

# THRILLING DETECTIVE

10¢

NOV.

A THRILLING  
PUBLICATION



THE  
CORPSE IN  
CALIFORNIA

A Novelet of  
Espionage  
By DALE  
CLARK

FEATURING

**DOUBLE MURDER**

A Gripping Mystery Novel  
By JOHN S. ENDICOTT

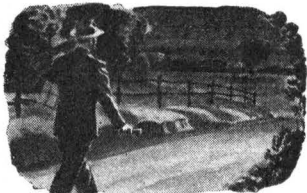
**A FOURTH MUST DIE**

An Exciting Novelet  
BENTON BRADEN

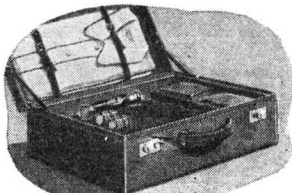
How to make your

# FLASHLIGHTS and BATTERIES LAST LONGER

These Wartime Suggestions have been Reviewed and Passed by the Office of Price Administration and the Office of Civilian Defense



**1 DON'T USE FLASHLIGHT CONTINUOUSLY.** Snap it on when you *need* to see—then snap it off. *Needless* use of flashlight merely wastes "juice."



**2 WHEN STARTING A TRIP,** don't toss your flashlight *loaded* into your suitcase, haversack or toolbox. Unscrew, or remove batteries—then switch can't "catch" and waste batteries.



**3 KEEP FLASHLIGHT OUT OF CHILDREN'S REACH.** It is not a toy—but a tool for your convenience and safety. *Know* where it is at all times—so you can put your hand on it quickly when you *need* it.



**4 DON'T THROW AWAY A BROKEN FLASHLIGHT** until you're sure it can't be fixed. Minor repairs can quickly be made, lens or bulb may be replaced.



**5 DON'T "HOARD" BATTERIES**—keep one extra set for each flashlight in case of long-continued use. Others want and need batteries too. *Do your share* in conserving the nation's battery supply.

## BUY FRESH DATED BATTERIES

Fresh batteries last longer. Dependable "Eveready" *fresh* DATED batteries will give long life and reliable service.

**NATIONAL CARBON CO., INC.**  
30 East 42nd Street, New York  
Unit of Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation

**UCC**

The word "Eveready" is a registered trademark of National Carbon Company, Inc.

**FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER...**  
*Look for the* **DATE-LINE**



# EVEREADY

TRADE MARK

## FLASHLIGHTS AND BATTERIES



# Be a Finger Print Expert!

**MAKE NO MISTAKE . . . NOTHING CAN TAKE THE PLACE OF 25 YEARS OF SUCCESS IN TEACHING MODERN CRIME INVESTIGATION AND IDENTIFICATION**

## Home Study Instruction!

**MORE THAN 43% OF ALL THE BUREAUS OF IDENTIFICATION IN THE U.S.A. ARE RUN BY OUR STUDENTS AND GRADUATES . . . HUNDREDS OF OTHERS WORK ON FULL PAY AS ASSISTANTS**

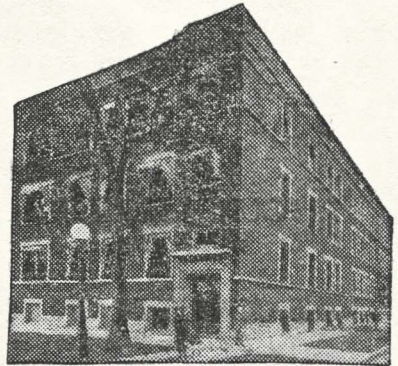


### The Man:

T. G. Cooke founded this school in June, 1916, and has been its active head ever since. He has studied this work in Scotland Yard, London, Paris, Berlin, Rome, Berne, Mexico City and all over the U. S.

### The School:

We built this modern structure and own it outright. No mortgages or back taxes. The school occupies the entire third floor. The School is easily accessible to all visitors in Chicago.



## The Course of Instruction

The Course includes thorough training in the very latest and most modern methods in Finger Prints, Police Photography, Secret Service Intelligence, Firearms Identification (Forensic Ballistics), Bertillon, Modus Operandi, Identification of Handwriting, and Identification of Typewriting. Fully equipped laboratories are maintained where advanced students and graduates may come for personal instructions on all sorts of Scientific Crime Detection apparatus *without* additional charge. A Diploma is granted upon completion of the Course. You do not need to

come to Chicago to complete the Course and get a Diploma.

## What About YOU?

Would you like to get into a new, fast-growing profession where the pay is good and work steady the year round; where you get paid for what you know and not for the heavy manual labor you do; where the hours are fair; where the work is safe, light and pleasant with something new and exciting every day? If you think this sort of highly-paid profession would appeal to you . . . then

## WRITE FOR FREE "BLUE BOOK OF CRIME"

**INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE  
1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 7968, Chicago**

Gentlemen: With no obligation on my part send me illustrated "Blue Book of Crime," complete list of over 840 bureaus employing your graduates, together with your low prices and Easy Terms offer. (Literature will be sent **ONLY** to persons stating their age.)

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This authentic, 80-page book, fully illustrated, will be sent postpaid and free of charge to persons giving their correct name and address and stating their age. Your age **MUST** be stated. The book is full of actual crime cases and the complete explanation of their solution. It is a real "eye-opener" to anyone interested in Modern Scientific crime detection methods. We will also send you a **LIST OF OVER 840** places where our graduates are working. You may write as many of them as you wish.

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1920 Sunnyside Ave., Dept. 7968, Chicago**

• EVERY STORY BRAND NEW •

# THRILLING DETECTIVE

Vol. XLV, No. 2

HARVEY BURNS, Editor

November, 1942



**A Complete Mystery Novel**

## DOUBLE MURDER

By JOHN S. ENDICOTT

*Police Detective Tracy's generosity boomerangs—and he is faced with two killings he must solve to keep his badge!*

30

**Two Gripping Complete Novelets**

**A FOURTH MUST DIE . . . . . Benton Braden 68**

*Sterling Danforth's amazing chain of perfect murders finally proves to be only as strong as its weakest link!*

**THE CORPSE IN CALIFORNIA . . . . . Dale Clark 92**

*Detective Nick Barry of the War Duty Office slings a mean line when he goes all out to rope a scheming Japanazi duo!*

**Thrilling Short Stories**

**A PROBLEM IN PLATES . . . . . Sam Merwin, Jr. 15**

*Sara Landis' interest in a stranger leads to a pattern of peril*

**STRICTLY SCIENTIFIC . . . . . James Donnelly 21**

*Calder was a cop's cop, but smart enough to use science*

**THE MONKEY ANGLE . . . . . Fredric Brown 57**

*An ace reporter scents a dire kidnaping plot*

**FREIGHT TROUBLE . . . . . L. K. Frank 83**

*Skid O'Neil finds himself between the eight-ball and a mess of guns*

**and**

**HEADQUARTERS . . . . . A Department 8**

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**J. E. SMITH**  
President  
National Radio Institute  
Established 27 Years

# I WILL SEND A SAMPLE LESSON FREE to PROVE I can Train You at Home in Spare Time to BE A RADIO TECHNICIAN

## I Trained These Men



**\$200 a Month  
In Own Business**  
"For several years I have been in business for myself making around \$200 a month. Business has steadily in-

creased. I have N. R. I. to thank for my start in this field."—**ARLIE J. FROEHER**, 300 W. Texas Ave., Coose Creek, Texas.

**Lieutenant in  
Signal Corps**  
"I was a Sergeant in the U.S. Army, Signal Corps. My duties covered Radio operating, maintenance of Army Transmitters and Receivers. I am now a 2nd Lieutenant, N. R. I. training is certainly coming in mighty handy these days." (Name and address omitted for military reasons.)



**\$5 to \$10 a Week  
in Spare Time**

"I am engaged in spare Time Radio work. I average from \$5 to \$10 a week. I often wished that I had enrolled sooner because all this extra money sure does come in handy."—**THEODORE K. DuBREE**, Hershham, Pa.

**MAIL the Coupon for a FREE lesson** from my Radio Course. It gives you, at first hand, evidence of how N. R. I. will train you for Radio at home in spare time. And with this sample lesson I'll send my 64-page illustrated book, **RICH REWARDS IN RADIO**. It describes the many fascinating jobs Radio offers. Explains how N. R. I. teaches you with interesting, illustrated lessons and **SIX BIG KITS OF RADIO PARTS!**

### Act Now! Many Radio Technicians Make \$30, \$40, \$50 a Week

Right now, in nearly every neighborhood, there's room for more spare and full time Radio Technicians. Many spare time Technicians are stepping into FULL time Radio jobs, or starting their own shops, and making \$30, \$40, \$50 a week!

Others take good-pay jobs with Broadcasting Stations. Hundreds more are needed for Government jobs as Civilian Radio Operators, Technicians, Radio Manufacturers, rushing to fill Government orders, need trained men. Aviation, Police, Commercial Radio and Loudspeaker Systems are live, growing fields. And think of the NEW jobs Television and other Radio developments will open after the war! I give you the Radio knowledge required for these fields.

### My "50-50 Method" Helps Many Make \$5, \$10 a Week Extra While Learning

Many N. R. I. Students make \$5, \$10 a week extra money fixing Radios in spare time while learning. I send EXTRA MONEY JOB SHEETS that tell how to do it!

My "50-50 Method"—half building and testing Radio circuits with the six kits of Radio parts I send, half learning from illustrated lessons—makes you "old friends" with Radio before you know it. Run your own spare time shop, get practice fixing friends' Radios, get paid while training!

### Find Out What N. R. I. Can Do For You

**MAIL COUPON NOW for FREE sample lesson and 64-page illustrated book.** You'll see the many fascinating jobs Radio offers and how you can train at home. If you want to jump your pay—Mail Coupon AT ONCE!

**J. E. SMITH, President**  
Dept. 2M09, National Radio Institute  
Washington, D. C.

**TRAINING MEN FOR VITAL RADIO JOBS**

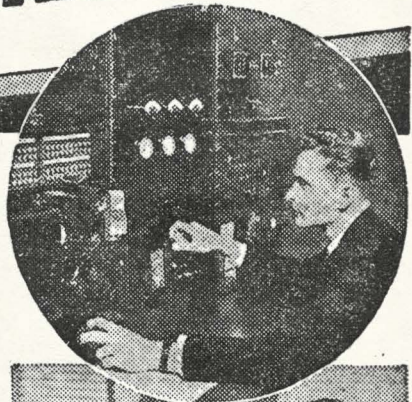
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of Men to Make More Money**



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NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE, Washington, D. C.**

Mail me FREE, without obligation, your Sample Lesson and 64-page book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." (No salesman will call. Please write plainly.)

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Address .....  
City ..... State..... 2FR



**BROADCASTING STATIONS** (top illustration) employ Radio Technicians as operators, installation, maintenance men and in other fascinating, steady, well-paying technical jobs. **FIXING RADIO SETS** (bottom illustration), a booming field today, pays many Radio Technicians \$30, \$40, \$50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make \$5 to \$10 a week extra, fixing Radios in spare time.

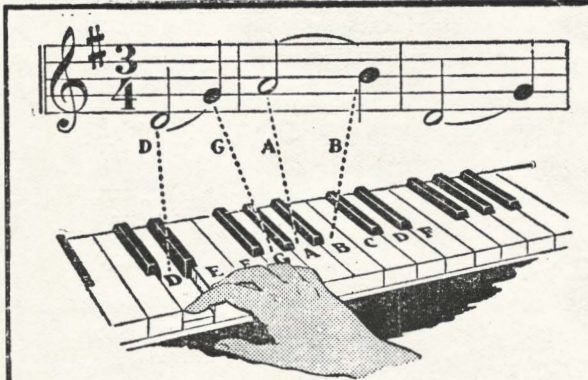
**Mail Coupon  
Now!**

**Extra Pay  
in Army,  
Navy, Too**

Men likely to go into military service, soldiers, sailors, marines, should mail the coupon now! Learning Radio helps men get extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duties, MUCH HIGHER PAY. Also prepares for good Radio jobs after service ends. Hundreds of service men now enrolled.

# LOOKS EASY.. DOESNT IT?

AND IT IS! Yet it's from the famous "Merry Widow" Waltz!



Look at the diagram. The first note on the music is "D." Following the dotted line to the keyboard you'll find "D" is the white key between the two black keys near the middle of the keyboard. From that you can locate the other notes. As you strike them on the piano you'll be playing the melody



of the ever-popular "Merry Widow" Waltz. Simple, isn't it? Now read below how you can take lessons on any instrument and learn to play quickly and easily . . . at a surprisingly low cost.

## HERE'S PROOF that you, too, can learn to play the piano or any other instrument!

Don't let the mistaken idea that it's difficult to learn music deprive you of the pleasure of playing any longer. Learning to play is now actually easy as A-B-C . . . thanks to the amazing new "Note-Finder."

This invention of the U. S. School of Music takes the mystery out of the piano keyboard, ends tedious scales and exercises, enables anyone to play a real tune almost from the start. You learn to play by playing. Soon you will be thrilled to find that you can pick up almost any piece and play it at sight. That applies to the piano, violin, guitar . . . any instrument you choose!

### Takes Only Few Minutes a Day!

With this modern method you don't need any previous knowledge of music; you don't need to spend months on monotonous exercises. It's real fun to learn music this short-cut way, and it takes only a few minutes of your spare time. What's more, it costs less than 7c a day . . . and that includes everything.

But see for yourself! Simply send today for our Print and Picture Sample. It will show you how you can quickly learn your favorite instrument. You will also receive a handsome booklet and details of the money-saving offer that enables you to learn music for but a few cents a day. Mail coupon today. Mention instrument that interests you. Note: Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit. U. S. School of Music, 29411 Brunswick Bldg., N. Y. C., N. Y. (Est. 1898.)

## HERE'S FURTHER PROOF!

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Before I took your course, I did not know one note of music. Then 3 months later I started to play for dances. I've been invited to many parties.

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Your advertisements are true to the letter. I can actually play my favorite instrument even though I'm only at the beginning. How can I ever express my joyful gratitude.

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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 your illustrated Print and Picture Sample. (Do you have instrument? . . .)

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City ..... State .....

Note: If you are under 18 yrs. of age, parent must sign coupon.

SAVE 2¢—Stick coupon on penny postcard.

# How to Make YOUR Body Bring You **FAME**

**... Instead of SHAME!**

**ARE YOU  
Skinny?  
Weak?  
Flabby?**

**Will You Let Me  
Prove I Can Make You  
a New Man ?**

I KNOW what it means to have the kind of body that people pity! Of course, you wouldn't know it to look at me now, but I was once a skinny weakling who weighed only 97 lbs.! I was ashamed to strip for sports or undress for a swim. I was such a poor specimen of physical development that I was constantly self-conscious and embarrassed. And I felt only **HALF-ALIVE**.

But later I discovered the secret that turned me into "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." And now I'd like to prove to you that the same system can make a **NEW MAN** of YOU!

## What Dynamic Tension Will Do For You

I don't care how old or young you are or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. If you can simply raise your arm and flex it I can add **SOLID MUSCLE** to your biceps—yes, on each arm—in double-quick time! Only 15 minutes a day—right in your own home—is all the time I ask of you! And there's no cost if I fail.

I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system **INSIDE** and **OUTSIDE**! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that you won't feel there's even "standing room" left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice new, beautiful suit of muscle!

## Only 15 Minutes A Day

No "ifs," "ands" or "maybes." Just tell me where you want handsome, powerful muscles. Are you fat and flabby? Or skinny and gawky? Are you short-winded, peepish? Do you hold back and let others walk off with the prettiest girls, best jobs, etc.? Then write for details

about "Dynamic Tension" and learn how I can make you a healthy, confident, powerful **HE-MAN**.

"Dynamic Tension" is an entirely **NATURAL** method. Only 15 minutes of your spare time daily is enough to show amazing results—and it's actually fun. "Dynamic Tension" does the work.

"Dynamic Tension!" That's the ticket! The identical natural method that I myself developed to change my body from the scrawny, skinny-chested weakling I was at 17 to my present super-man physique! Thousands of other fellows are becoming marvelous physical specimens—my way. I give you no gadgets or contraptions to fool with. When you have learned to develop your strength through "Dynamic Tension," you can laugh at artificial muscle-makers. You simply utilize the **DORMANT** muscle-power in your own body—watch it increase and multiply into real, solid **LIVE MUSCLE**.

My method—"Dynamic Tension"—will turn the trick for you. No theory—every exercise is practical. And, man, so easy! Spend only 15 minutes a day in your own home. From the very start you'll be using my method of "Dynamic Tension" almost unconsciously every minute of the day—walking, bending over, etc.—to **BUILD MUSCLE** and **VITALITY**.



*Charles  
Atlas*

Holder of title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." As he looks today, from actual untouched snapshot.

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I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name .....  
(Please print or write plainly)

Address .....

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## FREE BOOK "Everlasting Health and Strength"

In it I talk to you in straight-from-the-shoulder language. Packed with inspirational pictures of myself and pupils—fellows who became **NEW MEN** in strength, my way. Let me show you what I helped **THEM** do. See what I can do for **YOU!** For a real thrill, send for this book today. **AT ONCE, CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 77ZA, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.**



Missing Page



# SURPRISE!

This young man has just got a big surprise!

He telephoned to congratulate a friend on getting a big promotion — and learned how little it costs to acquire modern *training-for-success* through the International Correspondence Schools!

You, too, will probably be surprised to discover that only a few dollars a month will pay for the sound, essential I. C. S. training you need to “get the jump” on job-competition. Compared to the cost of comparable training-courses (I. C. S. texts are being used in 24 State universities), I. C. S. courses in 400 business and technical subjects are amazingly inexpensive.

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Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada  
 British residents send coupon to I. C. S., 71 Kingsway, London, W. C. 2, England



Appear **SLIMMER**  
Look **YOUNGER**  
Feel **BETTER**  
*Instantly!*

Don't let them talk about your "Bay Window"—stay slenderized with this amazing free-action, ever comfortable, elastic woven garment!

**"INTERLOCKING HANDS"  
Sensational NEW PRINCIPLE  
of Abdominal Support**

Clasp hands over abdomen, as in picture—raise and press gently—notice how much better you feel! Sturdy non-stretch fabric is **BUILT IN** with the two-way stretch weave of the Commander for **EXTRA DOUBLE SUPPORT** across the abdomen. Instantly the Commander flattens your "Corporation"—**BRACES YOUR BACK**—improves posture!

**TRY IT 10 DAYS AT OUR EXPENSE**

Send coupon—wear the Commander **TEN DAYS AT OUR EXPENSE**—if you do not get all the results you expect, return it and **YOUR MONEY WILL BE REFUNDED.**

**MAIL COUPON NOW**

Ward Green Company, Dept. 182  
342 Madison Ave., New York City

Send me Commander Supporter for Free Trial. I will pay postman \$2.98 plus postage. (Sizes 28 to 47.) If not satisfied I may return it in 10 days and get money back. (Sizes 48 to 60, \$5.98.)

My Waist Measures ..... My Height.....

Name .....

Address .....

If \$2.98 is enclosed with order, we pay postage charges.  Check here.



**10 DAY  
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Coupon**

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**For Musical Setting**

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For personal defense and counter-attack... no system is more powerful! Almost unbelievably efficient. You don't need big muscles. Lick brutes twice your size with only your bare hands, even if they are armed. Get ready now for any emergency—protect your loved ones. This amazing new self-study course teaches you double-quick. Startling low price. Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back. **FREE DETAILS.** Write today sure... time is short.

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Dental Plates made to measure—individually—by MAIL.  
Take own impression at home. Over 100,000 men & women wear teeth we made

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**UNITED STATES DENTAL CO.**  
1558 MILWAUKEE AVE., DEPT. B-82, CHICAGO, ILL.



**HEADQUARTERS**

(Continued from page 8)

pretty girl. In the darkness of the night she stopped him and told him that she had run out of gas. But instead of taking her to a gas station at once Masee decided to look over her car. There in that coupe standing at the edge of the road he found a dead man!

With the discovery of the body John Masee found himself right in the middle of a baffling set-up of blackmail and murder. How he fought his way out of the mystery maze and revealed the real criminals will keep you guessing until the very finish of this fast-moving novelet.

Of course there will also be a bumper crop of entertaining short detective yarns in the next issue of **THRILLING DETECTIVE** and plenty of entertainment for everyone.

**Letters From Readers**

Why not tell us which stories you like best and what you think of the magazine? We are always glad to hear from you and to get your reports at Headquarters. This is your department, and here you can be both judge and jury, and render your verdict for or against the stories you have read.

Here's a report from way down in the Sunny South:

All right, you asked me to tell you what I think of the magazine, and which stories I liked best so here goes. If you have no objections I'd like to list my favorite authors. They are: Norman Daniels, G. T. Fleming Roberts, Fredric Brown, Fenton W. Earnshaw, Frank Johnson and Edward Ronns. I like a lot of other writers, too, but these

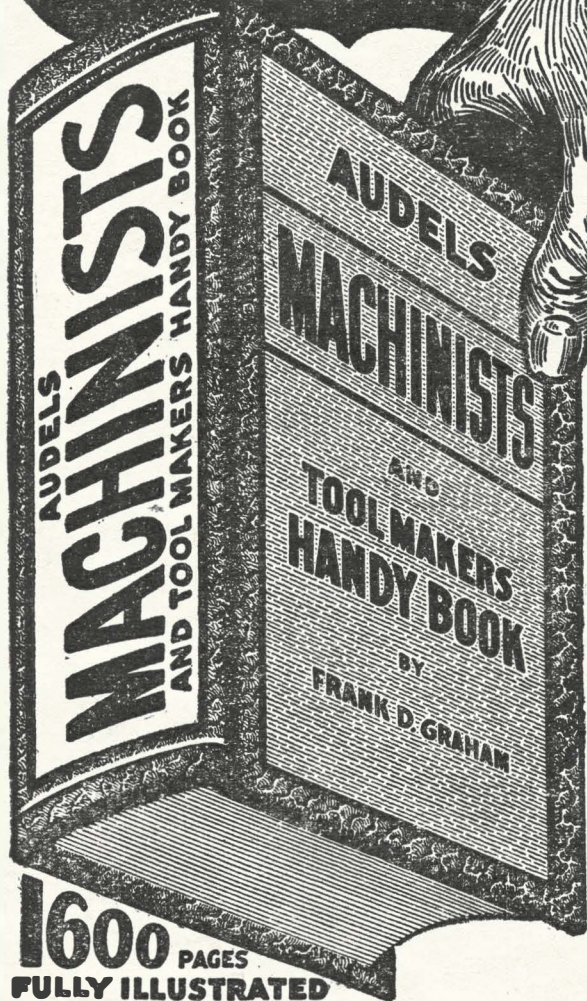
(Concluded on page 12)

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## HEADQUARTERS

(Concluded from page 10)

are my favorites. And I think **THRILLING DETECTIVE** is swell.

—James Grant, Jacksonville, Fla.

You picked some good writers, Jim, and we hope they will all continue to please you. Thanks!

I'm not going to beef about any story in particular, though there were some I liked and some I didn't, but I am going to voice a protest regarding hard-headed detectives. Boy, the heads of some of those guys must be made of steel. I've read stories where they get socked with a gun-butt three or four times in a row, and all it gets them—and me—is a headache.

—Norton Slater, Boston, Mass.

Maybe you are right, Norton. We've run across some fiction detectives who certainly must have iron-bound craniums, but those boys are tough and can take it just as lots of them do in real life.

I have been looking back through the last four issues of **THRILLING DETECTIVE** that I've read and here are the stories that I liked best: **THE HANGING MAN**, by Fenton W. Earnshaw; **THE SILENT WHISTLE**, by Bayard Kendrick; **MURDER HANGS A DOUBLECROSS**, by Riley Brown; **SHROUD FOR SALE**, by Harold Q. Masur; **SEVEN KEYS TO MURDER**, by Marvin Ryerson. Say, come to think of it, I liked just about all of the stories in those four issues, but I'm not going to list any more titles. I'll just say the magazine is grand.

—Henry Lawell, Brooklyn, N. Y.

We liked those stories, too, Henry—and thanks.

Remember, all of you, when you drop Headquarters a line, please address The Editor, **THRILLING DETECTIVE**, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y. We're waiting to hear from you. So long until next month and thanks for listening! —

—THE EDITOR.

## Calling All Puzzle Fans!

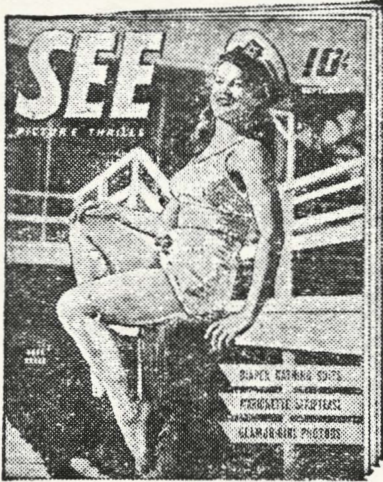
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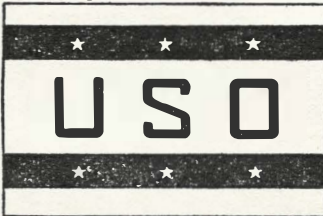
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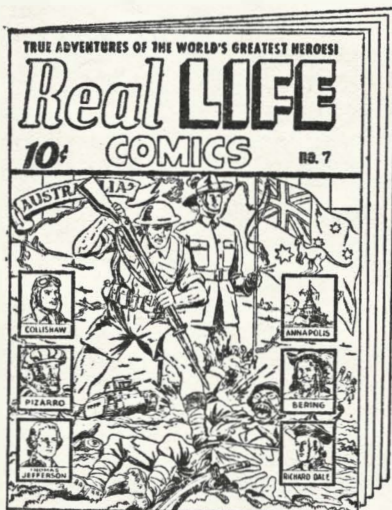
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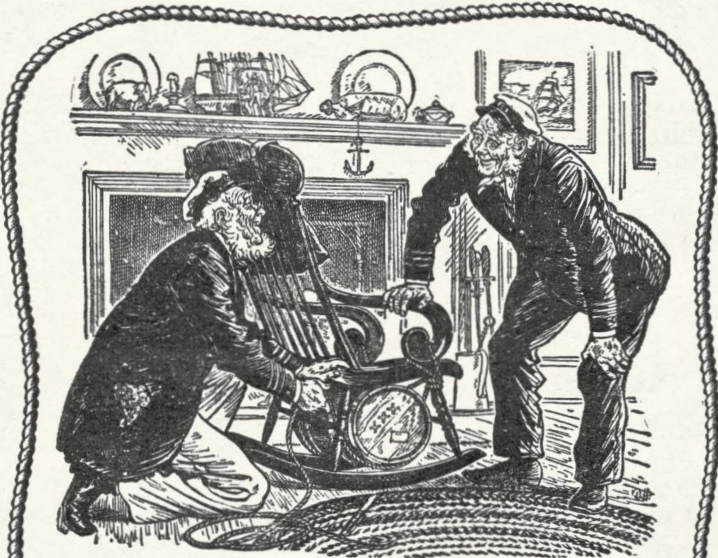
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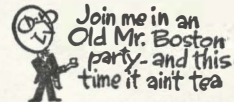
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Sara aimed at his hand and pulled the trigger of the .32

# A Problem *in* Plates

By SAM MERWIN, JR.

*Sara Landis' interest in a stranger attending a theater's dish night program leads her into an odd pattern of peril!*

SARA LANDIS first noticed the big fellow because, like herself, he was left-handed. Sitting in the cashier's booth of the Bijou night after night, she had come to think of people entirely in terms of hands.

There were toil-worn homemakers'

hands, grease-stained factory hands with broken nails, typists' hands with short nails, grimy children's hands, brisk, efficient hands, fumbling, awkward hands.

The big fellow's hands, beyond the fact that he used the left to rake in

his silver, failed to fit into any of Sara's categories. They were strong but without the callouses of manual labor, well-groomed without being soft.

Every week for a month now, they'd appeared at her window on dish night. Yet, never had their owner come out with a plate.

Lifting her dark eyes briefly, she looked up at him, found to her dismay that he was staring at her with unexpected intensity.

"Why don't you sign up for some dishes?" she asked to cover her embarrassment. "In a hundred and four weeks, you get a full set for twelve."

Sara had been on this job long enough to have outgrown embarrassment. Her triangular little face with its burnished dark bangs was pretty enough to draw all the routine proposals and propositions a good-looking girl in her quasi-exposed position was bound to receive.

So, being confused, annoyed her. But the big fellow was good looking—or was he?

She risked another look, found him still staring at her as he pocketed his change.

No, he wasn't handsome. His nose wandered slightly to the left side of his face, his jaw was too square. Yet, he was attractive.

"Sorry," he said, and his voice had authority even while speaking trivia. "I missed out on the first few. And a hundred and four weeks is a bit like one of those Hollywood contracts—without options."

"Oh," said Sara, vaguely disappointed.

**T**HE big fellow gave her a faint half-grin and went on inside. She forgot about him in the rush of selling tickets for the late show, except for an occasional wistful moment of wonder as to why fellows like him were never the ones who made proposals.

A Hedy Lamarr super duper and

a Buck Jones western, a bill nicely calculated to bracket the tastes of the Bijou audience, were getting quite a play.

It didn't make sense that Jim Manning, the manager, should be putting up dishes for sale this week. But once the dish thing started, she supposed, there was no letting up. And it did help tide over weeks with poor pictures.

Tonight, they were handing out dessert plates—filler for the soup, butter and main-course plates that had been or were to be doled out in installments.

Jim had them attractively wrapped and the housewives or housewives-to-be snapped them up eagerly.

Things eased off after nine-fifteen, and Jim Manning came out to collect the take and count it in his office.

He was humming "Just Plain Lonesome." That meant business was good. Jim always hummed when things were humming. When they weren't he worried about the progress of the war.

"We've got another hot week," he said, giving Sara a wink. "If things hold up for another month, sugar, you can hit me for a raise."

"Will you give it to me?" asked Sara.

"That," said Jim cheerfully, "is a horse of a different color."

Chuckling, he left her, carrying the cash box under his arm. Jim was always chuckling even when things were bad.

Sometimes she felt he didn't take his job as theater manager, even of a spot like the Bijou, seriously enough. Those dishes were an example of that.

From what little Sara knew of the deal, they seemed to cost more than the trade they brought in.

That, however was Jim's headache so Sara promptly forgot about the matter and sat in her booth, waiting to take care of late-comers. She didn't close up until eleven, when the



last picture began. It was her first job in the city, and she took it pretty seriously.

She was sitting there, mooning about the big fellow and weighing the delightful possibility of Jim Manning having meant what he'd said about a raise, when the first subject of her reverie came walking out of the lobby.

Unconsciously, she checked her hair to make sure every curl was in its proper place. But he strode right past her without even so much as a glance.

She shrugged, slim shoulders, ruefully examined the torn fingernail on her left forefinger. While washing stockings in the wash basin the night before, she'd caught the nail on the edge of the basin and ripped it.

"Just when I had them all perfectly even, too!" she sighed to herself. Then, "Darn him, anyway. He could at least have looked at me after the going over he gave me when he bought his ticket tonight."

**B**UT the big fellow was hurrying across the street. There, in the shadows cast by a dimmed-out street lamp in the angle of a store front, he conferred with a couple of other men.

Sara watched him, idly curious, only half registering what she saw. Then, suddenly, she sat up straight, fully alert.

The big fellow was recrossing the street alone. The other two men had disappeared like the shadows they'd talked in. Furthermore, the big fellow wasn't returning to see the rest of the show.

Instead, striding rapidly and taking full advantage of the dimout, he was moving with definite purpose toward the side door that led to the Bijou basement.

By leaning forward in the booth, Sara could just keep him in her range of vision. He was bent over, working with the lock of the door. A faint click sounded in her ears, and the door swung halfway open. The big

fellow slipped inside then and pulled it to after him.

The girl had never been in the basement. Jim Manning kept discarded display posters and billboards and his supply of dishes down there.

Sara wondered why the big fellow had broken in, what he hoped to find down there. The idea of his wanting to steal the dishes was absurd on the face of it. They were strictly of the five-and-ten variety.

Then she remembered something else, and it didn't seem silly any more. There was a stairway in the basement which led to Jim's office off the lobby.

Jim would be in there now with the cash receipts, counting them before making up his nightly statement. He'd consider himself safe from intrusion with the other door locked, and would be easy meat for a stick-up artist coming by that route.

Quickly she picked up the telephone, pressed the buzzer that would connect her with Jim Manning's office, pressed it again and again. There was no answer.

What she did then was a matter of reflex action, not thought. Had she stopped to weigh things, she'd have been too afraid to move. But she moved fast.

She picked up the .32 automatic pistol Jim kept for her on a shelf under the ticket counter. The Bijou was in a rather tough district, and at times there was enough cash in the till to tempt the local hoodlums. Slamming the board into place across the front of the booth, she slipped out and went toward the basement door down the street.

"He's not getting away with this!" she told herself grimly, her nerves humming with tension, all thought of romance fading from her mind.

She had visions of her raise disappearing before her eyes if the night's receipts were stolen.

Although she was slim and pretty and far from muscular, Sara packed

her full share of feminine determination. In addition, she had spent considerable time at pistol ranges learning how to use the gun.

The basement door was not locked now. She entered quietly, hesitated while her eyes grew accustomed to the darkness within. She was at the top of a steep iron stairway. There was another door at the foot, a door faintly rimmed with light which was either very dim or came from some distance beyond.

**P**USHING the door gently, she shoved it open and went inside. Abruptly, then, she was scared, and her breathing became ragged and shallow.

All around her were strange men, in cowboy outfits, in burnouses, in war paint and loin cloths, in soldiers' uniforms with guns. A cloaked figure with a dripping dagger menaced her.

She fought a giggle of nervous relief as she realized these figures were merely discarded display signs that had done their term of duty in the lobby upstairs. Then, from a half-closed doorway beyond, from which the light stemmed, she heard the sound of voices. Moving closer, she recognized Jim's.

"This is it," she heard the manager say. "It should suit even you, *Herr* Schmidt. We have an entirely legitimate front for ourselves and a means of passing it so slick that it will never be detected. It's smooth, what?"

"It's smooth, all right," said a deep voice with the overtones of the big fellow. She felt a shiver run up and down her dorsal vertebra. "How about it, Manning? Still no objections to helping the enemies of America?"

"Not since the government led us into war foolishly," said Manning. "I'm no Nazi, mind you, *Herr* Schmidt. I simply can't stomach the fools that are running things in this country today. If I can help get them out of power and make a buck for

myself printing this stuff, it's okay with me."

"We understand," said the big fellow. "You are, in effect, a collaborationist. That is enough for us. When we take hold of things here, you will not be forgotten. We do not forget our obligations to those who do dangerous work for our cause, whatever their reason."

"Now," said Manning—she could tell by his voice that he was grinning—"you're talking my pidgin. Excuse me a moment while I get the records. You can see for yourself what we've done here since we got things going. It's not bad."

Sara heard the scrape of chair legs on concrete, then the quick sounds of receding footsteps. Horrified at what she'd just heard, the girl pushed the door open a few inches and peered within.

The big fellow was lounging against a long carpenter's table, diagonally across the room from her. Seated behind it was a blond, tough-looking man she didn't recognize—or did she?

Beneath and around him on the board surface were thousands of pieces of green paper money, some in packages, some loose. More treasury notes had spilled over from an open strong-box at his elbow.

As she looked, she saw his hands flip over some of the bills, pick one up to show it to the big fellow. She saw the scar along the base of the man's thumb, spotted him as another dish-night regular. He held the bill so that the big fellow had to bend over to look at it.

"Excellent," said the latter. "It would fool me. Whoever made these plates was a genius."

"But evidently not quite enough of a genius for the job," said the man with the scar on his thumb.

He moved swiftly then, rising to reveal his great height as he flipped back the big fellow's coat, revealing a silver badge.

**B**EFORE the big fellow could stop him, the man with the scar on his thumb had pulled a pistol from his captive's shoulder, lifted it coolly and dropped him like a log with a terrific blow behind the ear. Without expression, he resumed his place at the table, laying the gun on the board surface.

Fighting the fear inside her, yet curiously happy in the knowledge that she hadn't misread the big fellow, Sara took quick stock of the situation.

Almost at her elbow, against the near wall, was an elaborate device with a roller that was evidently a printing press.

It had pressure screws, a long-handled windlass for obtaining better purchase to roll the plates through under heavy pressure. And on the plates were sheets of paper partially printed with reproductions of Uncle Sam's honest currency.

It was now or never. When Jim Manning returned with whatever he'd gone to get for the big fellow, the odds would be too great. At the moment, the man with the scar on his thumb was perusing one of the counterfeit bills, scowling as he endeavored to find the flaw in it.

After taking a deep breath and exhaling slowly to quiet her fluttering nerves, Sara stepped inside, brave in her scarlet smock, the pistol steady in her hand.

"Put up your hands, Nazi," she said quietly.

She couldn't have lifted her voice had she wanted to. Something was pushing her diaphragm up against her larynx, and it was almost impossible to talk above a whisper.

Startled, the man looked up at her. His mouth opened, closed again. To her dismay, he made no motion to obey her. Instead, his hand strayed toward the pistol before him.

"You are a very unfortunate young lady," he said slowly.

"Put them up!" she snapped.

His eyes flickered from hers, looked past her shoulder as if at someone in back of her. She smiled mockingly. That was the oldest gag in the world.

She knew this man was dangerous, knew he'd really go for his own weapon the moment her attention was drawn away from him. She wasn't having any, thank you.

Then, to Sara's horror and amazement, he went for his pistol anyway. The fool must have thought she didn't mean it.

Frowning with determination, she aimed at his hand and pulled the trigger of the .32. She felt it buck, saw blood spurt insanely from mangled fingers. Then something fell heavily against her, knocking her off balance and sending her spinning to the wall.

Whirling, half-sobbing, she turned, saw that what she'd supposed to be a gag had been stark truth.

Jim Manning, coatless and with his collar open, was thrashing desperately in the grip of the big fellow, who seemed to have recovered in time to stop the theater manager from slugging her with the butt of his gun.

The man with the scar on his thumb, swearing monotonously in alien accents with his mashed and bleeding hand hanging useless at his side, was trying awkwardly to pick up the weapon with his other hand.

"Cut it out and put them up," she said.

**L**OOKING at her with hatred in his eyes, he obeyed slowly. Manning saw her then, saw her pistol pointed at his head as he was about to bring the butt down on the big fellow's skull.

"Don't shoot again!" he yelled.

"Fire twice," directed the big fellow, gasping for breath.

Sara obeyed, and a moment later, the basement was filled with uniformed policemen and plainclothesmen. A physician was summoned, and he bandaged the counterfeiter's hand after examining the pigeon's egg that

had arisen behind the big fellow's ear.

The would-be Nazis were led away to prison.

"Who are you?" Sara asked when the big fellow finally finished giving the others the facts.

**H**E GRINNED, snapped some orders at a couple of policemen who were carrying the printing press from the basement.

"I'm Clark Armour," he said. "Treasury Department. And thanks for saving my skull—or what's left of it."

"I thought for a moment you were one of them," she said.

"Thanks again. I was supposed to look like one. But I don't have enough ham in me or something. These chaps got wise. If you hadn't put your oar in, they might have gotten the place cleared up before we could pin any proof on their filthy hides.

"It's the biggest counterfeit haul we've made since the war began. Manning was passing the money out via the free dish route to half a dozen key members of his little group.

"These persons—and most of them were misguided women—then handed it out to the passers, who were doing their bit to discredit American money. He didn't think he had a chance of being caught. At that, it was neat."

"Very neat," she said. "How in the world did you figure it out?"

"The hard way—sweat and shoe

leather," he told her. "When a phony bill was turned in, we tried to trace it back to its source. Finally we got as high as a couple of the key people. That brought the theater under suspicion. But we couldn't figure out how it was done. We knew you weren't passing it."

"I should say not," said the girl indignantly. "Why listen, I'd never—"

"We found that out, Sara," said the Treasury man. "So we checked up on Manning, found he was a rabid isolationist before Pearl Harbor who hadn't changed his views. We looked deeper. Then we got a tip from the other end, that he was in touch with Axis agents.

"Finally, we figured out the dishes by watching the key people we knew. I impersonated one of the high muck-a-mucks Manning had never seen, and he exposed himself willingly. Unfortunately, so did I."

"Gosh!" said the girl unhappily. "Am I dumb!"

"Not for my money," said Armour. "Come on. I'll give you a ride home."

He took her to her boarding house in a cab. His arm felt strong and safe and exciting around her shoulders. As they stopped at the curb, she sat upright.

"See here, Mister," she said, "you lost me my job."

He looked at her. It was a lot like the look he'd given her while she was in the booth, only more so. He smiled.

"I wouldn't worry about it," he said.



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The swiftness of the man's attack surprised the cop

# Strictly Scientific

By JAMES DONNELLY

*Calder was a cop's cop, but he was smart enough to make use of science when all the routine methods failed!*

**C**LAY HALLOWELL ran slim, short fingers through his hair.

"I tell you I didn't kill her!" he cried.

Homicide Chief Tom Calder frowned. He was worried. This young man he was questioning wasn't a bum, someone picked up in a dragnet. The papers had a name for him—"scion."

He had money. His old man was a power in the city. Already the D.A. had neatly passed the buck to Tom Calder.

"Take complete charge of this case, Calder," he had said. "Remember that I want sound evidence before I touch it."

Chief Lanser had been more explicit:

"Don't pull a boner in this one, Calder. Be right. I wouldn't want to have to send you back to the sticks if you're wrong."

Well, you couldn't blame the chief. He was looking after his job. So was the D.A. So was Tom Calder, but his job was a little more difficult.

He was a Homicide cop and there had been a homicide and every clue pointed directly to this young man sitting before him in his expensive tweeds.

"Mr. Hallowell," Calder said patiently, "you should realize the position you're in. Telling the truth will make it easier."

"I've told you the truth," Hallowell said wearily. "When I arrived at the Burroughs', the butler told me that Ann was swimming. It was hot and she often cooled off in their pool."

"You went there?"

"As I said, I found Ann under a beach umbrella beside the pool. She was dead. Choked to death."

Calder nodded. They'd been over the story time after time. Each time

Calder had hoped for some variance, some small thing that would give an opening, a wedge for him to pry wider. But young Hallowell had not varied the story.

"Miss Burroughs' brother says that you quarreled with her earlier in the day."

Hallowell looked sullen. "That's right."

"What about?"

Calder watched the man closely. This was information he had not sprung before.

"I don't see what bearing it has on the case," Hallowell snapped.

Calder snorted. "Be adult, Hallowell. A girl is murdered, and you've quarreled with her a few hours before. It has a darned important bearing on the case! Don't try that attitude!"

"If Carl knows that we quarreled, why doesn't he tell you what it was about."

Calder's lips tightened. "All right, he did. He says that she returned an engagement ring to you this morning. That you became pretty violent about the whole thing—made some threats."

Hallowell looked suddenly deflated. He relaxed in his chair and stared in front of him with vacant eyes.

"I guess I was crazy," he said hoarsely. "Crazy about Ann—and then crazy because I was losing her."

"Why did she break the engagement?"

"She said she simply had stopped caring for me."

"You threatened her?"

"I guess I did. I said a lot of wild things. Later, after I had left, I called her and she said she would see me in the afternoon. She was going to the Red Cross center to do some volunteer work. When I got to Burroughs', I found her—"

**T**OM CALDER thoughtfully rubbed his lean chin. He'd seen men before who were crazy enough about a

woman to kill the woman when he lost her.

"Did you kill her?" he asked abruptly.

Expression came back into the young man's face.

"No! I've told you! I didn't kill her! I—" His lips quivered and he stood, his eyes fixed on the detective in a wild gaze.

"Can't you understand?" he cried. "I loved her! I couldn't kill her! Maybe I said things—maybe I was half crazy because I was losing her! But I didn't—didn't kill—"

His voice jerked into sobs.

Calder sighed. The man was becoming hysterical.

"All right," he nodded. "That's all."

Hallowell was taken from the room and Calder paced worriedly until a telephone bell jangled. He picked up the instrument. It was Chief Lan-ser.

"Get anything?" the chief rapped.

"No. He still says he didn't do it."

"Holding him?"

Calder sighed wearily. "No, I'm turning him loose and putting a tail on him. You said to be careful, didn't you?"

"Yes. His old man has a corps of lawyers already on the job. We've got to watch our step. The mayor called me awhile ago."

"Some day I'm going to quit this job."

There was a silence and then the chief's voice: "I know how you feel. We all do. I'd like to work that spoiled kid over myself, only—"

"Sure. Skip it. I'll keep the kid gloves on."

He picked up a notebook and looked through notes he had taken. Clemens, the butler, had been able to volunteer little except for one observation that bothered Calder now.

He had asked Clemens: "Did Miss Burroughs seem unduly perturbed when she left the house in the morning?"

"Not especially," Clemens had said. "In fact, I should say that she seemed relieved about something. She was laughing with Mr. Burroughs when they went out. He was to donate some blood to the Red Cross and she was teasing him about the 'coming ordeal,' as she put it."

"Was she still in good spirits when she returned?"

The butler had looked troubled. "No, sir. It struck me that she was very worried or annoyed when she returned. She was earlier than usual and her face looked quite pale."

"What did she do when she came in?"

"She asked if Mr. Burroughs had returned. He hadn't. She decided to swim as it was so hot. He returned shortly afterward and joined her at the pool for a half hour or so and told me that Miss Ann would see Mr. Hallowell down there, when he came back to the house. Mr. Hallowell arrived a half hour later or so."

The butler could add nothing more to that and Burroughs had confirmed his sister's upset condition upon her return and attributed it to the quarrel with Hallowell earlier in the day.

**A** UNIFORMED cop stuck his head into the office, and Calder closed the notebook.

"Burroughs is still out here," said the cop. "He wants to know if you need him any more."

"Send him in," Calder decided.

Carl Burroughs was a large, handsome man in middle age. His black hair and dark skin were in direct contrast to the blondness that had been his sister's. Now he looked haggard and shaken by his sister's death.

"If you no longer need me," he said, "I have quite a bit to do. Funeral arrangements and—"

"I understand," Calder said. "There are a few more questions. I just finished with Hallowell."

"He confessed?" Burroughs asked tensely.

"No. He admits the quarrel and the threats, but he denies the murder."

A quick anger flashed in Burroughs' eyes.

"He did it! If you people can't handle—"

"Take it easy," Calder interrupted. "We're doing everything we can. If he's guilty, we'll tag him."

Burroughs relaxed.

"I'm sorry," he apologized. "This is all a great shock to me. As you may know, Ann and I had been apart since early childhood. Our parents were divorced, and I went with my father to Europe. He returned five years ago and was here when Ann was in a car accident, but I didn't return. He died two years ago, shortly after my mother died. Ann and I corresponded. I returned home last fall—a war refugee. Since then, Ann and I have had our first time together. It's been wonderful. To have this happen—well I guess I'm not quite myself."

"Did she seem to take Hallowell's threats seriously yesterday?"

"They worried her. I went to town with her. In college she took a great interest in science and laboratory work. She'd volunteered her services to the Red Cross, typing blood at their blood-donor center. I went with her yesterday to donate my share. On the way, she said she was afraid of Hallowell."

"Did she have any other enemies?"

"Not that I know about. Hallowell is your man."

Calder nodded slightly. "It looks as if you're right, but I have to get evidence."

"Let me know if I can help you more," Burroughs said.

"Thanks for your cooperation."

"She was my sister," Burroughs reminded the detective coldly.

The men regarded one another silently. Burroughs extended a large, capable hand.

"I know you'll convict Hallowell," he said.

After Burroughs was gone, Calder glanced at his strap watch. It was nine o'clock, but still light in the war-time evening. He had been on the case since four o'clock in the afternoon.

He had called his wife to tell her not to wait dinner, and now he left Headquarters and stopped at the first café. He ate a large dinner and finished with two cups of coffee, his eyes narrowed in thought.

TEN minutes after leaving the café he followed an attendant to a table where a white sheet covered Ann Burroughs' body. The attendant removed the sheet.

The girl had been beautiful, but the agony of her death had contorted her features.

Carefully Calder inspected the girl's throat where bruises from throttling hands appeared. Suddenly he placed his hands over the cold skin and then motioned for the attendant to lift the girl's head.

Calder bent over and looked at the discoloration that extended beyond the tips of his fingers.

This was the second time he had checked the marks, and now he stepped back and stared at the body.

"You must have something to work on," the attendant suggested. "This is your second look at her."

"I don't know," Calder said.

After a moment he thanked the attendant and left. There was little more that he could do until morning, except, perhaps, spend a sleepless night trying to find the answer to the problem that bothered him.

His wife was knitting an army sweater when he arrived home.

"Kids gone to bed?" he asked.

"Early," she smiled. "Jimmy's scout troop is collecting old paper in the morning and Sarah Jane couldn't stay awake another moment. You've had a hard day, Tom. You look tired. Is it the Burroughs case that was in tonight's paper?"

He sank into an easy chair and took off his shoes.

"That's the one," he sighed. "It's one of those influential family affairs with everyone passing the buck."

"I met Miss Burroughs once," his wife said. "At Red Cross. She had something to do with the blood donors."

Calder leaned back and shut his eyes. It was good to be home with his wife's soft voice in his ears and the comfort of his easy chair.

"I guess I'd better go down there tomorrow," he said.

"They could use your blood, Tom. They need it so badly. They dry it and have it ready for our fighting boys when they need it."

Tom opened his eyes and stared at her. Then he grinned.

"I hadn't thought of that," he said. "Sometimes I forget there's a war!"

MISS BLAIN, trim and efficient in a white uniform, expressed her shock about Ann Burroughs' death the next morning. She and Tom Calder sat in the privacy of her small office at the Red Cross center.

"She was one of the best workers we had," Miss Blain said. "We all thought a great deal of her."

"She was doing laboratory work for you?"

"She classified the blood donations into types. She was highly trained in laboratory work."

"Did she seem in good spirits yesterday when she arrived?"

A frown clouded Miss Blain's forehead. "Especially good. She brought her brother for a donation. Some time after he left, she came in to tell me that she was leaving early. She seemed very disturbed."

"She didn't say why?"

"No. I asked her if anything was wrong, but she said not. However, she acted as if she had received a shock."

"You have no idea what may have caused it?"



"I'm sorry, I haven't."

"Did she receive any phone calls?"

"No. The call would have come through this office, and I would have known. But she made one. I left the office while she talked."

"She didn't leave here at any time?"

"She worked steadily, until she came in to tell me she was leaving."

"She had a place where she worked? A place where she might have left anything?"

Miss Blain nodded. "She had a laboratory bench. It has a drawer. There might be something there."

She took the detective to a small room furnished as a laboratory.

The bench where Ann Burroughs had worked was neat and clean. Calder opened a drawer. A few personal belongings were in it. A compact, rubber gloves, several clean handkerchiefs, a fountain pen, pencil, and a scratch pad.

Calder took out the pad and scrutinized the notations written on the top sheet:

**AB! O. M-O, F-O. Mathiews?**

"Have you any idea what these letters mean?" Calder asked.

"Blood types," Miss Blain explained. "Blood, as you may know, varies in different persons. AB is a type. So is O. I don't know what the M or F could mean, although I believe there has been some work in agglutinogens M and N."

"How about Mathiews?"

Miss Blain was thoughtful. "It might mean Dr. Mathiews at the Medical Center."

Calder thanked her and was about to leave when he hesitated.

"You need blood donors pretty badly?" he asked.

"Desperately."

Calder rubbed his jaw. "I'll be in when I clear up this case. I imagine I have some to spare."

Miss Blain smiled. "Bring a friend," she suggested.

**D**R. MATHIEWS was gray-haired, sharp-eyed and large. He sat at his desk and nodded a brief greeting to Calder.

"What can I do for you?"

Calder identified himself and the case he was on. Mathiews nodded.

"It was a terrible thing. I'd known Ann since she was a child."

"Did she call you yesterday?" Calder asked.

The doctor looked a trifle surprised.

"Yes. Shortly after noon."

"Could you tell me what you talked about?"

Mathiews hesitated a second. "I don't see why not. She asked me to check the case history of her accident injuries five years ago."

"Anything in particular?"

"Yes. Several transfusions were necessary. Her mother and father—he was in New York at the time and we sent for him—both donated blood. She asked yesterday what their types were. Said she wanted to be sure."

"What were they?"

"Both of them had type O."

"You could use it for Ann, of course?"

"Naturally. In fact, the check was actually routine as long as they were the parents."

"I suppose Miss Burroughs' blood was type O?"

"According to Mendel's Law of Heredity, it could be O and nothing else. It's about the only grouping that works out that way."

"Did she ask anything else?"

"That was all. She's been doing work of that sort at the Red Cross. I suppose it was in relation to her work."

"Can you give me any information that might help us solve this case?"

The doctor shook his head slowly. "I'm afraid not. From what I gather from the newspapers, it would appear to me that young Hallowell is guilty. He—well, I've attended him for years. He's not too stable emotionally. Almost neurotic, in fact. But I shouldn't

like to be quoted on that. I'm not a psychiatrist."

Calder left the medical center and returned to his office.

Chief Lanser cornered him within moments. He was flushed and obviously worried.

"Trouble's breaking loose on that Burroughs case!" he erupted. "The papers indicated that we suspect young Hollowell and the old man is putting on the pressure. We've got to break this in a hurry!"

"Maybe we will," Calder smiled tightly.

"You're picking up Hollowell? You have got evidence?"

CALDER stood at his desk and nodded abstractedly. After a moment he pulled out a desk drawer and rummaged until he found a battered book titled: *Modern Criminal Investigation*.

"I think maybe Södermann and O'Connell might help on this," he remarked.

Chief Lanser watched him with puzzled eyes. After a moment he snorted.

"*Something'd* better help us!"

Calder thumbed the pages and finally studied a chart. Abruptly he closed the book and stared for a long time at his desk surface, nodding occasionally.

He reached for a telephone and then asked for a connection.

"Miss Blain? Calder of Headquarters speaking. Could you read to me the complete results of the tests Miss Morrow made yesterday? . . . Fine! I'll wait."

His finger drummed on the desk for several moments and then he listened intently. Finally he interrupted: "AB? You're sure about that? . . . Thanks!"

He broke the connection and then thoughtfully lifted the instrument again. He asked for "Grady."

"Grady? Calder. That Burroughs dame wore a blouse, didn't she? Bring

it to my office." He replaced the telephone.

He sat back and after a moment he carefully shaved lead from a pencil until he had a small pile on a sheet of paper.

Lanser stopped pacing and stared at him.

"What are you doing now?" he snapped.

"Getting ready to take a chance," Calder said. "I'm either going to break this case in a hurry, or I'll be pounding the sticks for a long, long time!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean I've gone strictly scientific, Chief," Calder said. "Strictly scientific!"

Calder was late returning from the County Clerk and Recorder's office where he had spent an hour going through records from the probate court. He smiled broadly as he hurried to his office. In the last hour he'd learned several interesting things about the Burroughs family.

In his outer office, young Hollowell and Burroughs waited. Hollowell looked distraught and nervous. He jumped when Calder slammed the door behind him.

Burroughs was dressed in a dark suit. He wore a mourning band on his arm.

He watched Hollowell with a set, stonelike expression of hate.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," Calder said. "Be with you in a moment."

He went into his private office and closed the door. Chief Lanser sat behind the detective's desk, impatiently smoking a cigar.

"All right," he barked. "They're outside like you ordered. What's the score, Calder?"

Calder shook his head and picked up his telephone.

"Send in Czenick to take dictation and you can bring in Hollowell and Burroughs. Bring in fingerprinting equipment."

He opened a desk drawer. Chief

Lanser got out of the detective's chair and took one across the room.

REMOVING a neatly folded woman's blouse from the drawer, Calder placed it on the desk as Hallowell and Burroughs were brought in. The blouse was the one which had been worn by Ann Burroughs.

Czenick, a small, dark man, glanced at the lanky detective and settled down at a table with open notebook and poised fountain pen. A cop placed fingerprinting equipment on the desk and stood back.

"I want Hallowell's prints," Calder said bluntly.

Hallowell started. His eyes widened a little.

"What does this mean?" he asked. "Why do you—"

"Just give us the prints, Hallowell. I'll explain later."

Hallowell looked around the room with worried eyes and then shrugged.

"Take them," he assented.

While the cop went about his task, Calder handed a sheet of typed paper to Burroughs, who read his own statements of the day before.

"Correct?" Calder asked.

"Absolutely," Burroughs said, and returned the paper. Calder handed it to an assistant who left with it.

Calder watched the cop finish Hallowell's prints.

"Take him outside," he ordered. "I'll call for him later."

An attendant took the young man out and closed the door. Calder sat back in his chair.

"I think we've broken the case," he told Burroughs.

"Fine! I'm glad you have evidence enough to convict him!" Burroughs said.

Calder snapped. "They always make a mistake. This time it was fingerprints. We've gone a long ways with prints lately. Few persons realize that we can even get them from cloth. The murderer left some on Ann Burroughs' blouse collar."

He unfolded the blouse and displayed the collar. Several fingerprints showed up plainly, dark against the whiteness of the material.

"Nice job in the laboratory," Calder remarked. "Those prints are as clear as we could want. They have photographs of them down in the lab. They will check them against Hallowell's and we'll know in a few moments if they're his prints on the cloth. I thought you'd like to be here to fill in details, if necessary."

Burroughs nodded. He lit a cigarette and squinted through the smoke.

"I'll be happy to see the case finished," he said. "Of course, he was the only suspect. There couldn't be much doubt."

Calder shrugged. Across the room, Chief Lanser stirred restlessly. Czenick continued to take notes.

A heavy silence came over the room for five minutes, and then the door opened and a cop came in with several papers. Calder spread them on his desk and studied them closely, his face showing sudden displeasure.

He looked at the others in the room.

"The laboratory tests show that the prints on the blouse are *not* Hallowell's," he announced.

He looked back at the desk and after a moment his lips became thin. He picked up a sheet filled with typing and turned it over. For several moments he compared the back side of the sheet with a photograph and then again read an inter-office memo.

"Burroughs," he said pleasantly. "Maybe you can help us."

Burroughs frowned and sat forward in his chair.

"Something has disturbed me about this case from the start," Calder said. "I checked the bruises on Ann Burroughs' throat. They extended all the way around and met in the back. Did you ever notice Hallowell's hands? He's nervous — runs his fingers through his hair a lot.

"They're slim, small hands with short fingers. I believe he'd have

trouble inflicting such bruises on her throat.

"I matched my hands against the marks. My hands were too small and they are larger hands than his. It would take very large hands—for instance, such as yours, Burroughs."

Burroughs shook his head, puzzled. "But the fingerprints should—"

"Something else bothered me," Calder interrupted. "Her quarrel didn't disturb her greatly yesterday, but something happened after she was at the Red Cross that did. She came home quite upset."

He stopped to glance at the stenographer who was busy taking down every word. Czenick glanced up and nodded.

"So I did quite a bit of research today," Calder said. "Scientific and otherwise."

Lanser cleared his throat nervously.

"I investigated blood types, Mendel's Law of Heredity, and Mrs. Burroughs' will, filed in probate court. She left you fifty thousand dollars, Burroughs. Three times that to Ann."

Burroughs straightened. "That's right, but I don't see what—"

"Burroughs," Tom Calder snapped, "your blood was typed yesterday. It's type AB. Ann's was O. It had to be because both of her parents were type O. *And they could not have children whose blood was type AB.*"

Burroughs watched the detective with expressionless eyes.

"Let us suppose," Calder continued, "that Ann's brother in Europe knew a man quite well. He told the man all of his family affairs, about his sister, the money he had inherited. Suppose that Burroughs died, maybe murdered, and that man saw an opportunity to come to America and take his place. Ann had not seen her brother since babyhood—she wouldn't know him. The parents were dead. He could step into Burroughs' shoes and inheritance.

"Suppose he did. One day he offered to donate blood to the Red Cross. His

supposed sister worked there and typed his blood and discovered that he couldn't possibly be her brother, because his blood was AB whereas her parents could only have children with type O. You'll find the explanation in this book, Burroughs."

Calder held up the book on crime he had studied.

"She returned home," he went on, "and accused the man who posed as her brother. Realizing that he was discovered, he killed her. He knew about the quarrel she had with Hallowell and that Hallowell was returning later. He would shift the guilt to Hallowell and not only keep Burroughs' inheritance, but get Ann's as well."

Calder stopped. Burroughs stared at him with intent eyes, lips pale.

"The so-called brother told about his blood donation. He knew we probably would check Ann's activities. Concealing his Red Cross visit might provoke suspicion. Ann probably admitted that she had informed no one of her discovery, so he was reasonably safe."

Burroughs leaped to his feet.

"This is a frame-up!" he cried.

CALDER smiled and held up the typed paper. "The statements you read," he explained. "Your fingerprints were recorded on the back of the paper when you handled it a while ago. It was easy to compare them with those on the blouse. We believe we can locate other refugees who knew the real Burroughs in Europe and can identify you as an impostor."

A wild look appeared now in "Burroughs'" eyes. He looked around nervously toward the door. A uniformed cop standing there was watching him.

"Want to make a confession now?" Calder asked quietly.

Instead of answering, the man called Burroughs bolted for the door. The cop there hauled out his gun. Burroughs grappled with him, and the swiftness of his attack surprised the

cop. Burroughs' fist came back, ready to deliver a blow.

The cop slapped sideways with his gun. Stunned, the man called Burroughs sagged toward the floor. The cop and Chief Lanser helped him back to his chair. All the fight had gone out of him now.

"I—I'll confess," he mumbled. "Ann's brother died in Europe when we were getting out. I saw a chance to take his place—we looked a little alike. I got a forged passport. Yesterday Ann discovered about the blood. When I met her by the pool she accused me. I didn't know about blood types or Mendel's Law. I killed her, just as you had it figured out."

\* \* \* \* \*

Calder and Chief Lanser were in Casey's back room drinking beer.

"Our laboratory must be pretty good," Lanser enthused, "getting those prints on the blouse."

Calder grinned. "Those were *my* prints, Chief," he said. "I put 'em

on with lead pencil shavings. But Burroughs didn't know that. He assumed that they were his and our taking Hallowell's prints for comparison made him think those on the blouse probably were authentic."

Lanser stared at him. "You mean you staged that whole affair?"

"Well, I had the motive when some notes on Ann's scratch pad—an M for mother and an F for father—a talk with Dr. Mathews and Mendel's Law tipped me off. But I needed a confession. We lacked evidence to convict." Lanser's mouth was open in surprise.

"Reminds me!" Calder exclaimed.

He motioned for Lanser to follow him to a telephone booth where the detective dialed a number.

"Miss Blain? This is Calder again. About that blood donation. I'll be in tomorrow morning."

He hesitated to grin at Lanser.

"And I'm bringing a friend!" he added.

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*Police Detective Tracy's generosity  
on his day off boomerangs—and he  
is faced with two killings he must  
solve to keep his badge!*



**Coldoni's hand froze,  
but his face was a  
devil mask**



# DOUBLE MURDER

*A Gripping Complete Mystery Novel*

By JOHN S. ENDICOTT

## CHAPTER I

### BOLT OF A NUT

**T**HE tall man in the poorly fitting gray suit looked about cautiously before he stepped out of the doorway. Down the long vista of street lights glimmering in the twilight haze, only a few pedestrians were visible. And none of them were near except the fellow who had obviously been celebrating too enthusiastically.

The tall man's knees shook just a little as he stepped out into the open

of the sidewalk. He felt the strength of steel springs in his muscles, but his hands felt naked. Empty. Without a knife.

A cold wind blew along the street, blew up the open cuffs of trousers that were a good three inches too short for him. Trousers that obviously had been made to fit a shorter and heavier man. Up the thin legs of the tall man blew the wind, and it seemed to blow up along his spine, and he shivered.

His somber eyes watched the celebrant, now only a few steps away.

The fellow was a big man, with a thick bull-like neck. The tall man's fingers flexed. It would be easy . . . But, no, that way was not fast enough.

People would come running. Policemen. Guards. And they would take him back.

No. He thrust his hands into his pockets, telling himself that he must wait. He must use the cleverness that had enabled him to change—within the few hours since his escape—his uniform suit for the suit he now wore, less conspicuous despite its poor fit.

And the man he had his eyes on had broad shoulders, too. He would put up a fight.

"Say, Mister," the tall man whined, "can you spare something for a guy who ain't eaten in—in days? Just some change, Mister. Honest, I—"

The other men had stopped. He stood there, swaying slightly, his eyes owlsh. He lifted a hand and solemnly wagged a thick finger at the suppliant.

"Can't fool me," he said. "Can't fool Tracy. You want money buy drinks, not eats. Drinks. You're bum."

"Huh-uh, Mister. That ain't it. Honest—"

"'S good idea, drinks. C'mon, I'll buy drinks. Your hat don't fit."

"I don't want—" The tall man broke off abruptly, and his eyes grew crafty. "Sure, Mister. That's swell. But—uh—some quiet place, huh? The way I'm dressed and all—"

THE owl-eyed man who called himself Tracy ponderously hooked an arm in the elbow of the man with the ill-fitting clothes.

"Sure. Quiet place. C'mon, pal, we'll go see Joe. Say, 'at rhymes swell. 'Go—Joe—'"

From time to time the tall man surreptitiously pulled at the sleeves of the gray coat to try to make them cover more of his bony wrists, to

make himself less conspicuous. He pulled, too, at the brim of the too-tight hat, jamming it tightly down over his forehead. If it fit so badly that even this half-seas-over guy would notice—

He thrust his hands back into his pockets. They felt less naked there. "Gee, thanks, Mister," he said. "I dunno how I can ever—"

"Here's Joe's," said his chance companion, and piloted the tall man through a doorway into a tavern.

Behind the bar was a man even bigger than the celebrant, with a head as bald as the knob of a banister-post. Otherwise, the place was deserted; too early for the evening crowd.

The man in the ill-fitting clothes sighed audibly with relief. No other customers—what a break. Somewhere they would have—

"Hi, Tracy," said the bald barman. "Third time today. Going in circles around the block?"

Tracy grinned. "Give us a drink, Joe. Give my friend whatever he wants. Mine same as usual. Y'know, Joe, you got something there, about going in circles. Read man's got one leg shorter'n the other. Everybody. Makes you walk in circles. Like pin-wheels maybe. Or—"

He talked on and on. The man in the ill-fitting clothes didn't like the way Joe was looking at him. He stepped quickly in closer to the bar and sat down on a stool, his hands out of sight in his lap. That kept his wrists and ankles from the bald man's suspicious stare.

But the bartender didn't keep on looking at him. He put a shot-glass on the bar and filled it from the Golden Eagle bottle, and shoved it across to Tracy, without a chaser.

Then he looked coldly at the slender man.

"Well, bum?" he asked.

The man in the poorly-fitting clothes felt relief. If he was passing for an ordinary moocher, he had



cleared the first hurdle. "I—a beer, I guess," he said. "But could I get something to eat first? I—uh—"

"Give him anything he wants, Joe," said Tracy magnanimously. "Maybe the guy is hungry. I thought he just had a thirst. Someday, maybe I'll be where he is, Joe. Maybe you will. Never can tell." He picked up

handling ain't my detail, annahoo. Now, Joe, you give this here guy whatever he wants. I'm paying for it, see?"

"Okay, Tracy, okay. I'll take care of him."

The big bartender tapped the slender man on the shoulder.

"Come on, bum. I'll give you some



his glass and downed its contents. "That's why I never turn a guy down, Joe, when I'm off duty."

Luckily for the tall man, the bartender had been looking at Tracy and Tracy had been looking at nothing. Neither of them saw the tall man start suddenly.

"Off duty?" he said. "Are you—"

"Sure, pal, I'm a detective. But don't let it worry you. I got three days off and I'm celebrating. Pan-

grub in the back room and leave you there to eat it. Then you scam, see? You don't look—well, you eat and then scam."

THE tall man nodded, and followed the bartender into the back room. There was a kitchen table there, and chairs around it. The bartender put a plate of bread on the table, a smaller plate with some sliced sausage beside it. He turned toward the

ice-box in one corner, then reconsidered.

"That'll do you," he said. "Go ahead."

"Gee, thanks. That's swell."

The tall man sat down at the table and reached for a slice of bread. Then he froze in that position, motionless, as the bartender turned away and went back to the front room again.

He dropped the bread back on the plate, and pushed the chair back quietly so it wouldn't scrape. His eyes searched the kitchen eagerly. There would be a knife somewhere, surely. Where?

His breath was coming fast now, with the nearness of it.

The ice-box? Not so likely. The cupboard? Then, as he stood up, he saw the drawer of the table at which he had been sitting. His somber eyes lighted.

WITH infinite caution, half an inch at a time, he slid the drawer open. It was there!

His whole body trembled—not with fear—as he reached into the drawer and picked up the knife. His hand closed around the hilt of it, and his hand was no longer naked. . . .

Back in the barroom the world revolved around Tracy in pink and black circles. The pink circles were the present, and the black circles were the future.

Oh, not that there was anything violently wrong about the future, past tomorrow morning. But tomorrow morning he would have a hang-over, and it would be a dilly. Tracy knew that, though Tracy didn't drink often.

This was the first celebration he'd had since—well, since years ago.

Here he had a rare three days off, and because he had done all his celebrating the first day, the second and third days were going to be misery. Anyway, the second.

Something was pounding at his ears. The radio back of the bar.

Where was Joe? Oh, yes. He swiveled around on the stool and yelled at the kitchen door:

"Hey, Joe, how's about shutting off this blinkin' yell-box?"

He got up off the stool to go around and shut it off himself, but decided it was too much trouble. Pretty soon he'd better take a taxi home and go to sleep.

That voice on the radio—it sounded exactly like old Cap Molenaus who used to handle the radio car broadcasts when he, Tracy, used to be in a radio flivver. But Cap Molenaus was dead now. The alky gang, they thought, had rubbed him out. But they had never proved who did it, and Cap Molenaus had been a swell guy, too.

Tracy cursed the alky gang, then cursed the radio. He gripped the glass that had held the Golden Eagle and wondered if he could throw it straight enough to put the radio out of commission. But he was a force of law and order, on duty or off. He couldn't go throwing glassware around taverns.

"And now for the local news," went on Cap Molenaus, only Cap Molenaus was dead so this must be someone else who had a voice like Cap's. "Carl Lambert, the homicidal maniac who escaped late this afternoon from Bellevue Asylum, is still at large. Everyone in the city is urged to take extraordinary precautions. He has been seen, or reported seen, in several places, and the police are active in investigating all leads. They hope to have him in custody within a matter of hours. He is described as—"

NUTS," said Tracy, glad that he was off duty and not chasing a homi with the rest of the boys.

Carl Lambert, Carl Lambert . . . Oh, yes. He had been arrested three, four years ago after those Blake Street killings, the nice ones with the knife.

Hmmm, Tracy thought, maybe he ought to phone in and ask if there was anything he could do to help in the hunt. He stood up again, but the very movement made him decide he'd better not phone Headquarters. Heck, he was off duty, anyway, and they could get along without him—he hoped.

## CHAPTER II

## TRACY WAKES UP



THE outer door opened. Tracy turned to see who had entered the saloon. He frowned. It couldn't have been anyone he wanted to see less. For it was Jerry Crayle, reporter for the newspaper that habitually lambasted the Force and yowled for reform, their idea of reform being their own party in power.

Crayle grinned. "Well, if it isn't Mortimer Tracy, and high as a kite. How's the rest of the Force?"

Tracy glowered at the newspaperman. It was a good thing that a few drinks didn't make Tracy pugnacious, or he would have taken a poke at Crayle's smug puss just for having the crust to call him Mortimer. Yes, that was the name his parents had misguidedly given him, but that was a long time ago and he had lived it down, except for the records.

"Lissen, you—" he said.

"Hi, Joe," said Crayle, turning his head, "What have you been feeding the police force?" Then as his eyes lit on the bottle on the bar, "Golden Eagle? Make mine the same, and fill up Tracy's."

The bald bartender went behind the bar again, and set another glass on it.

"Sure, Mr. Crayle. Water wash?"

"Not any for me, Joe," said Tracy, "I wouldn't drink with that punk if—"

Joe grinned and filled Tracy's glass anyway.

"Make the drinks on me, then, so you two can bury the hatchet," he said.

"In my head," said Tracy. "That's where he'll bury it. With an article on—"

"No, he won't, Tracy," said Joe pacifically. "You're off duty, ain't you? So you got a right."

"Sure, Tracy," affirmed Crayle. "I'm off duty, too, incidentally, and am I not tarring myself with the same brush? Ahh—and a very good brush it is. Now if all tavern owners were like Joe Hummer here and didn't refill their bottles with bootleg the minute they get down past the halfway mark—"

"There ain't any halfway mark on a whiskey bottle," said Tracy. "But, yeah, if all tavern keepers were like Joe here, then that yella newspaper of yours wouldn't have anything to squawk about. Anyway, we been tryin' to tell you, bootleg alky's not in the department of the city police. It belongs to—"

"Sure, sure. Revenue. But how about the crimes it leads to? How about the guys this Coldoni ring has bumped off because they wouldn't play ball? Murder's your department, no matter why it—"

"Aw, go lay an egg," said Tracy. "There've been three unsolved killings that might've been the Coldoni mob, but nobody can prove it. Not even the *Blade*, Crayle. And when one of them was one of our own men, if you think we didn't try—"

"Sure, sure," said Crayle. "Now that that's off your chest, will you have one on me?"

"Well . . ." said Tracy.

"Special bulletin," said the radio as a jazz band came to the end of a down-beat. "Carl Lambert, the escaped homicidal maniac, is reported to have been seen near Sixth and Wabash half an hour ago. He wore, at that time, a gray suit and a hat, both of which were too small for him. Apparently he has been able to ex-

change the uniform in which he escaped for civilian garb. Police are closing in on the district surrounding Sixth and Wabash. People living near there are advised to keep doors and windows locked, and not to answer any—”

“Say,” said Joe. “That’s near here.”

**S**OMETHING seemed to explode inside Tracy’s head.

“Good tripe!” he said. “That guy I brought in!”

He and Joe looked at each other.

“What guy?” Crayle wanted to know.

“Got your gun, Tracy?” Joe asked.

Tracy shook his head, already sliding off the stool and wishing he’d had just one drink less.

Joe yanked a drawer open somewhere behind the bar and came out with a short-barreled heavy revolver in his hand, and a scowl on his face. He and Tracy made for the door to the back room almost abreast. The door was ajar, but from the barroom all that could be seen was a table.

“Hey!” called the reporter. “What goes on? Let me in on—”

That was when they heard the scream.

It came from somewhere quite a distance away, but it was a piercing feminine shriek that cut the air like a knife. It hung for an instant on high E, then choked off abruptly.

The kitchen was empty. The door at the back of it leading to the quarters behind the tavern stood open.

“Good gosh!” said Joe. “I thought that was locked!”

Tracy, now in the lead, plowed on through into the rooms beyond. There were two of them, and they were empty. The door at the back of the second room, leading to a small cement-paved yard, stood wide open.

Joe caught up the Headquarters detective and grabbed his arm as they reached the yard.

“Take it easy, guy,” he said. “You

ain’t got a gun, and this ain’t no picnic. If that *was* the nut—well, there were knives in that room.”

“Sure,” said Tracy.

A knife, of course. That was what the guy was after. That was why he had wanted to eat instead of drink. He wouldn’t be hungry yet if he had escaped only late in the afternoon—not hungry enough anyway to risk bumming a meal.

“Lord, what a sap I was!” Tracy groaned.

There was a light half a block down the alley, a pale yellow spot in the gray dusk. Two houses down the alley toward the light lay the sprawled bodies of two men. Each lay in the center of a dark sticky pool that seemed to be still spreading.

Tracy got almost to them, then grabbed the top of a fence to hold on. He felt sick, physically and mentally. He heard Crayle’s voice behind him.

“Where’s the woman who screamed? There’ll be another body, in a yard or house or—”

“Shut up,” said Tracy. He didn’t want to think about that possibility. “Joe, go phone the station. I’ll look . . . Hey, gimme!”

He grabbed the revolver out of the tavern keeper’s hand and started running up the alley toward the light, around and past the corpses of the men. Up there at the other end of the alley, past the yellow light, he had caught sight of a moving figure.

The sheer forward momentum of Tracy’s pistoning legs kept him erect—for a while. Then the curb on the left came too close and got under Tracy’s feet and tripped him. The corner of a garage came straight for his face. It was like a slow-motion dream of flying. He tried to throw up a hand to ward it off, but the cornerpost of the garage came faster than his hand could move. It got larger and larger until it filled his whole field of vision, and his hand hardly moved yet. Then a red flash, into blackness. . . .

THE nurse looked down and saw that Tracy's eyes were open between the bandage across his forehead and the thicker bandage across his nose.

"A Captain Burton to see you, Mr. Tracy," she said. "Do you feel well enough to see him?"

"Arrgh," said Tracy, looking at her somberly.

It was hardly a courteous affirmative, nor even a courteous negative for that matter. The nurse was a good-looking one, too, with bright red hair and a smile. From the smile, Tracy decided she didn't know anything about him or who he was.

He'd had his eyes open for half an hour now and they were just beginning to focus properly. His head felt as if it had been used as a concrete mixer and his mouth felt like the inside of a sewer after a long dry spell.

He didn't want to see anybody. He didn't even want his own company. In fact, he particularly did not want himself around, but there didn't seem to be anything he could do about that.

"I beg your pardon?" said the nurse brightly.

"Uh," said Tracy. "Aw, send him in." Might as well get it over with. He tried to turn his head, and wished he hadn't. "Hey, wait a minute. First tell me what's all wrong with me."

But the nurse had already left.

While he waited, Tracy experimentally flexed his arms a bit, then his legs. Nothing seemed to hurt as long as he didn't move his head. He ran cautiously exploring hands along his ribs, and they seemed to be intact. Then, gently, he raised his hands to his face.

Most of it was covered with bandages. His chin stuck out the bottom and seemed to work all right on its hinges, but there wasn't any doubt about his nose being broken. There was plaster under the bandage across it. As far as he could tell with his tongue, all his teeth seemed to be there.

Footsteps beside the bed made him look up. Big, red-faced Captain Burton stood there looking down at him. His eyes didn't look any too friendly. "The conquering hero," he said.

"Hi, Cap," said Tracy. "Yeah, I—I guess I did pull a boner all right. But I hadn't seen a paper or anything, so I didn't know there was a homi on the . . . Say, get him yet?"

"Not a smell of him."

Tracy groaned. "How many, so far?"

"Just the two. He must be holed up somewhere till it cools down."

"Just two, Cap? How about the woman who screamed. Didn't she—"

"Nope. Turned out she didn't see Lambert. She screamed when she came across the bodies, taking a short cut home from the store through the alley. She ran on in a building and up to her flat."

"Uh," said Tracy. "Who were the guys?"

"One wasn't much loss," said Burton. "Buck Miller, used to be a Col-doni mobster. You remember him, I guess. Other chap—his name was Randall—was a grocer, had his store there."

"Buck Miller," said Tracy wonderingly. "What was he doing there?"

THE captain looked irritated.

"What's it matter? It's a public alley. There are a couple of taverns there with back entrances on it."

"Did you check 'em yet?"

"No. Why should we? What do we care what he was doing in the alley?"

"I dunno," Tracy admitted. "Guess I'm still going in circles. What's wrong with me, besides a broken smeller?"

"Bruises and contusions," said Burton. "And a suspension."

"Hey! I wasn't on duty, Cap. On my own time I got a right to . . . Well, anyway, I don't drink anything often, do I? And I could name a few of the boys who do a lot oftener than—"

"So could I," cut in Captain Bur-

ton dryly, "but they don't buy drinks for homicidal maniacs on the loose."

"But how'd I know . . . Aw, skip it. How long's the suspension?"

"There'll be a hearing before the board, tomorrow morning at ten. You ought to be out of here by then. If not, we give you a postponement."

Tracy sighed. "Okay, okay. But say, a hearing's usually pretty serious stuff, isn't it?"

"It usually is," said Burton. "I have a hunch this one won't be an exception, Tracy. Well, I got to go now. Don't worry about it—until you read the papers."

Tracy lay there staring at the ceiling, after Burton had left. Finally, he reached over and got a cord with a buzzer-button on the end of it. He pushed the button and nothing happened. After half a minute he pushed it again. And when nothing continued to happen, he held the button down steadily until the nurse appeared in the doorway.

"Yes, Mr. Tracy?" she asked.

"Will you get me a paper? This morning's *Blade*?"

"Just a minute. There'll be one in the waiting room, unless someone's thrown it away already. But the evening papers will be out soon. Wouldn't you just as soon wait until—"

"Huh-uh. It's the *Blade* I want to see in particular."

### CHAPTER III

#### TROUBLE AT TWILIGHT



WHILE the nurse was gone, Tracy experimented with his neck, and found he could turn his head. Encouraged, he raised himself to a sitting position and propped the pillow on end against the head of the bed, to be in a better position for reading.

He decided that he probably would live, after all. The pain from his nose was only a dull throb that could be

ignored, and the headache was merely a matter of time.

A copy of the *Blade*, rather the worse for wear and with the sections out of order, was put in his lap by the nurse.

"Anything else I can bring you?" she asked brightly.

"Naw," said Tracy. "I mean, no, thanks. Unless maybe I better have an anesthetic while I read about . . . Skip it. I was kidding."

The sports section was on top, with a headline about a fourteen inning tie between the Reds and the Giants. He put it regretfully aside, and hunted out the front page.

The main banner head was by Mars out of Europe, but the Lambert case story was not hard to find. It was topped by a four-column head:

HOMICIDAL MANIAC STILL AT LARGE  
SLAYS TWO IN DOWNTOWN ALLEY

And the three-column sub-head in 24-point Goudy Bold:

Headquarters Detective Gives Killer  
Access to Lethal Weapon

Tracy winced a little. He closed his eyes and opened them and the sub-head was still there. Maybe he *should* have asked the redhead for an anesthetic to go with the newspaper. Well, the story itself couldn't be any worse than the heading, so he read on:

Carl Lambert, 37, homicidal maniac who escaped at four o'clock yesterday afternoon from Belleview Asylum, killed two men last night at about 7:40 P.M. and is still at large. The victims were Walter (Buck) Miller, 35, of 115 Beecher Street, and H. J. Randall, 44, grocer, of 330 Corey Street.

Both killings took place in the alley between Corey and Main Streets, at a point approximately behind the grocery store and living quarters of Randall. A knife, presumably one stolen from the back room of the tavern of Joe Hummer, 324 Corey Street, was the weapon used by the homicidal killer.

"Huh," said Tracy. "Homicidal

killer'. That guy Crayle needs lessons in English."

The bodies were first seen by Mrs. E. Scarlotti, who lives on the second floor at 334 Corey Street. She screamed and ran upstairs to phone the police. Her screams aroused the attention of—

Tracy's eyes skipped down a few lines and caught the sub-head in minion bold:

Police Detective Aids Maniac

He gritted his teeth and read on from there:

The maniac was unwittingly aided by Mortimer Tracy, 41, Headquarters detective. Tracy, who was in an exhilarated condition, had been accosted in Corey Street, shortly prior to the murders, by Carl Lambert, who posed as a panhandler asking for money. Instead of taking Lambert in charge for begging, which was the detective's duty as a public officer, even though he was not on duty at the time, Tracy took him into the tavern of Joe Hummer, and instructed Hummer . . .

**T**HERE was more of it, much more. That was just the start, and it got worse. Much worse. Tracy had read it through twice and was staring at a hole in the wall by the foot of his bed when the nurse came back.

"How do you feel, Mr. Tracy?" she asked.

Tracy looked at her suspiciously. "Swell," he said. "Why?"

"I was wondering if you'd read the editorial page, too."

"Huh?" said Tracy, and glowered at her. "What's it to you, anyway?"

"Nothing, but—"

"But what?"

"It's none of my business, of course. But if you just read that article, you're feeling very sorry for yourself, aren't you?"

"Well—"

"Sure you are. I don't blame you, in a way. It was sheer bad luck. You might take a few drinks a thousand



The match caught the gleam of the knife that lashed out of Tracy's stomach

times and nothing like that would—”

“I haven’t taken a few drinks a thousand times,” said Tracy. “That was the first time in—well, in years. And, of all the people in town, he had to go and pick *me*.”

“That’s what I mean,” said the red-headed nurse. “You’re still sorry for yourself. If you read that editorial, you might get mad and do something about it.”

“Do what?”

“Maybe find Carl Lambert—before he kills anyone else.”

“How?”

“The newspaper said you were a detective.”

“But listen,” said Tracy. “The whole department’s after him. An organized search. What could *I* do?”

“I don’t know. I merely suggested that you might read that editorial about yourself. Maybe you’d find it funny, or maybe—”

“Okay, okay, okay,” said Tracy.

He began to look through the disordered newspaper. He heard the door close, just as he found the editorial in question.

He read the first half of it only. . . .

It was twilight again when Tracy left the hospital and as he walked down the street there was a tendency, at first, for him to wobble and to weave from one side of the walk to the other. But by the time he had gone a dozen blocks and was nearing the vicinity of Corey and Third Streets, Tracy got that straightened out.

He was pretty well straightened out about what he was going to do, too, although there were a lot of “ifs” to that. What the second step would be depended on where the first took him, and the third depended on the second. Yeah, naturally. He was going to do the unnatural thing for a case like this by conducting a natural investigation.

That was the one thing which, according to what Cap Burton had said, the police had not done. Undoubtedly,

they had drawn a beautiful dragnet, and undoubtedly they had every available radio car at a strategic spot ready to investigate reports of a tall, thin man in ill-fitting clothes seen at such and such a place. And probably, with every housewife in the city scared stiff, there were plenty of such reports for them to investigate.

But there was one thing they had not done, apparently. They had assumed—undoubtedly correctly—that the crimes were the motiveless slayings of a homi on the loose. And that once he had committed them, he had lammed out, and only a fortune-teller could guess where he would strike again. Sure, that was right.

**B**UT—and it was the only “but” which gave Tracy a chance to work off what that editorial had done to him—they had probably ignored the very things that are strictly routine on any other murder case. They had not checked up on the scene of the crime, and the witnesses, and probably they had not bothered to check what the victims were doing at that time and place.

Of course, if this Randall guy lived there and ran a grocery there, that would not be hard to explain. But “Buck” Miller didn’t live there. What had he been doing there?

And what, another part of Tracy’s mind wanted to know, did it matter what he was doing there? How could it help to find where this Carl Lambert was *now*?

“Shut up,” said Tracy, to that questioning voice in his mind.

If he took that attitude, he had no way to start in on things. He might as well wander about the streets at random, hoping for lightning to strike him. What if he couldn’t see what things like that had to do with finding Lambert? Heck, nine-tenths of the time there didn’t seem to be any reason for going through the routine steps in solving a crime, until suddenly you asked an ordinary ques-



tion and got an answer you didn't expect.

It was almost twenty-four hours after—well, after what happened twenty-three hours ago. Fifteen hours before ten o'clock tomorrow morning. But fifteen hours from now would be time enough to think about that.

Let's see. It had been right about here that the guy had come up to him and bummed him for money. Had he seen the guy before that?

Tracy stood there, thinking, forcing his mind back through what seemed to be heavy fog. Sure, he remembered now. The thin man stepped out of that very doorway.

Tracy walked up to the door. It was locked, and there was a "Store for Rent" sign behind the glass panel. Well, it was a million-to-one shot, but he couldn't overlook even that odds-on a bet.

He took a ring of skeleton keys out of his pocket and found one that opened the door. He looked in, using his flashlight, and saw he need not have been suspicious. Dust was thick on the floor, and it had not been disturbed in weeks. Lambert had not been in there—before or after. He had merely waited in the doorway for a sucker to come along.

Tracy strolled on slowly, thinking.

A Mrs. Scarlotti, second floor at 334 Corey, a few doors down from Joe's, had, according to the newspaper account, discovered the bodies, and had screamed before she ran in to phone for the police. That scream had been what had sent him and Hummer and Crayle out into the alley.

Tracy turned in at Number 334 and climbed a flight of steps to the second floor. He rapped on the door at the head of the stairs.

**F**OOTSTEPS approached the inside of the door.

"Who's there?" a woman's voice called.

"Headquarters detective," said Tracy. "Are you Mrs. Scarlotti? Just want to ask you a few questions, about last night."

"I . . . My husband isn't here, I—I can't open the door. The papers and the radio tell us not to open unless we know—"

"Sure," said Tracy. "Wait a minute."

He took his identification card out of his wallet and slid it under the door. It was pulled on inward, and in a moment the door opened. Tracy took back the card and leaned against the door post as he replaced it in his wallet.

"Will you tell me just how you happened to discover the bodies, Mrs. Scarlotti?"

"Why, sure, but—" She looked at him, not so much suspicious this time as curious. "But four times I told the whole story. To your Mr. Burton, and to—"

Tracy nodded. "Yes, of course. But Captain Burton was taken off the case, and I wanted to hear your story myself. Of course, he told me most of it before they took him away but—"

"Took him away? Why, what—"

"Oh, nothing serious, Mrs. Scarlotti. Appendicitis. But they operated right away and got it in time. So, if you don't mind running over the story once more—"

Obviously, Mrs. Scarlotti didn't mind at all. And obviously she had told the story a great deal more often than four times. That number, of course, had not counted friends and neighbors. And, like a snowball rolling downhill, the story had gained length with each telling.

Her reasons for having returned from the store, and which store it was and all she had purchased, seemed to go back almost to the time she had married Scarlotti. And Scarlotti was a window-cleaner by trade and she always worried for fear he would fall. Even that fact was woven

into the story. But Tracy listened patiently, and learned nothing of importance.

He leaned for a while against the other side of the doorway, and then back where he had been, and wished he had gone in and sat down to listen.

Finally the torrent of words slowed down.

"Uh, thanks," he said. "I guess that's about all I need to know. You—uh—told it so well, you didn't leave any questions for me to ask."

He took a step backward and started to turn. Then he said:

"Oh, by the way. You said you told your story four times. Who did you tell besides Captain Burton?"

"Oh, the other three were reporters. They were the ones that were really interested. Mr. Burton just wanted to know whether I'd seen which way the killer ran, and I hadn't seen him at all. I had a hard time making Mr. Burton listen. But the other three men were nice. One was a Mr. Crayle from the *Blade*, and the other two from the *Sentinel*."

"Two from the *Sentinel*? Did they come together? No, of course not, or you wouldn't have said four times you told the story. But why did the *Sentinel* send two men?"

SHE looked at him, her eyes a bit puzzled.

"You know, I never thought to ask. Well, maybe the explanation is something like your case. I mean, the police sending two men."

"Hmm," said Tracy. "It might be interesting if it was. Do you recall their names?"

"The first was—I believe his name was Smithson or something like that. Not very tall, and wore thick glasses."

"Smithens," said Tracy. "I know him. The other?"

"He called late this afternoon. His name—I believe it was Riley. Yes, I'm sure it was. Walter Riley."

"I can't quite place him," said Tracy honestly. "I thought I knew

all the *Sentinel's* leg-men. What'd he look like?"

"Well, I'd say he was about thirty. About your height—no, a little less. But he was stockily built, weighed almost as much as you do. Kind of a yellowish complexion. I didn't notice the color of his eyes. But he had dark hair, and kind of bushy eyebrows. He wore a dark brown suit, and I think a yellow shirt. That's what made me notice his complexion. I guess that's all I can remember."

"You've got a swell memory," said Tracy. "Did he show you any credentials? I suppose he did, though, or you wouldn't have let him in."

"I—I don't believe he did," Mrs. Scarlotti said thoughtfully. "I was sweeping the stairs when he came, so there just wasn't any question of opening the door for him, and I don't believe I asked for credentials. I could see right away that he didn't look anything like those descriptions of this Carl Lambert. And, anyway, he looked familiar. I think I've seen him around."

"Around here? Nearby?"

"I think so. Say, you don't mean you think that he—that he wasn't what he said he was, or that he was dangerous?"

"Not at all, ma'am, not at all," said Tracy. "I just thought I knew all the reporters in town and I was trying to place him. But just the same, you stick to that idea of yours of not opening the door unless you know who's there. It's a good idea. Well, thanks lots."

## CHAPTER IV

### LONG-SHOT GAMBLE



MORTIMER TRACY walked down the stairs more slowly and thoughtfully than he had gone up them, and when he went into Joe Hummer's tavern he merely waved at Joe and crossed to the telephone on the wall.

He dialed the number of the *Sentinel*, and asked to talk to Walter Riley.

"Sorry," said the operator. "We have no Mr. Riley here."

"He works days," said Tracy. "I didn't think I'd catch him there now, but maybe you can tell me how I can reach him."

"We have no Walter Riley here, sir. Day or night. There's a Mr. William Riley in Circulation. He's not here now, but—"

"I could have got the first name wrong," said Tracy. "Is this William Riley a stockily-built dark-haired man of about thirty?"

"No, sir. He's quite an elderly gentleman. I have a list of all employees here, and there is no—"

"Listen, Tracy," Joe said, "I read that *Blade* business, and I wouldn't blame you if you're sore at Crayle. But he'll probably be in here in a few minutes and—well, don't start any trouble, will you?"

"He'll be in here? How come?"

"I mean he probably will. He eats downtown after work—his shift ends at six-thirty—and generally drops in here for a few minutes on his way home, see? About this time, like last night. But listen, if you pop him one it'll just make things worse."

"Okay," said Tracy. "There's the door now. Is it—"

Joe glanced up. "Yeah," he said. "Hullo, Mr. Crayle."

"Hi, Joe—Tracy." The reporter



## FOUND—ONE CORPSE!

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# DATE WITH MURDER

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"Guess I just made a mistake, Sister. Never mind, and thanks."

He put the receiver back on the hook and walked over to the bar.

"Tracy," said Joe, "you look like something the cat dragged in. Have a drink?"

"Sure. Lemon soda, unless you got some coffee hot, maybe."

"Got coffee. With or without?"

"Black. Say, this is about the time I was in here last night. Maybe the same news program's on. Turn on the radio, Joe. I want to see if there's anything new on Lambert."

Joe nodded and flipped the switch before he went back after the coffee. The European news was still on when he came back with it.

came on up to the bar, not too confidently. "Say, Tracy, I hope you don't think there was anything personal in that article. I didn't—"

"Sure," said Tracy. "Shut up."

"I want you to know I didn't write that editorial."

"Shut up, I said," Tracy snapped. "I want to catch this broadcast."

He missed the first words. The voice on the radio was just saying "—are still searching for Carl Lambert, the escaped maniac who killed two men last night. The activities of the Police Department are under severe criticism by—"

"Shut it off, Joe," said Tracy. "I wanted to be sure nothing new had come in. Listen—you, too, Crayle.

wasn't exactly myself last night. Were there any angles you know of that got overlooked, maybe?"

CRAYLE looked at him curiously. "What do you mean, angles?"

"You sound like you got something, Tracy," Joe said. "Give."

Tracy shook his head slowly.

"Huh-uh. Well, maybe I got something, but I don't know what it is. Listen, do you know anyone fits this? About five feet nine or ten; heavily built; sallow skin, dark hair and bushy eyebrows. Yesterday he wore a dark brown suit and yellow shirt. Might be a newspaperman or might not."

Joe's eyes widened.

"What could another guy have to do with this Lambert? Another nut or something? That's silly."

"Yeah," Tracy admitted. "But do you know a guy like I described? Or you, Crayle?"

"Um," said Crayle. "No newspaperman, Tracy. Unless Ronson of the *Sentinel*. No, you wouldn't call his eyebrows bushy, and anyway I saw him yesterday and he wore blue serge. But, say, how about Hank Widmer?"

Tracy whistled. Then he drained the last of his coffee and stood up.

"Hey," said Joe, "let us in on it. What could Hank Widmer have to do—with Carl Lambert?"

"I haven't an idea," Tracy told him. "But I hanker to know."

"You mean a guy described like that was seen around here or something yesterday? But how would that tie him in with a homi killing a couple people?"

Tracy grinned. "I was kidding you, Joe. It wasn't yesterday. It was today, this afternoon."

"But there haven't been any murders today."

"Not yet," said Tracy.

He went out, leaving them staring at him.

It had been a nice exit, Tracy re-

alized as he reached the sidewalk, but it would have been less spectacular if Joe and Crayle had known that he didn't really know a thing. He wasn't even guessing yet. He was merely trying to guess.

And there didn't seem to be even an intelligent guess that would tie up Carl Lambert and Hank Widmer, except through Buck Miller, one of the men Lambert had killed. Hank Widmer—and that was the reason Tracy had whistled—was Buck Miller's pal. Both members, or they had been not so long ago, of the Coldoni mob.

All right, where did that get him? A homicidal maniac, who was not and never had been a criminal in the ordinary sense of the word, who could not possibly be tied up with gangsters, had escaped from an asylum. Thus far he had killed two men, one of whom was a Coldoni gangster. The other was a grocer. And where would a grocer fit in?

Tracy swore and began to walk slower so that—he hoped—he could think better. What did it matter that the other guy was a grocer, or that Miller was a crook? A homicidal maniac didn't ask questions or care whom he killed, did he?

But then why had Hank Widmer gone to see Mrs. Scarlotti this afternoon, posing as a reporter in order to question her?

Maybe it hadn't been Hank Widmer. That description was general enough to fit quite a few guys, of course. But if it wasn't Widmer, then Tracy didn't have a lead. Yes, for the sake of seeing where it got him, he would assume that Widmer had called on Mrs. Scarlotti.

Where did that get him? Nowhere.

Except that his feet were taking him in the direction of the garage where he kept his car, and the only reason he could have for wanting that car would be to drive out to the Green Dragon, where one would be most likely to run into Coldoni. Or Hank

Widmer. And most likely to run into trouble. If he tried arresting or questioning people without knowing even what questions he wanted to ask them.

**T**HEN he laughed. Trouble? He couldn't be in any worse trouble, short of occupancy of a slab at the morgue, than he was in right now, could he?

He began to walk faster. But by the time he had driven the car out of the garage, he realized that it was still a bit early for the Green Dragon. He drove slowly and roundabout, thinking. The thinking, too, was slow and roundabout. If Hank Widmer had impersonated a reporter to question the woman who had discovered the bodies of Miller and Randall, then it meant there was something fishy.

But what? It was absurd to think of a tie-up between Carl Lambert and the alky ring. Could it be that. . . . But no, there was no doubt about the identity of the tall man he, Tracy, had taken into Joe Hummer's to buy a drink. There had been a picture of Carl Lambert in the *Blade*, and there wasn't any doubt about identity.

The doorman at the Green Dragon did not recognize Tracy at first. Then he grinned as though the plaster cast on the detective's nose was funnier than Charlie Chaplin.

"If you like it that much," Tracy said, "maybe I could arrange for you to have one too. Is your best customer here?"

The doorman pretended not to understand.

"Who?" he wanted to know.

Tracy glowered at him, and walked on in. He stopped at the cigar counter and took his time about buying cigarettes and lighting one of them. He knew Coldoni was there. His car had been outside across the street. And there was a communicator that the doorman could use in talking to the barman in the main room at the rear.

The doorman had understood him all right, and he would phone back that a man from Headquarters was looking for Coldoni. And if Coldoni made himself scarce, it might mean that he didn't want to be found, that he had something on what would be his conscience if he had one.

That would tell Tracy something, even if he didn't know what. And if Coldoni scrambled—well, there wasn't anything Tracy was ready to ask him anyway. Maybe there would be after he had seen Widmer.

But Coldoni, dapper and supercilious as ever, was lounging against the bar. He turned, as Tracy walked in, and smiled with his lips.

"Ah," he said, "the conquering hero, with the scars of battle."

Tracy walked on past him without a word or a glance and opened the door to the room behind the bar. Nothing he could have said to Coldoni, he knew, would get his goat as much as completely ignoring him. It was imagination, of course, but he thought he could feel the cold, angry stare of Coldoni on the back of his neck.

There were four men sitting around a card table in the back room, one of them Hank Widmer. The game had just started, apparently, and was being played desultorily for small stakes until more players, suckers preferred, should join the game.

Tracy ignored the others.

"Hullo, Widmer," he said. "Want to talk to you."

Widmer was wearing, Tracy noticed, a dark brown suit and a shirt that was almost yellow.

Widmer glanced up at Tracy insolently, then turned back to the game, lifting up the corner of the hole card he had just been dealt and leaning backward to peer at its under side.

"Go ahead," he said. "I can listen while I play."

"Not here," said Tracy. "Down at the station. Some of the other boys

have questions to ask you, too."

"You wouldn't mean this is an arrest?"

"That's just what I would mean."

**T**HE dealer, with an ace up, tossed in a red chip.

"Too much," Widmer said, and turned down his up card. Then he looked at Tracy again. "What for?"

"Suspicion," Tracy told him. "Suspicion of anything you want to be suspected of. Want to come along willingly? I'd just as soon you didn't myself."

He heard footsteps and knew that Coldoni had left the bar and come over to the doorway.

"Looking for trouble, copper?" Coldoni's soft voice said.

"I'd love it," said Tracy, without turning.

Coldoni chuckled. "Go with the guy, Hank," he said. "He hasn't got anything on us. And I'll have a mouthpiece there by the time you get there. He can't hold you."

"Thanks, boys," Tracy said. "That's too, too swell of you."

He stepped backward and his heel came down on the pointed toe of Coldoni's shoe.

"Oops, sorry," Tracy said, but he threw his weight the wrong way for an instant before he recovered his balance and stepped sideward.

Coldoni's face was white as Tracy jerked around to face him, and his hand had gone, almost as though unconsciously, toward his lapel. But Tracy's own hand was already inside his coat, and Coldoni's froze where it was, then dropped. But his thin, white face looked like a devil mask.

"Curse you, copper," he said.

Tracy grinned. "I am an awkward lummo, ain't I? Even the newspapers think so. Ready, Widmer, or shall I—"

The sallow-complexioned man stood up and put his chips into his coat pocket.

"I'll keep these, boys," he said.

"Back in an hour or two. Hold my seat." He strolled toward Tracy.

"If you got a heater, better park it," Tracy said. "The boys at Headquarters might not like your carrying one. They're funny that way."

Deliberately he turned his back on both Widmer and Coldoni and started for the door. But he took only two steps, then stopped and waited. Those two steps brought him to a point where he could see behind him in the glass of a picture that hung on the wall beside the door. It was not a mirror, but the picture was a glossy print and the light shone on it diagonally. In the glass, he could see both men.

No gun exchanged hands as Widmer passed his chief. Apparently Widmer was not packing one. But his hand darted to the breast pocket of his coat and flipped out a small leather-bound notebook. Coldoni took it and slid it into his own pocket.

Tracy let it go. That notebook would be some addresses of customers of the alky ring, but the police knew most of them already. It would not be proof of anything, and anyway Tracy was not interested in alky tonight. Not unless he could find out how—if at all—alky without tax concerned Carl Lambert.

At the door he turned and said:

"Don't count on getting him back too soon, Coldoni. It's tough to get habeas corpus on a murder rap."

He watched Coldoni's face, and Widmer's for reaction. But there was not a sign of anything except bewilderment, and possibly a bit of relief. And both looked genuine, but you couldn't tell.

Widmer grinned. "I'll phone and let you know who I'm supposed to've murdered, Chief," he said. "So long."

**B**EFORE Tracy got into the car, he frisked Widmer to be sure about a gun. Widmer was not heeled.

Tracy headed the car toward Third and Corey Streets. If there was a

light showing at the Scarlotti place, he would take Widmer up there and get Mrs. Scarlotti to identify him as her caller of the afternoon. Then it would be tougher for Widmer to wriggle out of explaining.

He swung the car in at the curb in front of Joe Hummer's. If the Scarlotti place was dark, Tracy had another idea that involved the use of Joe's telephone. He was still working in the dark, and maybe hunting in the dark for a black cat that was not there, but he had a hunch something might happen if he kept throwing monkey wrenches into the machinery.

One monkey wrench would be the fact that Widmer, whether or not he talked, would not show up any more tonight, either back at the Green Dragon or at Headquarters where a mouthpiece would be waiting to spring him.

"You're waiting for me a minute here, Hank," Tracy said. "And just to keep you from getting ideas—"

He took out his handcuffs and snapped one of them around Widmer's left wrist, the other to the steering post.

"What the devil are we doing here?" Widmer demanded. "Don't tell me you're going to leave me here and go in there to get tanked up."

Tracy grinned at him, but didn't answer. He got out of the car and walked up to 334 Corey, and into the areaway alongside the building. There wasn't any light on the second floor. He mumbled something, and went up and rang the bell anyway.

After a couple of minutes a small, wiry Italian with curly black hair came to the door, dressed in an old bathrobe. He was about half the size of the woman Tracy had talked to.

"Mr. Scarlotti?" Tracy asked, and showed his badge. "Police. Awful sorry if you have to wake your wife, but I'd like her to identify someone I have in the car. I'll bring him up, when she's ready."

The wiry little man shook his head. "Elda, she's-a not here. She's-a very upset about finding those men stabbed. I send her spend a few days with her sister in Buffalo. She no feel-a good."

Humph, thought Tracy, she had pulled a fast one to wangle herself a vacation. She had *enjoyed* the excitement and having something to talk about. She feel-a swell. But if she was gone, that was that.

"Well," he said, "sorry if I waked you up."

"But who you wan-a her to see? She no see guy who stabbed—"

"Naw, I know that," Tracy said. "Another guy—one who came here to talk to her today. Said he was a reporter and gave her a phony name."

"So? For what?"

"I dunno, yet," admitted Tracy. "Maybe you could guess?"

The wiry little man shook his head slowly.

"But," he said helpfully, "if he talk-a to my Elda and tell-a her he's . . . Say, I go down and punch-a his face and make-a him tell why he—"

Tracy grinned. "Thanks, but I've thought of that myself. I can handle it." He turned away, then remembered the monkey wrench policy. "The guy," he said, "is a member of Coldoni's mob. That suggest anything?"

Again Scarlotti shook his head slowly.

"No. But then maybe it's-a not so good idea to punch his face."

Tracy laughed. "It's still a good idea. Well, so long, and thanks."

He shouldn't, he realized, have mentioned the Coldoni angle. Now, if it came to a point of Mrs. Scarlotti having to identify Widmer, he would have to get in touch with her somehow before her husband saw her. Obviously the Italian had a normal fear of getting in wrong with gangsters and would advise his wife not to stick her neck out.

But Scarlotti's reaction had been

natural. He had not pretended not to know who the gangster was, nor given any other cause to be suspected.

## CHAPTER V

### DEAD END



**B**USINESS was picking up in Joe Hummer's tavern. Crayle was still at the bar, occupying the same stool he had been sitting on when Tracy had left a couple of hours ago.

"Hi, Tracy," Crayle said. "How's about another cup of coffee? Or are you on the wagon again?"

Joe came back from waiting on one of the tables.

"Hullo, Tracy," he said. "Have something on Crayle? He's got the zipper open on his weasel-sack."

Tracy shook his head. "Just want to use your phone, Joe. Got a friend waiting for me outside."

"Bring him in," suggested Crayle.

He and Joe turned their heads to look out through the glass at Tracy's car. "What the heck, Tracy?" Crayle said. "That's—"

"Name no names," Tracy interrupted. "He's bashful. He'd rather stay out there."

He took his notebook out of his vest pocket and flipped through it to find the number he intended to call, then walked back to the telephone before Crayle could ask any more questions.

It was a local toll call, to the sheriff of an outlying village twenty miles from town, a man who was a good friend of Tracy's. The detective pitched his voice low so Crayle would not hear the number or the message.

"Hey, Tracy," called Crayle, as the detective replaced the receiver and started for the door. "Let us in on it. What's up?"

"Read about it in the *Sentinel*," Tracy told him, and went on out and got back in the car.

He had driven quite some distance when suddenly Widmer looked around with narrowed, suspicious eyes.

"What the devil?" he demanded. "This isn't the way to the station."

"That's right," Tracy said gravely. "Guess I must be a bit lost. Well, we'll keep on and maybe we'll get to it."

He swung the car into an arterial that led out of the city.

"Listen, copper, there's a name for this. Kidnaping. And a n y w a y, what's it all about?"

"Save your breath for answering questions, when I ask them."

"You'll lose your job for this, Tracy. I'll—"

"Don't make me laugh. Unless I pull a rabbit out of a hat, I haven't got any job to lose. This is my last night, and I aim to have fun."

"While you can still hide behind a badge, huh? Well, listen, if you retire tomorrow, you better pick a nice quiet island about four thousand miles from—"

"Shut up," said Tracy.

He drove on in silence, out past the last diminishing buildings of the city's outskirts. Ten miles out he swung the car into a side road, from it to a dirt road that looked as though it led to nowhere. A mile up the dirt road he stopped.

"End of the line," he said. "Get out."

"If you think you can get away with—"

Tracy put the heel of his palm in Widmer's face and pushed, hard. The gangster's head hit against the glass of the door with a thud. With his other hand, Tracy reached across and yanked down the handle of the door.

Widmer tumbled out of the car, barely managing to stay on his feet. He recovered his balance while Tracy was climbing out after him, and started a swing at the detective's face.

Tracy caught the blow on his left forearm and then jumped down off



the running-board, adding the momentum of his descent to a short vicious right-hander that caught Widmer in the chest and sent him backward. He stumbled in the shallow ditch and fell.

"And now," said Tracy, "I'm not hiding behind any badge. This is strictly unofficial."

He took the badge off the under side of his coat lapel and tossed it behind him onto the seat of the car. He took his automatic out of the shoulder holster and put it with the badge.

"Try running," he said grimly, "and I'll pick up that gun again and shoot your legs from under. Otherwise it's even. Now get up."

Hank Widmer didn't. He gave vent to his feelings in some scorching remarks, but he didn't seem disposed to take advantage of Tracy's being without his badge and gun.

Tracy grinned. "Don't get up, then," he said. "The Marquis of Queensbury isn't around here anyway, so he won't know it if I kick your teeth out. If you want to talk now instead of later, that's okay too. I'll give you three chances. One. Two. Th—"

"What do you want to know, blast you?"

"That's better," said Tracy. "Where's Carl Lambert?"

"Where's. . . Are you crazy?"

"You're supposed to answer questions, not ask them. In case you didn't understand, we'll start over on those three chances. I asked you—where's Carl Lambert? One. Two—"

"I don't know. Good glory, Tracy, I never saw the guy! I never heard of him until I read he had escaped!"

Widmer, obviously cowed, was sitting up now, drawn back as far as he could get against the fence at the roadside. He seemed to see that his only chance to avoid a beating was to talk, and once he started, he talked fast.

"Listen, Tracy, I been in town only

a year, so I didn't know about the Lambert case when he was sent up. I mean, put in. What the devil makes you think I'd know anything about a homicidal—"

"There you go asking questions again," interrupted Tracy. "All right, you answer it yourself. You know I have a reason for tying you up with Lambert. You tell *me* what it could be."

"There isn't any reason, Tracy. I don't know how—"

TRACY stepped closer and said, "One. How do you like the way I look with a cast on my nose? Funny? Well, you'll look funnier with one of these *and* your front teeth out. Two. Th—"

"Wait! You mean Mrs. Scarlotti?"

"I might," Tracy admitted. "What about Mrs. Scarlotti?"

"I—oh, all right, all right. I'll start at the beginning, but it's a mare's nest. It was this guy Lambert killed them all right."

"Was it?"

"Sure. You must've found out I talked to this Scarlotti dame and jumped to the idea that there was something fishy. Well, I had something of the same idea, but—well, it wouldn't wash. I decided I'd been seeing the bogey-man."

"Just what was this idea?"

"You know well enough what I'm talking about."

"Forget what I know. You tell me."

"Well, it just seemed fishy that out of a whole city full of people, Buck Miller was the one who got bumped by a homi on the loose. It—well, it was a coincidence, that's all. But I wanted to make sure."

"How about Randall?"

"Who?"

"H. J. Randall."

"Oh, yeah, the grocer. No, there isn't any tie-up there. That's partly what made me decide the homi angle was on the up-and-up."

TRACY looked at him closely. "That and what else?" he demanded.

"Oh, *all* of it. Your story, the way the papers gave it, and Crayle's and Hummer's and—well, it all added up. It couldn't have been anything but the loose nut, could it? You and Hummer both got a good look at him. Wasn't it this Lambert?"

Tracy ignored the question. "You thought it might not be. Who did you think might have killed Buck Miller? You knew him pretty well, didn't you?"

Widmer nodded. He was talking freely now, as though having kicked loose with what he had already said, he had nothing further to hide and was even interested in finding out if Tracy knew anything.

"Yeah, Buck Miller and me—well, I guess I was his closest friend. We worked together on—on whatever we worked on."

Tracy grinned at the circumlocution.

"You mean on carrying out whatever orders the boss gave you," he said. "We'll skip that. But did anyone have any reason for wanting Buck out of the way?"

"No." Widmer shook his head, then hesitated. "Well, I've gone this far and I might as well say that there might have been a reason I didn't know about. I had a hunch, for the last couple weeks, that Buck was holding out something on me. And he had a new dame."

"What's her name?"

"Marilyn Breese. A pony at the Troc. But she wouldn't have anything to do with it, Tracy. All I meant about her was that she was costing him plenty dough. And he had it. That isn't squealing because—what the heck, he's dead."

"You mean you think he had more money the last couple weeks than he should have had, from sources you knew about?"

"That's it. I dunno where he got

it, and it don't matter now. But then when he got killed—well, it was silly I guess, but I thought maybe—"

"So you turned detective and conducted an investigation on your own hook. Coldoni know about your little idea?"

Hank Widmer shook his head again.

"Huh-uh. And listen, if it gets out about me talking to Mrs. S., I'm going to have to do some tall explaining to the boss. He'll want to know why I didn't come to him with it."

"And why didn't you?"

"Well—look, Tracy, you got some idea what things are all about. Suppose Buck had crossed the boss. Suppose it wasn't this Lambert bumped him. Who would be the next most likely guy? And would the boss like to have me doing any guessing out loud? I ask you."

Tracy thought it over a minute. It was disappointing. He'd hoped for more, something that would give him a definite lead. But what Hank Widmer had just told him made sense and it rang true. Apparently he and Hank had had the same idea. It had led Hank to a brick wall, and Tracy didn't see how he was going to get over that wall himself.

If Carl Lambert really *had* killed the gangster and the grocer, then that was that. Curse it all, he didn't have any real reason to think anything else had happened.

But that had been over twenty-four hours ago. Why hadn't the homicidal maniac struck again? According to his case history, he would not be sitting quietly in hiding, waiting for them to catch him. He was an extreme case, obsessed with an insatiable urge to slash people with a knife.

AND he had a knife now. Why wasn't he using it? Or did he have a knife? Had he ever had one, that is, since his escape? Or had he escaped?

"Nuts," thought Tracy. "Pretty soon I'll be wondering if there ever was such a guy and if I really tried to buy him a drink."

Widmer's voice cut into his thoughts.

"Honest, Tracy, that's all I can tell you. The whole story. Now what the devil can I tell Coldoni about what you wanted with me, that won't spill to him that I had a wrong hunch that might not set so well with him?"

"Tell him anything," said Tracy. "Maybe by tomorrow you won't have to tell him anything. I . . . Skip it. What was that notebook you handed Coldoni?"

Widmer's voice sounded wary. "What notebook?"

Tracy took his own notebook from his pocket, the one he had carried for a long time to jot down addresses.

"One like this," he said. "Almost exactly like it. That refresh your memory, or do I have to get tough again?"

"Oh, that," said Widmer. "Yeah. That couldn't have anything to do with this other business. Just routine. A list of addresses. You can guess what for, without my drawing a diagram."

"You mean a list of the taverns that buy alky."

"Whiskey," corrected Widmer.

"If you can call it that. If you had that list, it means you were handling either deliveries or collections—you and Buck, if he worked with you. Which?"

"Listen, Tracy, haven't I sung enough? And since when are you going in for revenue work?"

"The devil with the revenue work, for now," said Tracy. "Why'd you think I brought you out here instead of taking you in where a shorthander'd be taking down what you said? All I'm interested in right now is murder. Anything else is off the record, and anyway it would be your word against mine whether you said it or not."

"But what's this stuff got to do with murder?"

"Let me judge that. Which were you and Buck handling? Deliveries, or collections?"

"Okay, but it's off the record. Fifty-fifty. We collected for whatever we delivered. That's why I don't see how Buck could've been chiseling. Not without being caught."

"Maybe he was caught."

Widmer had stood up and was leaning against the fence now.

"Aw, Tracy, there's nothing in it," he said. "I tell you I had the same idea, but it won't wash. Assume he was chiseling, even if I can't see how. Give anybody you want to name all the reason you want to give 'em for rubbing him out. It's still true that he got bumped off by a maniac. The nut was there, wasn't he? You ought to know. He swipes a knife from Joe's kitchen and runs out the back way and stabs the first couple guys he comes across. What else can you make out of it?"

Tracy grunted. "Shut up, or you'll have me believing it."

"Don't you?"

"I don't want to," said Tracy. "Get in the car. I might be wrong, but I think you leveled with me."

"Okay. But listen, what am I going to tell the boss about why you picked on *me*, without admitting about me having the wild idea I had and seeing Mrs. Scarlotti?"

TRACY slid his automatic back into its holster and put the badge back on before he slid in under the wheel.

"You're going to have time to figure that out before you see him again," he said. "I got you fixed up for board and room till tomorrow afternoon. I want to find out what Coldoni does if he gets worried about you."

"Huh? You can't—"

"It's strictly legal. He's a sheriff, see? There's nothing illegal, if he finds you on the street in his town,

about arresting you as a vag, is there? I don't think you'll have any explanation he'll believe about how you got there."

"But Tracy—"

"And of course you won't have any money or identification on you when you get out of the car." Tracy grinned. "But don't let that worry you, pal. I'll mail them back to you some time tomorrow."

## CHAPTER VI

### DEATH WAITS IN DARKNESS



EARLY Tracy dropped himself on the stool by the hamburger stand counter.

"Hi, Pete," he said to the tow-headed kid back of the counter. "Put a couple on, with. And coffee."

"Sure, Mr. Tracy," said the kid, and then, hesitantly: "I read about the Carl Lambert case. You sure had tough luck, Mr. Tracy. Has anything more happened since then?"

Tracy shook his head tiredly. "Had what I thought was a lead, but it petered out on me."

He glanced up at the clock. Ten minutes after one.

He stirred sugar into his coffee, took a sip, and it made him feel a little better. But not much. He was getting sleepy and his nose and his head hurt and he wished he could go home and go to sleep.

It would not be so bad, he thought disgustedly, trying to solve a case if he could feel sure there was a case to solve. But in all probability there wasn't any. Carl Lambert had committed the two motiveless murders, then lammed out across country and, for reasons of his own, had not killed anybody else yet. Or maybe he had been hit by a truck and not yet identified or something.

Or maybe—

Nuts. He had maybed himself in circles until he was dizzy. And he

had undoubtedly increased the jam he was in at Headquarters by making an arrest after Cap Burton had told him he was suspended, even though the captain had not taken his gun and badge along, and then not showing up with the man he had arrested. He wondered if Coldoni's lawyer was still waiting at the station.

"Pete," he said, "murder is a funny thing. If you haven't the faintest idea what you're doing, you can always go around throwing monkey wrenches, and maybe you can get somebody worried."

The tow-headed kid put the hamburgers on the counter in front of Tracy, and looked interested.

"Yeah?" he asked. "How?"

"Murder is a guinea pig," said Tracy. "It has pups, or piglets or whatever you'd call it. A guy commits a murder and then he finds he had to kill somebody else to cover up. Maybe the second guy might be a grocer. Then if you can keep it rolling, he'd think, whether he's right or not, that he has to kill another guy to keep it quiet. Maybe a detective."

"Gee, you mean you think that—"

"No, but I wish I did."

The door opened and Tracy looked around as two men came in. "Hullo, boys," he said. "Anything new on short-wave about Lambert?"

"Huh-uh." The foremost of the two men shook his head. "But listen, Tracy, there's a broadcast out about you. We saw your car outside. The cap says you're supposed to be suspended but that you pulled an arrest at the Green Dragon, and then never showed up with the guy. A lawyer waited there a long time."

"Yeah," said Tracy. "That's why I didn't bring him in. I just wanted to talk to him. Got orders to bring me in, Harry, or what?"

Harry Lane looked uncomfortable.

"Well, suppose you call up the station from here, Tracy. See what the cap says. I don't want to. . . ."

"Okay, anything you say," said Tracy. He crossed over to the phone and talked into it for a while. His lips were a bit tight as he came back and, before he sat down again to finish his sandwiches, he took off his badge and handed it, with his gun, to the squad car men.

"It's okay," he told them. "You don't have to take me in. But the cap seemed to think I'd better not run around with these until after the hearing tomorrow morning anyway."

"Gee, Tracy, that's tough luck. I'm sorry."

"It's all right, Harry. Skip it."

WHILE he munched the hamburgers, Tracy heard the squad car start up and drive away. He didn't say anything more to the tow-headed kid behind the counter, and the kid had wisdom enough to keep his own mouth shut.

When Tracy got back behind the wheel of his own car, he sat there and thought a while, while he unlaced the empty shoulder holster which, without a gun, made him feel strange and lopsided.

He knew he was licked, but darned if he was going to admit it, in spite of how tired he felt. He had gambled on practically kidnaping Hank Widmer, partly to see what Coldoni's reaction would be.

Well, Widmer had, in a way, disappointed him by telling what seemed to be a straight story. So it looked like he had been barking up the wrong tree, but he was going back to the Green Dragon anyway. He was going back without a gun and without authority, but Coldoni wouldn't know that.

He drove slowly, trying to think out some course of action that might force . . . Blast it, was he still hunting in the dark for a black cat that wasn't there? Well, what if he was? He hadn't anything much to lose now. And he had the rest of the night to keep on groping.

The familiar streets grew more familiar and he saw that his route across town was taking him within a block of his own place. Well, he might as well take advantage of that to leave the bill-fold he had taken from Hank Widmer in a safe place. There had been quite a bit of money in that wallet, and he would rather not carry it around until he had a chance to mail it.

And a bit of cold water on the accessible portions of his face ought to help wake him up and make his mind work again. A shower? No, he had better not take time for that. It was getting pretty late. If only his nose would stop throbbing—

He swung the car in to the curb and climbed out. He told himself he had better hurry, but his steps up the staircase were slow and lagging. He fumbled the key, had a lot of trouble getting it into the keyhole in the dark, so much trouble that he lit a match and held it in his left hand while he put in the key and turned it with his right.

The tiny flame was dying as the door swung open toward him, but it showed him the shadowy, unidentifiable bulk of the man standing there just inside the door. And it caught the gleam of the knife that slashed out toward Tracy's stomach. A kitchen knife.

It was that gleam of dim flame on dull metal that saved him. Tracy still had hold of the door with his right hand and he slammed it inward so the edge of it struck the arm snaking forward with the knife. The impact slowed and deflected the blow, and as the door bounded back, Tracy grabbed into the darkness and caught the arm of his attacker.

He threw his weight through the now open doorway, bearing his assailant back, even as he felt the arm he held trying to twist about for a stabbing blow into his side. He had his cheek against his opponent's chest, and there were blows raining

against his head and neck. Painful blows, but not dangerous. In the reeling darkness and the close quarters, the man he struggled with could not have aim or leverage for a rabbit punch that might have ended the fight.

AS HE staggered forward, not daring to step back, Tracy slid his left hand down until it closed around the wrist of the knife-hand. Then, risking letting go with his own right hand, he bent lower and caught his right arm around the back of the knees of the man he fought, and threw his own weight forward, butting with his head.

There was a moment when they were both off-balance, then a heavy crash, and Tracy fell on top. The knife clattered against the floor. Tracy felt the man under him struggling to rise, but instead of swinging a random blow into the darkness, Tracy stuck out his hand until it felt a face. He pushed the face backward, hard and suddenly, and there was a thud against the floor. The man under him went limp.

Tracy straightened up slowly, and struck a match.

"I'll be—" he said, as it flared.

The man who had tried to kill him was Joe Hummer, the barkeeper!

It was some little time before Hummer regained consciousness, and when he did he was in no position to fight or to wield a knife. Tracy had seen to that. Nor was the barkeeper inclined to answer questions.

"Like sin I'll talk," he growled to Tracy's repeated demands. "Why should I? So you can prove I tried to kill you, and that's bad enough, but why should I stick my neck—"

"Shut up," said Tracy. "I'm telling you why. But first I'm going to finish telling you what happened. When I came into the saloon last night with an escaped homicidal maniac in tow, you recognized him, or guessed who he was, from the de-

scriptions or maybe his picture in the newspaper. And you suddenly saw how you could get away with killing a guy you had to kill—Buck Miller."

"Nuts," said Joe. "And even if you *did* guess right—"

"I said to shut up," said Tracy. He gestured with the old service revolver he had dug up out of a trunk while Joe Hummer was still unconscious, and Joe sank back into the chair. "The reason the Feds hadn't closed on the Coldoni bunch was that they didn't know where the accounts and collections were handled. Coldoni never had any records. They had searched, unofficially.

"You were the dark horse of the gang, and probably next to Coldoni himself in power. We'll find out all about that when we search your place, won't we, Joe? All right, but you'd been dragging down on the boss and Buck Miller found it out and cut himself in on the deal for extra cash. And he started bleeding you worse and you wanted a way to kill him, *if* you could do it in a way that not even Coldoni, let alone the cops, would know he was murdered at all. Nobody figures a killing by a maniac as a murder, the ordinary way."

Joe sighed. "Tracy, do I have to listen to all this hogwash? If I'm under arrest, go ahead and take me in."

"You're not under arrest. I'm not even a cop any more. Listen! Buck Miller was in the part of your building behind the kitchen, waiting to see you. You saw your chance in Carl Lambert. When you took him back to feed him, you stepped out a minute to see whether he would go for a knife. You wanted to be sure who he was.

"Then you captured him. You went on back and stalled Buck Miller, walked with him out into the alley, and stabbed him with the knife Lambert had tried to swipe.

"This poor grocer, Randall, is going or coming the back way, and he'd have been a witness, so you stabbed him too. But that was all to the good. Two killings looked more like a homicidal maniac than one. And you were back in the tavern within ten minutes, and you figured I was too interested in my drinks to know you'd been gone even that long."

TRACY grinned.

The funny part is that I never got ~~it~~," he said. "I was just mess-

saw that notebook of mine I got a phone number out of and you thought it was Widmer's and that I knew about your connection with the gang! Well, either pick up that pen and start writing or we're on our way."

Joe Hummer stood up. "Let's get going then."

"Okay, Joe. But not to Headquarters. I told you I'm not a cop any more. We're looking up Coldoni and I'm turning you over to *him* with the news that you killed Buck Miller and have been chiseling on him. I'll tell

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**DEATH FROM THE SEA**

By **VICTOR GUNN**

*Next Month's Thrill-a-Minute Novel*

ing around tonight at random, trying to start something, and in some way you got the idea that I was getting on to you and that you'd better get out of the road. But you came here to kill me, and then you'd have let Lambert go and let him get himself caught somewhere and take the rap for all three killings, besides any he might do on his own hook.

"But what made you think . . . Hey, I know! You knew I had Hank Widmer out in my car when I stopped back and"—Tracy laughed out loud and slapped his knees with the hand that didn't hold the revolver—"you

him to go to your place and search there and—well, he won't need a confession like the cops would, would he?"

Hummer's face turned pasty white. "You're kidding, Tracy. He'd . . . You wouldn't do that."

Tracy's eyes, over the bandage across the middle of his face, looked to be the color and hardness of ball-bearings.

Joe Hummer sat back slowly and gingerly in the chair, and reached for the pen and paper on the table beside him. . . .

Gray light of dawn paled the yel-

low aura of the lamp on Captain Burton's desk.

Tracy slumped wearily in the visitor's chair in front of that desk and talked as though each word cost him an effort.

"Yeah, so I went around and got Carl Lambert, too, so I could bring them both in while I was at it. But, you see, he didn't commit the murders at all. He was tied up in the empty building next to Joe's. And, like I told you, Hank Widmer's in the clink at Shelbyville. We can send for him there.

"I think that confession, and what else we'll find at Joe's, will give us enough to break up the whole gang. I'd have gone around and brought in Coldoni too, but—"

Captain Burton snorted. "But you thought you might want help to round up the rest of the gang?"

Tracy must have been too tired to recognize the sarcasm.

"Well, there's no hurry," he said defensively. "They don't know we want 'em, or that Joe's confession there tied up the gang with those old killings, including Molenaar's. They don't know we got Joe, and they'll be easy to pick up."

Captain Burton grinned and winked at the stenographer at the side of his desk who was taking notes of everything.

"I guess the rest of the Force can manage to take over from here, Tracy," he said. "Unless you really want—"

"I can, Cap, but I really ought to get a couple hours nap before that hearing at ten."

"Hearing? What hearing? Oh, yeah. Hmmm, I don't think you need to worry about attending that, Tracy. I haven't quite the authority to squash it myself, but I can promise you the inspector will. And listen, you look really done in. I have got the authority to give you another week's leave. You better go home and sleep a couple days straight, and then"—he grinned—"then maybe you ought to go out and get plastered to celebrate."

Tracy stood up. "Thanks, Cap," he said, and stuck out his hand. "But if it's the same to you, I'll go fishing. G'night."

Captain Burton watched Tracy's broad shoulders weave down the hallway, as erratically as though liquor instead of lack of sleep and physical weariness were swaying him.

"If we had more men like that on the Force," he said to the stenographer, "we wouldn't need a Force."

The stenographer looked at him. "That doesn't quite make sense, sir."

"No," said the captain, grinning. "It doesn't, does it?"

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The door burst open and two men began shooting

# The MONKEY ANGLE

By FREDRIC BROWN

**T**HE blonde's eyes were very wide and blue and she was very serious as she stared at Carter.

"You've *got* to do something," she said. "Didn't you see that picture of the kidnaped boy? How can you just sit there and not do anything?"

Carter Monk sighed deeply and braced his feet more firmly on the desk. "Angel," he said, "of course I'm going to sit here. Why should I do anything else?"

"Because maybe you could do something. There have been other times when the police couldn't get to first base, and you did. You just might find him."

*Carter Monk, ace reporter, rushes into action when he scents a dire kidnaping plot that calls for swift judgment!*

"Angel," said Carter Monk, "be reasonable, will you? Now listen. I'm not a detective; I'm a columnist. I work for the *Blade*, yeah, but the *Blade* has men already covering the Harlow kidnap case. It's smeared all over page one, and they wouldn't want it in my column, and besides my column for today is done. You just typed it, if you remember."

"But—"

"Shut up. Item two. Kidnaping is a federal offense and the FBI is in on this. If I stuck my nose in, I might gum the works. A kidnap is a delicate thing to handle, Angel. Something happens to scare the kidnapers and—*blooie*—they bump off the kid and scam. After the ransom's paid and the kid is back, it's different."

"Do you really think they'll give the kid back?"

Monk grunted. "Sometimes—"

"Look," said the blonde.

A copy of the morning paper lay on one side of Monk's desk, and she turned it around so he couldn't help seeing the picture featured on the front page—the picture of a curly-headed, smiling boy of three years. The caption under it read, "Little Bruce Harlow, the kidnaped child."

A two-column head adjacent to the picture read, "To the Kidnapers" and the item under it was a poignant appeal from Walter Harlow, the well-known manufacturer. In bold-face type, it assured the kidnapers that he would meet their terms and begged them to hurry and make the contact.

It explained that it was not his fault that the police and the newspapers had learned of the kidnaping. He had been away from home the previous night, when the child was taken. The child's nurse, discovering that he was missing, had phoned the police and the story had been given out before they discovered the note under the pillow of the child's bed.

Monk didn't look at the picture. "Angel, you're being a sentimentalist," he said. "Well, maybe so am

I. But you overrate me, and I don't. How on earth can you think that I'm going to get anywhere if the organized forces of law and order—"

He broke off, staring at her moodily. He put his feet back up on the desk.

"But Carter, you *have*. Look at the Glittenden murder. Look at—"

"Nuts, Angel. I was in on those things, at the start. I had something to work on, something the police didn't have. I didn't go at them cold from the outside, after they started. Look, you got me mixed up with the Phantom. I'm not him, see? For one thing, he's got hair on top of his head and—"

"So have you, except for a little spot in the middle," said the blonde. "And it's cute. I like it."

Monk grinned. "You can't catch me that way. In fact—"

The phone rang. Monk said, "I'll take it, Angel," and swung his lanky legs down off the desk and picked up the receiver. "Carter Monk talking."

"Just a tip," said the voice on the wire. It was a thick, guttural, Teutonic-sounding voice. "Keep off the Harlow case, see?"

MONK glanced up sharply at the blonde. She was listening in on the extension phone on her own desk, and her eyes were wide with excitement.

She put a hand across the transmitter. "Keep him talking," she said. "I'll try to trace—"

Then she put her phone down quietly, still off the hook, and ran for the office door.

"What?" Monk asked. "I didn't quite get what you said."

"I think you did," said the voice, and there was a click in the receiver as he hung up.

Monk pushed the swivel chair back farther. He lighted a cigarette, blew a smoke ring, and looked at it with a jaundiced eye.

The blonde came back in. "I tried,

but the switchboard girl didn't know except that it came in on an outside trunk and by that time the call was already off and she couldn't—"

"Yeah," said Monk.

"But look, Carter." She crossed over and sat down on his desk, pulling down her skirt over shapely knees. "I heard the first part of that. So it shows I'm not the *only* one that thinks you might be able—"

Monk's eyes were closed, his face expressionless. He might have been asleep.

"That poor little boy," said the blonde. "When I think of him in the hands of people who might murder him any minute, it— Carter, you've got to try to do something. Maybe there's some little angle the police aren't working on—some little thing like those monkey tracks."

Carter Monk's eyes opened very slowly. "What monkey tracks?" he asked.

"Oh, I didn't mean them," said the blonde. "Because they found out they didn't mean anything and anyway that was a long way off. But maybe there'd be some little thing *like* that that would give you an idea that might lead—"

"What monkey tracks?"

"Bill Reilly mentioned them to me at lunch. He was out there early this morning. He took me to lunch today and he wants me to go to a movie with him tonight and I told him—"

"We were talking about monkey tracks," said Carter Monk firmly. "Or were we? If it's a gag or a stinking pun on my name, Angel—"

"Of course, it isn't. Carter, do you think I ought to go to the movies with Reilly? The girl on the switchboard went out with him once and she says—"

Monk straightened up. He said, "I'm going to give you three seconds to tell me what monkey tracks you're talking about. One. Two. Th—"

"I told you it doesn't amount to anything at all," said the blonde. She

had moved hastily out of range. "The caretaker found them, but they were across one corner of the estate, almost a mile from the house. He got excited and got a wild idea that maybe an ape or something had run off with the kid."

"And the police investigated?"

"Of course. They looked at them and decided they were real monkey tracks, but they weren't heading toward or from the house and they were a mile off, and anyway it wasn't big enough."

"What wasn't big enough for what?"

"The monkey. It wasn't big enough to carry off the boy, they said. It wasn't a gorilla or anything. Just a fair-sized monkey or maybe a baby ape or something. But it wasn't going or coming in the right direction, anyway."

"Get me Pete Zankowski on the phone, Angel," Monk said. "He's curator over at the zoo."

A MINUTE later he had the connection. "Pete?" he barked. "This is Monk. Listen, have you counted tails on Monkey Island this morning?"

"Sure I counted. They're all there. Anyway, you're behind the police on that. I was out at Harlow's."

"Oh, you saw the tracks then. What were they?"

"Young ape of some kind. I wouldn't go out on a limb on the exact species, but I'd say possibly a mimoso."

"And it wasn't from the zoo?"

"Nope."

"Oh," said Monk. "It isn't by any chance a native of this state of the union?"

"Don't be a dope. But what are you interested in it for? They found it. And they found who owned it. And they found how it got there. And they found it hadn't anything to do with the kidnaping. So where you been?"

"I think I've been taken for a ride," said Monk. "Who found out all this, and when?"

"Sergeant Dunrahan, early this morning."

Monk stared accusingly at his secretary as he put down the receiver.

"Did Bill tell you at lunch that the lead had petered out?" he asked.

"Of course. I tried to tell you. I said the tracks weren't heading toward or from—"

"Phooey. Why didn't you simply tell me they found the animal and its owner. No, don't tell me why. I know; you thought once I got interested even enough to call somebody up, my cussed curiosity would keep me at it. So you spill just enough to make me curious and— *Some day, Angel—*"

Monk glared at her a moment. Then he said, "Bah," and strode out of the office.

He got into his car, hesitated, then got out and went into the corner drug store. From the booth, he phoned Police Headquarters.

"Is Dunrahan there?" he asked, "or out at the Harlow estate?"

"I believe he just came in for a moment," said the operator. "Hold the wire and I'll see."

A moment later the sergeant's voice boomed, "Whozit?"

"Monk," said Monk. "Sarge, who owned that there now monkey?"

"Huh? Oh, the monkey. A guy by the name of Calloni. Lives in a shack out Dartown way, mile and a half from Harlow's."

"What for?"

"Whadda ya mean, what for? A guy's got to live somewhere."

"Nuts. I mean, what did he own a monkey for? Organ grinder?"

"Used to be once. He's got a little truck farm now. But say, what's this about? The monkey angle don't mean anything, and we're asking the newspapers to play down the Harlow case. We don't want stories on every little—"

"This isn't for a story," said Monk. "I'm just curious. I got monkeys on my mind. Give me the facts, and maybe I can get them off."

THE sergeant cussed, but Monk persisted, and the cop gave in.

"Okay, okay. It's on the level. Look, this guy bought this monkey or ape or whatever to train it, see? He used to be an animal trainer once and he likes monkeys because he worked with 'em. When he got fired from a circus he worked with a hand organ a while. The monkey he worked with died. He'd saved up enough for down payment on this truck farm and been running it. He bought this baby ape to train it in his spare time, and maybe if it got good, he'd sell the farm and get back with a circus."

"What was it doing on the Harlow place?"

"Nothing. It got away from him, that's all. Ran away. Just happened to cut across a corner of the estate. We found it in some woods half a mile past there. Up in a tree and sneezing after being out most of the night. Guess it got a cold or something from exposure."

"How'd you find out whose it was?"

"He asked around about it, dumb-bell. He'd reported it missing. Matter of fact, we had that report before we found the monkey. So we took it back to him and he's doctoring it."

"Oh," said Monk. "Was it a mimoso?"

"A what?"

"That was the kind of animal Zankowski said made the tracks."

"I dunno. It was a monkey; that's all I know. I ain't a specialist. Anyway, what's the difference if it was a mimoso or a begonia? It hadn't anything to do with the Harlow business."

"Um," said Monk, thoughtfully.

"Whadda ya mean, 'um'?" demanded Dunrahan. "Look, in case

you got any wild ideas like the monkey carrying off the kid, it didn't. For one reason, how could a monkey write a kidnap note?"

"You got something there, Sarge. But it could climb in a window or transom or something and then let its owner in."

"Nope. They got in a French door, and it was busted in from the outside, see? Cloth cemented over the outside of a glass pane in the door, so it wouldn't tinkle to the ground, and then they busted the glass and peeled off the cloth, leaving a hole they could reach through."

"You say 'they.' Was there more than one?"

"Two, we think. Two sets of prints on the lawn near the French door. Different sizes, but no good for identification. Just blurs."

"No ransom demand yet?"

"Nope. The original note said Harlow'd hear from 'em within twenty-four hours, but it won't be that till after midnight tonight. Now, listen, Monk, the papers got off on this with a splurge, but we don't want any more—"

"This is all off the record, Sarge. Where's this Calloni live?"

"Dartown Road, mile and a half past Harlow's. But what you want that for? I was there, just on the millionth chance, and I searched the joint and it cased okay. I got there while he was gone to get his monkey from the station. But what you want his address for? It don't— Listen, you haven't got anything on this we haven't got, have you?"

"Word of honor, Sarge, not a thing. I just got monkeys on my mind, that's all. Looks like it's on the up and up, but—"

"You gimme a pain," said Dunrahan plaintively. "I got to get back to Harlow's. I can't talk to you all day." He clicked the receiver back on the hook.

Monk got in his car and drove out the Dartown Road. Twice he

almost decided to call it off and go back to the office. But suppose the police *had* muffed the monkey angle, somehow?

A kidnaping is a rare occurrence, and so is the escape of a monkey. When the two things happen in the same neighborhood, and on the same night, might there not be a connection—even if not an obvious one?

And the thought of that curly-headed kid—

HE STEPPED harder on the gas until he came in sight of the wrought-iron gate of the driveway that led back to the Harlow house. There was a policeman on guard at the gate. Monk stopped without getting out of the car.

"Anything doing, Carey?" he called across.

The policeman shook his head. "You newspaper mugs oughta be shot for breaking that story," he said. "Old man Harlow's near frantic for fear the publicity'll scare the snatchers."

Monk nodded agreement. "But our paper's in the clear," he said. "It was the morning rags that broke it. We're playing it down, except for Harlow's appeal. And we're running a post-script reminding the kidnapers what happened to Hauptmann. No ransom note yet?"

Carey shook his head. He seemed surprised when Monk drove on without trying to talk his way in through the gate, and he peered suspiciously after the car.

Monk clocked a mile and a half on his speedometer and then slowed down. He stopped in front of a farmhouse where a woman was working on a flower bed in the front yard. Monk got out and walked over.

"Pardon me, ma'am," he said, "does a man by the name of Calloni live near here?"

The woman looked up, her face blank, obviously trying to remember the name. "Italian," Monk supplied.

"Runs a small truck farm. Has a monkey he's training."

"Oh, them," said the woman. "Fourth house down on your right."

"Thanks," said Monk. "You said 'them'—does he have a family?"

"I—I don't think so. But there are two men who live there. *And* the monkey." She sniffed, as though there was something beneath contempt in simian ownership.

Monk grinned. "Ever see the monkey, ma'am?" he asked.

"Yes. He's chained it out in the yard a few times. Why?"

"Just curious," said Monk. "How long has he lived there?"

"A couple of months, I guess. Let's see—yes, about that long. But if you're going down there, why'n't you ask him?"

"No reason," Monk assured her. "Just wanted to be sure I had the right chap. That's a nice color arrangement you got in that flower bed, ma'am. Has he had the monkey all the while he's lived there?"

"Uh—I believe not. I heard he bought it a few weeks ago."

"This other man," said Monk. "Do you know if he's a relative of Calloni's, or a hired hand?"

"No, I don't," said the woman.

She turned back to the flower bed. Monk thanked her and got back into his car. He drove on to the ramshackle two-story house which, from her description, would be the truck gardener's place.

**A** FAT, swarthy man wearing a once-white apron answered his knock on the door, and made suspicious admission of his identity as Calloni. Monk introduced himself and the door started to close in his face. He talked fast.

"I'd like to make some money for you, Mr. Calloni," he said hastily. "Ten dollars you could earn in five minutes."

"How?" The door remained slightly ajar and closed no farther.

"What for I earn ten dollars?"

"Just for an interview, that's all," said Monk. "Our paper wants a short Sunday feature on the fact that there is an animal trainer among us. I'd just like to ask a few questions on how you train monkeys, and maybe you could let me see him do a few tricks."

"Da monk sick. I no make him do tricks. Out all night—not good for monkeys in this climate, Mister. But—sure, for ten dollar I answer few questions. You say take only five minutes?"

"Right," said Monk, and pulled a ten-spot out of his wallet. "Mind if I take a glance at the monkey, even if it is sick? I can describe it better for the article if I've really seen it."

Reluctantly, the door opened wider.

The room was oppressively hot, and the reason for the heat was obvious once Monk's eyes were accustomed to the dimness of the interior. There was a hot fire going in a coal stove in one corner of the room, and the monkey lay on a pile of bedding as near to the stove as it could get without singeing its fur. It was wheezing badly.

Monk bent over it and said, "Hi there, feller. You look in a bad way." The monkey blinked red-rimmed eyes at him and bared yellow teeth without lifting its head.

"He no friendly," rumbled Calloni. "Monk bad when sick. Maybe learn to not run away. But I get him well, you bet."

Carter Monk nodded, asked a few general questions about animal training, and left.

It was getting dark. He drove slowly, thoughtfully. As he passed the entrance of the Harlow place, the policeman on duty waved him to a stop and walked over to the car.

"Sergeant Dunrahan wants to talk to you," he said. "He's up at the house. You wait here."

He went back to the gate and used

an extension phone. A few minutes later Dunrahan got into Monk's car.

"How'd you know I'd be back by here?" Monk asked.

"Didn't, for sure. But I learned from Carey you went by toward Dartown, and I figured you were heading for Calloni's. You'd have to come back same way unless you drove around by Dartown. Look, why this interest in monkeys? If you got anything on this case we haven't got, I want to know it."

"Haven't, Sarge. It was a vague hunch, but I guess it petered out. I went to look at the mimoso."

"And whadya expect to find? That it had feathers? By me, you can look at all the monkeys you want. I hate the things. Wouldn't touch one with a ten-foot-pole. They gimme the creeps."

"Maybe you do worse to them," said Monk. "How'd you go for a hamburger and coffee? Passed a stand a mile back."

Dunrahan grinned. "What we waiting for? I ain't eaten since breakfast. And this is line of duty; I can question you while we eat."

Monk started the car and turned it around.

"It's a mess, Monk," Dunrahan said. "I'm afraid they'll kill the kid. The note said they would if Harlow called cops or gave it to the papers. I oughta be back there, but the place is so full of G-men you can't turn around, and they won't let us local yokels do anything but guard duty and stuff. They're handling the ransom note and— Listen, I'm talking this much because I'm hungry and miserable, and I ain't thinking. If you phone in I said there was a second note, I'll—"

"Pay-off arranged?"

"Uh—yes and no. They're going to try a fake. I talk too much." Dunrahan broke off, and there was a new tone in his voice when he swore feelingly and stated what he'd like to do to the kidnapers.

The hamburger stand was coming up, and Monk stopped the car. "It isn't money, then?" he asked.

Dunrahan didn't look at him. "What do you think?" he said. "If it was, think Harlow wouldn't pay it? That's what's bad, Monk. If whatever little trap the Feds are setting doesn't work, they'll kill that kid. And Harlow can't—"

"I get it," said Monk. "Harlow's plant's on war work. Making something new?"

Dunrahan merely grunted.

"So they're going to try fake plans and to trap the snatchers when they try to get 'em?" Monk asked.

"What else can they try? But it won't work. They got a way of getting the papers to them that's watertight, Monk. They'll get the stuff and look it over—and those boys know what it's all about. They'll smell fake a mile off, and it's curtains for the kid."

"Tonight?"

"Yeah. Just about right now. They wouldn't let me go. I'd give a millicen bucks to—"

MONK got out of the car. "Let's get some food in us, Sarge," he said. "My brain isn't working. It hasn't been, all day."

Dunrahan didn't move. "It gets you, Monk," he said. "Sitting around back there, doing nothing. Waiting. Looking at a nice guy like Harlow dying on his feet. And there's pictures of the kid all over the place. You sit there and look at 'em and wonder what's happening to him now that those Nazi—"

Monk took hold of his shoulder and shook it. "Snap out of it, Sarge. Get some coffee in you. Come on!"

"Nuts to coffee. I better go back. I ain't hungry."

Almost by force, Monk got him inside the lunch stand and put him on a stool. "The kid's three," Dunrahan said listlessly. "I remember when my kid was—"

"Shut up, Sarge. Get it off your mind long enough to eat. Or anyway, think of angles instead of the kid. When's the pay-off?"

"Right about now. Maybe they had a look at those plans already. Maybe right now, some Nazi—is lifting the butt end of a Luger to kill the kid. And they'll do it just out of—"

"All right, go ahead and talk about it then, if you got to," Monk said. "Get it off your chest. There's nothing we can do, Sarge. Me, I had a wild idea I could, but it turned out to be a turkey."

"I ain't even had that much," said Dunrahan. "I chase around in circles all day and search one house and look at a couple of monkeys and—"

CARTER'S fingers on his arm stopped him. Stopped him suddenly and with such a grip that Dunrahan winced.

"Say that again, Sarge," Monk said.

"I said I search one house and look at a couple of monkeys. What's the matter?"

"Where were they?"

"At Calloni's. The one we found and brought back to him and the other one in the—"

Carter Monk stood up. He slapped a handful of silver on the counter and said, "Come on, Sarge."

"What's it all—" Dunrahan started.

But Monk was already running out the door, and Dunrahan followed. He got into the car as Monk gunned the motor, and the lurch of the start threw him back into the seat.

Monk shifted into high and started up the hill with every bit of speed the coupé could give him.

"Got a gun?" he asked.

"Sure. What—" Dunrahan took a deep breath and his tone of voice changed. "Oh, well, it's your party. If you got anything on Calloni, let's get there. You can tell me afterward."

They were at the top of the hill now, and Monk threw in the clutch and shifted into neutral. "We'll coast down from here and he won't hear a car stop," he said. "Maybe we don't need to worry about it because maybe he's out on the pick-up. But if he just got back—"

They slid swiftly and silently through the early dark, and came to a quiet stop just past the bottom of the hill. Monk switched off the headlights and got out. A hundred yards ahead they could see lights in Calloni's house. Lights in two rooms, one upstairs and one down.

Monk pulled off his shoes and started toward the house. At the fence he stopped.

"We're being fools, Sarge," he said. "We ought to go back for the boys at Harlow's. But you said those fake papers were already delivered. Minutes might count."

"You think there's a chance—even an off-chance—the Harlow kid's in there?"

Monk nodded. Dunrahan said, "You go back and get the Feds. I'm going in. I'd go in if I had to shoot you to do it, Monk."

Without answering, Monk slid across the fence and started across the lawn, keeping out of the swath of yellow light from the downstairs window. He came up to the side of the house, ducked under the lighted window without looking in, and made his way to the porch. Its corner post looked reassuringly solid.

Dunrahan was right behind him. He whispered, "Going in upstairs?" Monk nodded. Dunrahan shoved him slightly to one side. "Me first. I got the gun."

He climbed to a standing position on the porch railing, caught hold of the eaves and pulled tentatively. Then he clambered on up, gripping the post with his knees until he could throw his weight over the edge of the roof. Monk followed.

The tin roof of the porch creaked.



but not loudly, as they made their way to the window off the porch. The lighted window was at the back of the house. This one was dark.

THE sash slid up without much sound. Dunrahan first and then Monk, they crawled through the window and stood in the darkness inside. There was light coming through a crack under the door of the room.

Dunrahan took a flashlight from his pocket and masked the lens with his hand as he turned it on. Dim radiance showed the room they were in to be a dingy and disordered bedroom.

Dunrahan handed the flash to Monk and took his short-barreled Police Positive from its shoulder holster. In darkness, now that they were sure no furniture barred their way, they walked stealthily toward the door.

There was no sound from beyond it.

Monk turned the knob cautiously and opened the door. Dim light came from a turned-down oil lamp. There was a table in the room, with scattered cards and poker chips on it. Apparently two men had been playing.

A small, huddled, hairy figure lay on a pile of rags in one corner. It didn't move. Monk started across the room toward it, and Dunrahan caught his arm.

"Careful," he whispered. "Those crazy things bite. The other one took a chunk out of Dolan's—"

Monk shook off the restraining hand almost fiercely. He whispered back, "*That's the Harlow kid. You watch the door while I—*"

And then, with cataclysmic abruptness, the door from the hallway burst open and there were two men standing there. One of them was the fat Calloni in an apron, and the other a bearded stranger in a trench coat. Both had guns and they were both shooting.

Dunrahan was shooting, too. Monk felt something like a hot poker sear across the flesh of his arm just above the elbow and inside, as a bullet went between his arm and body. He jumped forward, ducking down, and the world seemed to explode in his face.

There was the sting of fire on his skin and the reek of powder in his nostrils. But with the momentum of his rush, he hurled the flashlight, ahead of him, throwing underhand and low.

He saw the metal cylinder strike just above Calloni's groin. Then, miraculously, he was under the gun and butting against Calloni's stomach, carrying him back against the jamb of the door.

Monk knew he was hit, somewhere, but there was a blind red rage in him that kept him from letting himself fall. And the bullet or bullets couldn't be in his right arm because that was working fine. It was swinging for Calloni's fat face in what would have been an uppercut had not the Italian been doubling up forward from the impact of Monk's rush.

The fist exploded on the Italian's nose with a squashy sound and Monk's knuckles were red with blood.

It straightened Calloni up, and with a dazed look in his eyes he tried to bring the gun back and around into Monk's face, but Monk's bloody hand unclenched and pushed straight into Calloni's face, shoving hard. Calloni's head struck the door of the jamb, and there was finality in the sound of the thud.

Only then did Monk see that the man who had stood beside Calloni was already down on the floor in the doorway. There was an ugly hole where one of his eyes had been.

Monk turned to look over his shoulder. Dunrahan was standing, but there was a blank, vacant look in his face and in his eyes. His hands were empty and held out from his sides like a man reaching back for

the arms of a chair. The Police Positive was on the floor at his feet.

Monk said, "Dunrahan, are you—"

He didn't finish, because Dunrahan seemed to be going up in the air. Not really, of course, but Monk himself was falling forward. He didn't feel the floor under him nor hear the distant faint scream of sirens.

**T**HERE were a lot of people around and it must have been a long time later, because Monk was in a bed in a white room. His eyes came to focus slowly on a white face under an aura of golden hair. The face was blurred, but he recognized the hair. "Did they find the kid?" he asked.

"Shhh. Don't try to talk, yet. Yes, they found the kid and he was all right. A little shock, but that's all. Harlow's outside, waiting to see you, but I made them let me wait in here till you came around. But I had to promise I wouldn't let you talk."

"But I was right about—I mean, the kid was the second—"

"Shhh. Yes, of course. Sewed into that monkey costume. And with adhesive tape over his lips so he couldn't talk or cry. And doped, too. He's down the hall. They've got him awake now and laughing."

"Dunrahan?"

"You mustn't talk any more now, Carter. I'll tell them you're—"

"Dunrahan's dead?"

She nodded, and he could see her face well enough now to see that her eyes were moist. "He—he was swell; he came around for a while, and he knew he was going to die, but he said to tell you thanks for letting him in on it."

"I should have—but he was going in alone even if I hadn't."

She put a cool hand across his lips. "Don't even think about it," she said. "I'll have to let the doctor know you're awake now. But first, you haven't even asked about yourself. You've got three bullet-holes in you, but they've taken the bullets out. And

they were in nice places to have bullets, if you've got to get shot. You'll be here a week or ten days."

"I'll settle for that," said Monk. "I want to sleep that long."

When he woke up next, he was feeling a lot better. They let Inspector Blake talk to him, and then he had a brief but embarrassing talk with Harlow.

Then the blonde again, and she was very businesslike.

"It's still a big story," she said. "We got most of it, but the boss said to get you to explain what led you to Calloni. Dunrahan had searched the place. Why—"

"Dunrahan had a phobia about monkeys, Angel," he told her. "He didn't go near either of them. But, you see, the real monkey's getting away was an accident.

"Calloni established himself there, near Harlow's, and established the fact that he kept a monkey. He had the monkey suit ready for the kid. After the kidnaping, Calloni was going to keep him there and even if the house was searched nobody'd guess there was a kid around.

"They were going to kill the real monkey, see? There wouldn't be any unaccounted-for monkey or child around. Nobody'd look at a sick monkey twice, because they'd think he'd had it all along.

"Then when they took the monkey out to kill it, it got away. He had to report it, in case it turned up. After the police brought it back, Dunrahan searched the house and found the second monkey. But Dunrahan hadn't made much inquiry about Calloni. It didn't strike him as odd that a guy who had one monkey might have two. It wouldn't have been, of course, except that the neighbors knew of his having only one."

Monk turned away, and then looked back at her. "About Dunrahan. He was a swell guy. I blame myself that—"

"But you mustn't!"

"I knew him pretty well," said Monk, "but not his personal life. One thing he said made me think he had a kid himself. Harlow's trying to give me a reward; maybe I ought to take it and turned it over to—"

She put her hand gently over his lips.

"He did have, Monk," she said. "But don't forget Dunrahan was almost fifty. The kid was grown up. He was in the Philippines, with Mac-Arthur's men. One of the first casualties.

"Dunrahan tried to get himself in the army after that, but, of course, they wouldn't take him. Last night gave him a chance to—to hit back. That's what he meant when he said to thank you for letting him in on it. He meant it. He wouldn't have wanted it otherwise. See?"

Monk nodded slowly.

"Angel," he said, "that phone call I got warning me not to mix in the case. I hope you didn't gum the story

by telling anybody about that."

"I—I completely forgot it, Carter. But why shouldn't I have told?"

Monk grinned at her. "You don't think it fooled me, did you? That was old Charlie Wagner, down in the composing room. You vamped him into doing it because you wanted to get me interested in the case. For some fool feminine reason you got the idea I could—"

"But you *did*. You found the boy!"

"Nuts," said Monk. "I had a lucky hunch, that's all. And when I get out of here, Angel, I'm going to paddle you for that little trick!"

The blonde stood up, and there was an expression on her face that he couldn't quite read.

"That might be better than—" She paused.

"Than what?"

"Better than nothing," she said, and walked rapidly out of the room.

Carter Monk's eyes followed her speculatively, and he smiled.



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# A Fourth Must Die

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## CHAPTER I

### DEATH PAYS A DIVIDEND



STERLING DANFORTH smiled in smug satisfaction as he regarded his own handsome features in the mirror's reflection. Those features had paid dividends in spendable cash.

Years ago he was on his uppers. Now he had a wife; a wife who was ten years older than he, a wife who could hardly be rated as comely, a wife who had more money than she could ever hope to spend.

What a stroke of luck it had been. A few simple words in a quiet wedding ceremony had meant the difference between poverty and opulence. From that moment on, money had flowed through Danforth's hands like water. Nothing had been denied him. Life had become just one grand party after another.

He had, of course, to pay a certain price. On certain evenings he had to go out with his wife. And since Harriet was rather stout, almost ugly, in many ways stupid, such evenings were dull affairs. But there were other evenings when he was footloose, when he could make the rounds of night spots and private parties with his pockets bulging with

money. He made up for it then.

Danforth was thankful that his wife never complained of his extravagance. It was true that she was inclined to be jealous. She occasionally berated him when rumors of wild parties reached her ears. But Danforth could handle her. After all, she was wildly in love with him and all he had to do was put his arms around her and flatter her until she forgot her grievances. That had always worked. It had never occurred to Danforth that a time might come when it would not work.

Now, as he was preparing to dress for another gay evening out, the door of his bedroom opened. Danforth looked up. It was Harriet. He smiled and said, "Hello, darling."

There was no answering smile on Harriet's face. Her eyes were cold, her lips set in grim lines. Danforth knew the signs. Harriet had heard something again, probably about the party he had thrown at the Grove last week. Well, he knew how to handle her. In ten minutes he'd have her crying on his shoulder.

"Now, now." He wagged his forefinger at her chidingly. "What's been annoying my little sweet? Has someone been telling lies about me again?"

"No, Sterling," she said stiffly. "No one has been telling lies about you. I didn't come here to quarrel with you tonight. I came in to ask one thing of you."

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## A COMPLETE MYSTERY NOVELET

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Donforth took a step  
toward the door and  
Lieutenant Ragan  
moved in

That puzzled Danforth for an instant. Harriet had everything—there wasn't much that she could ask of him. But he threw out both arms in a gesture of generosity and said, "Anything, Harriet. Anything your heart desires that is within my power to give. What is it?"

"A divorce," she replied.

THE false smile dropped from Danforth's face as if it had been slapped off. Consternation replaced it. He couldn't believe that he had heard her aright.

"Did you say—"

"I said," she repeated calmly, "that I want a divorce."

His eyes narrowed and grew cold.

"Nonsense, Harriet. You know very well that our relationship has been a pleasant one. You have no reason whatsoever to even mention such a thing."

"I am really serious, Sterling. I want a divorce."

She seemed to be determined, but he decided to apply the old tried and true remedy. He advanced toward her, tried to put his arms around her. "You know I'm wild about you, Harriet," he cried.

She pushed him away, pushed him away rather roughly.

"Don't remind me of it," she said harshly. "Perhaps I did love you. More likely, it was just an infatuation. You were young, handsome. I was older—and not handsome. Yes, it must have been an infatuation, because, surprisingly it has left me as suddenly as it came. In the past two days, Sterling, my feelings toward you have undergone a complete change."

"She really means it," he thought. "Well, she won't get away with it."

Aloud, he said: "So, you've been listening to those lies again. You know they're utter nonsense."

The shadow of a smile crossed her lips. But it was a cold, almost malicious smile.

"I no longer have the slightest interest in your past escapades, Sterling. If you've had a good time while it lasted, that's fair enough. Whatever it cost I'll charge off to experience. The point is that it's all over now and I want a divorce."

A cold wrath was rising in Danforth. His life of ease was about to be snatched away, and he was not fool enough to let it go without a struggle.

"You're a fool, Harriet." He spoke quietly, leashing his fury. "You are my wife, and I refuse to divorce you."

"Fortunately, you won't have a great deal to say about that, Sterling," she said in a business-like tone. "If you won't agree to a divorce, I can find ample grounds. You've left a broad trail. You've spent hundreds of thousands of dollars of my money, and you can't show where you've spent much more than a thousand dollars directly on me.

"I have your canceled checks, and they are a story in themselves. No judge would look at those checks and refuse me a divorce."

"We'll see about that. You can't throw me out and get away with it." His tone was rising now.

"No, I can't put you out bodily," she admitted. "Although I really should, since I am now well aware that you married me solely for my money. But I am going to make you a settlement."

A settlement! It might be worth his while, and then he would not have to face her across a breakfast table again.

"Well, let's have it. How much?"

"Five thousand dollars," she said crisply.

"Five thousand dollars!" Danforth laughed derisively. "Why, that's chicken-feed!"

"It's quite enough," she said icily, "to allow you to live for a long time in the manner in which you were accustomed to before you married me."

Danforth was blind with anger. He could barely keep the smoldering flames in check.

"So you'll just kick me out with a measly five grand when you smother yourself in millions. Well, my dear wife, let me see you try!"

"It's up to you, Sterling," she said with small concern. "You can take five thousand—or you can take nothing. From my point of view I owe you exactly nothing. I shall divorce you at once. I shall expect you to leave this house in the morning, and if you want the five thousand, you can let me know before you leave."

Danforth's face was purpling. He slowly clenched his fists. Inwardly he was raging—but he was thinking too. Thinking of the kind of life he would leave if he were forced to walk out of this great house in the morning with a mere five thousand dollars. His mind was racing with purpose, with a plan. There was no time to think things out deliberately. He had to act and act now while he was still Harriet's husband and would be entitled to share in her millions.

Her expression showed contempt as he took two steps toward her. She didn't see, until it was too late, that his purpose was not just to try his same old tricks, to cajole her into forgiveness. She didn't realize that her handsome and profligate mate could suddenly become a mad and ruthless killer until his outstretched fingers were closing about her neck. Then her jaws opened wide and she tried desperately to scream.

"So you'd kick me out with five grand, would you?" he taunted her as her eyes went glassy in horror. "I'm just a little smarter than you thought I was. Squawk if you can. It won't do you any good. We're all alone in this wing of the house, and the servants couldn't hear you even if you did scream. It was always your idea that we should have such privacy in our own rooms. That's going—to work out—very nicely—now!"

IT WAS minutes later when Danforth carried Harriet into her own bedroom. He was working coolly, confidently. He laid her on the floor. He rose, swung back a picture on the wall and opened the safe behind it. He pulled out three jewel cases and some papers, scattered the papers over the floor, then emptied the cases and threw them down. Then he dropped some rings and brooches in his pocket.

He knelt by Harriet's side, and put a necklace in her hand. He closed her fingers about it, held them with one hand, then pulled with the other. The necklace broke, and he dropped the long end of it into his pocket. He pressed Harriet's hand tightly about the strand with two diamonds that remained in her hand. Then he rose and looked down at her.

He assured himself that he must not overdo the act. It had to look as if Harriet had surprised a burglar at her safe—no more. No overturned chairs, no dramatic set-up that would make the police suspicious when they surveyed the scene.

Even if the police were suspicious—what could they prove? Harriet had made her decision alone. She didn't have any close friends that she would have confided in. He was sure of that.

They wouldn't even be able to pin a motive on him. The chances were a hundred to one that Harriet hadn't told a soul that she was considering a divorce. Hadn't she just told him that her infatuation for him had disappeared as suddenly as it had begun.

At last he had the scene arranged to his satisfaction. He had wiped his fingermarks from the wall safe, raised Harriet and put the prints of her right hand on the safe. The police might reason that the burglar had forced her to open the safe before he had killed her. Everything looked all right to Danforth now.

Then he saw the letter on her dressing table. It was sealed, addressed to a Mrs. Henry Cauldon, in Pitts-

burgh. That was Harriet's sister. He hastily tore the letter open and read it, his lips moving:

Dear Clara:

It's all over now. I have come to see Sterling as you do. Almost overnight, I have come to despise him. I realize that he has never cared for anything but my money. He has thrown away hundreds of thousands of dollars, and now all I want to do is to get rid of him as quietly and quickly as possible. I shall divorce him at once.

I am not telling anyone but you of this decision at the present time.

Danforth gasped in relief as he read those words. His guess that Harriet would not have confided in anyone was correct. There would be only this letter to her sister—and this letter would never be mailed. Danforth read on, but after a few words his eyes widened in alarm.

I want to get my divorce as quietly as possible, with a minimum of publicity. So I have consulted James Haston, my attorney. I have had him draw up a paper for me which I will ask Sterling to sign in the morning. Sterling will get five thousand dollars if he signs, nothing if he refuses. I am quite sure he will accept the five thousand when he realizes that I can divorce him without paying him a penny if I choose to do so. I will write you again as soon as the matter is fully settled.

Harriet.

Danforth's expression was bitter as he slowly crushed that sheet of paper in his fist. Harriet had consulted her attorney, James Haston, who could furnish the police with the motive—and it was the best kind of motive.

There was only one answer to that. Haston must be silenced. Danforth couldn't take any chances now. He had taken the irretraceable step. His wife was dead on the floor there, and he'd go to the chair for her murder if he didn't play the game on through, no matter what risks he had to take.

Danforth looked the room over very carefully before he left. He returned to his own room, burned the letter in his fireplace, and then dressed quickly. He would leave the

house by a door on the east and no one would be able to swear at what time he had gone. His story, of course, would be that he had left early, an hour earlier than the time at which a medical examiner would estimate the time of Harriet's death.

Danforth had some acquaintance with James Haston. As Harriet's husband he had had to sign papers with her several times. He knew that Haston was a bachelor and lived alone in an apartment. Danforth looked at the phone directory, and found Haston's residence listed at 738 Cowper Place.

## CHAPTER II

### DOUBLE IN DEATH



IT WAS nine o'clock when Danforth sneaked from the house. Once he was outside, there was no chance of anyone in the house seeing him in the darkness. He walked several blocks, then dropped in a drug store, and called the number listed at 738 Cowper Place. The operator informed him that Haston lived in Apartment C on the fifth floor.

Danforth left the drug store and took a taxi to the Hotel Stentham, went into the bar and had one quick drink. Then he walked out and climbed into another taxi. He kept the brim of his hat pulled well down so the hacker couldn't see his face. He stopped ten blocks from Cowper Place, and covered the remaining distance on foot.

Using the service entrance and stairs, he reached the fifth floor without being observed. Without hesitation he rang at the door of Apartment C, and when the door opened, he recognized the slender figure and narrow face of the lawyer. He pushed right on in, closing the door behind him.

"Good evening, Haston," he said briskly. "You remember me? I'm



Sterling Danforth. My wife informed me this evening that she wanted a divorce. It was a complete shock to me. But when I saw that she was in earnest about it, and that I would not be able to change her mind, I agreed to the divorce.

"I would not for a moment stand in her way, and to make things easier for her, I decided to leave the house at once. She told me that she had consulted you, that she would like to have me get in touch with you. I'm not one to put things off. It's an unpleasant business and the sooner we get it over with the best for all concerned."

"You're taking the sensible view of it, Danforth," the attorney agreed. "Yes, your wife consulted me this afternoon. Frankly, she wasn't just sure how you would take her decision. If you'll just come into my study I'll explain further."

Danforth followed him through the living room and into the study that led off the rear hall. Haston seated himself at a desk and Danforth dropped into a chair at the side of the desk.

"You agreed," Haston asked a bit uncomfortably, "to the—er—settlement that your wife offered you?"

"Of course," Danforth replied. "Five thousand dollars. I wouldn't take a cent of her money if I didn't need it. That five thousand will enable me to make a fresh start somewhere."

Haston reached into the briefcase that lay on the desk and removed a sheet of foolscap. "This is the agreement that I drew up for you to sign, Danforth. By it, in consideration of the sum of five thousand dollars, you agree to surrender any claim you might have against your wife, Harriet. The divorce, of course, is not mentioned. But it is understood that you are not to contest the action that I will bring for your wife.

"On the other hand, we will make the grounds for divorce as reasonable

as possible. If that is satisfactory to you, you can sign this paper and the five thousand will be paid to you as soon as the bank opens in the morning."

"I'll sign it," Danforth said quickly. "But would you mind reading it to me first? I don't have my glasses with me."

The lawyer nodded and lifted the paper. Danforth stood up, moved around with the apparent purpose of looking over Haston's shoulder. But Danforth didn't even hear the words as the legal phraseology rolled off the attorney's tongue.

Danforth's hand was coming out of the right pocket of his coat and there was a bronze paper weight in his hand. Again his eyes flamed with the rage of the ruthless killer as he lifted the weight. He brought it down on Haston's head. He struck again and again. . . .

Danforth was breathing heavily when he stepped back a minute later and surveyed the result of the attack. Haston's body had slipped from the chair and fallen to the floor.

Danforth wasted no time. He picked up the paper that Haston had dropped. He searched the briefcase to make sure that there was not a copy of the agreement in it. He glanced through the drawers of the desk. There was nothing else here, but in Haston's office there would be at least one copy of the agreement in the files.

DANFORTH knew, in that instant, that he had one more murder to commit. Haston had no partner. His practice was confined to a handful of wealthy clients. But Haston hadn't typed that agreement himself. He had dictated it to his secretary. That secretary would remember what she had written. As long as she lived she could point an accusing finger at Danforth, supply the police with the motive for the murder of not only Harriet, but for the lawyer as well,

There was no alternative, no choice. That secretary must die and die quickly. Danforth's brain was racing again, planning each step that had to be taken. This, he was quite sure, must be the last step; the last murder and he dare not overlook the smallest detail in its commission. He searched Haston, took his keys.

The brim of his hat was down over his face again when he left Haston's apartment. With hunched shoulders he edged swiftly along the corridor. He was breathing hard when he went down the service stairs.

Not until he had reached the street and walked half a block did he relax. Then a grim smile twisted his lips. Suspect what they might, they'd never be able to prove that it was his hand that had struck down Harriet and Haston. These were two perfect jobs. He'd be even more careful with the last one because he would have more time to plan.

Twenty minutes later, Danforth climbed the stairs to the seventh floor of the Marquand Building. There was no sound in the corridor as he stopped before the door of Haston's offices. Using Haston's keys he was inside in less than a minute. He didn't turn on a light. Considerable light came through from the corridor and he had a box of matches in his pocket.

First he stopped at the secretary's desk. He grunted as he found a letter that the secretary had left in her desk. It was addressed to Miss Edna Wales at 2229 Pine Street. He glanced through it. It was from an aunt of the secretary and its contents left no doubt that Edna Wales was Haston's secretary.

Next Danforth went to the files. Quickly he found the Harriet Danforth file. He found three copies of that agreement and some notes in longhand that Haston had jotted down. He thrust them in his pocket. That, he was quite convinced, disposed of all the documentary evidence that Harriet Danforth had ever con-

sidered divorcing her husband. There only remained Miss Edna Wales, secretary.

But Danforth wasn't quite through in the office yet. He glanced through file after file, examining correspondence. At last he discovered a letter that brought a triumphant smile to his lips. Some client of Haston had written him a pretty hot letter. He had practically charged Haston with cheating him. Danforth tucked that file under his coat. Since that file listed under the name of Vantin was going to be missing, he didn't bother to pick up burnt matches.

He left the office with caution, but the building was practically deserted at this hour and he didn't meet a soul. Danforth was very sure that up to the present moment he hadn't made a miscue in this night of murder.

But that very fact made his heart begin to thump a little as he approached the modest apartment house at 2229 Pine Street. Would his luck hold out? Would he be able to enter and leave another building without being even glanced at by some nosey person who might remember his face—or even his figure and the way he was dressed?

He set his teeth together in determination. He had to take the risks no matter what they were. Edna Wales had typed that agreement. She was the only living person who could testify that Harriet Danforth was not still blindly in love with her husband.

He walked slowly past the building, made sure no one was loitering in the small foyer. He glanced at the mail boxes to get the apartment number. Then he went on in and swiftly mounted the rather narrow stairs to the third floor. He moved down the hall, stopped before a door, and punched the button at the right.

**H**E WAITED nervously for more than a minute. But he managed an easy smile as the door opened. He

had that Vantin file under his arm, and he eased forward a little as he bowed.

"You are Miss Edna Wales, are you not?" he asked.

She nodded and said "Yes."

"You are the secretary of my friend, Attorney James Haston?"

"I am," she admitted. There was no sign of recognition in her eyes.

"I am urgently in need of a secretary, Miss Wales," he told her as he managed to take another step forward and close the door. "I must have a secretary at once—tonight. Mr. Haston told me about you, told me that you might know of an expert legal stenographer who is not employed at the moment. It is of such importance that I decided to drop by and see you personally."

Edna Wales' eyes brightened a little.

"I think I can recommend a secretary," she said. "It just happens that a girl I know quite well is looking for a position. Her name is Gladys Hillman. If you wish I'll call her."

"Just give me her address and I'll see her in person," Danforth said. "Here is a pencil. Write it on the back of this file."

She took the pencil in her hand, then the file. She bent her head. . . .

It was a knife that flashed this time. Danforth had his arm over her mouth before she could move and he sank the knife into her back with the other hand. The scream that she might have uttered dwindled to a gurgle, then a great sigh. Finally, he lowered her to the floor and she lay still. He dropped the file by her side.

He sniffed, seeming to smell a pungent odor. Finally, he located it—it came from a cloth that she had about her neck. She must have had a sore throat and been using turpentine on it.

Danforth turned back to the door. There was only danger in lingering here, and he wasn't interested in looking over the small apartment.

He opened the door and listened for a moment. Then he went back through the hall and down the stairs. He was elated when he walked away from the building. Brains and luck were an unbeatable combination. He congratulated himself—it wasn't every man who was smart enough to commit three murders without making a slip.

TEN minutes later he stood in a doorway and made a final mental check. He was absolutely sure he hadn't left a clue anywhere—not so much as a single fingerprint. The murder weapons were safely disposed of. He had destroyed every trace of evidence that might point to a motive for the murder of his wife. And that Vantin file that he had left with the Wales girl was a red herring that would give the cops a headache.

All he had to do now was firmly deny that there had ever been any rift between himself and Harriet. Since Harriet had always given him all the money he wanted, there would seem to be no reason why he should want to kill her.

Danforth considered his next move. The answer was easy. He'd go right on and spend the evening as he had planned in the first place. He had worked very fast. There was hardly more than an hour that he wouldn't be able to account for if he lied about the time a little, and they couldn't possibly check him on that.

He had drinks at two bars in rapid succession, then went to the Tower Club. He was a regular there and immediately found a seat with a couple of friends. Two more drinks and he was thoroughly relaxed, ready for whatever might come. But he reasoned that none of the bodies would be found until morning. Even then, he might finally have to go in and "discover" the body of his wife on the floor of her bedroom.

After all, he reflected, murder was a simple thing for a man with iron

nerves; a man who could coolly consider each step that he had to make. He laughed and joked with his friends. In another hour the club was crowded. He began to wonder what hour it would be best for him to leave and go home. About three, he decided, would be right. Not too early. Not too late.

**B**UT the decision was taken away from him. It was only a little past midnight when a heavy-shouldered man with the firm, clean-shaven chin appeared at his table. He took a chair without invitation.

"You're Sterling Danforth?"

"That's right," Danforth said with a broad smile.

"I have some unpleasant news for you, Mr. Danforth." The voice was a good, even baritone. "I am Lieutenant of Detectives Ragan."

Danforth's face sobered.

"What's the trouble, Lieutenant?" he asked.

"There appears to have been a burglary at your house tonight, Mr. Danforth. Your wife must have surprised the burglar. At any rate—"

"You don't mean that she was hurt?" Danforth broke in, his voice tense with anxiety.

"Yes, she was hurt." Ragan nodded. "I think you'd better come with me, Mr. Danforth. Your wife is dead. She was murdered."

"Murdered! No!" Danforth came to his feet, shuddered, then walked unsteadily away beside the detective.

But Danforth was very careful not to overplay his role of the stricken husband. When they reached the bedroom where his wife lay, he clenched his fists as he looked down at her. His face twitched with just the right degree of smothered grief as he knelt beside her and gently touched her hair. Lieutenant Ragan watched closely—and got none of the answers for his pains.

"When did it happen?" Danforth asked thickly after a moment.

"Around nine o'clock, the medical examiner said. You saw her tonight before you left the house?"

"Yes. I told her I thought I'd go out for the evening and asked her if she wanted to go along. She said she had a slight headache and would stay at home. That was here—in her bedroom. Between seven-thirty and eight, I'd guess. I went back to my room and dressed. I must have left the house around eight-thirty or a quarter to nine.

"I dropped in the Hotel Stentham bar and had a couple of drinks. I didn't see anyone there I knew so I went on to Stubby's place. Later I was in Tony Blaine's place for fifteen minutes or so. Then I walked on up to the Tower Club where I ran into Minton and Alcorn. I was with them when you came into the club. Naturally I hadn't called back home in the meantime. Who found her?"

"A maid. There was a phone call for your wife. The maid came up to the room to find out why your wife didn't answer. She found her here on the floor. Do you know what was in the wall safe, Mr. Danforth?"

"I know what was generally in it. Two necklaces, some brooches, and some rings. I used it occasionally myself when I had more cash than I wanted to carry around. But mainly my wife used it for the jewelry she wore regularly. She kept her more valuable pieces in a box at the vaults downtown and got them out when she wanted to wear them. Just how, Lieutenant—was she—" Danforth stammered as he looked at his wife.

"There's little doubt that she was strangled, Mr. Danforth. We'll want to make a more thorough examination later. We didn't want to move her until we talked to you. Didn't want to overlook a possible clue that you might furnish."

Danforth shook his head miserably.

"We're careless about locking doors," he said. "Someone may have been watching when I left the house

and may have entered after I left. I don't remember whether I locked that east door or not."

"It was unlocked when we examined it," Ragan told him.

When, an hour later, Sterling Danforth retired to his own bedroom, he was well satisfied. Lieutenant Ragan hadn't hinted that he was suspicious in any way. He hadn't asked a single sharp question. But Danforth knew that Ragan would ask some sharp questions later—after the bodies of the lawyer and the secretary had been found. Yes, Ragan would be very suspicious. But what could he do about it?

### CHAPTER III

#### BLACKMAIL ON THE MENU



DANFORTH remained in the house alone all the next day. It was not until late afternoon that Lieutenant Ragan appeared again. He spoke almost apologetically.

"I am sorry that I am unable to report any positive findings," he said. "We have not been able to make an arrest. If a burglar murdered your wife, we have no lead that we can follow. The murders of two other persons, James Haston, an attorney, and Edna Wales, his secretary, may or may not have any connection. It does seem a little strange that all these three deaths should have occurred practically within an hour."

"I knew Haston slightly," Danforth admitted boldly. "I've been in his office a few times. He represented my wife."

"We know that," Ragan said dryly. "So we have to consider the possibility that his murder and his secretary's murder may be tied in with the murder of your wife. I'll frankly admit that the murders themselves were well executed. The killer left hardly a clue."

"Then you have no leads?"

"The killer went through Haston's files at his office," Ragan frowned. "He took certain papers concerning an Edward Vantin from the files. The Vantin papers were found beside the body of Edna Wales. Vantin had a little trouble with Haston some time ago. Vantin denies that he has seen Haston for more than a year. Claims he didn't even know Edna Wales. We can't prove that he is lying."

Ragan paused and frowned just a little. "I'm going to be frank with you, Danforth," he resumed. "As a matter of routine we have to consider you as a suspect in the case. I'm not going to bluff though, to pretend that we have found any real evidence against you. You will, of course, inherit a considerable fortune from your wife."

"That's true, Lieutenant," Danforth replied as frankly. "And I realize, that until the actual murderer of my wife is found, that some suspicion is bound to fall on me. But there is no reason in the world why I should have killed my wife. Money? Why, I had all the money any man could ask for. Harriet authorized me to write checks without limit. Only last week I cashed a check for five thousand dollars."

"I know that," Ragan conceded. "Bank records show that your wife allowed you to spend money as you pleased. And that you spent a lot of it."

"Yes, I did. Never once did she make any objection. There's no doubt in my mind that she would have given me a million in cash if I had asked for it."

"Her friends bear you out in that," Ragan nodded. "They say she was wild about you. That she petted and pampered you, catered to your every whim."

"She loved me," Danforth said simply. "And I loved her. There was a perfect understanding between us. We never had a harsh word in our whole married life. But in spite of

all that," his tone grew a little bitter, "I know how people jump at conclusions, know that many people will say that I—"

Danforth didn't say the words. He gestured his disgust. Then he said: "There is only one way that such people can be silenced. The murderer of my wife must be found and brought to justice."

"Right," Ragan agreed. "I'll admit that right now, Danforth, I am a badly baffled detective. I am quite sure that I have evidence of murder right here in my hand."

Danforth stared at the red envelope that Ragan held up. It was about a foot square. There was something in it. Possibly a sheaf of papers, possibly a small book. Ragan made no motion to remove the contents of that red envelope. Instead he turned and moved toward the door.

"Yes, I'm quite sure that I have the evidence here that will solve all three of these murders," he flung back over his shoulder. "The trouble is—it looks right now as though it's going to take an Egyptologist to decipher it."

Ragan went on out. Danforth stared after him, his mouth open, his eyes worried. What was in that envelope? What *could* be in that envelope!

THE funeral was over and two more days passed. Danforth hadn't seen or heard from Ragan. His first alarm had quieted. The truth was that Ragan was wholly stymied. That red envelope had been a bluff. Ragan was trying to use psychology. Ragan shrewdly reasoned that Danforth might have made a slip somewhere and that the sight of that phony envelope might send him out in an effort to correct it. Undoubtedly, Ragan had had men watching Danforth to see if the little scheme would work.

But Danforth wasn't falling for any bluffs. Now he was serenely confident that they could never pin a thing on him. He was going to play

it right, act the role of a bereaved husband. No parties, no night clubs—until Harriet's estate was settled and the widower's one-third of her millions safely transferred to Danforth's name. Then—a lifetime of pleasure and idleness without the annoyance of a homely and stupid wife. Everything would work out just right.

It was a week after the funeral when Sterling Danforth dropped in at a quiet restaurant, took a secluded table in a corner, and ordered his lunch. He was just starting to eat when he raised his head and looked into the face of the girl who was slipping into the chair opposite him.

The girl was a brunette. She was good looking except for a certain sharpness in her features. Her gray suit was neat but showed signs of wear. Her alert eyes were gray and steady.

"How do you do, Mr. Danforth," she said politely.

He frowned, stiffened a little.

"I don't believe I remember you," he said.

"Naturally you don't. You've never seen me before, Mr. Danforth."

"What do you want?" he asked abruptly.

"A loan, Mr. Danforth. A loan of five thousand dollars."

His frown deepened and he turned his eyes as though to look for a waiter.

"I wouldn't call a waiter if I were you, Mr. Danforth," she said, her eyes hardening. "If you do, I might call Lieutenant Ragan."

He stared at her uncertainly.

"Why should you be asking me for a loan?" he demanded. "I don't even know you. Who are you?"

"My name is Gladys Hillman," she said.

Gladys Hillman. That name struck a chord in his memory. He had heard it somewhere, he was quite sure.

"Of course you don't know me," she went on quickly. "But if you're

smart you'll listen to what I have to say. You may be very glad to lend me five thousand dollars when you learn the truth. I am a legal stenographer. I was a friend of Edna Wales."

Danforth suppressed a start. He remembered now! Gladys Hillman! That was the name of the girl that Edna Wales had recommended to him as a secretary when he had used the subterfuge to get in position to drive the knife into her back. But Edna had never had an opportunity to call Gladys Hillman. Gladys couldn't possibly know anything.

"Edna Wales?" he repeated. "What of it? I didn't know Edna Wales."

Her gray eyes went steely.

"You didn't have to know her—to kill her," she said in a low voice.

"You must be crazy," he snapped.

"I'm not crazy," she denied. "And if you're smart you'll listen to me until I am through. I'm the one person in the world that knows the truth. You must have acted very quickly when you got into Edna's apartment. You didn't give her a chance to talk. Otherwise you'd have known that I substituted for her that day.

"She had a sore throat, was threatened with flu. She called me that morning. She knew I was out of work and she asked me to take her place for the day. I did. I took James Haston's dictation that day, while Edna stayed in her apartment and nursed her sore throat. It's a good thing for you I did. Some other girl might not have been as reasonable as I am."

Danforth had to fight to conceal his consternation. Now he recalled the odor of turpentine, the cloth that had been tied about Edna Wales' neck. He saw his mistake now, but he was not going to make another equally foolish one.

"I haven't the least idea what you're driving at," he said coolly.

"The notebook, you fool," she said. "You went to the trouble of taking the copies from the files, but you for-

got the stenographic notebook. Edna's notebook that I wrote in that day.

"Lieutenant Ragan grabbed that notebook the first thing, and he's been moving heaven and earth to get somebody to read the notes. Most people think that one stenographer can read another one's notes. But that's not true. Every steno develops a style of her own. The stuff that most of them wind up with looks nothing like the fine examples in the books.

"That's a break for you, Danforth. Ragan can't get anyone that can read my shorthand notes. Nobody else on earth can transcribe the hieroglyphics I use."

STERLING DANFORTH sat rigid, his usually calculating mind in a turmoil. It was plain enough now. Ragan hadn't been bluffing about that red envelope. He had had that notebook in it, the notebook that was supposed to contain the shorthand notes of Edna Wales for the day of the murder.

But here before him was the girl who had actually taken the dictation. This girl had him! He wouldn't dare challenge her to go to Ragan. Even if she didn't remember exactly what she had written that day, she could read her own notes and expose the truth—and that would send him to the chair.

"Relax, Danforth," Gladys Hillman whispered. "Take it easy. You don't have to admit a thing to me. All I ask is that you *lend* me five thousand dollars. Your wife, Haston, and Edna Wales are dead now. Nothing I can do will bring them back. The only problem I had was whether to turn you over to the police, or collect some easy money myself. Well, I've been poor all my life. Why shouldn't I have some of the—the proceeds? You won't even miss what you *lend* me. Is it a deal?"

She was smiling a little—but there was a threat in those last words.

Danforth recovered his poise.

"I'll lend you five thousand," he said. "I certainly don't admit a word of what you say. But publicity at this time would be very bad. I'm a suspect—no matter how innocent I actually am. So I'll lend you the money. However, I can't get it just now. You'll have—"

"That's okay," she interrupted. "I know the estate hasn't been turned over to you yet. I can wait till you get your hands on some of that money. At least they'll give you a big allowance out of it in a few days."

"Yes. I think I can get it for you in about a week. Shall I deliver it?"

"You leave that to me," she said crisply. "I'll get in touch with you. I'll meet you somewhere and you can hand me the money. No one will be a bit the wiser."

She rose from the chair and walked rapidly away. He watched her until she had gone out the entrance. Then his face darkened. Rage swept over him.

He was sure of only one thing. He would have to commit one more murder. That girl, Gladys Hillman, must die. He could never take another easy breath as long as she lived.

That first five thousand would be only a starter. She'd soon learn how easy it was to spend easy money—and how easy it was to get it. She'd be back asking for ten, twenty thousand, more and more all the time. She'd be a far worse millstone than Harriet had been. If she ever became angry with him, if he displeased her in any way, she might tell Ragan the truth.

Then there was the chance that Ragan might find out that she had worked for James Haston that day. If Ragan found that out, he'd break her and get the truth out of her.

So he, Sterling Danforth, would have to take the risk of committing murder one more time. The risk was preferable to the constant danger he would have to face if Gladys Hillman

lived. He'd have ample time to plan carefully and to reduce the risk to a minimum.

He wasted no time. After he had made the motions of eating his lunch he hurried from the restaurant. He consulted a phone directory and found that Gladys Hillman was not listed. But he found her name in the city directory. Her address was listed as 4387 Linton Street. First he had to check to see that she still lived there. He didn't dare walk past the building and see if her name was on a mail box. If she saw him, she'd know what was in his mind. She was afraid of him already. So afraid that she was going to make him hand her the money in a public place.

## CHAPTER IV

### "A FOURTH MUST DIE"



THE next night Danforth first made sure that no one was following him. Then he went to Linton Street and took his post in a dark doorway across the street from 4387. He was in luck. He'd waited hardly more than thirty minutes when he saw Gladys Hillman emerging from the building across the street. She turned to her right and walked on. Danforth waited until she had gone almost a block, then followed her. She went four blocks, then entered a movie theater.

Danforth retraced his steps to 4387 Linton Street. He stopped and looked at the mail boxes. Gladys Hillman's apartment was on the third, the top floor. He walked down a narrow court, looked up at the rear of the building. There was a fire-escape at each side of the rear wall.

Danforth fingered the steel chisel in his pocket. Why wait? The girl would spend at least two hours in that movie. Why wait if he could act now?

He went around to the front of the building, entered it, climbed the stairs



to the third floor. He walked down the hall to the last door on the right. The name-card in the holder read: "Gladys Hillman." There was no other name, so he was sure she lived alone. But to be doubly sure, he punched the button on the side of the door. He could hear the buzzer sounding inside—but no one came to answer the ring.

The stairs that led to the roof were just to his left. He went up, opened the door that led into the small pent house. He unhooked another door and stepped out on the roof. He felt his way to the edge of the roof and looked down. The top landing of the fire-escape was just below the rear window, and that window opened into Gladys Hillman's rooms. There was a short drop to that landing.

There was a maze of clotheslines behind him, and it took him only about five minutes to find heavy cord of sufficient length. He doubled it, took his chisel and cut out some of the mortar between two bricks in the coping. He tied a big knot in one end of the cord so it would anchor it on the roof end. Even if the cord failed to hold he wouldn't have too great a fall.

But the cord held and he slid down to the landing without a sound. He slipped the thin edge of his chisel under the window. It wasn't even locked and came up easily. He stepped into the room, took a flashlight from his pocket, used it briefly, and saw that he was in a small kitchen.

He lowered the window behind him, and went on through the apartment. There were two small rooms and a bath.

Now all he had to do was wait. It would be easy to do it when the time came. He'd flatten himself against the wall a yard or so from the door. He'd wait until she had closed the door and turned on the light. Then he'd leap before she had time to cry out.

He got a chair and sat down near the wall. The minutes dragged by

interminably. He frequently used his flashlight and looked at his watch. She had been gone nearly two hours when he thought he heard a sound. He listened. He couldn't be sure but it sounded as if it came from the kitchen.

He went swiftly to investigate. But he found nothing. He looked out the kitchen window. There was no shadow on the fire-escape. Just a creaking noise in an old building he decided, and turned back to the living room. He stepped into the living room—and the lights flashed on.

GLADYS HILLMAN stood just inside the door. There was a gun in her hand and she held it very steadily at Danforth's chest.

"Drop the chisel!" she ordered. "Drop it, Danforth. I'll shoot in an instant if you don't."

Danforth dropped the chisel, watched the muzzle of that gun.

"It was fortunate I knew you were a cold-blooded killer, Danforth," she said. "I had a hunch that you would not play it straight with me, that you would choose a cheaper and safer way out. With me dead you'd be absolutely in the clear, wouldn't you? What I ought to do is to call the police and tell them the truth."

"You've got me all wrong," he protested. "I came here because I had to talk to you."

"About what?"

"About marriage, Gladys. I knew you'd want money, so I saw that the safest thing for both of us to do was to marry. A legal point, you see. Then neither of us could testify against the other, no matter what happened. I thought we could be married at once—and keep it secret."

"Were you going to use that chisel for an engagement ring?" she asked with sarcasm.

"I didn't have a key to get in your apartment," he said blandly. "So I had to use the chisel to get in. I didn't know when you'd call me again, and I

wanted to speak to you about marriage at once."

"I'm honored," she said. "It's the first proposal I've ever had from a three-time killer. I've got just one objection. I'm afraid if I married you I'd quickly become Number Four. You strangled your first wife. I wonder how you'd dispose of me."

"Don't be ridiculous," his mask of innocence slipped away. "Harriet deserved that fate. Circumstances made it unavoidable."

"You got Edna Wales with a knife."

"That was unfortunate. However, I had to protect myself."

"You've got murder on the brain, Danforth," she said in a cold voice. "You came here tonight to save yourself again."

Danforth was becoming worried. His carefully laid plan was not succeeding. He would have to buy her off—for a while, anyway.

"This whole discussion is most distasteful," he said. "If you so wish it, you will have all the fine clothes and the best of everything. In fact, if you have any silly notions as to my intentions, you can employ a bodyguard. If I were you, I'd think it over."

"All right, Danforth." She smiled grimly. "I'll let you know."

DANFORTH took a step toward the door. The door opened, and Lieutenant Ragan moved in. Danforth turned, bolted for the kitchen, and through the door. But he came back in a few seconds, with two detectives holding him by the arms.

"Well, Danforth," Ragan said. "I nailed you on that notebook after all."

"Take your hands off me. Why I don't know what you're talking about and I don't know anything about a notebook."

"You're wasting your breath," Ragan told him. "We had these rooms wired. And Gladys Hillman has been working with us. I knew you had murdered your wife, James Haston, and Edna Wales. But I couldn't find a bit of proof. Except this notebook that you overlooked in Haston's office. I thought I had you cinched with it, until I found out that Edna Wales wrote shorthand notes that no one else could read."

"I was up against a stone wall. Then I remembered that I had found cold medicine in Edna's rooms—and that she had had a rag tied about her neck that was soaked with turpentine. I reasoned that you must have seen that rag and smelled the turpentine. So you might fall for a story that Edna hadn't worked that day."

"I inquired around, found out that Miss Hillman was Edna's best friend. I put it up to her. She agreed to play the part and approach you as a blackmailer. I came up and flashed that red envelope with the stenographic notebook in it on you. That was the build-up. I knew it would worry you, that the red envelope would be in the back of your mind. So when Gladys sprung it on you, you fell for it. You didn't dare turn her down."

AT LAST Danforth was completely beaten. He hung in the detective's arms, in a state of collapse.

Lieutenant Ragan turned to Gladys. "You're a brave girl, Miss Hillman," he said. "It took some nerve for you to walk in here and face this killer so we could get some admissions down in black and white."

"Not much nerve, Lieutenant," she replied. "Every time I started to get shaky, all I had to do was think of what he did to poor Edna Wales—my best friend."



The dame stood in front  
of the headlight fooling  
with a spare tire



# FREIGHT TROUBLE

By L. K. FRANK

*A private detective takes a vacation—and finds himself  
between the eight-ball and a grim mess of roaring guns!*

**S**KID O'NEIL collected and banked his two-thousand-dollar fee for recovering the Vetter diamonds, told his stenog to hold down the office for a week, and then got in his coupé and started driving. He was that kind of impulsive fellow. By one o'clock the next morning he was

sleepy and in strange territory, so he drove a few yards off the highway on a twisting lane and settled down for a snooze.

Sometime before daylight he was awakened by the idling mutter of a truck motor on the highway, around the curve of the lane. He got quietly

out of the car and walked around the curve to come upon an interesting tableau on the pavement.

A girl stood in the glare of the truck headlights holding a gun on the driver. To one side, headed in the opposite direction from the truck, and partly blocking the road, was a sedan with its engine running and a shadowy figure at the wheel.

Someone was hammering at the back of the truck. Skid, unseen, stood quietly a moment, analyzing the set-up. He moved off noiselessly to an angle, got out his Police .38, and aiming carefully at the glint of the girl's automatic, blasted it from her hand.

The tableau flew apart like the automatic. The girl jumped to the car, which leaped ahead at the same moment. Skid dimly saw a man scramble aboard as the car roared past the rear end of the truck. The truck driver lowered his arms and sat down on the bumper.

As Skid stepped into the light the driver said, "Mister, I never was so glad to see anybody. But I wish you'd plugged that dame."

"I'll bet," Skid answered. "Hijackers?"

"Hijackers!" the driver confirmed. He looked approvingly at O'Neil's lithe height, his carrot hair, and the map of Ireland that he used for a face. "My name is Freeman—Fred to you. I own this truck and one other. Picked up some furs on the route today to take to Plain City for cold storage. I reckon this gang was after 'em."

"Why didn't you just bump the car off the road and keep rolling?"

Freeman smiled wryly. "That's what I shoulda done. I been stuck up before, and I oughta smelled that dodge of having a dame fooling with a spare tire in front of her headlights at four A. M. But you know a guy can't just breeze past and leave a pair of gams like that alone on the road in the middle of the night?"

"But she wasn't alone, huh?"

"Naw. I stopped and got out to—er—help, and two lugs come out of the bushes with rods, and there I was. I'm gettin' tired of these hold-ups. A couple more and I'll be washed out. Us independents have been offerin' a reward, but this gang—we think it's the Panelli mob, but nobody can prove it—goes right on. Say! D'you want a job?"

Skid shook his head. "No thanks," he said. "I'm a private dick, but I just finished a job, and I'm taking it easy for a while."

"Well, all right. But I need a pusher for my other bus who can take care of himself. My last driver poured too much gin in his tank. Thanks for getting me outa the jam."

"Okay," Skid replied. "So long. My car is parked back here. Don't stop for any more pretty legs."

"Say, I wouldn't stop for a harem full. G'by."

BY LATE afternoon of that day Skid was in Plain City and bored to death already with his holiday. So he hunted around the motor freight terminals until he found Freeman, who was glad to have him take a truck down to Riverton.

The truck would not be loaded and ready to go until midnight, therefore he had five or six hours to grab some sleep. It would be an all-night trip.

At twelve-thirty Skid's truck was whining and roaring up the last hill of the Plain City suburbs when his headlights picked out a girl standing on the curb at the top.

The hijackers used a girl for bait. He saw that this definitely was not the same girl from whose hand he had shot the gun, but he figured she could be another hook for the same gang. And, since he was pushing a truck for fun, he might as well get all the fun available.

Grinning as he realized he was about to do just what he had warned Fred yesterday not to do, he swiftly raised the bullet-proof window on his

side of the cab, got his gun in his lap, and let the truck ease into the curb. He called to the girl through the other open window.

"Funny hour for a girl to be out alone. What goes on?"

"I was sleep-walking, but woke up. I want a ride," the girl countered.

Skid waved a hand to acknowledge the repartee, and told her to hop in. With his gun in his left hand, but out of sight, he reached over and swung the door open. He remained alert while he got the truck under way again. Nothing happened, however, and when they were rolling smoothly Skid turned to his passenger and asked:

"Where to?"

"Where are you going?"

"Riverton."

"That suits me."

Her voice was not the voice of a girl one would expect to find bumming a ride at one o'clock in the morning. The light from the dash was bright on the cab floor, and her shoes looked expensive. In the darkness of the seat, he fingered her skirt. He knew little about women's clothes, but he did know this outfit did not come out of a bargain basement.

Prodded by the thought that it could have been hijacked from a truck, he questioned her for ten minutes with a skill and acuteness born of experience in his profession. The tone of her evasive answers reassured him; if he had questioned one runaway like her, he had questioned twenty. She was no moll putting the finger on him for hijackers.

He shrugged; he wasn't chasing runaways tonight. At three A. M. he stopped at a truckers' roadside stand for coffee and hamburgers.

"Stay in the cab!" he told her. "There may be insurance spotters in this joint. I'll bring you some grub."

In the glare of floodlights that illuminated the parking yard he took a good look at her face. It was a pretty face, framed in blond, wavy

hair and with a generous, inviting mouth. There was something vaguely familiar about her face, too, but at the moment he didn't bother to recall what.

Inside, he sat at the counter and ate hamburgers while an extra order was being prepared for him to take along. A drunk, coming in, lurched into him and before he could turn around on the stool the drunk yelled,

"Ya big lug, why don't ya look where yer goin'!"

Skid looked at the man and said, "Nuts. You're the one who can't navigate. Beat it."

"Oh, ya wanna make sumpin' of it, huh!" the drunk roared, and swung.

AS HE ducked, Skid thought it was a pretty good swing for a drunk, but he did not have time to think any more because another man came to the aid of the first. Skid sent a right to the mouth of this one and felt lips mash satisfyingly under his knuckles.

He reached his left to the counter for a bottle of ketchup and conked the drunk with it. Half a dozen men in the joint applauded, but the waitress screamed and fainted, probably because the ketchup on the man's skull looked like blood.

O'Neil spent ten minutes getting the waitress back to normal and by that time his two assaulters had disappeared.

When he got out to the truck, the girl had disappeared, too. He looked around for her, and waited a few minutes, but she didn't show, so he pulled his truck out on the road to Riverton, wondering what to make of it.

Not until daylight crept into the cab did he happen to spot the tiny gold pencil on a section of a man's watch-chain, in a corner of the floor. The chain was broken sharply off, as if it had been jerked during a struggle. He also picked up and pocketed a small old-fashioned cabinet key, with a hollow tip.

In town he left the truck at the

terminal and looked up the boarding house that Fred had mentioned. A buxom young woman answered his ring. "My name is O'Neil," he said. "Fred Freeman told me I could get a good bed here."

"Any friend of Fred's is a friend of mine," she replied. "I'm Edna. C'mon in."

He followed her upstairs and accepted the first room she showed him.

Six hours later he awoke to find a pitcher of ice water and an afternoon paper on the stand beside the bed. He yawned, reached for the newspaper, and came wide awake instantly when he spotted a girl's picture on the front page.

It was the girl he had picked up, and the caption over the picture read: **KIDNAPED!**

The details were brief: Ursula Jensen had run away—as Fred had suspected—and had been traced to Plain City the day before. Early this morning her parents had received a telephoned demand for ransom. There were rumors that the State Police and Federals were investigating a tip that the girl had been picked up by a truck driver at Plain City.

Miss Jensen had left a note saying she was sick of society life and was going to see the world in her own way. So that was how he had known her face! The society pages carried her picture every month.

He was in a jam if the Feds believed he knew anything about the girl. Sitting on the edge of the bed after he had slipped on his pants, he reached for the pitcher and began to pour himself a glass of water, when a ratty-looking fellow stepped in the door, gun in hand, and whispered: "Upsy daisy! Quick!"

Skid threw the water pitcher at him, and followed it, catapulting from the bed like a rock from a sling. The slug shattered the pitcher at the same moment that Skid loosed a left while reaching for the mug's gun hand with his right.

The rat was strong and wiry and Skid had a busy time until he suddenly heard a crash, and felt the man go limp. Edna was standing there holding the stump of a vase in both hands. Skid sat down and gasped.

"No bum is going to sneak into my house and bother my guests!" Edna said.

A furious pounding broke out below. Edna raised her eyebrows to ask, "What next?" and went downstairs to see, leaving Skid sitting on the bed contemplating the unconscious fellow on the floor, and idly twirling the captured gun.

**T**HE next thing he knew, a uniformed State Trooper and two men he guessed to be Riverton detectives burst into the room. Skid looked up and coolly tossed the gun at the older of the two plainclothesmen.

"There you are, Lieutenant. You can thank the lady. She beamed the guy with a vase."

The other detective turned the man over and after a glance at his face said: "One of Tony Panelli's hijackers, Lieutenant. What's he doing here, I wonder?"

The lieutenant turned to Skid. "Did you bring a truck in from Plain City last night?" he barked.

"Yeah. Nice trip. Nice scrap at Casey's place, en route."

"What were you fighting about?"

"Not a thing. A couple of drunks wanted a workout."

"Where's the girl?"

"What girl? Edna? She let you in." Skid asked a question himself: "Say, what's this inquisition about, anyhow?"

"Nuts!" the lieutenant snapped. "Don't try to pull that innocence on me." He shot a glance at the newspaper on the bed. "You read the papers, don't you?"

"Oh. You mean this. I don't know anything about this—what's-her-name, Jensen, isn't it? How should I?"

The lieutenant tried a new tack:

"Who's this gorilla?" he asked, poking the inert body on the floor with a shoe.

"Well, Lieutenant, your man said it's one of Tony Panelli's mob." Skid drew his private detective's license from his wallet and showed it to the three men, adding, "I've been asked to go after this gang, and now it seems they're after me. That makes it simple; all I have to do is sit here, and let Edna crown 'em when they come to bump me. I'll have to buy her some more vases, though."

The officer's face remained skeptical. The trooper broke in, "Lieutenant Murphy, his story about the fight at Casey's checks; that's what they told us. This bird is a new trucker around these parts, but if he is tailing Panelli, and Panelli sends a man after him, that makes it click."

Out of the corner of his eye Skid saw the trooper give Murphy a significant wink.

The latter's suspicion seemed to leave him. "All right then, O'Neil," he said. "If you can tag Panelli and make it stick, the Commissioner'll be obliged. The guy's been a pain in the neck a long time. We'll take this rat along."

Skid watched them drag the man out and closed the door after them. He pulled the tiny pencil from his pocket and looked at it curiously. He hadn't noticed before the trinket's evident costliness; it was strongly made, and heavy, yet the engraving was delicate and skillful. Examining it minutely, he started, and got a small lense from another pocket. With the lense he could just read a line of tiny letters around the cap: ANTHONY E. PANELLI!

SO THAT was it! Probably the set-up was about like this: Panelli and his mob, scouting for a truck to knock over, had spotted the girl in the cab of Skid's truck at the parking yard, had recognized her, and saw an opportunity for a snatch.

Panelli had sent those men into Casey's to start a fight and create a diversion, while Panelli had pulled the girl from the truck, and lost his pencil in the process. Later he had missed it, and had sent the thug to get the pencil and then bump Skid to shut him up.

Skid, thinking hard, shook his head. If his guess was right—and it sounded reasonable—then he *was* in a jam. If he took such a yarn to the police, he would be accused of being Panelli's fingerman in the snatching of the girl.

To a suspicious cop his story would be so much eyewash. As it was, that trooper's wink meant, of course, they were putting a tail on him, figuring the girl would be safer if he were free, and he would lead them to the hideout.

It was a lucky break that the younger detective had called the rat one of Panelli's hijackers. That had given Skid a stronger hunch that Panelli must be the man the Truckers' Association wanted. But, between Panelli and the police, Skid's spot would be too hot for comfort until Ursula Jensen was found, and Panelli's mob was liquidated.

Skid found paper and envelopes in a dresser drawer and wrote out all he knew and suspected. He pushed the pencil into a large cake of soap, covering it with more soap, and tossed the cake behind a pile of litter on the closet shelf.

He went downstairs and gave the letter, addressed to the Riverton Police Commissioner, to Edna, asking her to mail it if she didn't hear from him in twenty-four hours.

He strolled to the warehouse district, well aware of the detective following him, and killed a couple of hours helping to load his wagon and checking his manifest. When he came out of the warehouse office for the last time, the tail had dropped out of sight, and Skid pulled his truck out of the terminal yard in a heavy rain.

He stopped at Casey's again, near midnight, but discreet questions brought no information about the girl, and he was boring through the storm a few miles beyond, before the weather really bothered him. A red-lanterned barricade blocked the road and a crudely lettered sign said "Bridge out."

He dropped out of the cab and walked forward to investigate—and wanted to kick himself when two men with rods appeared and barked: "Hands up!"

One of the men got the lantern and the other took his gun and marched him to the truck. The first one climbed behind the wheel. Skid sat between them, a gun in his ribs.

The truck bunted the barricade aside as the driver leaned out the window and yelled into the darkness, "Okay, Flo, come ahead."

Car lights flashed in the woods behind the truck and Skid pictured the girl from whose hand he had shot the automatic two nights before. The truck went on for ten minutes, turned off on a dirt road, then turned off this onto a little-used lane, over which it lurched and groaned for a few minutes, before stopping in the yard of a dilapidated old building on the bank of a stream.

"Out," the driver said.

Skid got out, the gun always covering him. The yard was better illuminated now, by the lights of the car that had been following them, and he saw that the building was an old mill. He guessed that it was used as a storage place for goods from hijacked trucks. A girl got out of the car and stepped into the light. It was the same dame, Skid assured himself.

The lights of both car and truck were turned off and the four people headed for the mill door. As the group paused at the door, Skid looked back at the truck, and with difficulty suppressed an exclamation.

In a flash of lightning he saw a man climbing noiselessly out of

the laced canvas backdrop.

"Aha!" he thought, "So that's where the copper disappeared to!"

His captors, with flashlights, led him down into the cellar of the mill, along a short corridor lined with stolen tires and batteries, and into a stone-walled room with a solid-looking oak-beamed ceiling, and a lantern.

PANELLI apparently had just finished a meal; he sat by a littered table in a corner, sipping coffee. He was swart and lean, with glistening hair, immaculate clothes, and slits for eyes. Two plug-uglies whom Skid recognized as the two drunks of Casey's joint, sat with him, and off to one side a disheveled and dejected Ursula Jensen lay on a couch.

She opened her eyes as Skid and his captors entered, and a spark of recognition flashed into them, but she said nothing.

Panelli spoke to Skid in a voice as pleasant as the point of a fork scratching a plate.

"Where is my pencil?" he said.

Skid stood silent.

Panelli got up and approached him. "When I ask you a question," he grated, "answer me." His open hand swung up and smacked Skid viciously across the face. "My pencil?" he repeated.

"I lost it," Skid said.

Panelli's cold eyes called him a liar, and his mouth said, "You know, you're going to die. Tell me where my pencil is and you can die quick. Otherwise—"

Skid replied calmly, "Oh, no, Panelli. Not tonight. I reckoned something like this might happen. A letter containing your name will be mailed to Commissioner Rankin by afternoon, unless I stop it. Look—turn me loose, release the girl, and lam. I stop the letter and keep quiet. If you can't see that, remember the pencil and the letter will settle your hash."

He knew well enough that all this



talk would not interest the gang leader. But he was consuming time, and time was what he had to have.

Panelli stared at him with basilisk eyes. "I hate smart guys," he snarled. His eyes flickered at the man behind Skid.

Skid, warned by the flicker and a movement behind him, timed the descent of the blow exactly, ducking and rolling with it just enough so that the gun, instead of crashing solidly on his skull, scraped along the side like an explosion of rockets. He slumped to the floor, stunned and dazed, but not out.

Skid had by this time regained his senses. He had purposely fallen sideways, and flung out an arm as he fell, so that he was resting on his side, with his face partly shielded by the outflung arm. He heard the water gurgling in the mill-race behind him, and cautiously opened one eye.

Trig took off his coat, revealing a .45 in a shoulder holster, and lounged at the table, indolently picking his teeth. Obviously, he could get his .45 into deadly action before Skid could even hope to get off the floor.

The fine gravel and chaff of the dirt floor was hurting Skid's cheek and he



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Panelli let him lie, and turned to snap orders to his crew.

"Muggs and Pete, back to Riverton. Make that fat Edna talk. Don't come back without the letter—and the pencil, if you can find it. This smart lug must have left the letter with her. The pencil may be hidden in the truck. Jack and I will look, but meanwhile you boys scam."

The two men who had captured Skid went out.

Panelli addressed the other two. "Trig stays here to watch this shamus and the blonde. If either makes a break—plug 'em! Jack comes with me and if the pencil's in the truck, we'll find it." Panelli went out with Jack, and Flo trailed along.

suddenly recalled a boyhood trick. Stirring a little, as a man does who is coming out of a daze, he managed to run out his tongue, invisibly, and pick up with it a couple of very small pebbles, like BB shot. Stirring again, he waited a moment, praying he hadn't forgotten how to do it, and, controlling his facial muscles, ejected one pebble at Trig's face, twelve feet away in the semi-darkness of the lantern-lit room.

THE guard jumped, slapped his chin, and exclaimed, "Ouch! A hornet!" He snatched off his hat and slapped about in the air with it at the non-existent hornet.

Skid thought, "I remember, all

right," and took advantage of the distraction to tongue up a mouthful of rubbish from the floor and after waiting a few minutes, began to toss and mumble.

Trig came over, looked down at him, and was stiffening his leg to fetch Skid a kick in the head. Skid let one word escape clearly, among his groans: "Pencil." Trig's leg relaxed, and bending to hear better, rolled Skid on his back.

Skid continued to mumble and groan—until he felt the thug's breath on his face. Then, his tongue already burning with the lime pellets his saliva had moistened, he propelled his mouthful of rubbish into Trig's eyes, forcibly.

The latter cursed, and tried to rub his eyes and reach the .45 simultaneously. It didn't work; Skid swarmed over him, yanked the gun from the holster and, with grim satisfaction, slammed the barrel behind the man's ear.

The thin bubbling in Trig's throat assured Skid that the gunman was finished. Stopping only to rinse out his mouth with a swig of coffee from the pot, he seized the lantern and pulled the gasping Ursula out of the room and upstairs.

The outside door stood open and in the yard a pair of auto headlights shone on the truck. Panelli and the fellow called Jack were working in the glare, ripping open the truck seat cushions. Skid and Ursula stood behind the door, listening.

"Chief," a voice called from behind the car headlights. "Gas line's okay. Must be ignition."

With a start, Skid recognized the voice of Pete, who had driven Skid's truck to the hideout, and whom Panelli had ordered to go to Riverton. Straining his eyes through a crack, he saw the man working on the engine of the car, with Flo and Muggs hovering about.

He gestured impatiently in the dark. The city detective he had seen

dropping out of the truck had disabled the thug's car before going for help. Now what?

Four men and a woman, all armed, in the yard. If Skid started shooting, and failed to get them all, in the dark, he might get plugged himself, and Ursula Jensen would be spirited off again or killed with him.

He led Ursula back downstairs, relit the lantern, and went frenziedly to work on the stored tires and batteries, repiling them for several minutes, but leaving the door clear, and explaining his scheme to Ursula. Then he blew out the lantern and led her back upstairs to the spot behind the outside door. He pulled her close, whispered in her ear. "This is it!" and fired the .45 into the floor.

The boom of the small cannon reverberated in the old mill. The echoes had not died away when the gang from the yard dashed through the door behind which he and Ursula were standing, and piled downstairs.

Skid slithered down after them, and to the open doorway where he saw their flashlight beams swinging about inside the room. He slammed the door, jerked the key tire of the pile he had previously arranged, and was just exulting at the tumbling crash when for the second time rockets exploded around his head, and he went out cold.

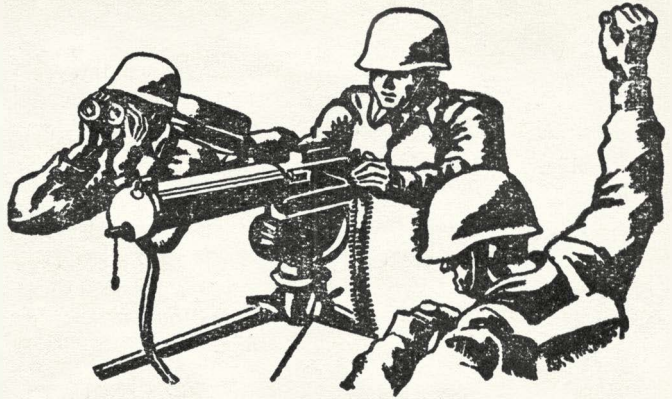
He woke up to find his head pilloled in a soft lap and three State Policemen, with the Riverton dick, shining their flashlamps on him.

"What happened to you?" one of the cops asked.

Skid winced. "I forgot to duck when the battery I put on top of the pile came down. Where are those rats?"

The cop chuckled. "Inside, waiting for us to clear this blockade of yours."

Skid looked up at Ursula. "These cops might as well earn their pay," he said. "I think I'll keep my head in your lap for a while, if you don't mind."



## **“ATTACK AT 0600!”**

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# THE CORPSE IN CALIFORNIA

By DALE CLARK

*Detective Nick Barry of the War Duty Office slings a mean line when he goes all out to rope a scheming Japanazi duo!*

## CHAPTER I

### PERSONAL POST-MORTEM

**T**HE phone rang. I lifted it and said, "War Duty Office. Barry speaking."

"Nick, this is Ed," the other voice said.

Ed Smith was on Homicide. I'd

been on Homicide with him before the war. When the little yellow devils started shooting our scrap iron back at us, the Police Department formed its War Duty Office, and I was transferred.

"Hello, Ed," I said. "What gives?"

"I've got a dead Jap," he announced.



I caught Hoy Sing  
right in the middle,  
and he started to  
slide across the  
floor

"Congratulations," I told him. "Why don't you start a collection?"

He didn't laugh.

"I got my hands full with just this one. Look, Nick," he said seriously, "the Jap was an alien enemy of the United States, and he picked out a forbidden area to die in. Wouldn't that spell something or other to you War Duty men?"

"It might. What's the address?"

"Ten-sixty-and-one-half Harbor Street. The Hashamoto Importing Company used to be downstairs. You go to the back and go up one flight."

"Okay," I said. "Right away."

It was a golden California afternoon, but the kind of a neighborhood where men melted out of the doorways when they saw a cop coming.

Hashamoto's was a brick, two-story building crowded in among others like it. The store windows were dusty and contained nothing except brown shelf paper and a foggy reflection of the Homicide car. Hashamoto, of course, had been ordered out along with all the rest of the Japs in the prohibited area.

A rat-run passageway fed back along the brick sidewalls to a littered rear yard. The wooden steps that angled up the back wall of Hashamoto's groaned under my hundred and eighty pounds. A cop on the landing grinned me inside.

I went along a wall-papered corridor that led to the front of the building. A door on the left stood open, and I looked at the corpse first.

THE dead Oriental lay huddled in the middle of the floor—the most devilish sight I ever saw. He was a pint-sized, black-haired, brown-faced Jap all dolled up in a very fancy ceremonial robe that was frogged with gold embroidery and stiff with blood. Tangled up in the folds of the robe was a short, yardstick length of sword.

It looked like he'd sat down on the floor, opened his fancy kimono, and

started hunting for his appendix with the sword. He'd found it, too. He couldn't have missed it the way he'd wielded the knife.

"Hell's hinges!" I said. "What'd he do, commit post-mortem on himself?"

"Hara-kiri," Lee Ogham corrected. "That's the Jap style of suicide."

Lee Ogham is a little bookish guy who bounces when he walks, or would if he weren't weighted down by the leather satchel coroner's carry.

The others in the room were Ed Smith and Jeff Barney, both Homicide. Barney was a kid at the business. He took his cues from Ed.

Ed would weigh in at around two hundred ten, never buttoned his vest across his barrel chest, and never smoked a cigar except on Sundays. Week-days he just chewed them, cold. And he fooled you by looking sloppy and easy-going and sort of dumb.

Standing by the window, taking it all in with wide eyes, was a fourth man whom I'd never met.

"I don't know if it's suicide or not," said Ed Smith in his slow, dumb way.

"Of course it's suicide. Look at his fingertips," Lee Ogham urged.

I'd already noticed the dead Oriental's fingers. They were slashed across the tips. Such cuts are caused by the victims grasping the blade to put more power into the act.

This Jap had them on both hands because he'd had to hold the sword that way—he couldn't have gotten enough leverage from the handle. But if there'd been a fight over the sword, if he'd tried to get it away from a murderer, the cuts would have been along the base of his fingers and across his palms.

Every Homicide cop knows a simple thing like that. I knew it, and Ed Smith knew it. But Ed just stood there and shook his head.

"Who was he?" I asked.

"We found some papers," Ed said. "Jeff has them."

Jeff Barney handed me the bundle. I looked at the passport, which was on top. It was a Japanese passport, issued to one Osui Takamura, student. The visa date was in June, 1940. It was all properly stamped, and the photograph was a good picture of the dead Jap.

The other papers were letters of introduction; they all bore the date of May 24, 1940, were addressed to different American universities and museums, and had been signed by a Professor Huichi Najito, in Tokyo.

The letters described Osui Takamura as a student of music who wanted to study primitive American Indian music. They were written in good, fluent English. I got the idea Professor Huichi Najito was probably an American-educated Jap.

"Yeah," I said. "Well, when'd it happen?"

"Eighteen or twenty hours ago," Lee Ogham said.

That meant last night, in the early evening.

"Who found him?"

Ed Smith jerked a thumb.

"This guy, Collings."

**C**OLLINGS was the fourth man, the one I hadn't met before. He was a big guy, as big as Ed Smith, and about the same age—forty.

"It was accidental," Collings said. "I was making a routine check-up on the property. You get a better chance to rent these places if you air them out once in a while. I've found out that nothing depresses a prospect more than the stuffy, airless smell a place gets by being locked up a long time. It's one of the fine points of my business."

I took a good look at him. His thick, larded jowls needed a shave. The light from the window showed a telltale fuzz around his collar where the starched cloth was worn. His serge suit was shiny, and his coat pockets bulged with a collection of pencils and receipt pads

He wasn't drunk, but I caught a whiskey whiff as he fumbled inside his coat and got out a shabby wallet and handed me his business card. The card said his name was Fred W. Collings, that he was a rental agent, and it mentioned his business address and phone number.

He held out his hand and mumbled something about the paper shortage, so I gave him back the card.

"You rented this flat to Takamura?" I asked him.

"No. I didn't rent it to anybody," he said. "I thought the whole building was vacant."

I glanced around. The place was completely furnished, and to a trained eye it showed all the signs of being lived in. The recent newspapers on the table, for one thing.

"How could a tenant move in without you knowing it?"

"That's easy," Collings said. "There's just an ordinary lock on the back door. The Jap had a skeleton key, I guess, and nobody would ever notice him going up and down the back stairs, especially at night."

He turned his head to the window and pointed to the drapes.

"They're heavy. If he pulled them at night, you could never see from the street he had a light up here."

"What about light service," I asked, "in an empty building?"

"Wasn't any," Ed Smith said. "No gas, either. Just the phone." He chewed his cold cigar. He looked dumb, stubborn, and mule-eyed.

"It's certainly a queer deal," Ed Smith said. "This Jap was an enemy alien. He ran the risk of hiding out in a prohibited area. I can't figure why he'd go to all that trouble, and then commit suicide. I wonder what his game was, anyway?"

Nobody offered any answer to that one.

"Well, whatever it was," I said, "He's a dead Jap, and so he's a *good* Jap."

"Well," Collings said a *minute*

later, "what are we waiting for?"

"The dead-wagon," responded Lee Ogham.

"And the fingerprint guy," Ed Smith added.

I was thinking. I took out my handkerchief, covered my fingers, and lifted the cradle phone by one of its rounded ends. In that way I kept my own prints off the instruments, and also wasn't likely to disturb the prints left by anybody who'd used this phone in the normal manner.

I dialed the phone company's confidential information number, which is a number that's never released to the public though all law enforcement agencies have it.

"This is Sergeant Barry, badge number nine-twelve," I said. "I want to know who's paying for Ranier—four—three, six, nine, seven." I was reading the number off the center plate of the dial.

There was a pause, and then a voice said in punctilious, telephone company tones:

"That is an unlisted number. The party is a Mr. John Rohde," and she spelled that. "Ten-sixty-and-one-half Harbor Street."

"Where do you send the bill?" I asked. I knew the postman wasn't leaving mail at a vacant building.

"Post office Lock Box three-twelve," the operator's voice said.

I thanked her and put down the phone. I didn't wait for the dead-wagon, or any of the Homicide formalities. I checked out of there, and went straight to the post office.

## CHAPTER II

### DIAGRAM FOR DEATH



SOMETIMES a cop can be a fool for luck, and this was one of the times.

I walked into the post office lobby, strolled past the glass-fronted boxes, and shot a look into 312. There was a letter inside it. A letter

that apparently Osui Takamura hadn't lived to receive.

I stopped at the General Delivery window.

"My name's John Rohde," I said. "Box three-twelve. I must have left my keys in the locker at Headquarters. Will you hand me my mail?"

I didn't know about the postal regulations. It may have been okay, or the clerk may have been impressed by a glimpse of my badge.

"Why, yes, sure, Officer," he said and handed me the envelope.

I pretended to check the typewritten address; saw that it had a two-cent, local stamp. I turned it over, and saw that the envelope was one of the self-sealing type.

I did know the postal regulations on the next step, though. I was going to break a Federal law. Of course, I didn't have to. I could have gone through a lot of routine and red tape, and eventually had this letter opened by a postal inspector.

But the way I felt, Pearl Harbor wasn't attacked according to the rule-book, either. When you've been kicked below the belt, you can't stop to lace boxing gloves on your own feet before kicking back.

I walked down the street to a photographic shop. It cost me two-bits to buy a pair of bamboo tongs, the kind photographers use for lifting pictures from one tray to another.

My next stop was a drug store, where I spent fifteen cents for a milk shake. What I really wanted was a quiet corner of a booth to do a little unobserved work. With my penknife, I whittled the tongs down until they ended in two bamboo needles less than an eighth of an inch in width.

Then, holding the envelope by its edges so the gummed flap bulged out slightly, I slid the needle-like tong ends through the gap. You begin to get the postal authorities' idea.

All I had to do was grasp the upper edge of the enclosure, and twirl the tongs. When the letter was wound



into a tight cylinder around the tiny tongs, I pulled it out, and my eyes fixed eagerly on the unrolled page.

There was just the one page. The pencil lines drawn carefully, plotted out the floor plan of a house. It showed an entrance hallway, a solarium, living room, dining room, and study. It was none of your hasty, bungled jobs, either. The drawing had obviously been made by a professional, and just as obviously it had been drawn to scale.

A tiny "x" had been penciled into the study wall. I didn't know what the "x" was supposed to signify. That was the least of my worries, anyway. The big worry was that I hadn't the foggiest notion of where the house itself could be found.

I studied the letter, both sides of it. There was no address, no written message at all. It was just a floor plan. It might have been the plan of almost any largish home in any part of the city, and it was a needle-in-a-haystack proposition if I ever bumped into one.

FOR a crazy moment, I contemplated the possibility of a street-by-street search. A lone-wolf couldn't have done it. A police department, where every cop in town was handed a mimeographed copy of this plan, could conceivably have located the building I wanted. But the cops couldn't do it by cruising around in squad cars.

You can't tell about a floor plan by staring at the exterior of a home. It'd mean barging into maybe ten thousand houses before eventually we hit on the right one.

There were too many complications, so I gave up the street-by-street idea. I had to think of something better.

One of the advantages a cop has over a criminal is the cop's ability to reach out and find expert help. The crook's handicap is that he's rarely expert at more than just one spe-

cialty. A cop isn't, either, but the cop doesn't have to be.

What I needed right now was an expert on house plans.

I headed for the City Hall. I went up to the third floor and walked to the end of the corridor and through a door that said:

PAUL TAFT

Building Permit Division

I flashed my detective badge and got past the public counter, through the file room, into Taft's private office.

Taft was fat, bald, and spectacled. "As one tax-eater to another," I said, "I'm on a spot. I want to locate this house. I've got the floor plan, and nothing else at all." And I laid the plan on his desk.

Without looking at it, he said:

"Sure you realize—"

"A house can't be built without your okay, can it?" I asked. "You must have a file of approved plans somewhere, and it's just a case of matching this sketch with the original, architect's drawing."

"We'd have to match it against thousands of plans in our files," he objected. "You don't even know when this particular house was built. It may be buried away in the records of ten, fifteen years ago."

Then he looked at the plan. He started to push it back across the desk at me, then stopped, bent his bald head over it.

"Why, this is a Clifton Clyde," he said.

"A how-much?"

Taft was smiling.

"Clyde's an architect," he said. "He's unusually modern, and that solarium is a typical feature. It's built at *patio* level, so in good weather you push back the sliding glass walls and bring the outdoors into your house."

"Then you *can* check it?"

He nodded.

"Thanks to the architect's individuality, and the fact that his work's

too modernistic to be extremely popular. There are probably not more than fifty of his homes in our files, all built in the last three years."

He got up and waddled out; came back in five minutes, still smiling.

"The house you want is at Fifty-six twenty-two Surfton Drive. The owner's name is Walter F. Stone, unless the place has been sold since it was built in thirty-nine. The permit was for ten thousand, five hundred. Cahill & Bright did the contracting."

I stopped downstairs, stepped into a phone booth. There was a Walter F. Stone listed at 5622 Surfton. Then I called Ra-4 3697.

"Got anything new, Ed?" I asked.

He growled.

"A post-office lock-box key?" I asked.

"No," he said.

"Maybe your killer took it," I told him, "if there was a killer. I'll meet Jeff at the post-office."

I did, and told Jeff to keep a watch on 312. To encourage anybody who might come along and open it, I stepped over to a stamp window and slid the empty, sealed envelope under the wicket and said, "Wrong box, not Three-fourteen," so that the envelope would go back into 312.

I SAW what Taft meant about the architect's individuality when I reached 5622 Surfton Drive. It was one of those hillside houses, and if you didn't care for modernistic architecture you'd say it looked like three shoe-boxes nailed together.

That is, the house was built on three levels, three cubes of glass and stucco stacked one above the other against the hillside. Apparently my floor plan was of the middle level, not the lowermost. That was the biggest of the three shoe-boxes, and the one facing onto the *patio*.

I crossed the *patio* and put my thumb on a button connected with some chimes inside. I saw a shadow against the obscure glass of the door

and then it opened, and the girl who opened it was cute. She had a page boy mop of thick, shiny blond hair that fell to her shoulders. Her eyes were a nice shade of gray-blue. She was wearing one of those California-style play suits, with a halter neck. Mexican *huarachas* sandalled her small, bare, high-arched feet.

"Mr. Walter F. Stone?" I said.

"Uncle Walt is out," the girl said. "Did you try the office?"

"This isn't a business call. Has your air raid warden called on you yet?"

"Why, of course, but—"

"I'm from the sector headquarters," I told her. "We're making a few check-up calls and inspections to test the efficiency of our post warden organization. We've had some complaints about the wardens neglecting to make their calls, so we're conducting a general investigation."

I flipped open the notebook that all cops carry and said briskly:

"Fifty-six twenty-two Surfton is right, isn't it? Number of persons living here?"

"Four," the girl said.

"Names? Ages?"

She wrinkled her blond brows at me.

"You have to know our names and ages?"

"The information is for our files," I said, "in case a bomb fell on your house and we had to send a rescue squad to dig you out."

"Oh, I see," she said. "Well, Uncle Walter is forty-seven. The maid, Martha Wells, must be fifty or so. I don't know how old the cook, Hoy Sing, is but I should imagine between thirty and forty."

"No invalids? No children?"

"No."

"Own a dog?"

"You must keep very complete files."

"We're really only interested in vicious dogs," I said. "In the black-outs, we've already had, several war-

dens have been bitten on their rounds."

"Oh. Well, no dog."

"You have buckets of sand? You keep a water hose connected?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then that's all, except that I'd like to inspect your blackout arrangements—just to make sure you have one room that can be darkened."

What I wanted, of course, was a look-see inside the house—inside the study, especially, to find out what the "X" on the floor plan signified.

"Won't you come in?" the girl said. She led the way.

"In here," she said.

**M**Y PULSE jumped. I was certainly a fool for luck today. The door she opened was the study door.

"We pull the Venetian blinds tightly," she explained "and then draw those drapes across the windows. If there's a fire burning, we extinguished the fire. And, of course, the fireplace serves for ventilation, even though the windows are all tightly closed. Then, there's a phone right here on the desk in case we need it."

She'd walked over to the desk and was smiling at me in a pleased way.

I still had my notebook open, pretending to write it all down. I let my glance drift to the end of the room, the west wall where the "x" had been located on the plan. I didn't know what to expect—a safe, wall vault, or what.

As a matter of fact, there wasn't a thing there except an electric outlet in the baseboard.

"By the way," I asked, "what's your uncle's occupation?"

"He's with the Horticultural Commission," the girl said. "I'll get you one of his cards." She opened a desk drawer.

"Thanks," I said. "These routine questions are necessary. We have to find the people in every neighborhood who can help out in an emergency—

doctors, nurses, druggists, scout-masters, and so on."

Of course, it wasn't a routine question. I was digging desperately for the connection between these people and the dead Jap at 1060½ Harbor Street.

"Oh, by the way," I said, "I don't believe you mentioned your name and age."

She tossed her mop of blond hair as she looked up from the desk drawer.

"It's Barbara Stone," she said. "And Uncle Walter is air raid warden for this post, and you're not from sector headquarters at all, and you can just lift your hands as high as you can get them!"

Her own hand popped out of the desk drawer. She was pointing a .38 caliber pistol at me.

## CHAPTER III

### HOY SING'S SONG



**D**ON'T like amateurs with guns. They're too nervous, too apt to be panicked into squeezing the trigger. Also, they have beginner's luck.

Barbara Stone was an amateur. It showed in the overly tense, awkward way her fingers wrapped around the gun. It showed in her stance, the way she pushed the gun out in front of her instead of the side-on method you learn at target practice.

I shoved my hands up fast.

"What," I asked, "do you think I am?"

Her smile was one-third nervousness, one-third triumphant, and the rest grim determination.

"Probably a burglar," she said. "I suppose you were casing the joint. That's what they call it, isn't it?"

"What are you going to do? Turn me in?"

"You bet I am," she said.

She reached with her free hand for the cradle phone, dragged it across

the desk. She lifted the receiver, held it in one hand while she dialed for the operator.

I relaxed. If she was really going to call the police, I had nothing to worry about.

Barbara Stone cradled the phone against her cheek. Her blond eyebrows hooped up, and then pulled into a tiny frown. A muscle at one corner of her mouth jerked involuntarily.

As plainly as if she'd said so in words, her unguarded expression told me that the telephone was dead.

"Wait a minute, Miss Stone," I said. "Give me a break, won't you? Before you call the police, there's something I'd like to say to you."

You can see why I put it that way. The girl was on a spot, and I wanted to get her out of it. I wanted her to feel she had the upper hand. It's just like poker—you can't get chips into the pot unless the other fellow thinks he holds better cards than you do.

Barbara Stone was an amateur at poker, too. She decided to bluff with too little, and too late.

"Operator," she said, "please send a policeman to Fifty-six twenty-two Surfton Drive. At once, please." She lowered the phone into its base, and then said to me:

"There, now! You'd better explain yourself quickly if you don't want to wind up in jail."

She was in the poker game, all right. But it wasn't a game where she could call and force me to spread my cards face up.

"I'm not a burglar at all," I insisted. "I'm in the real estate business. My name's Fred Collings. You can look me up in the phone book if you don't believe that."

"Go on, Mr. Collings. What were you after here?"

I didn't try to make myself out a hero. If you want to be believed, you have to tell the worst about yourself. That's what people want to think, anyway.

"Frankly," I said, "I've got a client

who's interested in buying this house. I came here to meet your uncle, get to talking to him in a friendly way, and sound him out on whether he'd like to sell.

"I've found out that when I tell people I'm a realtor they immediately jack up their asking price three or four thousand dollars. So I merely sound them out, and if they're interested, let my partner close the deal. It's one of the fine points of my business."

BARBARA STONE'S eyes were a contemptuous shade of gray.

"You sure you don't mean a sharp point?" she asked. "It's pretty cheap and sneaky, isn't it?"

All the time we were talking, I'd kept my hands high in the air. Now I made a gesture, throwing out both palms, which naturally lowered my arms.

"I don't think it's sneaky to protect my clients," I said. "You see, I know what this house is worth. It cost ten thousand, five hundred to build three years ago. That was what Cahill & Bright charged for the job, and allowing ten per cent for Clyde's fee and another thousand for the lot, a fair price would be around thirteen thousand."

I dropped my hands to my sides.

"Now," I said, "will you call off your cop?"

The girl hesitated.

"Have you any identification?" she asked.

"I've got something better than that," I said. "I've got positive proof."

She was a complete amateur. She let me reach inside my coat, as if she'd never heard of guns in shoulder rigs.

"Here's a floor plan of your home which I drew up from the plans on file at the City Hall. You see, my client is really interested. He's even planning how his furniture would go in these rooms."

"What's the 'X' for?" Barbara Stone asked.

"Oh. Oh, that. Well, my client wants to install a wall safe. He's a lawyer and brings home a lot of valuable papers to work on, nights."

She shook her blond head.

"It'd be in the way of the dumb-waiter," she said. "The kitchen is on the lower level, with a service shaft in the wall that connects with the pantry off the dining room. You couldn't have read the plans very carefully, or you'd have noticed."

"It's my partner's fault," I said. "He's really the one who—"

A scream sliced through my fairy tale.

I stopped with my mouth hanging open.

Another sound—queer, gurgling—sliced through the middle of the scream. Somewhere in the house, a weight thumped heavily.

Barbara Stone stood stunned, moving only the facial muscles which widened her startled eyes. I stepped close, pinned her right hand to the desk, and pulled the gun out from under her spread, unresisting fingers.

I ran across the study, feeding the .38 into my coat pocket as I ran. An unfamiliar gun isn't much use in a crisis, particularly when you're not sure it's loaded, so I tugged my short-barreled Detective Special out of my shoulder rig with one hand, and heeled open the study door with my left.

The hallway was empty.

"D-d-downstairs!" Barbara Stone chattered.

I RAN down the flight of modernistic stairs into a metal kitchen that was spick-and-span except for a limp, black-suited shape sprawled on the rubberized tile floor.

"Hoy Sing!" the girl cried behind me.

I ran past the fallen cook, through a door that opened into a service gallery. The gallery was empty. So was the rear patio.

[Turn page]

# To People who want to write but can't get started

Do you have that constant urge to write but the fear that a beginner hasn't a chance? Then listen to what the editor of Liberty said on this subject:

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It turned back into the kitchen. Barbara Stone had wetted a dish-towel in cold water and was swabbing the cook's face. The dark suit indicated he'd either been out, or was just going out. Pinned on his lapel, a conspicuous badge said:

I AM CHINESE

I jerked open a door at the other end of the kitchen. It let me into a pantry, gave me a glimpse of the dumbwaiter arrangement Barbara had mentioned. A door from the pantry led me on into what was evidently Hoy Sing's bedroom. I looked around, then I went back into the kitchen.

"Well, he probably slipped and fell," I said.

"What'd you think happened?" the girl asked.

"Well, somebody could have hung the slug onto him."

Hoy Sing blinked a pair of wedge-shaped, black pupiled eyes at me. He blinked several times, shook his black-maned head.

"It certainly sounded like he started to scream," I continued, "was choked off, and then hit."

"What happened, Hoy Sing?" Barbara Stone asked.

"I fix'm 'lectlic light. Velly much fall off'm sink." The slanted eyes were staring at me now.

"You shouldn't stand on the sink. You should use a step-ladder," the girl said reprovingly.

"I solly, Missy." Hoy Sing got up gingerly. He hadn't taken his eyes off me. "You makee phone okay, you man?"

Barbara blushed.

"Our phone's really out of order, Mr. Collings. Hoy Sing must have gone out and ordered a repair man sent here. He evidently thinks you're the one."

For my money, Hoy Sing thought nothing of the kind. He continued to watch me with a strained, peevish mistrust which made the girl laugh apologetically.

"Hoy Sing's new here," she explained. "Hoy Long, our cook, was drafted last week. So one morning we found his cousin installed in our kitchen. That's the way the Chinese are, they never let a job get out of the family."

I nodded. I'd heard about that Chinese cousin system before. You hire a Chinese cook or gardener, and the chances are you'll never have to do business with an employment agency again.

A Chinese servant looks on his job as a personal possession, to be passed on to one of his numerous cousins in case of war, illness, or death. Most employers encourage the system because they've found out the Chinese provide the most loyal and efficient service that money can buy. They're honest to the core, have never heard of time-and-a-half for overtime, and will lay down their lives for you.

Barbara Stone handed Hoy Sing the water-soaked dish-towel.

"It's all right, Hoy Sing," she said. "Mr. Collings is a real estate man. You know, a man who buys and sells houses."

Hoy Sing gave me a slanted stare.

"You velly funny, Mista Collings. You sellee leal estate with a gun, maybe?"

The damned Detective Special was still in my fist.

"Oh, no, that's my—" Barbara Stone stopped short as the meaning of the Detective Special dawned on her slowly.

"Why, you were carrying a gun all the time!" she said. "You lied to me!"

Hoy Sing was good. He snapped out that dish-towel with just a flicker of wrist movement, caught me squarely across the eyes with the stinging tip of it. I was blinded for an instant—long enough for him to leap in, swinging with everything he had.

He wasn't quite that good. He jarred me, drove me back against the sink's drainboard. I brought up my

foot, caught him in the middle, and he slid clear across the kitchen and bounded into the electric stove.

"Sure, I pack a gun," I explained to Barbara Stone. "That's because I collect rent from some of the buildings on my list. A man has to protect his clients' money. It's another fine point in the business."

I hauled the .38 pistol from my pocket, flipped out its magazine, and then handed the gun to her. She was open-mouthed as I walked away.

## CHAPTER IV

### COPS DON'T CRY



UN permits are issued through the sheriff's office in California. So, on my way downtown, I stopped at the sheriff's headquarters.

I told the deputy in charge I was interested in a .38 automatic. I'd checked its number when I extracted the magazine.

The deputy looked it up.

"That permit was granted to Walter F. Stone, Fifty-six twenty-two Surfton Drive," he told me. "He applied for it last December."

"Yeah. He's an air raid warden, isn't he?"

"That's not why. We don't give gun permits to wardens. Stone's a chief inspector with the Horticultural Commission."

"That sounds like a spray gun job to me."

"No, it isn't. The State of California enforces a quarantine against importing lots of fruits and vegetables, for fear of spreading plant pests. A ship can't come into harbor here until they inspect and make sure it's clean. You know, they even throw the potatoes overboard."

"And he needs a gun for that?"

"He needs a gun because he's on twenty-four-hour call," the deputy said, tapping Walter F. Stone's filing card. "It means driving down through

[Turn page]

# REDUCE FAT



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the waterfront district at night sometimes, and that's a pretty tough district."

"Brother," I said, "I think maybe you laid it right in my lap."

My next stop was the post-office—or that's the way I planned it. Actually, I didn't get any farther than the front steps. I had to fight my way through a crowd to get that far.

The same blue-clad cop who'd waved me into Takamura's flat was holding this crowd back. I ducked under his arm.

I SAW big Ed Smith down on his knees on the blood-stained steps. The slumped body beside Ed had belonged to Jeff Barney. Jeff wouldn't need it any more, now.

"He made a pinch, huh?" I said.

If it sounded cold and unfeeling, that was the way I was. Cold all the way through, with ice in the pit of my stomach, and numbness that flooded my brain.

"Yeah," Ed Smith said. "Somebody opened Box Three-twelve, and he must have made the pinch. The guy shot him the minute they stepped outside."

I knew he felt it worse than I did. After all, Jeff Barney was the big fellow's partner. But his voice sounded just as cold and practical as my own.

"Anybody see it?" I asked.

"No," he said. "Plenty of people inside heard the gun go off, but nobody happened to be on the sidewalk at the time."

"What time?"

"It was just two, three minutes ago." He began cursing in low, slowly spaced oaths. "If only I'd gotten here just a little sooner. I was checking with the F. B. I. They've been trying to find that Osui Takamura for weeks, with nothing to work on but his passport record. If I'd come straight here, Jeff would be alive now."

"Or if I hadn't put him on the job at all," I said. "Thinking like that won't get us anywhere."

COPS don't cry over their dead. Death is the gamble you take when they pin the badge on you. If you're a loser, they unpin the badge and put it up on the big silver plaque at Headquarters, along with the badge of other cops who have been slain in line of duty.

Big Ed Smith's fingers were shaking as he turned Jeff Barney's lapel and unfastened the badge concealed there. I knew that neither of us would ever pass that silver plaque again without letting our eyes rest momentarily on this particular shield.

Cops don't cry, but they have long, long memories.

I turned quickly and ducked away through the crowd. I'd been on Homicide long enough to know the whole routine of a murder investigation. Every scrap of evidence has to be noted, sketched, photographed, tagged. If not, you'd never get a conviction. But that was Ed's job. It wasn't mine. And I wanted faster action.

I remembered Fred Collings' address. It proved to be a dingy, one-room, street-level office with a lot of signs in the window advertising properties for rent. Collings himself was behind the desk, with his feet propped up on the ledge. He pulled his feet down, but not before I'd had an opportunity to see the dime-sized hole in the left sole.

"Yes, officer?" he said.

"I want a key to Hashamoto's," I said.

"Why, I left that key with your man, Smith."

"I mean the key to the store downstairs."

"What for?" He stared at me.

I stared back at him, but I didn't say anything.

"I see," he said. "Official secrets. Well, of course, it isn't regular, but I want to oblige the police. I think I'll stretch a point."

He pulled open his desk drawer,



hauled out a thick mess of keys on a ring, and selected one almost without looking.

"Be sure to lock up again," he said warningly.

"Yeah," I said. "Tight."

THE afternoon was wearing on into the early dusk which darkens city streets while the sky is still almost bright overhead. The sky was blue over Harbor Street, but the doorways were thick with shadow.

I unlocked Hashamoto's door, and stepped into deeper, stagnant shadows inside.

Bare shelves stretched back along the long, plastered walls. I knew what I was looking for, but it took me a while to find the trap-door, leading down into the cellar.

The cellar was as black as the inside of an ink bottle, so I struck a match as I clambered down the ladderlike steps. The cellar was full of boxes, presumably loaded with the stock that had been moved from upstairs. Over in a corner, a glassy reflection answered the glimmer of my lighted match.

It was the electric meter. And it was shut off. It had to be. You can have a phone bill sent to a post-office box, but to obtain electric service it's necessary to allow a meter reader on the premises once a month.

Somebody had eliminated that necessity by running a feed-in wire around this meter. It's fairly easy for people to tap electric current, and during the depression the cops used to haul in a lot of them for doing it.

But the mechanic in this case had been more than ordinarily skilled. He'd attached a safety fuse to his wire tapping job, and in making his connection to the fuse plug, he'd used the regulation underwriters' knot.

From the fuse connection, a length of stout, rubber-clad cable disappeared between the packing boxes. I shoved two of the boxes aside, and struck another match.

[Turn page]

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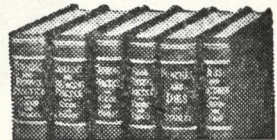
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Suddenly, I heard footsteps overhead. I blew out the match, and my hand slid between the lapels of my coat, closed on the butt of the Detective Special, and waited there.

The beam of a flashlight tunneled through the trapdoor into the cellar.

A voice said, "Barry? You down there?"

"Collings?" I asked.

"Yeah. Say, something funny just happened right after you left my office."

He was coming down the steps, swiveling a flashlight this way and that. Finally he spotted me behind the boxes.

"A Miss Stone telephoned," he said. "She seemed to think it funny I didn't remember the name. She seemed to think I'd been at her home this afternoon."

"Go on."

"I asked her what the man looked like, and she gave me a perfect description of you."

"Quite a coincidence," I said.

HE STOPPED on the other side of the packing boxes. The boxes came almost shoulder high to both of us. I could watch the hand holding the flashlight, but I didn't know what the other was doing.

"I don't think it's a coincidence," Collings said. "You've been trading on my name, my professional reputation. Don't you think I'm entitled to an explanation?"

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"Yes, I do."

"Okay," I said. "Here it is. I found a floor plan of her home. It had been marked to show the spot in the wall where a phone tap could be installed. Apparently the job was going to be done by the same expert who tapped the juice in this cellar."

"Miss Stone's phone had even been put out of commission, so the man could get into the house by posing as a telephone company repair man."

"You don't say. And why would anyone want to tap Miss Stone's phone?"

"It's her uncle's phone," I said. "Walter F. Stone is an inspector on the Horticultural Commission, and he's sometimes called in the middle of the night to meet incoming ships."

"Anyone who could tap his wire

[Turn page]

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would have access to advance, inside information on ship movements. It might be possible to flash that information to a Jap submarine lurking outside the harbor."

The level of the flashlight shifted a little. There was some movement of his shoulders behind it. "Okay, okay," he said, "you were working on a police case. But why drag my name into it?"

"I don't know. It's just that you stuck in my mind. I guess it must be because you overplayed your part a little. You were a trifle too run down at the heel, frayed, unshaven, and whiskey perfumed. It didn't quite fit in with your attention to details, like airing out this building every so often. I figured a man who'd let himself run to seed personally would let his business go hang, too."

Collings probably had a gun in his other hand, but I figured he wouldn't use it while I kept talking. He wanted to know what I had on him, of course. If he knew that, he'd be better set to protect himself against the next detective.

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"Still," I said, "it was nothing definite. I didn't really get warm until I asked you for the key to this building, and you picked it out of twenty or thirty others automatically. That was a dead give-away that you'd been coming here a lot oftener than you told us."

I threw my weight against the two packing boxes. He'd been crowding them close. He had to, to keep his free hand out of the angle of my vision.

He jumped back, naturally. Just as naturally, he used his hands to fend off the toppling boxes. I wanted to take him alive, if I could, so I risked a headlong dive over the boxes.

The flashlight fell on the concrete floor and started rolling toward the cellar's sewer drain. Collings was forced to shoot blindly at a target in motion. The gun-flame was inches over my head, but so close the bellow of it deafened me.

I'd fallen short, and was sprawled across the boxes, head, arms, and shoulders hanging over. I reached out and hacked desperately at his leg.

The steel barrel of the Special caught him fair and square on the kneecap. If you've ever bumped your knee sharply on a table leg, you'd get a faint idea. If the table leg was made of steel, and traveling as hard as a hundred and eighty pounds of cop could sling it, you'd really have the idea. [Turn page]



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Fred Collings slid down into a  
shrieking, pain crazed hulk of flesh.

I picked up his gun and dropped it  
into my pocket, buried the Detective  
Special in its shoulder rig. Then I  
grasped Fred Collings by his shirt-  
front, hauled him up.

"Come on!" I said. I wanted him  
to do the rest of his talking in front  
of witnesses. My mistake was in not  
realizing there already was a wit-  
ness. It simply hadn't occurred to me  
that Collings' heavy footsteps could  
have masked the sound of another  
pair of feet—if the other pair moved  
lightly, in time with his footfalls.

## CHAPTER V

"FIRST, YOU'VE GOT TO CATCH YOUR  
JAP . . ."



FIGURE swung through  
the cellar trapdoor as I  
stooped to lift Collings'  
bulk, and the weight of it  
caught me full across the  
kidneys. The combination  
of weight and surprise  
crumpled me across Collings' writh-  
ing body. Then the flat side of a solid  
little hand hatched across the base  
of my skull.

My fuses blew. The mental current  
blacked out, spluttered, began to burn  
dimly again.

"You allee light now?" a mocking  
voice purred.

I sat up, braced my shoulders  
against the upset packing boxes.

"Light as a feather," I said. "Prac-  
tically floating in space."

My Detective Special was pointed  
at me from the little yellow cook's  
hand. He was no amateur with a gun,  
either. He showed plenty of know-  
how in the way he held the Special  
butted into his palm, keeping the  
trigger finger relaxed for accurate  
shooting.

"You talkee pletty quick, Mista  
Poliss," he said. "You tellee numbah  
one big lie, you air laid wahden.  
Numbah two lie, you leal estate fella.

You talkee stlaight now, or Hoy Sing shootee. No like, I betcha?"

I tried to remember a ju-jitsu trick. In a general way, I knew the trick. It consists of grabbing an opponent's outstretched hand, whirling, and hurling him over your shoulder.

"And how, I don't like," I said. "Sure, I'll talk. What'd you want, Sing?"

"Having lettar, pliss," he hissed.

"Oh, yeah. The letter. You mean the plan." I got up, shakily. I felt shaky, but not that bad. I dug inside my coat, got out the letter, started to hand it to him. At the last moment, I changed the movement into a desperate plunge for the gun in his hand.

He wasn't fool enough to fight over a gun with a man my size. He reacted exactly as I'd expected—the way he'd been trained to react.

He dropped the gun, wrapped the fingers of both hands around my wrist, and started to whirl. His idea was to haul my arm over his shoulder, and at the same time slam his hips into my groin. Using his shoulder for a fulcrum, he'd apply the leverage to throw my charging weight head over applectart.

I wasn't plunging straight-ahead. I pivoted on my right foot as he grabbed my arm, and put the whole impetus of the charge into a hook of the left knee. Instead of slamming his hips into my groin, he whirled

[Turn page]

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smack into all the force of my knee.

He got up three yards away. He still had Collings' gun. It was in his pocket, and he went for it. The Detective Special lay where he'd dropped it.

I went for that.

I'm telling this story. *He* isn't.

The last I saw of him was stretched on a slab at the morgue, with a little white card at his feet that said:

OSUI TAKAMURA

**E**D SMITH and I had it all figured out then, with some help from the F. B. I.

The dead Oriental who'd supposedly committed hara-kiri in the flat above Hashamoto's store wasn't a Jap at all. He was Hoy Sing, the cousin of Stone's drafted cook.

Osui Takamura and Collings—real name, Kohlens—had kidnaped the Chinese before he ever reached the Stone home. They drugged him, and carved up his unconscious body with the ceremonial sword. The slashed fingertips were an added touch, designed to discourage a check on his prints.

It's practically impossible to devise a sure test for telling even living Chinese apart, so they figured the discovery of the supposed spy plus a forged passport would take the Federal heat off Osui Takamura. And the scheme put Takamura inside the Stone house, in a perfect spot to check on incoming ships.

That was half of it—the half that ended when Kohlens, the Nazi rat, "discovered" the corpse.

The other half? The Jap found he couldn't safely listen in on all the family phone calls on the kitchen extension, because he might easily be caught by the maid. So he drew up a floor plan to guide Kohlens—the Nazi being the radio expert of the pair.

It was drawn to scale, so Kohlens could come prepared with the neces-



sary wire trimmed to proper length. Osui Takamura mailed it to the undercover post-office box, never dreaming we'd trace that through the phone company.

That fall in the kitchen, of course, was strictly stage-play. Osui Takamura was eavesdropping on my talk with Barbara Stone. He figured he could jump me, accuse me of being a burglar. Then, while Barbara went to the neighbors to call the police, he'd put a bullet between my ribs while I was "escaping."

"And then," as Ed Smith says, "this Kohlens guy went to the post-office to pick up his plan. Jeff Barney grabbed him, and he put a bullet into Jeff."

"They don't send a gas mask along with you into the chamber at San Quentin," I reminded Ed.

But he isn't too happy about it.

"I'm supposed to be on Homicide, not you," Ed says, "and look who falls down a cellar and comes up with two murders solved."

So I tell him, if it'll make him feel better, how to handle such cases.

"First," I say, "you've got to catch your Jap. . . ."



### Next Month's Headliners

## DEATH FROM THE SEA

*A Gripping Mystery Novel*

By **VICTOR GUNN**

## DATE WITH MURDER

*An Exciting Crime Novelet*

By **H. Q. MASUR**

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"The 7 Keys to Power alleges to teach," the author says, "All the Mysteries of Life from the Cradle to the Grave—and Beyond. It claims to tell you the particular day and hour to do anything you desire, whether it be in the light of the moon, sun, or in total darkness."

He claims, "The power to get what you want revealed at last, for the first time since the dawn of creation. The very same power which the ancient Chaldeans, Cuthic, Egyptians, Babylonians and Sumerians used is at our disposal today."

He says, "Follow the simple directions, and you can do anything you desire. No one can tell how these Master Forces are used without knowing about this book, but with it you can mold anyone to your will."

From this book, He says, "You can learn the arts of an old Science as practiced by the Ancient Orders. Their marvels

were almost beyond belief. You, too, can learn to do them all with the instructions written in this Book," Lewis de Claremont claims. "It would be a shame if these things could all be yours and you failed to grasp them."

He claims, "It is every man's birthright to have these things of life: **MONEY! GOOD HEALTH! HAPPINESS!** If you lack any of these, then this book has an important message for you. No matter what you need, there exists a spiritual power which is abundantly able to bring you whatever things you need."

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| Obtain property.                     | Understand mental telepathy.                     |
| Make people do your bidding.         | Help people in trouble.                          |
| Make any person respect you.         | Banish all misery.                               |
| Make people bring back stolen goods. | Gain the mastery of all things.                  |
| Make anyone lucky in any game.       | Restore your ambition.                           |
|                                      | Choose words according to ancient, holy methods. |

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This is the Power, he says, from which the old masters gained their knowledge and from which they sold limitless portions to certain favored Kings and others at high prices, but never to be revealed under a vow, the violation of which entailed severe punishment.

#### THE VOW HAS NOW BEEN BROKEN

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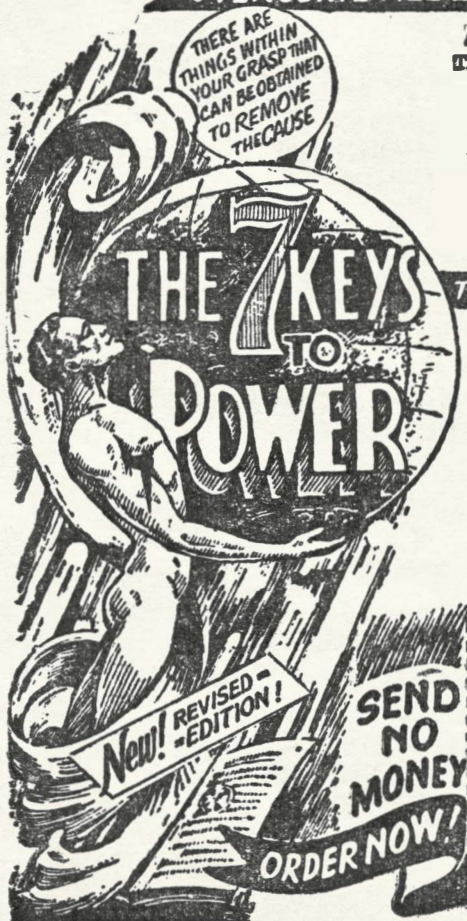
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