was so sure that was what they wanted, I phoned 'em long distance and played it for them over the phone. Weinstein was crazy about it, just as I thought he'd be. Three grand you get, just for its use in the picture. There'll be other rights, unless I'm wrong."

I couldn't say anything.

Three thousand dollars, I thought. And the first thing that hit me about it was—*Now I won't have to leave Northport.* And I found myself looking into Amanda's face and she was smiling at me.

I asked, "You haven't found another tenant, have you, Amanda?"

"No, Jan. I didn't even advertise the place. I thought you might decide to stay. I hoped you would."

"How much longer will I be here?" I asked them.

"About a week," Dave said. "You were lucky. A bullet through your leg, but it didn't hit bone. A mild concussion, and a flock of bruises and contusions."

"We'd better go," Amanda said. "We've been here too long already." She stood up, "Good-by, Jan."

"Hey," I said, "What about Blackie? Is someone taking care of him?"

"I am," she said. "And you may have trouble getting him back. I warn you."

"Maybe," I suggested. "We can cut a hole in the fence."

Dave looked from one to the other of us and frowned. He said, "Those Labradors grow up to be pretty big dogs. You'd better make it a pretty big hole in that fence."

I grinned, and Amanda blushed a little and then smiled.

**WHEN BOOMS GO *BUST*,  
WILL YOU BE BROKE OR *BUSY*  
...in a well-paying GOVERNMENT JOB?  
(Thru CIVIL SERVICE)**

CAREER TRAINING INSTITUTE will



...prepare you NOW (Men and Women) at home thru broad, intensive, simple training to take tests for good jobs offered in Civil Service. Hundreds of classifications, many jobs for 1946, every chance to advance. Vacations with pay, pensions, sick leaves. No layoffs, no strikes, no discrimination. Our course is so inexpensive, no sensible person should delay mailing coupon TODAY.

CAREER TRAINING INSTITUTE, Dept. 204  
1060 Broad Street, Newark 2, N. J.

Please send me FACTS regarding Government Employment (Civil Service), and how your course will help prepare me for tests.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Zone \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_  
Veteran?  yes  no

**C.T.I.**

**VETERANS  
GET  
PREFERENCE**

**FLATFISH!** The "Action" Lure!

All fishermen know that, in any lure, ACTION is the most important requisite of all. And when you try a Flatfish, you'll say it has the most lifelike swimming action of any lure you ever used, bar none. Over 2,000,000 sold. Exclusive offset hooking. Lures in 21 colors. Underwater, surface and trolling models, \$1.20 each. Musky, \$1.35. Flyrod size, 95c. Write for FREE Color Catalog, including 4,000 word treatise on plug fishing.



**Free CATALOG** HELIN TACKLE CO.  
6342 Pufford Detroit 7, Mich.

**FOR INVENTORS INVENTION RECORD FREE**

Write today for full information on "Patent Protection" and important "Record of Invention" form—both free.

RANDOLPH & BEAVERS, 573 Columbian Bldg., Washington 1, D. C.

## Backache, Leg Pains May Be Danger Sign Of Tired Kidneys

If backache and leg pains are making you miserable, don't just complain and do nothing about them. Nature may be warning you that your kidneys need attention.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking excess acids and poisonous waste out of the blood. They help most people pass about 3 pints a day.

If the 15 miles of kidney tubes and filters don't work well, poisonous waste matter stays in the blood. These poisons may start nagging backaches, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of

pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, a stimulant diuretic, used successfully, by millions for over 40 years. Doan's give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from the blood. Get Doan's Pills.

# COMPLETE 5-PIECE CANDID CAMERA OUTFIT



*Includes all This!*

- ★ GENUINE PHOTOCRAFT CANDID Type CAMERA
- ★ CARRYING CASE with Your Name in 23-Kt. GOLD
- ★ 3 ROLLS of No. 127 FILM

ALL YOURS FOR ONLY \$ **3.98** POST PAID

CARRYING CASE With Handy Shoulder Strap INCLUDED

## LOOK AT THESE FEATURES

- ★ Gemine Simpson Ground and Pitch Polished Lens
- ★ Takes 16 Pictures on Any Standard No. 127 Film
- ★ Will Take Pictures in Full Color
- ★ Has "Bulky" Level View Finder
- ★ Easy, Simple, Foolproof Operation

THREE ROLLS OF FILM INCLUDED



*Personalized* WITH YOUR NAME IN 23-Kt. Gold

## PICTURES YOU TAKE TODAY WITH THIS BIG 3-IN-1 OUTFIT WILL BE THE TREASURES OF TOMORROW

... For while time stands still for no one, the memories of happy times can be preserved by Photocraft. Your Photocraft candid camera outfit comes to you ready to go to work—with a handy shoulder strap carrying case Personalized with the name of your choice in 23-Kt. GOLD, and enough film for 48 exposures—for only \$3.98 postpaid! Your Photocraft will also take full color pictures when loaded with Colorchrome film. So whether for a gift or for yourself, order your Complete 3-piece Photocraft Outfit now! Our guarantee is your assurance of satisfaction.

RUSH THIS COUPON NOW

Sold On A "Examine At Our Risk" GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION

Yes, if you don't feel that Photocraft is everything you expected, you may return it in 10 days for a complete refund.

IMPERIAL INDUSTRIES—Dept. PC 301  
618 South Dearborn St., Chicago 5, Ill.

Rush my Photocraft Candid Camera Outfit at \$3.98 with Personalized Carrying Case and 3 rolls of No. 127 Film. My money will be refunded if returned in 10 days.  
Name Wanted in Gold \_\_\_\_\_

Price Paid \_\_\_\_\_

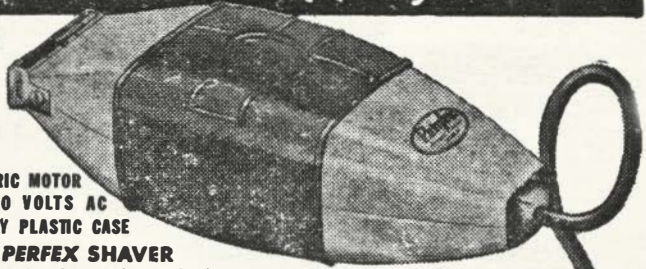
CHECK ONE  
 I'm enclosing \$3.98 in full payment. Please send my Photocraft Outfit Postpaid.  
 Send my Photocraft C.O.D. I am enclosing \$1.00 deposit because I want my Carrying Case Personalized in GOLD. I'll pay postman balance of \$2.98 plus postage.  
 Send my Photocraft C.O.D. without name on Carrying Case. I will pay postman \$3.98 plus postage.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please Print Clearly  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ Zone \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

# Here it is! AT AN ELECTRIFYING LOW PRICE THE NEW AND BETTER Perfex ELECTRIC DRY SHAVER

**\$3.95** POST PAID  
COMPLETE WITH TRAVEL KIT

*a gift He Will Truly Appreciate*

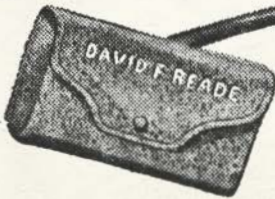


- ★ INCLUDES PLUG-IN CORD
- ★ SUPER-KEEN CUTTING HEAD
- ★ RUBBERIZED HAND GRIP
- ★ HEAVY-DUTY ELECTRIC MOTOR
- ★ OPERATES ON 110 VOLTS AC
- ★ STREAMLINED IVORY PLASTIC CASE

## DO YOUR FACE A FAVOR... WITH A PERFEX SHAVER

Now you can own the new and better PERFEX Electric Dry Shaver for only \$3.95. So why continue to take shaving discomfort on the chin. Whisk your whiskers away in the modern manner—quickly and efficiently. Introduce your beard (tough as it may be) to the dynamic, Super-Keen cutting head of a PERFEX shaver. You'll be truly electrified at the flattering smoothness and satisfying comfort that you experience. Why not retire your old "home-and-buggy" razor and send for your miraculous new PERFEX Electric Shaver today. If you don't feel that it's everything we say it is, return it to us within 5 days and we'll cheerfully refund your full purchase price.

INCLUDED AT NO EXTRA COST  
*Personalized*  
**TRAVEL CASE**  
WITH YOUR NAME IN 23-Kt. GOLD



MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY

IMPERIAL INDUSTRIES—Dept. E 40  
618 So. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.

Rush my Perfex Electric Dry Shaver at \$3.95 with handsome travel case Personalized in Gold. If not completely satisfied I may return it within 5 days for refund.  
Name Wanted in Gold \_\_\_\_\_

Price Paid \_\_\_\_\_

CHECK ONE  
 Am enclosing \$3.95 in full payment. Please send my Perfex Shaver Postpaid.  
 Send my Perfex Shaver C.O.D. I am enclosing \$1.00 deposit because I want my travel case Personalized in GOLD. I'll pay postman balance of \$2.95 plus postage.  
 Send my Perfex Shaver C.O.D. without name on travel case. I will pay postman \$3.95 plus postage.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please Print Clearly  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ Zone \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

# Three months after taking your course I STARTED TO PLAY FOR DANCES



**"Before I took it I didn't know a note of music"**

says Miss Rosie Montemurro of Vancouver, B. C., Canada



Read Miss Montemurro's Letter:

"Words cannot express my feelings to the U. S. School of Music. Before I took your Course I didn't know one note of music. Then three months later I started to play for dances. I have been invited to many parties and made people very happy with my music. They enjoy my playing so much. I never saw anything like this Course before. It has a clear and careful explanation in every lesson. It's easy and very interesting.

"I am happy and proud of this beautiful Course."

Truly yours,  
Miss Rosie Montemurro

## You too, can learn your favorite instrument quickly, easily, for only 7c A DAY

THE letter above is typical of the many we have received from the more than 750,000 people who have taken our courses . . . expressing appreciation for the way we have helped make their musical dreams come true.

Yes, literally thousands of people, who didn't know one note from another before, are now playing their favorite instruments . . . thanks to this amazingly simple way to learn music right at home, in spare time, for as little as 7c a day.

Here's why the famous U. S. School

of Music "Print and Picture" method of instruction is so successful. . . . You learn to play by playing . . . and you have loads of fun doing it. No long-winded, difficult explanations . . . no tiresome exercises . . . no trick numbers or "Play-by-ear methods." You learn to play real tunes by actual notes from the very beginning.

And it's all so clear . . . so easy to understand. First the simple printed instructions tell you how to do something. Then a picture shows you how to do it. Then you do it yourself and hear how it sounds. You just can't go wrong!

If you want to play, mail the coupon below asking for our FREE "Print

and Picture" Sample and Illustrated Booklet. Check off the instrument you wish to play. But don't wait . . . act today. U. S. School of Music, 3677 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y.

### NOTICE

Please don't confuse the U. S. School of Music method with any system of teaching music "by ear" or by trick charts. Our method teaches you to play by actual notes — not by any trick or number system.

## See how easy it is!

"My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty"



Look at the diagram. The first note on the music is "C." Follow the dotted line to the keyboard and locate "C" on the piano. Find the other notes the same way. Now strike the notes as indicated and you'll be playing the melody of that famous patriotic hymn. "America." Easy as A-B-C. Isn't it?

## FREE! Print and Picture Sample

U. S. School of Music, 3677 Brunswick Bldg., New York 10, N. Y. I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument checked below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet, "How to Learn Music at Home," and Free Print and Picture Sample.

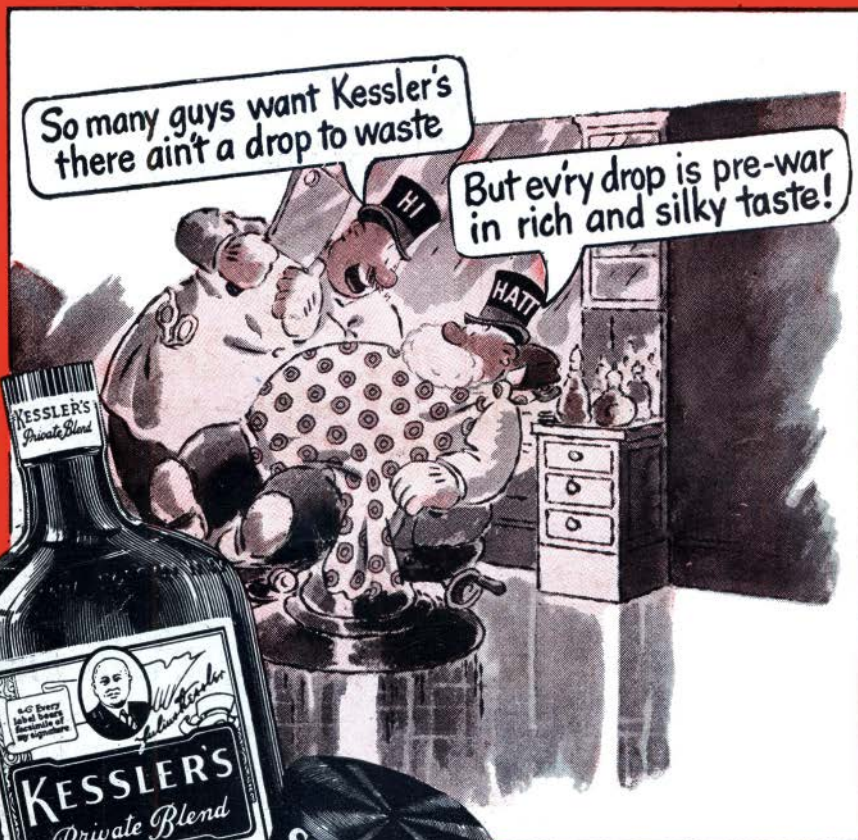
|                 |                 |            |           |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------|-----------|
| Piano           | Saxophone       | Flute      | Clarinet  |
| Guitar          | Trumpet, Cornet | Piccolo    | Mandolin  |
| Hawaiian        | Reed Organ      | Modern     | Practical |
| Guitar          | Tenor Banjo     | Elementary | Finger    |
| Violin          | Ukulele         | Harmony    | Control   |
| Piano Accordion | Trombone        |            |           |

Name..... (Please print)  
Address.....  
City..... State.....

NOTE: If under 16 years of age, parent must sign coupon.

SAVE 2c—STICK COUPON ON PENNY POSTCARD

**"They ain't cut the quality!"—says HI to HATT**



**KESSELER'S BLENDED WHISKEY**

*True Pre-War Quality*

KESSELER'S PRIVATE BLEND. 75% Grain Neutral Spirits. 85 Proof. Julius Kessler Distilling Co., Incorporated, Lawrenceburg, Ind.