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ACE G-MAN STORIES

10c

Volume Six

January-February, 1940

Number Three

A SMASHING G-MAN ACTION NOVEL

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From Washington comes the Suicide Squad, three grinning Volunteers of Death—betting their already forfeit lives that, in dying, they could smash a murder empire!

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All stories in magazines bearing this seal are written especially for this publisher and have never before been printed in any form!

Public Enemy Number 1!

THE youth problem in crime, J. Edgar Hoover says, is a national disgrace. Particularly, do we, the editors of Ace G-Man, feel this to be true, because so much of the youthful criminal activity in this country is of a preventable sort. Never before has there been such need for widespread extension of all crime prevention work.

What shall be the nature of this work? Jobs and vocational training for the young, especially the underprivileged, are of prime importance. Slum elimination, improvement and construction of playgrounds, extension of the school system—all these can play a great role in freeing the nation of the terrific toll in lives and property that preventable crimes take yearly. Improvements in the prison and parole system can also do their share, as can advances in the technique of readjusting delinquents and first offenders to a place in the social scheme where they may live full and normal lives.

But handicapping this work is partisan and corrupt politics. That, J. Edgar Hoover, in a recent talk before the Annual Convention of Chiefs of Police at San Francisco, calls our new Public Enemy Number 1!

Our law enforcement agencies have not been unaffected by the machinations and corrupt connivings of political bosses. Lazy, crooked, cheating and ignorant officers must go—in the drive to secure the best of ideals, courage, personnel and equipment for our crime-fighting institutions.

The handcuffs of corrupt politics, Mr. Hoover declares, must be struck from the wrists of those engaged in the profession of law enforcement so that they may carry on their work upon a high plane of efficiency, honesty, and integrity. Decency demands that this be done.

Every reader of this magazine can do his share. Only by the concerted efforts of all can we strike from our midst this dread Public Enemy!

—The Editor.

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Name..... Age.....

Present Position

Address



COFFINS FOR THE SUICIDE SQUAD

An Unforgettable
Kerrigan, Murdoch and Klaw Novel!

by
Emile C. Tepperman





Boldly, New York's crime czar flung his challenge before the F.B.I., daring the full might of America's prize crime-fighting machine to a finish war! And Washington answered with the Suicide Squad—three grinning, fighting Volunteers of Death—to tame a murder empire!



Just at this moment the gun went empty.

CHAPTER ONE

Volunteers to Die!

STEPHEN KLAW'S train arrived in New York at 8:55 P. M. He slipped quietly off it.

Walking through Pennsylvania Station, his slim and wiry figure might have been mistaken for that of a

kid back home from college for the holidays—were it not for those cold, slate-grey eyes of his, and for the sure and effortless way in which he handled himself.

He kept both hands dug deep in his overcoat pockets as a flock of newspaper reporters and cameramen surrounded him.

“Is it true, Mr. Klaw, that you’ve been sent here to hunt down Dunstan Vardis?”

“That’s true,” said Steve. “Dunstan Vardis escaped from Leavenworth five years ago. Since then he’s made a business of harboring wanted criminals. He controls the most vicious gang in the country.”

“Are you going to capture him dead or alive?”

“Either way.”

“Suppose he gets you first, Mr. Klaw?”

Steve shrugged. “I’m paid to take chances.”

“What about the Suicide Squad?” one of the reporters persisted. “Where are your two partners—Johnny Kerrigan and Dan Murdoch?”

Klaw shook his head. “That’s their business. Now, if you’ll excuse me—”

“Just a minute, Mr. Klaw!” a photographer begged. “Stand still for a second, will you?”

The man raised a bulky camera to his eye and sighted through the periscope. He had his finger on the lever to click it down. Before he could do so, Stephen Klaw took his right hand from his pocket. There was an automatic in it. Without wasting a fraction of an inch of motion, Klaw fired from the hip.

The shot echoed and re-echoed like thunder in the vaulted train-shed. The slug smashed square into the camera, driving through the box and embedding itself in the photographer’s skull. The man went hurtling back, and at the same time there was an explosion from the camera.

Flame lanced upward from it and a bullet screamed wildly into the air, thudding against the steel arch far overhead. Had the camera been pointing at Stephen Klaw, the bullet would have hit him between the eyes.

Those two almost simultaneous shots created a veritable inferno of panic in the great railroad station. Stephen Klaw slipped the automatic back in his pocket, and stepped over to the side of the dead man. A couple of the reporters, with eyes gleaming with delight at such a story, knelt with him. Flashlight bulbs exploded by the dozen.

“What a story!” exclaimed Kearney, of the World. He put a hand on Klaw’s shoulder. “How did you know he had a gun in that camera?”

Klaw pointed to the smashed box. Where the lens should have been, there was the round bore of a long-barrelled forty-five calibre revolver.

“Did you ever see a camera with a gun-muzzle for a lens?” he asked.

Police were surrounding them now, and it was necessary to clear a space around the body. Lieutenant Schirmer, of the Homicide Squad, took Steve aside.

“Do you think that man was an agent of Dunstan Vardis?” he asked.

Klaw stared at him without blinking. “What do you think?”

Schirmer scowled. “I think you ought to have a bodyguard. Are you crazy, Klaw? The F. B. I. has kept sending men in here one after the other, to get Dunstan Vardis. And Vardis gets them, one by one. He’ll get you, too.”

“Thanks for the tip,” Steve said coldly.

Lieutenant Schirmer flushed. “Now get me right, Klaw. Nobody wants to see Dunstan Vardis laid by the heels more than I do. But the New York police department has been working on the case for a year. You G-Men think you can come in and clean it up in a month. You don’t work right, either. You’ve got to

play with stoolies, and keep your ear to the ground for information, and wait for a chance to grab him."

"That's not the way I do it," Stephen Klaw said. "I've been sent to get Vardis—and that's what I'm going to do."

Lieutenant Schirmer shrugged. "Have it your way, Klaw. I've heard a lot about you, and those other two fellows, Kerri-gan and Murdoch. You three are supposed to be the Suicide Squad of the F. B. I. Well, if you want to commit suicide, go right ahead. Should you get in a jam, call on me—if you have the time."

"Thanks," said Stephen Klaw. He nodded, and walked away.

As Schirmer watched him go, the Lieutenant's face was twisted into an expression of intense perplexity. He turned to one of the reporters who crowded around him.

"There goes a man," he said, "who isn't afraid of God or the Devil!"

WHEN Stephen Klaw got out into the street he turned north on Seventh Avenue, looking for a taxicab.

A girl in a sleek black Hudson seal coat came hurrying after him, with a handful of little ribbons attached to buttons. She had yellow hair, and deep blue eyes.

"Won't you buy a button, sir," she said, smiling, "to help the starving Chinese?"

Without giving him a chance to refuse, she came up close, and started to pin the button to his lapel. Her lips were still smiling, and she seemed to be saying something to him in a bantering manner. But her voice was suddenly deadly serious, and there was live terror in her eyes.

"For God's sake, be careful, Mr. Klaw!" she breathed. "You're being watched. Pretend to give me a coin!"

Steve studied her quizzically. He took his left hand out of his coat pocket and

slipped it into his trousers pocket. He took out a quarter and handed it to her.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Never mind who I am. If you want to find Dunstan Vardis, come to see me tomorrow at noon. The Hotel DeGrasse, Room 715. Ask for Miss Lee."

She slipped the quarter into a little tin box, and started to hurry away.

Stephen Klaw reached out and caught her wrist.

"Not so fast, Miss Lee," he said tightly. "It's too long to wait till tomorrow at noon. You tell me what you know—now!"

"Oh God," she groaned, "you mustn't. They—they'll see us talking."

"Who will see us talking?"

"Dunstan Vardis' men. Don't you understand? You're being watched every second!"

"Interesting!" said Klaw. He kept his grip on her wrist. His glance swept up and down the street. There were several men idling nearby, but there was nothing to indicate that they were the men of Dunstan Vardis. "How do you know we are being watched?"

She tried to drag her wrist away, but unsuccessfully. "Oh, you beast! I thought you were clever, and could help me. I—I'm sorry I approached you. Let me go quickly, before they shoot us to death!"

Stephen Klaw grinned thinly. "Let's see those buttons of yours!" He lifted up her hand, which was clutching the buttons with the colored ribbons attached. They were all green, but the one she had pinned on his lapel was red.

"So," he said, "you pinned this ribbon on me so that Dunstan Vardis' gunmen may recognize me later, when they come to look for me. You were posted here for this purpose, in case that photographer failed!"

She ceased struggling. Her eyes met his. A faint, bitter smile tugged at her lips.

"Well," she said, "what are you going to do about it? Will you arrest me?"

"No. I couldn't prove that you work for Vardis. I'm going to let you go." He released his grip on her wrist. "Good-bye, Miss—Lee!"

She stared at him a moment, unbelieving. "You—you're taking that ribbon off?"

His eyes were cold and hard. "On the contrary, Miss Lee, I shall wear it. Go back and tell Dunstan Vardis that I shall wear it all the time—to make it easier for him to find me!"

The girl sucked in her breath sharply.

"Stephen Klaw," she said, "you are a very brave man!"

Then she turned and walked swiftly away.

Steve looked after her, fingering the ribbon in his buttonhole. Almost imperceptibly, he nodded in her direction.

Two men who were sitting in a sedan fifty feet back, saw that nod, and understood its meaning. One of them was big and blond, with the shoulders of a stevedore. The other was tall and slender and black-haired.

The black-haired one, at the wheel, said, "The Shrimp wants her tailed, Johnny. You take care of her, and I'll stick with him."

"Right," said Johnny Kerrigan.

He slipped out of the car, and moved leisurely off in the direction taken by the girl with the yellow hair. No one would have suspected that he was following her, or was even interested in her. But he would not lose that girl. For all his great stature and powerful build, there was not a better shadower in the F. B. I. than Johnny Kerrigan.

Stephen Klaw waited only till he was sure that Johnny had the girl in sight. Then he turned and flagged a cab, knowing that Dan Murdoch, in the F. B. I. sedan, would keep following on his tail.

THESE three men—Kerrigan and Murdoch and Klaw—worked together with the smooth efficiency of well-oiled machinery. All three of them were able to think fast on their feet. And what was more, they thought along the same lines—so that it was hardly ever necessary for them to hold prolonged conferences to decide on a course of action. Each knew that the other two would go through hell for him, and none of them ever had to doubt that the others would hesitate in the face of danger.

They were called the Suicide Squad. For in the F. B. I. they rated only those assignments from which there was little chance of returning alive. Originally, there had been five of them. Now there were only three. Tomorrow, there might be only coffins for the Suicide Squad. But that was the way that Kerrigan and Murdoch and Klaw wanted it. Hard-bitten, headstrong and wilful by nature, they could not have brooked a life of routine investigations and patient trailings of minor bank defaulters or absconders.

And this was the job they had wanted. The name of Dunstan Vardis had become almost legendary in the underworld since his escape from Leavenworth five years ago. In some secret and mysterious way he had developed a sure-fire method of hiding wanted criminals. Every killer in the underworld came to Dunstan Vardis for protection. Convicted murderers with money could pay Dunstan Vardis to effect their escape. Trigger-men and dope smugglers paid Dunstan Vardis a percentage of their regular take as insurance against the time when they might be captured. And in this way Vardis had built up an organization powerful enough to make itself felt in every field of crime. So strong had Dunstan Vardis become, that he felt himself ready to challenge the F. B. I.

Three young Special Agents had already paid the price of attempting to

track him down. Yesterday, young Lawrence had been found with his eyes gouged out. They hadn't killed the young Special Agent. They had blinded him.

Almost on the heels of that, in the early hours of the morning, another agent—Jack Sloan—had met death, his body hurtling down through space from the fifteenth floor of an office building where he had gone to make a routine investigation which must have uncovered something about Dunstan Vardis.

So when the Director of the F. B. I. had called Kerrigan and Murdoch and Klaw into his office, they were eager to come to grips with Dunstan Vardis.

Stephen Klaw's eyes had been grey and cold. "Tony Lawrence was blinded unnecessarily," he said harshly. "The kid couldn't have been dangerous to Dunstan Vardis. Why, he was just breaking in. He was only assigned to investigate the relatives of fugitives!"

The Director nodded somberly. "That's true of Jack Sloan, too. It looks as if Dunstan Vardis is throwing down a challenge to the F. B. I. If he can do things like these, and go scot free, then the underworld will figure him invincible, and they'll accept him as their undisputed leader. He'll be the King of Crime, from coast to coast!"

"Do we get the assignment, sir?" Klaw asked grimly.

"Yes. We won't handle it through the New York office, and we can't send a big force of men in there. There isn't enough to work on. It will be up to you three to stir things up, so that Vardis will come out in the open—give us some leverage, so to speak."

Dan Murdoch's dark eyes were frosty. "We'll stir things up, all right!"

"There's only one tangible thing for you to work on," the Director continued. "It may be the break we need. A girl named Nina Prentice phoned direct to this office from New York. She talked

to me personally. She's the sister of Gerald Prentice. Remember him?"

All three of them nodded.

"Prentice," said Johnny Kerrigan, who had a prodigious memory for names and faces, "was convicted of diamond smuggling. He drew five to ten in Leavenworth. He escaped a year ago, and a guard was killed. The death of the guard has been published, but not connected with Prentice's escape, so that he won't know he's wanted for murder. It's strongly suspected that Prentice's escape was planned by Dunstan Vardis."

"Right," said the Director. "Well, Nina Prentice phoned that she has information for us. I've arranged for one of you to meet her secretly in New York. She's frightened stiff that something may happen to her brother, and she insists on going through a lot of rigmarole to keep the meeting secret. It may be worth it. I'll give you all the information before you start. Now, how are you three going to operate?"

"As usual, sir," Klaw said promptly, "I'll go in alone. We'll let them know I'm coming, and just when. Maybe Dunstan Vardis will make a try at me." He grinned thinly. "That would be very helpful. Johnny and Dan will work in the background."

The Director shook hands with all three of them. "Take care of yourselves," he said earnestly. "Don't take too many unnecessary chances."

And so here they were in New York. And Dunstan Vardis had already made a try, and failed. And it was certain that he would try again—and again.

CHAPTER TWO

Killer in a Derby

KLAW took a cab to Forty-Second Street and Fifth Avenue. He did not look back once, confident that Dan Mur-

doch was there, behind him. If he were being tailed, Murdoch would know it, and would know how to deal with the shadowers. It was important now that Stephen Klaw should not be observed for the next ten minutes.

He paid off the cab at the Forty-Second Street entrance of the Public Library, and walked swiftly up the steps. In the hall, he stopped to look at a bulletin board, and saw that a short, squat man in a derby hat had just come in after him, and had paused and bent down as if to tie a shoelace. Steve's eyes flicked to the doorway, and he saw the tall figure of handsome Dan Murdoch entering the building.

Murdoch's eyes met his for an instant, and flickered. Then he nodded toward the squat man in the derby, who still seemed deeply interested in his shoelace.

Stephen Klaw smiled, and turned away from the bulletin board. He cut across the corridor toward the elevator, and saw the squat man get up from tying his shoelace, and start after him. But the man had taken only two steps before Steve heard Dan Murdoch's voice raised: "Say, mister! You dropped this ten dollar bill!"

Klaw kept going. When he reached the elevator he did not enter it, but went around it into the rear hall. He followed this hall around, and it brought him out back again into the front lobby, near the bulletin board. He just caught a glimpse of the squat man hurrying down the cross corridor, with a ten dollar bill clutched in his hand. Murdoch was grinning after him.

At the cost of ten dollars, Dan had held the man up long enough for Steve to lose him.

The man would undoubtedly think that his quarry had gone up in the elevator to the main reading room on the third floor, and would lose valuable time in looking for him up there.

Steve turned and went in through the large double doors opening into the ground floor Circulation Room. He glanced at his watch, comparing it with the clock there. It was exactly nine-thirty. He was on time to the minute. He went past the librarian's desk, and turned into the end lane of bookshelves, containing scientific books.

A slim young woman with dark hair was examining a book. The fingers with which she turned the pages were long, slender, patrician. She looked up quickly as Steve entered the aisle, and then looked down.

Klaw stopped quite near her, and looked at the book in the top shelf. This section, the little placard at the top of the shelf announced, was devoted to Science—Criminology. At once, Steve found the book he sought—Abingdon's Anatomy of the Criminal.

He took it from the shelf ostentatiously, and opened it to the title page, holding it in such a way that the dark-haired girl could see it. She drew in her breath sharply. In turn, she flipped the pages of her book back, so that her title page was visible. It was, "Modern Criminal Investigation."

At once, Steve smiled. "Miss Prentice?" he asked.

Her eyes widened with a sudden flicker of relief. "Mr. Klaw?"

He nodded, showing her his identification card case.

Her hands were shaking with excitement as she put her book back on the shelf. "Thank God you made it! I—I was afraid they'd get you before you left the station!"

"Thanks to your warning, I was on guard," Steve told her. "And now, talk quickly. There's very little time. You told our Director over the phone that you had information about Dunstan Vardis?"

"Yes. But I'm afraid it's not very much. You—you know all about my broth-

er, of course?" she whispered shakily.

Steve nodded. "Your brother, Gerald Prentice, was arrested for smuggling uncut diamonds from Holland. He swore he was framed, but he was convicted by a Federal Jury and sentenced to five years in Leavenworth. He escaped. He is still a fugitive from justice."

"That's true," she said in a low voice. "You have the facts. But you don't know the—the terrible truth behind them. Gerald could have cleared himself by naming a certain woman. He didn't, because he loves her. He took his punishment to protect her. Gerald is innocent. He has a large income. He didn't need to smuggle diamonds."

"What has all that got to do with Dunstan Vardis?" Stephen Klaw asked impatiently.

"I'll tell you," she said. "The woman who framed Gerald is called Zara. She works for Dunstan Vardis. It was a scheme to get a hold over Gerald. It was Dunstan Vardis who helped him escape from Leavenworth."

STEVE was watching her closely, watching the swift play of emotion across her sensitive features. "You have proof of this?"

She dropped her eyes. "No. But I've seen Gerald twice since he escaped. I'm going to see him again tonight. I—I'll turn him over to you!"

Steve's eyes narrowed. "You'll betray your own brother? Why?"

"Because otherwise, I'm sure he'll be killed. Dunstan Vardis is using him. He's promised to help Gerald escape from the country through the underground channels he controls. But I'm sure he intends to kill him. I—I've talked to Dunstan Vardis. The man is all evil!"

"All right, then," said Steve.

"No. Wait. There's a condition. You must promise something first. I understand the F. B. I. can't make bargains

with wanted men. But you—you have leeway. Don't turn Gerald in. Hold him somewhere. If, within forty-eight hours, you are able to catch Dunstan Vardis, you must promise to release my brother. *I'll help you catch Vardis!*"

For a long minute, Steve studied her carefully. "I'm sorry," he said at last. "I can't do it."

"But why?" She put a hand earnestly on his arm. "What good would it do to put Gerald in prison? His crime was only smuggling—even if he wasn't framed."

"You're mistaken," he told her harshly. "When Gerald Prentice escaped from Leavenworth, one of the guards tracking him was shot and killed. That makes it murder!"

Nina Prentice's eyes snapped wide open. Her face became utterly white. "Murder! But that's impossible! Gerald never told me. Nothing was ever said in the papers."

Stephen Klaw's voice became a little more gentle. "The murder of that guard was not made public until two days later. And it was made to appear in the newspapers as if it had no connection with your brother's escape. You see, we were sure even then, that Dunstan Vardis had helped Gerald escape. We weren't laying all our cards on the table at once."

"Then—then—" she was very plainly struggling to make herself realize the full meaning of what she had just heard—"Gerald faces the gallows if he's captured?"

Klaw nodded soberly. "The gallows. Or life imprisonment at best. Do you still want to turn him over to me? Though perhaps, if you aid in the capture of Dunstan Vardis, the court will take that into consideration. His sentence might be commuted—"

"No, no. Better let Gerald take his chance with Vardis. Maybe I'm mistaken. Maybe Vardis doesn't intend to kill him."

Steve shrugged. "As you please. Technically, I should take you into custody, since you admit having information about Vardis. But I'm not going to do it. Should you decide to play ball with us, call me at the Hotel Montrose."

He stopped quickly, for Nina Prentice uttered a short cry. He saw her eyes fill with terror as she looked over his shoulder.

"That man! That's Joslin! He'll tell Vardis I was talking with you. They'll surely kill Gerald."

STEPHEN KLAW had already swung around. He caught a glimpse of the squat man in the derby hat, whom he had eluded in the lobby. The man had evidently come around the back way after him. He was looking at them now with a triumphant leer. He turned away swiftly.

"Oh, God, stop him!" Nina Prentice exclaimed in a tense whisper. "If he tells Dunstan Vardis—"

She had no time to finish. Suddenly, Dan Murdoch appeared in the aisle. The squat man recoiled as he came face to face with Dan.

Murdoch put a hand on his shoulder. "Not going yet?" he asked pleasantly.

The man jumped back, and his hand flew to a shoulder holster. It came out with a gun.

Dan Murdoch clucked his tongue. "Not in the library!" He stepped in with a swift, lithe motion, bringing his fist up in a short, beautiful arc that landed flush on the fellow's chin. The man tumbled backward along the aisle, into Stephen Klaw's arms.

Steve grasped his wrist, and twisted. The man gasped with pain, and let go of the revolver. Dan Murdoch stepped in and caught it before it struck the floor. Then Stephen Klaw let go of the wrist.

Their teamwork had been so swift and efficient that the man was disarmed before he knew what was happening to

him. Nina Prentice stared at them, a hand pressing hard against her breast. She had never seen two men act so swiftly and in such perfect unison.

Klaw winked at her, and swung the man around. "Well, Mr. Joslin," he said, "what do you think we ought to do with you?"

Joslin stood tense, between Dan and Steve. "I ain't talkin'," he said.

Dan Murdoch shook his head deprecatingly. "Too bad," he murmured. "You're under arrest."

"What for? You ain't got a thing on me."

"What about this gun?" Steve asked.

Joslin looked at him slyly. "Okay, but that's state law. You got to turn me over to the cops."

Nina Prentice said breathlessly, "If you turn him over to the police, he'll get a lawyer. Vardis has several lawyers who appear for his gunmen when they're in trouble. Joslin will tell that he saw me talking to you, and Dunstan Vardis will surely kill Gerald!"

Stephen Klaw raised his eyebrows. Joslin smirked. "I don't know what you're talking about. I never heard of Dunstan Vardis."

"See," said Steve. "He's a perfectly innocent man. He was only carrying the gun for protection against bookworms in the library."

"In that case," said Dan Murdoch, "I guess we'll have to let you go. Scram."

"No, no!" exclaimed Nina. "You mustn't—" But she stopped at a wink from Steve.

"We're not holding you," Dan Murdoch told him. "You claim we haven't a thing on you. So get going."

Joslin looked a little surprised, but quickly he gained confidence. He started to squeeze past Dan Murdoch.

Dan took out his revolver, and spun the cylinder. Stephen Klaw took out one of his automatics. For a brief moment

they looked at each other very seriously.

"Who gives it to him, Shrimp," Murdoch asked. "You or I?"

"You take him, Dan," Steve said. "You have a new gun. You want a chance to try it out."

Joslin drew in his breath sharply. "What—what you guys gonna do? What—what you gonna do with the gun?"

"Get going!" Dan said implacably.

"You're gonna shoot me down!" Joslin exclaimed. "You're gonna shoot me when I go down the aisle. That's it! You're gonna shoot me, an' you'll say I resisted arrest!"

"Well," said Dan, "what did you think we were going to do? Hurry up—" he gave the man a little shove—"let's get it over with!"

"Wait!" Joslin begged. "For God's sake, wait. You can't kill me like this."

"No?" Murdoch asked softly, looking down at him out of slitted eyes.

"I'll talk!" Joslin blurted. Terror had complete hold of him now. "I'll talk! I'll tell you anything you want to know. But don't kill me!"

"WHERE can we find Dunstan Vardis?" Stephan Klaw demanded.

"I don't know!" Joslin breathed. "I swear I don't know. He gives me orders on the telephone."

"How do you report to him?"

"I wait for a call."

"Suppose it's an emergency?"

"Then I phone that woman—Zara. The one with the yellow hair."

Stephen Klaw's eyes gleamed. "The number?"

"Trafalgar 4-6047."

Nina Prentice said tensed, "That's the woman—Zara. The one who framed Gerald!"

"Nice work," said Dan, marking down the number Joslin had given them. He looked at Steve. "What do we do now, Shrimp?"

Steve grinned at him. "Just what you're thinking of doing, Dan. We'll call on Zara. I know where she lives. I'm pretty sure it's the Hotel DeGrasse. Joslin hasn't told us anything we didn't know. But he may come in handy. Let's go."

Dan Murdoch took Joslin's arm, and thrust him down along the aisle.

"Where you takin' me?" Joslin demanded.

Dan gave him a grin. "You've admitted working for Dunstan Vardis. That puts you in our jurisdiction, my friend. We're taking you up to the New York Field Office of the F. B. I. And if Vardis or anybody else can get to talk with you before tomorrow, then I'm a lame duck!"

They walked him out to the street between them. He was surly and resentful, sensing that he had been tricked into talking too much. Now it was too late. They had every right to hold him on a Federal charge after what he had told them. Murdoch handcuffed him, and shoved him in the car.

Steve took him aside for a moment. "You better stay at the Montrose from now on, Dan—in case Johnny phones in. I'll call you if the going gets hot."

Murdoch nodded, grumbling. "Now don't try to grab all the fun, Shrimp. If you try to cut me and Johnny out of it, we'll saw your ears off!"

"Don't worry," Steve told him. "I'll call." He watched Murdoch drive away, then turned to Nina Prentice. "Well," he asked, "have you made up your mind? Are you going to play ball with me?"

"Yes!" she said suddenly. "I'm going to trust my brother's life in your hands—even if you do promise nothing. The last two times that I met Gerald, it was in the basement of the Silver Galleon. That's where I'm to meet him again tonight. It's a night club downtown in the Village. The owner is a cripple named Farney. He never gets out of his wheel

chair, and he seldom shows himself. He opened the Silver Galleon about a year ago, and it has become a hangout for the underworld."

"What time are you supposed to be there?"

"At midnight. I'm to sit at one of the tables. The last two times, a man came and took me to an inside room. Then he blindfolded me, and led me through a lot of passages. When the blindfold was removed I was in a room with Gerald. There weren't any windows in the room. Gerald said he himself didn't know where he was. They had blindfolded him, too. They were waiting for a chance to smuggle him out of the country."

Steve was listening carefully. "All right. Be there at midnight, just as if nothing had happened. I'll be there, too. Don't give any sign that you know me."

There was a trace of moisture in her eyes as she looked at him. "God help me, Stephen Klaw, I hope I'm doing right!"

CHAPTER THREE

Death Wears a Muff

WHEN Klaw left Nina Prentice, he walked two blocks west to Times Square, fingering the red ribbon in his buttonhole. He crossed Times Square diagonally, and entered Emlen's Bar just off Broadway.

The place was busy. Thirty or forty people were seated around the horseshoe bar. Emlen's had long been a rendezvous for the tougher elements of New York's underworld. Crack trigger-men, mobsters on the loose, policy racketeers and dope salesmen congregated here. The sole requisite was that they should not be wanted by the police at the moment.

Stephen Klaw made his way to an empty spot at the bar, and seated himself

on a stool. The man at his left glanced at him carelessly, and then stiffened. His eyes focussed on the red ribbon in Klaw's buttonhole. The man hurriedly downed his drink, left a coin on the bar, and went out.

Steve smiled. He slipped his right hand into his overcoat pocket. He saw the eyes of other people around the bar fixed on that ribbon. A couple of other men got up and left.

The bartender did not notice the sudden exodus. He moved over in front of Steve, wiping the bar. He started to say, "What'll it be, mis—"

He stopped short, breaking the word off in the middle. He had looked up from the bar. His eyes met Steve's, and he froze.

"Steve!" he choked.

"Hello, Mike," Steve said genially. "What's eating you?"

He knew Mike Emlen. A long time ago he had done Emlen a big favor. It had concerned Emlen's son, who was in a jam. Steve had helped the boy out of his trouble, at considerable risk to himself. Emlen had never forgotten it.

"Are you crazy, Steve?" he demanded hoarsely. "Don't you know that the word has gone out all over town to get you? Dunstan Vardis offers twenty grand to any torpedo who knocks you off!"

"Interesting," said Steve. "I'm glad to hear that Vardis puts such a high value on me."

"See here, Steve," Mike Emlen said earnestly. "I know you're tough. You've bucked pretty bad outfits in the past. But this is different. You can't beat Dunstan Vardis. Look how the bar is emptying. Some of these guys are stoolies for Vardis. By this time, they're phoning him that Stephen Klaw is in Mike Emlen's with a red ribbon in his buttonhole. They'll be coming for you. And you can't fight a whole mob single-handed."

"How do you know I'm singlehanded?"

"I know how you work. When the Bureau sends you, they don't use a regiment. At the most, you've got Kerrigan and Murdoch. Three men. Against maybe a couple of hundred. Vardis is a big man, Steve. He's got every torpedo in town eating out of his hand. They give him a cut of every job they do, just for protection. He's got a system of some kind, for helping them to escape if they get caught. He smuggles them out of the country in some way."

"I know all that, Mike," Steve said wearily. "I thought maybe you could give me some new dope."

"That's all I know—except that you'll be dead in less than twenty minutes if you don't get under cover."

"Do you know about a place called the Silver Galleon?"

Mike nodded, looking around at the quickly emptying bar. "Yes. The Silver Galleon is a joint down in the Village. It's owned by a cripple named Farney. Nobody knows where Farney came from. But he has plenty of dough. Some say he fronts for Dunstan Vardis." Mike kept wiping the bar in front of Stephen Klaw. "And now, why don't you take a tip from a guy who means well by you, Steve. Get out of here. Don't try to take Dunstan Vardis singlehanded."

"What about this woman that's called Zara?" Steve persisted.

"She's pure poison!" Mike Emlen told him. She's dangerous because she's got looks and brains. To look at her you'd think she was an angel. But inside, she's worse than a snake. Emlen broke off sharply, sucking in his breath. His eyes were fastened on the entrance. "Speak of the devil—"

STEPHEN KLAU had kept an eye on the door all the time that he talked to Emlen. He saw her as soon as Mike did. It was Zara, the yellow-haired wom-

an whom he had met a short time ago.

She stood for just an instant, inside the doorway. She was no longer wearing the Hudson seal coat. Now she had a tawny nutria coat, with one of those fashionable little hand-muffs to match it. Both her hands were in the muff as she moved gracefully up to the bar, alongside of Klaw. She did not smile. She seemed to be studying him, as if he were some new kind of being she had never seen before.

She didn't spare a single glance for Mike Emlen, who moved discreetly out of earshot. Fully three-quarters of the patrons had already deserted the place. Those who remained were on the far side of the bar away from where Klaw stood.

Zara leaned against the bar, facing him. Her glance flicked down to the red ribbon in Steve's buttonhole.

"A little while ago, Stephen Klaw," she said, "I told you that you were a very brave man. Now I must tell you that I think you are a fool."

Klaw's eyes flickered. "Is that your own opinion? Or is it a message from Dunstan Vardis?"

"Take it any way you wish." She moved a bit closer to him. "I like you, Stephen Klaw. That's why I came to warn you. You are doing a very foolish thing. You have nothing to gain by allowing yourself to be killed by the gunmen of Dunstan Vardis. Why do you expose yourself this way?"

Steve's face was inscrutable. "I appreciate your interest, Zara. Did you come to warn me because you like me—or because Dunstan Vardis is worried about what my two partners are doing? Is he afraid that Kerrigan and Murdoch are somewhere around?"

Zara smiled ruefully. "You're a hard man, aren't you, Stephen Klaw? You trust no one."

"Yes," he said. "There are people I

do trust. But you aren't one of them. Go back and tell Dunstan Vardis that he doesn't have to worry. I'm alone here. Kerrigan and Murdoch aren't anywhere around. He can safely send his gunmen."

"Why?" she insisted. "Why do you challenge him like this?"

He smiled tightly. "I'm going to break down the reputation of Dunstan Vardis, my dear Zara. I'm going to show the rats of the underworld that he isn't invincible. I'm going to show them that one man—not the whole F. B. I., but just one man—can take everything that Dunstan Vardis can hand out, and still come back fighting. I intend to show the underworld that its idol has feet of clay!"

Zara sighed. "It's a pity, Stephen Klaw. You're the kind of man I admire. It's too bad you have to die!"

SHE stiffened, and her elbows pressed close against her sides. The little nutria muff pushed out, against Steve's stomach. He read in her eyes what she was going to do. There was a gun in that muff. She was going to pull the trigger, and send a slug into his stomach. The fur would kill the sound of the explosion. She would turn and calmly walk out, as he slumped down to the floor.

"Don't do it, Zara," he said, in a low, conversational voice.

She paused for a fraction of a second, her eyes questioning.

"As you see," he explained softly, "my right arm is resting on the bar. As you can also see, my left hand is in my coat pocket. Do you know what it's doing there? It's holding a thirty-two calibre automatic pistol. The muzzle is pointing at your beautiful body. If you shoot, Zara, I shoot, too. It would be a shame for one as beautiful as you to die—now!"

Mike Emlen had said that she was like a snake, inside. For an instant, her deep,

innocent blue eyes seemed to change color, and to glitter with a tinge of reptilian green. But immediately she veiled them. When she looked at him again, that glitter was gone, and she was smiling.

"I was mistaken, Stephen Klaw," she murmured. "I said that you were a foolish man. You are not. You are a very clever man—and still a very brave one. I shall go now. Tell me—would you shoot a woman in the back?"

"No," he said. "Go and tell Dunstan Vardis not to send a woman to do a man's job. Ask him why he doesn't come himself!"

Zara raised her eyebrows. "Do you want me to admit that I know Dunstan Vardis—so that you can arrest me?"

He shook his head. "I could arrest you, if I wanted to, for violating the Sullivan law. I'm sure you don't have a permit for that gun in your muff. But I'm saving you till I can arrest you for murder. Take a tip from me, Zara, if you had anything to do with the killing of Tony Lawrence, or Jack Sloan, or the other G-Men who were sent after Dunstan Vardis, then be sure not to be around when the blow-off comes. I'll have no mercy for you."

She was smiling no longer. The fierce intensity of his voice had shaken her. She turned around very slowly, and walked out into the street.

Stephen Klaw watched the door close behind her. He couldn't see her outside, because the Venetian blinds over the windows were all the way down. But he didn't take his hand out of his pocket.

"Make it Scotch," he said to Mike Emlen, who had come up alongside him.

He drank it neat, without a chaser, not noticing that it came out of a bottle that was Mike's private stock—a Scotch that can't be bought any more, since the war began.

He took out a bill and laid it on the counter, but Mike Emlen pushed it back

into his hand. "I'm not taking your money, Steve," he said.

Klaw nodded his thanks, and took the money back. Then, with both hands in his pockets, he went toward the door.

"Good luck, Stephen Klaw!" Mike Emlen called after him, softly.

CHAPTER FOUR

Lightning War

AS STEPHEN KLAW stepped out of Mike Emlen's place, one question was beating like a hammer against his brain: *Where was Johnny Kerrigan?*

Johnny had set out to tail Zara. Surely, if nothing had happened to him, he would have followed her inside. If Johnny had given up the trail of Zara, it was either because he had been killed, or because he had come across a hot lead to Dunstan Vardis. In the latter case, he might have left a message at the Montrose Hotel, which they had agreed upon beforehand as their contact point. He started for the Montrose, which was only two blocks away.

There was no sign of Zara. She hadn't lingered after coming out of Emlen's.

Klaw walked warily now, watchful of

everything and everyone in the crowded street. From now on it was certain that Dunstan Vardis would wage a *blitzkrieg*. For Vardis must know that a challenge had been thrown down to him which all of the underworld could understand. One man was challenging him. Or, let us say, three men. Dunstan Vardis had planned for a big war—a war with the whole F. B. I. Certainly he must have expected that when his operations became known, the whole weight of the Federal Bureau of Investigation would crack down upon him. He had convinced his followers that he had a strong enough organization to win against the nation's great crime-fighting bureau. What now would those followers say if they saw that only three members of that Bureau had been assigned to the task of ferreting him out? And what would they say when they saw that those three lone men were checkmating their clever and ruthless boss?

The psychology of the Director's tactics was perfect. But the Suicide Squad would have to bear the brunt of an attack which had been planned for an even larger force.

Stephen Klaw understood all this as he walked toward the Montrose Hotel.

THE GIRL WHO PUNISHED HERSELF



BETTY: I don't know which is worse . . . constipation or the remedy!

SALLY: You're silly to punish yourself that way. Why don't you try Ex-Lax?



BETTY: Ex-Lax? You expect that to work for me . . . a little chocolated tablet?

SALLY: Don't let its taste deceive you. Ex-Lax is thorough and effective.



LATER

BETTY: No more strong, bad-tasting laxatives for me! Ex-Lax fixed me up fine!

SALLY: What did I tell you! We've used Ex-Lax in our family for over 30 years.

The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet *gentle!* No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowel movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax the next time you need a laxative. It's good for every member of the family.

10¢ and 25¢



Now that Zara had failed in her treacherous attempt at Klaw's life, Dunstan Vardis might be expected to stage more spectacular attempts. Machine-gunning in the street? A bomb? A dope-crazed murderer? He had used all these methods before, and no doubt had ample facilities for using them again. Klaw therefore, walked warily.

By the time he reached the Montrose Hotel, he knew definitely that he was being followed. There were at least two men on foot, behind him, whom he had spotted. And there was a Black and Gold taxi which was also most certainly tailing him. It kept crawling a half block in back of him, and never gaining.

Three times Stephen Klaw stopped and went to the curb, where he would afford a tempting target for anyone in the cab. Each time, he kept his hands in his overcoat pockets, and watched the two pedestrian tailers out of the corner of his eye, as well as the cab. If it should start to gather speed to come shooting past him, he would be prepared.

But they failed to rise to the bait. Each time that he stopped, they stopped. Evidently, they had something else planned—something that would be more certain of obtaining the desired result. Or else they were waiting to choose the most favorable spot for the attack.

With narrowed eyes, Klaw continued up Broadway, then turned west to the Montrose Hotel, which was in the middle of the block.

Then they struck.

It was typical of Dunstan Vardis, that the attack was different from anything that might have been expected.

Stephen Klaw grasped the idea at once. And too late, he understood how clever was his adversary.

THREE drunks had been staggering down the street from the Montrose Hotel, toward Steve. Two other men,

standing near the curb, were arguing loudly about something or other. Steve suddenly discovered that all these men were clustering closely around him. At the same time, the two tailers came hurrying up from behind, and joined the press of men closing in on him. The Black and Gold taxi accelerated and pulled up alongside at the curb.

None of the men had guns in their hands. They just closed in, purposefully, grimly. The pseudo-drunks were still making noise, talking and laughing loudly. But their eyes were on Klaw. They pushed in so close that his elbows were pinned to his sides.

Simultaneously, some one opened the door of the taxicab, and it yawned invitingly. The close-pressed group of men began to surge toward that open door, half pushing and half carrying Klaw with them.

"Don't get tough!" one of the men said. "Dunstan Vardis wants to see you. Better get in the cab without scraping!"

Steve braced himself, and pushed against the crushing weight of the close-knit group.

"Okay," one of them said. "He's gonna make trouble. Sap him!"

Blackjacks appeared in several hands. They rose to slam down upon Steve's skull.

Klaw sighed. "Sorry, boys," he said. And he fired both automatics through the cloth of his pockets.

He fired four times with each gun, and the noise of the blasts was almost smothered by the close-pressed bodies. The slugs struck his assailants low, mostly in the groin, for they were fired at hip-height.

Blackjacks fell from nerveless hands. Men screamed in awful agony. They fell away from him as if they were puppets whose strings had been cut. Those who were not hit, turned and ran in sudden,

frantic terror. The wounded men writhed on the sidewalk at Steve's feet. The taxi motor roared, and the cab sped away, with open door swinging wide. Men and women pedestrians rushed headlong away from the vicinity, anxious to get out of range.

Stephen Klaw did not spare a single glance for the wounded men on the sidewalk. He kept his hands on the guns in his pockets, and stepped away from the writhing mass. Black, scorched tears showed in the cloth of his overcoat as he walked toward the Montrose Hotel.

He could have stopped and waited for the police, and participated in questioning the wounded men. But he had no time. He must find Johnny Kerrigan and Dan Murdoch, and he must be in the Silver Galleon at midnight. He was sure that little information about Dunstan Vardis could be gleaned from those men. Like Joslin, they probably knew nothing about their boss. He must be content now with his temporary victory.

A moment after he stepped away from that spot, he was only one of the hundreds of pedestrians on the crowded street. It was night, and the passers-by were panic-stricken by the sudden shooting. It was certain that none would be able to point him out to the cop who was running up from the corner with drawn gun.

Quietly, Stephen Klaw turned in toward the entrance of the Montrose Hotel.

But he had hardly taken a step toward the entrance, when a woman screamed, across the street.

Klaw's eyes swiveled toward that long drawn-out shriek of terror. He saw the woman, standing transfixed, pointing frantically toward an upper window of the Montrose Hotel.

KLAW was already under the canopy of the hotel entrance. He was not in a position to see what was happening

above the canopy. But his instincts were those of a fighting man, always attuned to danger. Especially now, when he knew he was at war with the cleverest and most ruthless enemy the Suicide Squad had ever encountered.

Almost in the same split-instant that he saw the woman, he saw other people on the opposite side of the street looking upward and gesticulating wildly. He needed no more than that. He went into a flying leap that carried him forward, to land flat on his face on the sidewalk, just past the canopy.

Almost simultaneously there was a ripping, rending sound. A heavy armchair tore through the canopy, tearing the canvas as if it had been paper, and twisting the iron framework into a mass of curlicued wreckage. It crashed to the pavement with the force of a projectile, and disintegrated into a thousand catapulting splinters.

For an instant, everything was silent in that street. It was as if the whole world had stopped moving. Even the screaming woman had ceased to scream. Then, abruptly, the spell was broken. The woman on the opposite side of the street found her breath again. Hysterical shrieks poured from her throat.

The cop, who had reached the group of wounded men, was uncertain whether to remain with them or to come and investigate this new phenomenon. A man shouted, pointing upward, "That chair came from the fifteenth floor!"

Some one else yelled, "No! I saw it. It was pushed out of the tenth floor!"

A milling mass of people began to swirl around in the gutter, blocking off all traffic. People began to argue and gesticulate. A small crowd gathered around the wounded gunmen. Even for jaded New Yorkers, this combination of a gunfight and a huge chair hurtling out of a window, all within the space of two or three minutes, was too much. Pan-

demonium swept the crowd in no time.

In all the excitement, they lost sight of the central figure—the one at whom all this had been aimed, Stephen Klaw was no longer there. Unobserved, he had sprung to his feet and hurried into the hotel.

Grimly, he pushed through the revolving doors into the lobby. Dunstan Vardis had first tried to capture him alive. Then, failing that, he had made an immediate attempt to kill him.

Klaw understood very well why Vardis wanted him alive. He wanted information about Kerrigan and Murdoch. Perhaps he had planned to torture it out of Klaw. He wanted to eliminate all three members of the Suicide Squad. He would probably have left Stephen Klaw to be found in some dark street, with his eyes gouged out, like Tony Lawrence. But Vardis, like a good general, had figured on possible failure. He had prepared a quick second attempt. And he would keep on trying. For now it was becoming vital to Dunstan Vardis that he dispose quickly of the Suicide Squad. His vicious prestige was at stake.

The clock over the clerk's desk in the lobby showed that it was twenty minutes before twelve. Little enough time to get down to the Silver Galleon by midnight.

People were streaming out of the lobby, brushing past Steve, almost bowling him over in their eagerness to get outside and see what had happened. He pushed through them toward the elevator. The indicator was in motion, moving past the third floor. By the time he reached the door, the indicator showed that the cage was at the main floor. The door began to slide open.

KLAW kept his hands on the two automatics. It was possible that the men who had thrown that chair were coming down to make their escape. They

could easily walk out of the hotel unmolested, for no one could prove who had sent the chair hurtling out of the window. In fact, it would take some time to discover the window from which it had come.

Klaw watched with narrowed eyes as the door slid fully open. The operator stood aside, and three men came out.

Klaw's glance slid past them, and his eyes gleamed as he saw who was standing far back in the interior of the cage. It was Dan Murdoch. Dan must have been upstairs in their room, and had sprinted for the elevator at the first sounds from outside.

Steve had only a second to exchange glances with Murdoch. The three men who had emerged from the elevator suddenly stopped, staring at the red ribbon in Steve's buttonhole.

"That's him!" one of the three shouted. They all made concerted jabs toward their shoulder holsters.

Stephen Klaw stood very still, a set-hard smile on his lips, his agate eyes inscrutable, his hands deep in his pockets. He was waiting for them to get their guns out. He had no need to shoot. Dan Murdoch stepped lithely out of the cage, directly behind them.

"As you were, gentlemen!" he said pleasantly. And suddenly there were guns in Murdoch's hands, boring into the backs of the two men on the ends.

Those two stiffened, with their hands actually touching the butts of the guns in their shoulder holsters, but not daring to draw them. The one in the middle, however, felt no muzzle at his back. His lips drew back from his teeth in a snarl. Whirling, he yanked out his gun.

Stephen Klaw shot him as he turned—through the head. He fired from the right hand pocket, and at the same time his left hand automatic came out to help cover the other two. They stood stiff as soldiers on parade, never moving a mus-

cle, as their companion stretched both hands over his head, then collapsed crumpling to the floor at their feet.

The single gunshot reverberated through the lobby, but there was no one to see what was happening. Everyone had run out into the street. Only the elevator operator watched them, his mouth agape.

"Nice work, Shrimp," said Dan Murdoch approvingly. "I wish I could shoot from my pocket the way you do!"

He had not moved, keeping the two guns boring into the prisoners' backs.

"What'll we do with these rats?" he demanded. "They're the ones that shoved the chair down on you. I was looking out the window, and I saw them do it."

"Upstairs," said Steve.

The two gunmen allowed themselves to be herded into the elevator. The operator sent the cage up to the tenth, and their room. Once in the room, they swiftly disarmed the thugs, and handcuffed them to the radiator.

"What about Johnny?" Steve asked anxiously while they worked over the two gunmen. Any word from him?"

"Nothing!" Murdoch told him. "He didn't call in. Maybe he's still on the girl's tail."

"He isn't," said Steve. "I met her. Johnny was nowhere in sight."

"By God," said Dan Murdoch, "if anything's happened to Johnny, I'll take Mr. Dunstan Vardis apart, piece by piece."

He turned and glared at the two handcuffed prisoners. They cowered at what they saw in his eyes. But Dan Murdoch immediately recovered his self-control.

"Don't go away, boys," he urged them. "We'll be wanting a few words with you, by-and-by!"

Murdoch and Klaw went down in the elevator, and the operator goggled when they showed him their F. B. I. badges.

"Let us out at the basement," Klaw ordered him. "We have no time to stop

and answer questions. After we've gone, get hold of Lieutenant Schirmer of the Homicide Squad. He should be around somewhere. Tell him to go up to our room and ask those boys a few questions."

"Y-yes, sir!" the operator stuttered.

"And tell him," Klaw threw back as they stepped out of the cage, "that the Suicide Squad is still alive and kicking!"

Under his breath he added, so that only Dan Murdoch could hear, "*I hope!*"

They were both thinking of Johnny Kerrigan as they got into the car, which Murdoch had parked around the corner on Eighth Avenue. They went roaring downtown, utterly disregarding traffic lights, and police whistles.

"It's seven minutes of twelve," Steve said. "We've got to get there by midnight. I don't want Nina Prentice to be alone in the Silver Galleon for a minute!"

CHAPTER FIVE

The Killer Orders Eggs

THEY made it, just as the bells of Saint Mary's Church were tolling midnight.

The Silver Galleon occupied a brownstone house just across the street from the waterfront, at the edge of Greenwich Village. Opposite, was a row of abandoned warehouses, formerly used by the Jersey Shore railroads, but long since condemned. Beyond the warehouses was the river, with the riding lights of half a dozen yachts, and the tall superstructure of a heavy cruiser visible against the Jersey shoreline.

Stephen Klaw left Dan Murdoch, and went directly into the main entrance of the Silver Galleon. Strains of an orchestra came wafting out as the doorman opened the door for him. Within, the

smell of stale spaghetti permeated the tobacco-laden air.

A girl at the coat room tried to take his overcoat, but he shook her off. She started to argue with him, insisting that no one could go in without checking his hat and coat, but she stopped with her mouth open, staring at the red ribbon in his buttonhole. She said not another word, but scurried off down a narrow hallway.

Klaw grinned twistedly. The warning was given. In a moment every killer in the place would know that Stephen Klaw was here for a showdown.

A headwaiter came to him, out of the crowded dining room. The man had a barrel chest, and big, hairy hands. He looked out of place in a waiter's outfit. He would have been more at home, wielding an iron bar or a blackjack in some strikebreaking fracas. His eyes rested on Klaw for a moment, and Steve saw him purse his lips as he spotted the red ribbon.

"You alone, mister?" he demanded.

"Yes."

"Okay. Right this way."

He started to lead Klaw to a table in the center of the room, but Klaw stopped him. "I'll take that table—over near the wall," he said.

"That's reserved, mister. You got to take what you get, in here."

The headwaiter found himself talking to thin air. Steve had already started for the table near the wall. The bruiser cursed under his breath, and took a quick, angry step after Steve. He put out a big hamlike hand to grasp his shoulder. But Stephen Klaw seemed to have eyes in the back of his head. He turned just at the right moment, and his cold, level eyes met those of the bruiser.

"Never try to put a hand on me!" Klaw said softly. He had both his own hands in his overcoat pockets.

The headwaiter jerked his fist back,

as if he had touched fire. "Okay, okay, mister. But I tell you that table is reserved—"

"Cancel the reservation, then!"

Klaw crossed the room, passing between aisles of tables whose occupants stared up at him and his ribbon with hard, appraising eyes. There was no doubt in his mind now that Nina Prentice had been right when she said that this place was the hangout of Dunstan Vardis' paid killers. He seated himself at the table he had chosen, pushing his chair around so that his back was to the wall. The headwaiter stood irresolute, a few feet away, wondering how to handle him.

Steve paid the man no attention. He let his gaze wander over the room. An orchestra was chopping out indifferent music, and fifteen or twenty couples were moving slowly around on the roped-off square in the center. His eyes flickered as he spotted Nina Prentice.

She was seated alone at a table alongside the dance floor. Her long, sensitive fingers were wrapped around the stem of a cocktail glass, but she hadn't touched its contents. She was staring off into space, as if studiously trying to avoid seeing Stephen Klaw.

OUT of the corner of his eye, Steve saw Dan Murdoch come into the room. The headwaiter went over to greet him. Evidently no one in the place recognized Murdoch as one of the Suicide Squad. That was all to the good.

Murdoch waved the headwaiter away, and instead of taking a table he went over to the bar at the other end of the room, and stood with his elbows on the railing, facing the floor. Over his shoulder he ordered a drink from the bartender.

The orchestra ceased playing, and the couples went back to their tables. Now, a dozen more pairs of eyes became focussed on Steve, as word went around to those who had just finished dancing

that Killer Klaw was here in the place.

Steve saw the attention he was attracting, and smiled thinly. A waiter came over to him to get his order.

"I don't want a thing," he said to the man. "Just go and tell Dunstan Vardis that Stephen Klaw has come for him!"

The waiter tried to look innocent. "Dunstan Vardis? I never heard the name."

"Then you ought to read the newspapers," Klaw told him. "On second thought, never mind taking the message. Vardis surely knows it by this time. You might tell him, though, that if he doesn't come out in ten minutes, I'm going to start taking this place apart—to see what's behind the false front!"

The man flushed, and hurried away.

Klaw half-closed his eyes, as if he were dozing. But his head was thrown back, so he could see everybody in the room. Suddenly he stiffened. He almost lost his pose of easy somnolence. He blinked, and looked again. Yes, there could be no doubt about it—the man in the waiter's uniform, who had just come out of the kitchen, was Johnny Kerrigan!

Steve felt a surge of gladness. He had been sure, for the past hour, that something had happened to Johnny. He looked across to the bar, and saw that Dan Murdoch had also spotted their big partner.

Johnny was carrying a tray with two sandwiches, which he served to a couple

at a nearby table. Then he started back to the kitchen. He threw a quick side glance at Steve, and nodded his head almost imperceptibly.

Steve caught his cue. "Waiter!" he shouted imperiously, raising his hand.

Johnny turned, apparently saw that he was wanted, and came over to Steve's table. Steve picked up a menu, and pretended to be asking him about the food. In reality, he said swiftly, "What's the lay, Johnny?"

Kerrigan bent over him, as if advising on the dishes.

"This is it, Shrimp!" he said. "This is Dunstan Vardis' headquarters. I followed that dame down here. She went in the front entrance, and I could see her talking to a cripple in a wheel chair, in the foyer. I decided to take a look around the back. The place wasn't open for business yet, so I broke into the cellar and looked around. There's a secret passage of some sort that leads under the street to those warehouses on the waterfront. I came upstairs, and what do I do, but run into that cripple in the wheel chair, with four or five hard guys. I was just going for my gun, when the cripple says: 'Oh! You're the waiter the Acme Agency sent!' I said yes, and that's how I'm a waiter. But I got no gun. I heard the cripple telling one of the boys to frisk me, so I ditched my gun in a big pot of soup. Now I can't get it."



"Take one of mine," said Steve softly.

"Nix. Too dangerous. We're probably being watched. That cripple—Farney—has a million eyes. What are you and Dan doing here, Shrimp?"

"We're going to work in about ten minutes, Johnny. It's the showdown."

"Okay. I'll change to my street clothes, and work my way down to the cellar. I'll see can I get through that underground passage to the warehouse. If you get that far, come through after me."

"Right, mope."

"Right, Shrimp. See you in hell. If no see no more, say good-bye to Dan for me."

With that, Johnny Kerrigan turned away and headed for the kitchen, writing down an imaginary order for a chicken liver omelette.

BARELY a moment after Johnny Kerrigan had disappeared into the kitchen, Stephen Klaw was treated to another surprise. A door opened in the wall, close to where he was sitting. The yellow-haired woman, Zara, came into the room. She was clad in a daring, low-cut evening dress which was molded to every curve of her voluptuous body.

She threw a quick side-glance at Stephen Klaw, but did not greet him. Instead, she walked right past him, and went over to the table where Nina Prentice was sitting. She bent low, with her back to Steve, and talked swiftly with Nina. Then Nina arose, her face flushed with clashing emotions, and followed Zara back toward the side door.

Immediately, Steve was alert. Zara was taking Nina Prentice to see her brother. And he had reason to believe that Nina would never come back from that interview. Dunstan Vardis could not afford to leave Nina alive, to tell what she knew. He was going to cause her to disappear.

As the two women approached the door, Stephen Klaw got up from the table, and

signalled with his hand across the room to Dan Murdoch. Then he stepped directly in the path of Nina and Zara.

The yellow-haired woman looked at him coldly. "What do you want, Stephen Klaw?"

He smiled. "Nothing, dear lady—except to go along with you and Miss Prentice."

Zara shook her head, her eyes never leaving his. "No, Stephen Klaw. You see—*here*, I am the mistress!"

She must have given some secret signal. For now, a group of men were pushing close around them, coming from the nearby tables. Their hostility was no longer veiled. They had guns in their hands, and the guns were covering Stephen Klaw from a dozen angles. Two of the men stepped deftly in front of Zara, so that their bodies shielded hers from Klaw's guns. The others moved in close to him, from all sides.

Klaw smiled, keeping his hands in his pockets. "Very neat, my dear Zara. You deliberately brought Miss Prentice this way, to get me away from the table—so I wouldn't have a wall at my back."

"Thank you," Zara acknowledged. She took Nina Prentice by the arm, and dragged her around behind the screening bodies of her gunmen.

"Finish him without noise if you can!" she ordered. "Have the orchestra play loud music."

She stopped, her face becoming paper-white. Her hand dropped from Nina Prentice's arm. Behind her, Dan Murdoch had suddenly appeared. He was pressing the muzzle of his revolver to the white skin at the back of her neck.

"I think," he drawled, "that I have the situation well in hand, Shrimp. The lady understands that as soon as these rats of hers fire the first shot, I'll fire the second—into her pretty spine!"

Zara stood motionless. Her eyes blazed with fierce hatred at Stephen Klaw. "What

do you want?" she demanded hoarsely.

Steve stepped back, pushing the gunmen out of his way. As long as their mistress was threatened by Dan Murdoch's gun, they didn't dare resist.

Klaw reached behind him, and opened the door in the wall. He stood to one side, and bowed. "Ladies first!" he said.

Zara stepped forward unwillingly, with Dan Murdoch close behind her. Nina Prentice followed them through.

Stephen Klaw remained where he was. "Keep going, Dan," he called out. "I'll be along in a couple of minutes."

He closed the door behind him, and stood with his back to it, facing the roomful of gunmen. His hands came swiftly out of his pockets, gripping the automatics. The room had become so still that the *snick* of his safety catches was distinctly heard.

"All right, boys," he said softly. "Come and take Killer Klaw!"

CHAPTER SIX

Dead End for G-Men

FOR thirty tense seconds, there was not the slightest movement in all that room. Men with guns in their hands were facing Stephen Klaw—men as hard-bitten as any to be found in the underworld. They had only to press the triggers of their guns. But they remained unmoving.

Every one of these men had heard the almost legendary stories about the Suicide Squad. They had heard how Kerrigan and Murdoch and Klaw had gone into dens where they were outnumbered ten to one—and had come out alive. They had heard how the three hellions of the Suicide Squad seemed actually to *seek* death—and yet, never to find it. Just now, these gunmen had been ready, hot for a fight, under the eye of their mistress. That had been due to the desire

to shine before her. There was no doubt that she commanded the unholy love of men, just as in the case of Gerald Prentice, who had been willing to allow himself to be framed into prison rather than betray her.

But now she was gone, and they knew that one of the terrible Suicide Squad had taken her away. Perhaps she would never return. What was the use then, of fighting this other one, who stood there so coolly, with his guns ready to blast? Some of them must surely die if a fight started.

Klaw could read these thoughts in their faces. He knew also, that their respect for Dunstan Vardis had perceptibly diminished in the past few hours. They did not have the blind confidence in him that had carried them on before the Suicide Squad appeared on the scene. They were not sure that Vardis could do the things for them that they had thought he could.

Time passed in that room, with each second ticking slowly, like an aeon of time. If only one of those men should decide to shoot, that would be the end of Stephen Klaw. He would go down, taking with him many of these rats. But he would be dead.

He faced the prospect calmly, without a flicker of emotion showing in his cold features. The men before him saw in him the modern incarnation of the flaming warrior of olden days, who wasn't afraid to die because he saw visions of Valhalla.

To them it was incomprehensible. These men killed for profit, or to save their skins. They didn't fight for the love of fighting, but to make a mean living. They could not understand one who offered to risk his life for honor, or for the love of battle.

Slowly, as the seconds ticked away, some of the crowd at the back of the room started to trickle out, slinking away

and hoping that the hard-eyed man with the automatics would not notice them.

STEPHAN KLAW saw them steal away. And he let them go. He faced those others nearest him, and a little smile of contempt twitched at his lips, for he saw that they would not fight.

"All right," he said harshly. "Listen to me, all of you. As I look at your faces I don't see any who are wanted for serious crimes. Perhaps the wanted men are in some other part of the building. You are all *would-be* gunmen and thugs. You haven't the guts for a real fight. You thought you'd have an easy time of it under the protection of Dunstan Vardis. You even thought that with Vardis behind you, you could laugh in the faces of the G-Men. Well, I'm a G-Man. Let's see which of you wants to laugh first!"

There was no response. Indeed, many of them looked away from him, lest he think they were defying him.

It was Stephen Klaw who laughed at last.

"Get out! All of you!" he ordered harshly. "Get out of here, and leave town. Never come back. Dunstan Vardis won't be able to help you after tonight. Leave your guns. And never try to make a living by guns again, because you'll surely come up against the G-Men, and next time you may not be so lucky!"

Uncompromising and unsmiling, he stood there with his automatics, and waited.

He had not long to wait. Almost before he had finished talking, men began to stoop and lay their guns carefully on the floor, and quietly slink away. Soon there was no one in the great room, except Stephen Klaw. He raised one hand, and wiped sweat from his forehead. Then he turned, and opened the door in the wall. He went through into the passage, after Murdoch.

There was a dim bulb illuminating the

hall. He followed the corridor to the end, with his automatics out. He came to a flight of stairs leading down. At the foot of the stairs he saw an open door. The door was in a larger hall, and he saw that the hall led on beyond that open door, seemingly into utter darkness. Klaw did not follow it any farther than the door. He stepped through it into a small room.

Murdoch was there, and Zara, and Nina Prentice. Murdoch still had his gun in Zara's back. But none of them was looking toward the door. None of them saw Stephen Klaw enter.

They were too busy looking at that which was at the other end of the room.

THERE was an opening in the far wall, where a sliding secret door had been opened, affording a view of another dark passageway beyond. But framed in that opening there was a grotesque and revolting man.

He was seated in a wheel chair, which could be propelled by a self-contained motor. The lower half of the man's body was covered by a robe, and only his head and torso were visible. His head was tremendous. It was shaped like an egg, and the narrow chin served all the more to accentuate the unbelievable width of his skull. His forehead was shining white, like wax, and he wore a wig which was so manifestly not his natural hair that one wondered why he bothered to wear it at all.

This queer creature was chuckling. And the chuckle made a horrid, vile sound in the room. The reason for his amusement was the Thompson sub-machine gun which lay across his lap, pointing at Murdoch and the two women.

"Well, my dear friends," he was saying, "it seems that I shall have one last pleasure before leaving—the pleasure of raking you all with snub-nosed slugs! You and your two friends, my dear Murdoch,

are entitled to my compliments. I never thought that the efforts of three men could break up the power of Dunstan Vardis!"

Stephen Klaw was invisible to the cripple in the wheel chair, because he had the darkness of the hallway behind him, and because Murdoch and the two women were between him and the open panel. He could barely see the man over Nina Prentice's shoulder. His eyes reflected puzzlement. This man was surely not Dunstan Vardis. He had pictures of Vardis, before the man had escaped from Leavenworth. There was not the slightest resemblance. This must be the cripple, Farney, who had been mentioned both by Nina Prentice and by Johnny Kerrigan. Yet he spoke as if he were the master.

And now, for the first time, Stephen Klaw saw that there was another man in the room. He was standing over at the left of Murdoch, and his hands were bound behind his back. His clothes were disheveled, and his hair was mottled. He lacked a shave, and there was blood on the right side of his face which had evidently trickled down from a wound in the scalp. But Steve recognized him at once. The resemblance to Nina Prentice was so marked that there was no doubt he was Gerald Prentice.

Prentice spoke now, for the first time. "Why kill my sister?" he demanded hoarsely. "Let her go, Vardis. She never harmed you."

The man in the wheel chair shook his head, still chuckling. "Impossible, my dear Gerald. You see, when I leave this place, I intend that none shall remain alive to say what Dunstan Vardis looks like." His eyes swung to Zara. "Not even you, my dear Zara!"

And then, he must have pressed some secret spring. For with the swift smoothness of well-oiled mechanism, the secret door slid shut with a *click*. Dunstan Vardis disappeared, and nothing was left

but blank wall. There was only one little aperture in that blank wall—a loophole. And now, the barrel of the submachine gun was thrust out through that loophole.

THERE would never have been time for any of them to escape from the room before the gun began to stutter its flaming death. Zara screamed, and leaped to one side. As if her scream had attracted the killer's attention to her, the barrel of the gun swung in her direction, and flame streaked from the muzzle. The snub-nosed bullets lanced out at Zara.

But some one uttered a hoarse shout. It was Gerald Prentice. Shouting, he leaped forward awkwardly, in spite of his bound hands. And he threw himself directly in the path of that stream of lead directed at Zara!

Nina Prentice screamed as she saw his body battered by the flailing bullets. For a moment he danced in the air, as shot after shot thudded into him. Prentice was dead before he hit the floor.

But his sacrifice had been unavailing. For one single bullet had caught the beautiful Zara in the throat, and she fell slowly, graceful even in death, upon the body of the man who had sacrificed everything for her sake.

Dan Murdoch had thrust Nina Prentice behind him when the machine-gun began its chatter. He raised his revolver, and fired six times, quickly, straight at the bit of muzzle which showed through the loophole. At the same time, Stephen Klaw's two guns were spitting fire, at the same target.

Klaw fired seven times with each gun, emptying the clips. He hit it fourteen times, and Murdoch hit it six times. Those twenty sledge-like impacts in split-second succession must have paralyzed Dunstan Vardis' hand, for the muzzle of the machine-gun disappeared.

Klaw's fingers flew as he inserted an-

other clip, and emptied it into the blank wall. But none of his shots pierced it. The bullets ricocheted into the room. That sliding door was made of sheet steel.

They heard a sudden whining of machinery from behind the door, and Klaw exclaimed, "That's an elevator, Dan! He's going down!"

The two men swung out of the room, dragging Nina Prentice with them.

"Wait!" she begged. "Let me stay here. My brother—"

Dan Murdoch and Stephen Klaw looked at her with sympathy. Murdoch patted her on the shoulder.

"Sure, kid. Stay with him. And don't feel too bad. Your brother was a brave man. I'd have been proud to shake his hand."

There were tears of gratitude in her eyes for those few words as she watched them hurry out. Then she turned to her dead. . . .

KLAW and Murdoch followed the long hallway, reloading as they went. They noticed that the corridor sloped downhill, and they guessed that it would lead them into the lower part of the warehouse fronting on the river.

"Johnny is down there!" Klaw said. "He said he was going down to look around. He'll run right into Vardis and whatever is left of his crew—and he hasn't got a gun!"

There were no lights here. The corridor was in utter darkness, and Murdoch used his flashlight. They came to a strong, oaken door, and stopped before it. Klaw tried the knob. It was not locked. He had his hand on the knob when he heard sudden shouts from the other side, sounds of a furious struggle.

"Let's go!" he shouted to Dan Murdoch.

He thrust the door wide open. They stepped through, shoulder to shoulder.

They were at the head of a flight of stairs, leading down into the basement of the warehouse. And this, they saw at a glance, was the final hideout of Dunstan Vardis. It was equipped like an arsenal. It was here that were stored the weapons used by Vardis' gunmen.

But they spared not a second glance for all that. Their eyes swept to the panorama of struggle in the center of the room.

Johnny Kerrigan was there. From somewhere he had gotten a gun and was fighting with it. But at just this moment it went empty. A dozen thugs were coming at him, and at the far end, where a sliding garage door opened out to the dock, sat the cripple in the wheel chair. He must have come straight down in the elevator. His face was twisted with rage as he urged the killers to close in on Johnny Kerrigan. For the moment, their guns were useless against him, for he seized one of their number and whirled him high above his head. He was using the inert man's body as a club.

Only Johnny Kerrigan, with his stevedore shoulders and his primordial strength, could have done that. He was flailing that body around, and the thugs were backing away from him, waiting for a chance to get in a shot.

As Murdoch and Klaw came down the stairs, Johnny swung the body, hitting two of the thugs. They went down like nine-pins, and Johnny laughed out loud, deep in his chest, and went in at the others, not the least concerned about their guns.

A little rat-faced thug sneaked around in back of him, and raised his gun to deliver the killing shot in Johnny's back.

Klaw and Murdoch took care of him. Their guns began to blast as they came down those stairs, shoulder to shoulder. The first to fall was the little rat who had tried to shoot Kerrigan in the back. Then they went down, one after the other,

as thunder filled the underground room.

Taken by surprise, those gunmen had no stomach for this hot work, facing all three of the Suicide Squad. They turned to run, but saw at once that they couldn't beat the burning slugs from the avenging guns of the three G-Men.

"Don't shoot!" they shouted, almost in unison. And their hands went up in the air, guns clattering on the floor.

Only one man did not give up.

That was the cripple in the wheel chair. Dunstan Vardis raised his machine-gun, with his lips drawn back in the snarl of one who hates all the world. He raised it to cover Klaw and Murdoch. Klaw fired at his head and Murdoch at his torso. Murdoch's bullet killed him.

Klaw's forehead puckered in puzzlement. He had seen his slug hit the man in the head, but it had not even jerked him back. It had seemed to carry away part of his scalp, but there was no blood.

But Dunstan Vardis was dead, and that was the thing that counted. They came all the way down the stairs, and Kerrigan wiped blood from his face, and grinned.

"Hi, punks," he said. "You didn't come any too soon!"

Stephen Klaw patted him on the back. "That was nice club-work, Johnny. I never saw you do that before."

HE STEPPED past them, and went over to the dead body of the cripple. He knelt beside him, and uttered a low whistle. Kerrigan and Murdoch came over, keeping an eye on the prisoners, although it was hardly necessary, for they had no more fight in them.

They looked down at the head of Dunstan Vardis.

"No wonder I didn't recognize him!" Stephen Klaw said. "That's all wax!"

Indeed, Vardis had built up for himself a head of wax upon his own. The broad forehead, the hydrocephalus skull, were

all made of wax. Stripped away, it revealed the true features of Dunstan Vardis.

"That's why he didn't want anyone to remain alive," Dan Murdoch said. "I mean anyone who had seen him. He must have put in a lot of effort on this disguise, and he didn't want to have to change it!"

Stephen Klaw turned to Kerrigan. "What about you, Mope?" he asked. "How did you get down here?"

Johnny grinned. "I just wandered down, and fell into a beehive. But come here. Let me show you what I found!"

First they tied up the prisoners with strips of burlap sacking, and then Johnny led them into an adjoining room.

"Take a look!" he said.

A girl was lying unconscious on the floor. "That's Mary Lawrence," he explained. She's poor Tony Lawrence's sister. She came down here yesterday. It seems that Vardis phoned her and told her he had her brother, and she could save him by coming. Well, the poor girl came down, and they held her, figuring that if the F. B. I. tried to get after Vardis for blinding poor Tony Lawrence, they could threaten to do the same to her."

"Is this where you found her?" Steve demanded.

Johnny nodded. "I came down here, and broke into this room, in the dark, and heard her sobbing. She was tied up. I flashed my light, and untied her, and she started to tell me her story. She found out what happens to the criminals who paid Vardis to get them out of the country. Here are a couple who were supposed to leave today."

He led them to an open trapdoor a few feet away, and pointed down the opening.

Dan Murdoch uttered an exclamation. "Coffins!" he exclaimed.

"Sure," said Johnny. "And dead men in them. They're Vardis's clients. He helped them to escape, all right!"

"I'm sorry we shot him," Stephen Klaw said. "I would have liked to see him hang."

Johnny Kerrigan kicked a machine gun lying on the floor. "See this? It almost finished me. I found it, and figured I owned the place. And then, while Mary Lawrence was showing me the coffins, three hoods jumped us. I turned the machine gun on them, but the clip held all duds. It didn't shoot."

"My Gawd!" said Dan Murdoch. "What did you do?"

Johnny grinned as he knelt and took Mary Lawrence's head in his arms, and chafed her skin to revive her. "I threw the gun at them!"

He pointed to a small huddle of bodies over in a corner. "The boys thought they'd like to take me without noise, so

they all jumped me. Too bad for them. That's where I got the "club" I was using in there."

Twenty minutes later, the place was flooded with police, and reporters. Klaw was giving interviews, while Johnny Kerrigan held Mary Lawrence's hand, and while Dan Murdoch talked earnestly with Nina Prentice.

Lieutenant Schirmer scowled, and drew Stephen Klaw aside.

"Looks like those two buddies of yours are mighty interested in the girls? What do you think?"

Stephen Klaw looked over at them, and made a wry face.

"Only till the next job," he told Schirmer. "The Suicide Squad can't afford to get tangled up with women—except at the other end of a gun!"

THE END

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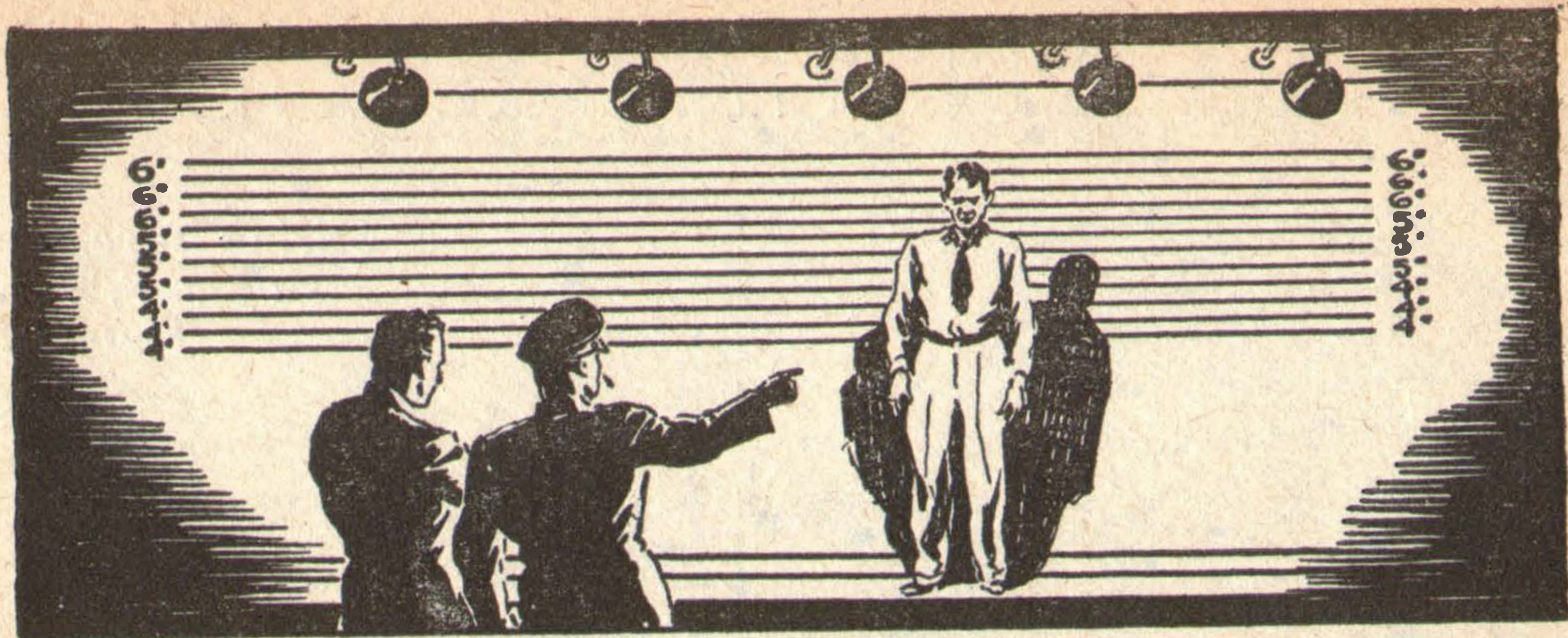
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On this page appears information released by the Federal Bureau of Investigation relating to two fugitive criminals. Here you will find their case histories and descriptions. The law asks that you be on the watch for these men. Either may be living next door to you. You may pass them on the street. In the event that you encounter one, do not fail to report to headquarters. You need the law—and the law needs the eyes and ears of its millions of honest, civic-minded citizens!

For Embezzlement of National Banks

HOWARD L. LAWRENCE. *Description:* Age, 39; Height, 6 feet, 1 inch; Weight, 200 pounds; Eyes, gray; Hair, dark chestnut, thin on top; Build, large; Complexion, dark, tanned; Race, white; Nationality, American; Peculiarities, smokes a pipe incessantly, has slight limp in left leg; suffers from hay fever; Personal History: Very much interested in golf and considered a proficient player.

On Monday evening, June 27, 1932, Lawrence left the bank where he had been employed since 1918, and upon his failure to report for work the following morning the officials of the bank, being somewhat suspicious, checked his records and ascertained he was short in his cash to the extent of over \$10,000. Subsequent investigation by an Agent of the FBI resulted in his indictment on four counts with the embezzlement of various sums of money from the First National Bank of Danville, Illinois, in violation of the National Bank Act. The car in which Lawrence left was later recovered from a public garage in South Bend, Indiana, where he had parked it. Later reports lead to Cuba, Guatemala and Canada, but no definite trace has yet been found. It is pointed out that because of his proficiency as a golfer he might be employed at some golf club.

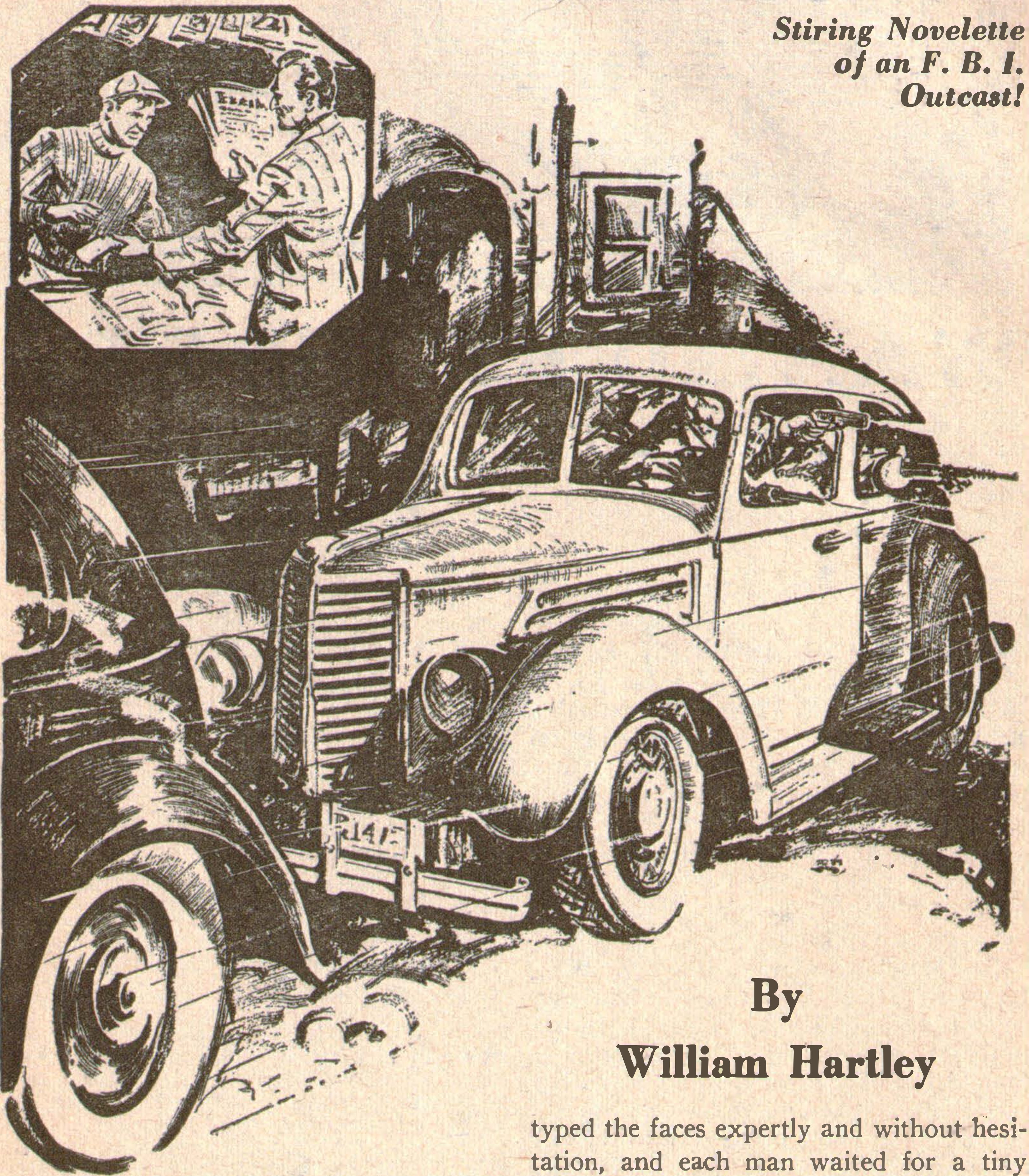
STANLEY RECYNSKI, with aliases: Stanley Brazinski, James S. Pater, James L. Pater, James L. Porter. *Description:* Age 48; Height, 5 feet, 3 inches to 5 feet, 4 inches; Weight 140 to 150 pounds; Build, short, with broad shoulders; Hair, brown, thin, slightly bald in front; Eyes, light; Complexion, medium light; Occupation, real estate operator, salesman, and follower of dog tracks; Nationality, American of Polish extraction; Mustache, was wearing a small, sandy-colored mustache at time of disappearance.

The FBI has for a number of years wanted this man who is charged with aiding and abetting George W. Anderson to embezzle the sum of \$30,000.00 from the Calumet National Bank, Chicago, Illinois, on or about February 15, 1928. By reason of his association with Reczynski, whom he knew as James S. Pater, who was then President and General Manager of a dog race track in Chicago, Anderson became short in his accounts at the bank. He attempted to make up the shortage by gambling, but instead of winning, he lost considerably more of the bank's funds. Pater then advised Anderson that since he was short \$8,000 anyway, he might as well take \$50,000 and leave the country. Anderson did. He fled to France, but later returned to Chicago and was apprehended and sentenced to prison.

In view of the personal history of Reczynski, and inasmuch as he was previously regarded as a high-pressure type of salesman, it is entirely possible that he may be posing as a respectable citizen in some community in the United States.

SATAN CARRIES A

*Stiring Novelette
of an F. B. I.
Outcast!*



CHAPTER ONE

Phony Alibi

THEY stood on the sidewalk outside the Iron City terminal. There were three of them—Ted Parks, Gary Phillips and Joe Simon. Their quick, sure eyes took in the face of every passer-by and examined each one carefully. They

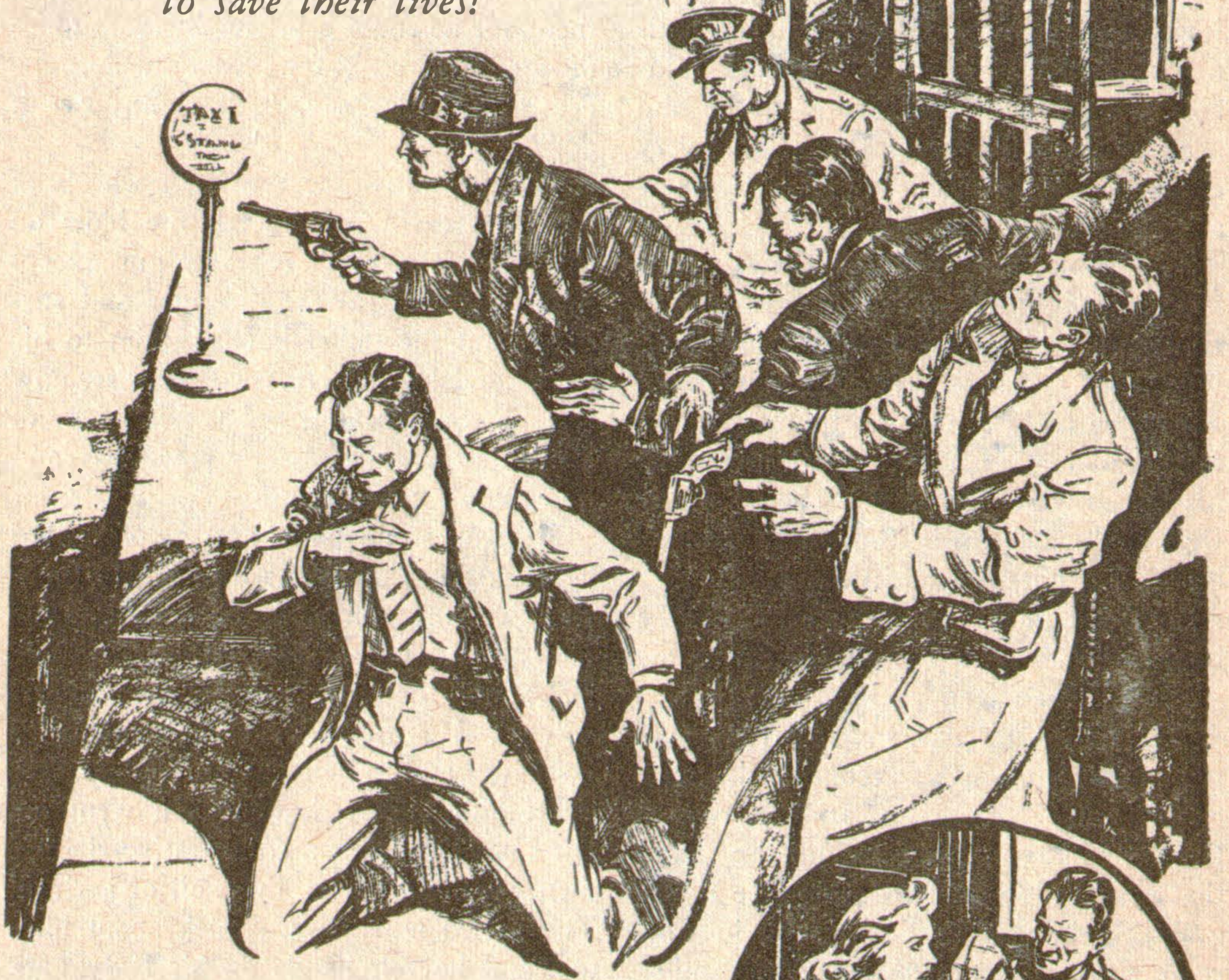
typed the faces expertly and without hesitation, and each man waited for a tiny bell to ring in the halls of his memory as he searched the throng. There couldn't be any slip-up.

Without turning his head, Ted Parks said to Gary Phillips, "Three of us for one guy. It seems a bit silly. Brent isn't too tough. One of us would be able to take him back to Chicago. Why the mob?"

Gary shrugged a big shoulder. "He's hot. He will kill that Cardenas case if we

TOMMY GUN

Ted Parks, they said, was a coward, a disgrace to his kind. . . . But today he'd prove that the memory of his massacred fellow Feds was as bright and precious as the blood, everyone swore, he'd been too cowardly to shed to save their lives!



He tried to arise, but his legs were powerless. . . .

once get him on the stand. There are some people who wouldn't like him to step up there and tell what he knows."

Joe Simon, on the third side of the triangle, said, "Why complain? We get a fine ride and a day off."

Ted lighted a cigarette and flung the match impatiently into the gutter. This *was* his day off. And if Marge didn't hear from him before tonight, he was in trouble.

Ted and Gary and Joe Simon had come

down from the Federal Bureau of Investigation office in Chicago, where they were stationed, to get Benny Brent from the State Prison here at Iron City. He was to be delivered to them here, at the station, and they were to see that he got

back to Chicago. It was very important. He was the man whose testimony would cement the case against Little Joe Cardenas.

Brent himself was relatively unimportant. He had been so unfortunate as to fall off the running board of a car roaring away from a bank hold-up, and he had been captured. He was currently spending twenty years in the jug. But his testimony against Cardenas would be valuable enough for the court to grant him a chance at parole, and Benny was very eager about the whole thing. He knew all about Little Joe.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation knew all about Little Joe, too. But many times it is difficult to prove the things you know, and such was Little Joe's case. He was a mobster of no little means, and the murders that had been committed at his behest were many. But when the trail was back-tracked, it inevitably petered out before it reached Little Joe. He was smart, and guilty of every crime in the book—including greed. And it was his greed that had trapped him.

Little Joe Cardenas, smart guy, had set up several huge bank accounts, the fruit of his many enterprises, and on two of them he had paid no income tax. And that was the loose fur by which the F.B.I. grabbed him. His trial was on in Chicago now, three hundred short miles away, and all that was needed was for Benny Brent to show and speak his little piece.

And after Ted and Phillips and Simon had been waiting for a few moments, Ted said, "Here it is," and the State Police car came around the corner. There was a trooper driving and two in the back seat. And between the two in the rear was Benny Brent. The car stopped at the curb and the men in back got out, holding Brent between them.

Gary Phillips flashed his badge and told the trooper, "Thanks, pal. We're

here to collect our little parcel." He gave him a transfer order.

Ted was looking at Brent, his back to the street, when he heard the cars come around the corner.

HE knew they were coming fast, the way the tires *whirped* on the pavement. And he knew there were two of them, for he could hear the different tones of the motors. As he was turning, he heard the voice say, "All right. Let it go."

He could just see the front wheels of the front car when he felt the blow on the head. He didn't hear the gun except dimly. He was aware of anger and surprise, and the bullet knocked him to his hands and knees. He tried to arise, now that he could hear the shattering roar of shots, but his legs were powerless and he couldn't see a thing.

He was stone blind and helpless, but he could hear the shots dimly. He knew that Tommy guns were working, and interspersed with their chatter, he could make out the flat, ugly reports of revolvers. He tried to get his hand to his own gun, and he fell flat on his face.

He didn't know how long it went on, but soon there was a comparative silence, then, in the distance, the wail of a siren. The crowd noises were thick about him, too, and he felt hands on his body. He was as weak as a cat and dizzy, and he thought bitterly, unwillingly, "I'm blind! Blind, darn it, blind!"

Someone had him under the arms, now, and with support he could stand. He was weak, and he knew that if whoever was holding him let go, he would fall again. He couldn't see, though he strained the muscles of his eyes frantically. He asked, what happened, but the crowd noises drowned out the sound of his voice.

In a few moments there was the sound of an approaching ambulance, and with someone's hand on his arm, he stumbled

up the step and dropped heavily on a cot.

The ride to the hospital was brief, and Ted felt the new terror clawing at him, pulling his reason apart. His hands were raised to his eyes. He could feel them there, gently prying at the lids, and he could feel the lids open. But that was all. There was a great voice in him crying out, but he would not give utterance to it. But he could hear it himself, and it said, over and over again, "Blind! Blind!"

He could feel the blood running down his face and onto his hands, and someone did something with cotton and an astringent, and in a few moments they were in the emergency ward. He was led to a table and he sat there numbly, silently, the voices around him unheard, while busy hands wielded a needle on his scalp. He felt the motions of bandaging then he was led away, and now he became aware of the meaning of words.

A man was helping him off with his clothes and saying, "You just go to bed for awhile and try to get some sleep. This might help you." And there was the bite of a needle in his arm, and in a few minutes he was asleep, in spite of the fear and the worry and the horror that crowded his mind.

HE awoke quickly, to the blinding white light of a hospital room. He was staring at the ceiling. His eyes turned to the window at his side before he became aware of what was happening.

He came erect in the bed with a hoarse sound in his throat, then he stared out the window again hungrily, remembering. He remembered, but he couldn't understand, but that didn't stop the grin that spread across his face. He could see again!

He turned to the other side of the bed, the grin working hard, and he suddenly cut it short when he saw Moran sitting there in the chair by the bed. But even Moran couldn't stifle the joy that roared

within him. He grinned again and said:

"Hello, Jake. What are you doing here?"

Rough, tough Jake Moran. They had been bitter, but polite enemies for two years, now, ever since Ted had broken a case that the grizzled veteran had been working on. Moran hadn't liked him since that day, and it was easy to see, by the expression on his face now, that his feelings hadn't changed. Moran stared at him coldly.

"What am I doing here?" he said. "You might ask yourself the same question, Parks. You might ask yourself a lot of questions, but you won't."

Ted looked at him, examining the words, then it all hit him like a bowling ball. He was half out of the bed, clawing at Moran's arm.

"What happened?" he asked. "We had just taken Brent; then there were all those shots. What the hell was it all about? Where are the rest of the boys?"

Moran stared at him before he spoke. "Your memory was never that poor before, Parks. You were always the smart boy. You were going ahead fast, Parks—until now."

"What are you talking about?" Ted asked him.

Moran leaned forward. "I've heard the story from a couple of people. Civilians, standing around watching. You and Phillips and Simon were standing there, and the troopers drove up with Brent. They got out of the car, then two fast jobs come around the corner. The guys in those cars are using Tommy guns, and you go down on your hands and knees and stay there. A fine position for a mutt."

Ted said coldly. "What about the rest of the boys? Where are they?"

"Simon's on his way back to Chicago," Moran said, his eyes bleak. "Gary Phillips is getting the next train."

Ted grinned. "They're all right, then."

Moran nodded. "If you figure it that way. There's nothing to worry *them*. They're both dead."

"What!"

"They got Joe Simon right away. Phillips died about an hour ago—while you were asleep. Two of the troopers are dead, and the other one won't live out the night."

Ted stared at him. "What about Brent?"

"What the hell do you think all the shooting was about? They wanted him, and they got him first. They got him and the rest while you were kneeling there, too scared to pull your gun. Too scared even to get up and run. So scared that when it was all over you had to be held up and then led into an ambulance. You looked good out there, Parks."

Ted said, "Wait a minute—"

Moran waved a big hand at him. "I got the story from twenty people, who were huddled in doorways watching the whole thing. The stories are all the same. You got a crease on your head that didn't even knock you out, and you knelt there and took it like a dog. And don't think my report is going to be any different from the stories I got from the witnesses."

Then he was gone, and Ted was alone, staring at the big back going out the door, trying to understand what was going on.

Marge came in then, tall and lovely, and excitement and worry in her eyes. In her eyes, too, was something else that Ted hadn't seen there before and which he didn't like. She sat down beside the bed and said, "Hello, flatfoot. How you feel?"

Her mouth was soft and moist, and it turned up at the corners in that funny smile, and he told her, "Lousy, kid. I got whacked on the skull."

She nodded. "I was in the office, and the thing came over the radio. I flew down here on the first plane."

She was quiet a moment then, and

Ted said quickly, "You see Moran?"

She nodded, "Some pal of yours. He had a nice story."

He said, "Look, kid. I got whacked with the first shot. It did something to me. I couldn't see and I couldn't stand up. I could just about hear all the noise, but I couldn't do anything about it. I couldn't see when they brought me here. They put me to bed and gave me a needle, and here I am. How long ago did all this happen?"

"About four hours ago." Her voice was low, and now she reached out for his hands. "And listen, Ted. Don't you worry about all this. It'll all blow over. I like your story, not Moran's. We'll go back to town—"

Ted said "Nuts," and tried to get out of the bed. He got his feet on the floor, almost went on his face, then crawled back between the sheets and said, "Ring for the plumbing, baby. I'm going to be sick."

CHAPTER TWO

G-Man on Probation

HE was there for three days, and the air was hostile all about him. The story had gone around, how he had hugged the ground and let his pals die, and no one cared for him. He got scant attention from the nurses, but he finally found a doctor who would listen to him, a gray, busy, distracted man. Ted told him what had happened—the shot, the blindness, the dizziness, then the rapid and seemingly phony recovery.

The doctor nodded absently. "Of course," he said. "A perfect histamine reaction. Unusual, but I've seen them before."

"Tell me more," Ted said.

"Caused by a shock—in your case, the head wound. Histamine, a drug contained in the body cells, is released into the blood streams. The results are blindness and

dizziness, both temporary. Lowers the blood pressure by dilating the blood vessels. Perfect example you had, my lad. Perfect example."

He patted Ted on the leg, then was gone out the door, his eyes on a chart in his hand. Ted called to him frantically. Someone else must hear this. But the man was gone, his hand waving over his shoulder, a nurse at his side.

Ted rang for a nurse. He'd get that guy again and persuade him to tell someone else the story of what had happened.

Then he stopped. The hell with them. Let them believe what they wanted to believe. They'd known him long enough to be sure this thing wasn't on the level. This wasn't the first time he'd faced gunfire, and his behavior on those other occasions should be sufficient guarantee as to his courage. If they could change their minds with so little trouble, the hell with them.

But he had seen that expression in Marge's eyes. He cared about that. He didn't like it. He'd have to do something about it.

But he couldn't do anything about it for a few days, while they kept him here. So he turned his attention to the other man in the double room.

He was young, about twenty-seven or twenty-eight, and he had come in shortly after Ted. He'd been in an auto smash-up, and he had a badly cut leg. He looked over at Ted from across the room now and smiled. He said:

"We ought to know each other. I've heard all about you—from the staff and from that old doc who was in awhile ago. I'm probably the only one who has a true line on the situation, except yourself. My name is Thorn—Larry Thorn. I had a couple of drinks too many and busted up my car. Cut my leg. I'll be here for a couple of days."

Ted was grateful for the proffered friendship. He looked at Thorn, at the

black curly hair, the long jaw and the laughing eyes and there was something familiar about him as he spoke.

Ted picked up the story from the remarks the nurses made and the jocular tone of the doctors. Thorn was a son of one of the big men of Iron City. He had more money than was good for him, and a taste for liquor. His upturned car had been found on the outskirts of the city, a broken bottle of liquor spilled all over the landscape, and Thorn, unconscious and drunk, with a beautiful gash in his leg. It wasn't the first accident of the kind that had happened to him, and it probably wouldn't be the last.

But Ted liked him. There was something about the kid that was pleasant and friendly, and although he was labelled a bum and his father wouldn't permit him to have anything to do with the big steel business he had founded, Ted was glad to have him in the room. He could talk to him, and that stopped him from thinking too much about Gary Phillips. He couldn't think of Gary as being dead. He had known the big guy so long, and had had such a hell of a good time working with him and playing with him, that it was difficult and painful to imagine him taking that last ride home in the baggage car.

So he talked with young Thorn, and it was pleasant, and Marge came in again the next day, and they had a small party. Ted said:

"How come, kid? This is a long way from Chicago. How's about the job?"

Marge crossed her long legs and told him, "All you think about is work. I'm on a vacation."

"You had a vacation during the summer," Ted reminded her.

"That's what they told me at the office." She lit a cigarette. "They said, 'Do you think you're running the place, Miss Banks?' So I told them what they could do with the job."

"How lady-like," Ted said. "The perfect gentlewoman."

Marge looked at him from under raised eyebrows. "I merely told them to keep it, Ted. To save it for me."

THE talk was gay, and young Thorn added to it, and even Ted joined in absently. But his heart was filled with bitterness and anger against the one man he knew was responsible for all this; responsible for the death of Gary and of Joe Simon, and for the rotten mantle of disgrace in which he himself was now wrapped. That man was Joe Cardenas.

That was obvious. Cardenas was the only man who would gain by Brent's death. But Marge had told him that the F. B. I. office in Chicago had put a finger on Cardenas and every one of his mob fifteen minutes after the killings had occurred. No one of them could have covered the three hundred miles to Iron City and then returned. The guy had hired outside help for the job, but who they were and where they were, no one knew.

But he knew he'd find out. It meant more to him than anything else in the world. He'd get the men who had killed Gary Phillips, and he'd show Moran and the rest of the world—and that included Marge, though she lied with her pretty lips—that they were wrong.

And he knew there wasn't much time to lose. The hoods who had pulled this job would be dragging out, and once they did, it would be tougher than ever to find a cold trail.

So he spent three impatient days in the hospital, and Marge got a room in town, and visited with him almost constantly, and they and young Thorn got to be fine friends. On the third day, he said to Marge:

"Look, kid. They're letting me out to-day. I've got to go up to the office and see the boss, and then I've got to see a couple of other guys. I don't want you

tailing around. You might get in trouble."

"That's fine," Marge said. "Just what a girl likes to hear. What do you expect me to do now, pull a vanishing act? And by the way, Parks, there was something you and I were talking about. Marriage, wasn't it? It was to have happened next month. What about that? And what am I to do, a poor homeless creature with no family and no job, while you are about your business? You are most thoughtless, Parks."

Ted said, "About that, kid. I'll give you enough money to take care of you until this thing is over. Then we'll—"

Thorn cut into the conversation with a grin. He said, "Look, you two. The Thorns have a big place up outside of town. While Ted is working on this, I know Mother would be delighted to have you there for a few weeks, Miss Banks."

Marge turned and made a face at Ted. "See? I've got offers." She turned to Thorn. "Do you have butlers, Larry?"

Thorn grinned and said, "Six of them."

Marge nodded her lovely head with the ridiculous hat perched atop of it and said, "That's fine. I never go visiting unless there are butlers."

Ted said, "You never saw a butler, baby."

She turned to him again. "Don't you think it's about time I did? I probably never will, married to a flatfoot."

So Marge went up to the big Thorn place for a few weeks, and Ted went to Chicago. He had a feeling that something unpleasant was going to happen when he walked into the chief's office, and he wasn't wrong. Bronson looked up from his desk as Ted entered the office, and there was an embarrassed smile on his face. He said:

"Sid down, Ted. Rest yourself. There are a few things we have to talk over."

Ted sat down, and they talked about the scene in front of the Iron City station. When Ted had told all he knew,

Bronson frowned and pursed his lips. He picked up several papers from his desk.

"I have a report here from Moran," he said. "And there are several letters from witnesses." He looked up at Ted. "They all concern you, Ted. It was a rather—unfortunate occurrence. I might as well be frank with you. Moran's report is damning. People who were on the scene thought your conduct so unusual that they wrote to the Bureau about it. I don't know what to do, Ted. This isn't your type of thing. You've been under the gun before, and—" He shrugged hopelessly.

Quick words came to Ted's tongue, about the histamine condition the old doctor had spoken of. They came to his tongue but he didn't release them. The anger and the stubbornness came into him again, and he closed his tight lips. Bronson spoke again.

"There's only one thing for me to do, Ted. You know what that is. The Bureau can't disregard the complaints of the citizens, particularly when they are as complete and condemnatory as these. And then there's Moran's report. Moran has been an agent for a long time."

Ted was silent, looking at him, and Bronson seemed to loosen. He said, "Before I make this final, Ted, I'm going to put you on sick leave. You've been hurt, and there's no reason why I shouldn't. A two week leave, Ted. Perhaps something will turn up. If not, there's only one thing I can do."

Ted went out, then, into the cold air, and it felt fine in his mouth and in his chest and on his face, after the office. He knew the chief couldn't do anything else. Moran's report, and those letters, had been forcing his words.

He had two weeks. If in two weeks he could bring in the men who had done this thing—

He knew the key man to the puzzle. Cardenas. And he knew that Moran had

been assigned to the case, too. Cardenas was out on big bail, and Moran would be on his tail every moment of the night and day. He wouldn't be able to roll over in bed without Moran knowing it. There was little use of him watching Cardenas. If anything turned up, Moran would be there.

And then Ted said to himself. "The hell with Moran. The old goat is tough, but he isn't too smart. He can make mistakes. He did once, in that Carson case. He might do it again."

SO he went after Cardenas. He knew better than to go into the man's apartment, a great duplex job on the North Shore. But he stayed in the neighborhood. And he saw many things.

He saw that Cardenas' boys were around. There were always a couple of them in the vicinity, and he knew the apartment held a couple more. It was a tough crowd, and they had kept their noses fairly clean, and they spelled a great deal of trouble.

So for four days he hung around, sitting in a restaurant watching the house, lolling in the big park across the way, sitting in a cab down the block. And he saw Cardenas. He saw him once a day.

Every evening, about seven o'clock, the man came out of the house, two big gunmen at his side and another bringing up the rear, and walked for exactly three blocks. He walked three blocks, and then he bought a newspaper. Every evening the routine was carried out, and never once did it vary. At seven the door of the apartment opened, two hoods stepped out and looked around, and then came Cardenas, his slight body immaculately dressed, his beautifully tailored coat close about him, the light gloves on his hands. The beady little eyes were constantly alive, looking to right and left, always moving.

And always he bought the paper from

the same newsstand. The first occasions, Ted managed to be close by, his hat pulled over his eyes, and saw the little man saunter up. The procedure was the same. He handed the man behind the stand a folded dollar bill, picked up his paper, turned, and went back to the apartment.

The second time he witnessed the paper excursion, and the casual throwing of the bill on the stand, something clicked in Ted's mind. He knew there was something wrong, but he didn't know what it was. He went over every step of the way carefully, remembering everything that had been said. Cardenas never spoke, and the newsie merely said, "Gee, thanks, boss." It went that way both times.

Suddenly he got it. Cardenas had a reputation. He was tough; he was cold; he was a killer. And he was something else. He was the cheapest guy who had ever held the cold handle of a gun in his hand. He was known far and wide as a tight johnny, both to his own crowd and to the law. Cardenas never spent a hundred bucks where ten would do. He paid his men well, because he had the best and couldn't get them cheaply. But he never gave anything away. He had a vast load of dough, and he meant to keep it. It was his miserliness that had pulled him into trouble, in fact. He had been trying to beat the tax, and because of his greed, he was in a fair way of losing his whole poke, and doing a lot of time, besides.

So now he went out every evening and gave a newsie a dollar for a three cent paper. It was a laugh. Not Little Joe Cardenas. He knew more about a dollar than to treat it that way. There was something phony about this thing.

The fourth night, Cardenas had his walk again. He went to the newsstand, tossed down his bill, picked up the paper and went back to the apartment. And Ted, who the other evenings had followed him, stayed where he was in a

tobacco store across the street and let him go. He had other things on his mind. He wondered what the newsie would do with that dollar.

He had to wait an hour to find out. When Cardenas walked away, the man put the bill in a vest pocket, and Ted stood across the street watching him carefully. But he stayed where he was, behind the stand, selling to his usual trade. In an hour, another man came along to relieve him. The newsie came out of the stand and walked down the street, and Ted wasn't far behind him.

He walked two blocks, then went into a large drug store. Ted was close in back of him, and as the man went into a booth, Ted saw him take the bill from his pocket and unfold it. There was a flash of white paper in the bill, then the man was in a phone booth, closing the door.

Almost miraculously, the booth next to him, which had been occupied, suddenly released a stout woman, and Ted went in quickly. He took the receiver from the hook, and pressed his ear to the wall of the booth.

He didn't hear much, but what he did hear set the little hairs on the back of his neck tingling, and he could feel the sudden jump of his heart. He barely heard the words, "Long distance," then there was a pause, and the man spoke again. Ted missed what he said and cursed low in his throat, but then he was still. The operator must have told the man to speak louder, for Ted distinctly heard him say, "I want Walnut 1219, in Iron City, sister."

That was all for a moment, then the man said, "Hello, Whitey? This is Louie Berino. Listen, Whitey. The boss says—" Then the voice trailed off, and Ted could catch nothing but an occasional senseless word. He hung up the receiver softly and left the booth while the man was still in his. He went out the store by the rear door.

It didn't take him long to get to another phone and ring Information. His badge number got him the street address of the Number in Iron City.

He was getting somewhere, at last.

CHAPTER THREE

Hideout

TED knew that he might well be getting into an awful mess. He had no idea who lived at the Iron City address, but he was certain that Cardenas was connected with it somehow. He was going down there and give it a look, and it would probably turn out to be rough, tough and nasty. What he really should do was to call the Bureau, tell them what he had uncovered, and let them send a couple of men along.

Then he snorted. There was a hell of a chance of him doing that. After the going over they'd given him, and the boot he was to get in two weeks. So he was a mutt—taking it on his hands and knees—falling on his face until the shooting was over, all for a scratch on the head. The hell with them!

And he knew there was a good chance, where he was going, to get a gun on the man who had killed Gary Phillips, and Joe Simon. He didn't intend to share that pleasure with anyone.

He went down to Iron City and arrived during the evening. He got off the train and went to the street—and stopped.

He remembered the last time he had been at this same spot. He'd been standing with Gary and Simon, and he had heard the cars come around the corner and the voice say, "All right. Let it go." And now he knew the rest of it, although he hadn't been aware of it then. He looked at the point near the curb where he must have been kneeling, then lying on his belly. It must have been pretty.

He took a cab to where he was going.

He didn't know the town well and told the driver, "228 Meekham Street. And let me out a block away."

It was quite a ride, out into the suburbs, and Ted felt the reassuring bulk of the two guns, one in each overcoat pocket.

They had been riding for twenty minutes when the driver pulled up to the curb. He said, "It's about a block and a half up the line, bud. A big house. You can't miss it."

Ted paid him and the cab drove away.

He looked down the street. There weren't many houses along it, and a row of trees, whose now naked branches still shut off the light from an occasional street lamp, were strung between the street and the sidewalk. He walked slowly, taking his time, getting his bearing.

Once near the house, he didn't hesitate. He knew there might be someone watching, and he didn't want to cause any unnecessary suspicion. He looked at it as he approached. It was a large affair, of brick and shingle, and he could see no lights in the windows. It was set back from the street and a small driveway ran up to the front entrance. He walked the gravel easually, very conscious of the noise he made. He went up two steps and rang a bell beside the door. He heard it sound far within the house. He waited, and there was no response. He checked his impatience, then after a long wait, he rang again. This time the door opened.

There was a slim, dark man standing in the entrance, and his voice was harsh. "Whattaya want?"

Ted said, "I want to see Whitey."

The man shook his head. "There ain't no one named Whitey lives here."

Ted said, "Louie Berino sent me."

The man looked at him, said, "Wait here a minute," then closed the door again. Within a few minutes, it opened again and the same man said, "Come on in."

Inside, the house was sparsely furnished, Ted noted. The floors were bare,

and the large rooms seemed almost empty. The place was lighted, but heavy shades covered the windows. The door closed behind him and he turned to the man who had admitted him.

The fellow said, "There's the guy you want to see," and pointed to one side of the room.

TED turned, and there was a squat man coming from another room. Ted knew him at once. He had seen that face plenty of times, on circulars. Whitey Jenson. A tough guy, wanted in half the states of the Union. He spoke, now.

"You wanta see me?"

"Louie Berino said you might have a job or two. He said you could always use a good gun."

"Who are you?"

"Name is Blake," Ted said. The name had been chosen with care. Blake was a small time gunman who had pulled a couple of little jobs, been caught and sent to the can, and made a clean break about a month ago. He said, "Seattle is a hot town. I'm travelin'."

Jenson's face twitched in a cruel, quick smile. He must have heard of the break. He looked Ted over carefully and said, "Come on upstairs and see the boss. I could use a guy, but you gotta get his okay."

They started for the back of the house, Jenson and Ted side by side. The man who had opened the door was in back of them. They had just emerged from the large front room to a smaller one, in the middle of the house, when a man stepped out of a hallway. Jenson said, "The boss wants you upstairs, Johnny."

The man nodded, said, "Okay," and started to turn. Then he stopped, stared at Ted, and Ted's stomach felt cold. He had questioned this man in Chicago, not a month before, about a bank hold-up.

He saw the light of recognition come into the man's eyes, and he didn't wait

any longer. He shot the man with his right hand gun, then dropped to one knee as a gun went off in back of him. He turned, and the dark man fired again, the bullet whispering through Ted's coat. Ted hit him with the next, in the pit of the stomach, and he folded.

The action had been fast, and Jenson turned and shot down, the gun still in the holster at his shoulder. It hit Ted in the thigh, and he wondered if it was bad. He shot Jenson twice, right in the face, then he heard the feet pounding down the stairs.

He had no idea how many men were in the house, and he had no intention of being a target for a bunch of hot hoods. He was running when he started up from the floor, wondering about the leg. The slug was in the flesh, though, and he could run. The first man he had shot was on the floor, pegging away at him, and he heard a bullet hit the sill as he went through a window, shade and all.

It was black as the inside of a pocket on the side of the house, and Ted dove for the bushes surrounding the place. He was out of the light, now, but they were still throwing shots at him from the house. He kept going into the woods at the back of the house, and didn't stop until he was sure they couldn't see him.

He examined his leg, first. The bullet had hit into the right pocket of his trousers, struck a ring of keys, cut a short furrow in his leg, then gone into the floor. It was bleeding, a bit, but he knew it would stop soon. He crept back toward the house slowly, cursing the man who had spotted him. In a few moments he would have seen the man who was at the head of this thing—the man working with Cardenas.

But he thought of Jenson, and the man who had opened the door, and he hoped they had been among the crowd who had done the job at the terminal. He knew that the first man he had shot didn't have

much left, for he had seen the bullet kick dust from the guy's coat. That was three. Three for Gary and Joe Simon.

HE went back to the house cautiously, peering through the shrubbery, and there was no sound except that of his careful movement. He was near the place when he heard the car engine roar, and he hurried. He knew what was happening.

He had scared them out. They didn't know whether he'd been alone or if there had been others with him. They were getting while the getting was good.

He hurried, now, all thoughts of caution gone as the prospect of losing the whole gang grew stronger. He went to the back door, picked up a rock and threw it against the glass. Then he stepped behind a small tree. There was no sound from the house. They had gone.

He went in, then. He reached through the broken glass of the back door and turned the knob. He found a light switch in a room which turned out to be the kitchen. He went through it into a hallway and stumbled over something. He found another light and saw that it was the first man he had shot. He was dead. Jenson was there, and the gent who had opened the door for him.

And there was another shape.

He was surprised. He knew he had only shot three men. Where the hell had the other one come from?

He went to the front door and opened

it, turning out the lights in the house. He had no business around here, now. The local police would be on the scene, soon, and he didn't want to answer a lot of silly questions. He went down the steps quickly, started down the driveway, and went flat on his face. He got up fast, his gun still in his hand. He had tripped over a leg. What the hell was this all about?

He started away, then stopped as he heard the groan in back of him. He went back slowly, warily, but there was no movement from the body he had tripped over. He took a small flashlight from his pocket, snapped it on, then dropped to his knees. The man was Jake Moran.

Moran was alive, but there was blood on his mouth and Ted knew he was hard hit. He lifted his head, and the eyes opened slowly, then closed.

Ted said, "Moran! It's me, Parks!"

The eyes opened again and the lips started to move. Ted bent close. Moran said, in a choking voice, "In the hosp— In the hospital—" Then his head slumped.

Ted felt for his pulse. There wasn't any. He put his hand under Moran's coat, over the heart. Moran was dead, and Ted's hand came away sticky with blood.

He laid the grizzled head on the ground again and stood up. There was nothing he could do here now. He walked away from the house, his mind in a turmoil.

He knew how Moran had come here. The wily agent had spotted Ted near Car-



denas' house. When he had seen him leave, after four days of vigil, he had suspected that Ted had something he had missed himself, and so had followed him to Iron City and to the house.

But what had he meant about the hospital? Ted was aware of a slight grin creasing his face as he understood what Moran had meant. The old gent had certainly heard the shooting in the house, and he had been apologizing to Ted for what he had said to him at the hospital. He had heard the shooting, rushed up, and they had plugged him as they came out the front door. But not before he had taken one of them along.

And now it was Moran, too. Gary Phillips, Simon, and now old Moran. There had been no love lost between them, but Ted found himself with another reason for pinning this thing to Cardenas and his whole lousy mob, and seeing them burn.

Suddenly, he knew what he was going to do. He should have done it before this, instead of wasting time down here. The fastest way to learn what he wanted to know about Cardenas was to learn it from Cardenas himself. He'd get the little louse in a corner and beat his head off until he talked. Oh, it wasn't the way the Bureau worked, but this was off the record. He really wasn't an agent now. He'd gotten his dismissal from Bronson when the chief had said, "Two weeks, Ted—"

CHAPTER FOUR

"Take It Easy!"

HE used his last fifty dollars getting a plane to fly him back to Chicago.

He wondered how he was going to get into the house, but he'd figure that out later. He thought of Marge, and was glad that Thorn kid had been so nice about things. That whacky gal! He

grinned. Life with her would never become tiresome. She threw away jobs as if they were yesterday's newspapers, and life was her own personal apple. He'd have plenty of time for her when this was over. He didn't know what he'd do if she wasn't around.

He went directly to his apartment when he hit Chicago, and there he had a shower, fixed the slice on his leg with gauze and tape, and changed his clothes. He substituted a blackjack for one of his guns, saw that the one he carried was loaded, then went out and got a cab.

It was almost three o'clock when he got out of the taxi, five blocks from Cardenas' apartment. He went carefully, knowing there would be obstacles.

He saw the first one, in a few moments. He walked through the park opposite the house, and he saw the figure there, hanging in the shadows. He went closer, silently, and took a good look. It was one of Little Joe's hoods, leaning against the park fence, hands in pockets, cigarette dangling from his mouth.

Ted went up behind him slowly, his feet stilled by the carpet of grass. He was within three feet of the man, billy in hand, when the fellow turned, warned by some preserving instinct. Ted hit him hard.

Ted dragged him into a clump of bushes and did a fast job, gagging him with a handkerchief, binding hands and feet with the man's belt and necktie.

He watched the house carefully for a few moments, looking for others. There was no one, and he knew the rest of his trouble would be indoors. He walked up to the apartment and in.

There were two elevators, one of which was in service. The operator was standing in the door of the car, and Ted stepped in. From the corner of his eye, he saw the man who walked from a small alcove at the side of the foyer and who was only one step in back of him as he, too, stepped into the car.

Ted said to the operator, "Fourteen," and the door closed and the car started up. Ted felt the gun in his back just as the man behind him said, "Where do you think you're goin', pal?"

Ted was near the middle of the small car, and the man in back of him, he knew, must be against the back wall. He moved fast, to one side, and the thrusting arm, with the gun in the hand, was suddenly protruding between his arm and his body. He clamped the arm close and grabbed the gun and hand with both of his own hands. The gun went off.

Ted pushed backward until he knew he had the gorilla jammed against the rear wall of the car. Then he brought his head back, ignoring the man's left hand, which was clubbing his head. He snapped his head back fast and felt it hit into the gunman's face. He felt the nose go, and on the second try, a tooth bit into his head. He held onto the gun and did it again, and suddenly the body behind went limp.

He ripped the gun loose from the relaxing fingers and turned with it. The man was staring at him glassily, the blood running down the ruin of his face, and Ted hit him with the barrel of the gun, on the side of the head. He sank down.

The car had stopped, and the operator was staring at him. Ted said, "I said 'fourteen', kid. Let's get moving." The car started up again. "Make it snappy."

Ted knew that in all probability the shot had not been heard. He thought for a moment, then told the kid running the car, "Stop at thirteen, son. I've changed my mind."

The car stopped and Ted got out. He dragged the hood's body after him, and the car door closed. Ted put his foot in the door and showed his badge to the operator. He put a folded five dollar bill in his hand and said, "Keep your mouth shut."

He tied the hood as he had the one outside the house, then dragged him into a

dark corner. He found the service stairs.

He had no intention of being surprised.

THE corridor above was empty. There were only two apartments on the floor, and he found Cardenas on the first try. There was a button outside the door, and he pressed it, stepped to one side.

He heard the small grate in the door being shoved back. There wasn't a sound for a moment, then the grate closed and the door opened. A head appeared around the door, and Ted brought the gun down. There was a grunt, and he caught the body as it fell. In a moment he was inside the apartment.

The big apartment was dimly lighted, and he stuck to the walls. At the far end of the big living room, stairs led to a balcony. He went up quietly, waiting for something to happen. But it was a silent house. Cardenas was probably alone.

There were three doors on the balcony, and he opened the first one noiselessly. He peered in, but it was dark and no sound came to him. He went to the second, and it was dark, too, but he heard the sound of breathing. His eyes became accustomed to the gloom, and he went in. There was a large bed in the corner, and he saw Cardenas there, sleeping.

There was a reading lamp on a table beside the bed, and Ted switched it on with a grin. The light flooded the room, and Cardenas came erect in the bed, blinking the sleep from his eyes. Ted stood there looking at him and said, "Hello, Joe. What do you know?"

Cardenas cursed and was fully awake. He looked about the room with his small eyes. Ted shook his head. "They're all asleep, Joe. We're alone at last."

Cardenas said, "Who the hell are you?"

Ted grinned. "It doesn't make any difference, Joe. There are a couple of things I'm curious about."

Cardenas said, "You can go to hell. Who let you in?"

Ted reached out a big hand and grabbed Cardenas by the lapel of his gaudily striped pajama coat. The little man came out of the bed fast, and Ted cuffed him across the face with the back of his hand and knocked him into a corner. He said, "I want to know about Benny Brent, Joe. I want to know about that Iron City thing. I want to know who your pal is down there, the guy they call the 'Boss.' I want to know a lot of things, Joe." He put the gun in his pocket and said, "Talk to me, Joe."

Cardenas said, "You can go to hell."

It lasted for almost five minutes. Cardenas was a punk, but he was tougher than Ted thought he would be. He didn't like the proceedings. He didn't enjoy hitting someone who didn't have the power of hurting him. But he thought of Gary Phillips, and Simon, and old Jake Moran. They hadn't had much of a chance, either. No one had been giving them a break.

He thought too, of Marge. He could picture her tall loveliness, the movements of her body, her casually careless, fine intellect, and of the years stretching ahead for both of them. Then he didn't mind so much what he was doing.

It lasted for five minutes, and then Little Joe Cardenas had a face that looked like something the butcher wouldn't sell. He was in the corner, on his knees, his back to the wall, and his hands were in a supplicatory attitude. He talked.

Ted stood there, his hands raw and bleeding, his whole attention given to the words. They surprised him. He thought he might get a few facts out of Cardenas, but he got the entire story, and it astounded him that a broken nose and a few lost teeth could mean so much to a man. He hadn't really hurt Cardenas.

HE heard Cardenas' life story. It wasn't nice. He patched it together, and he got an East Side slum for a start, and a kid growing and stealing. And then the

story moved out of bounds, to the West.

A small time stick-up man who barely made a lousy living and spent his spare time hiding from the police. And then there was a break. There was a sudden association that changed things entirely. Joe had contracted a partnership that had put him on the up-go. And then people started to work for him.

He and the man who started him in the big time really did things up in a big way. It was organization of the most efficient sort. They hit banks and small finance houses, where the money was. They had gambling and prostitution sewn up in four states. Officials were taken care of.

Ted got the whole story and said, "Okay. Where did you get the angel?"

Cardenas told him. He told him of the time, three years ago, when he had been the only witness of a hit-and-run accident. He told Ted how he had traced the license and discovered that the car belonged to a very rich man. He had blackmailed him for plenty, then the man he had been milking refused to pay any more. He wouldn't pay—but he would talk.

And Cardenas discovered that the man he had been dealing with was a criminal at heart. His clever brain sought worlds beyond convention. There was an intellect there, but perverted. This person who had every opportunity for legal mental exercise and financial activity, preferred to do his work outside the law. This man who had once been his victim had built an empire outside the law which was almost invulnerable.

Ted looked at Cardenas and sneered. He had divulged all this information in exchange for a surcease of minor pain.

He said: "Give me the rest of it, Joe. Who is this guy?"

Cardenas didn't answer, so Ted did it again. Little Joe gasped the name. "Thorn. A guy in Iron City. Young Larry Thorn."

Ted looked at him and was silent.

Larry Thorn. The playboy. The guy whose father wouldn't let him work in the family plant. The unstable drunk. The clever guy. The wastrel.

The guy he had left Marge with.

Then there was a voice in back of him. It said, "All right. All right, Parks. Take it easy."

TED turned. He had heard that voice before. He had heard it in front of the Iron City terminal, more than a week before. It had said, then, "All right. Let it go." And then there had been the ugly chant of a Tommy gun. He knew that voice. He turned.

The first person he saw was Marge. She was in the doorway. Her arms were at her sides, but between her right arm and her body another arm protruded, and in the hand was a gun pointed at Ted.

He looked up and saw Thorn's face over Marge's shoulder. He was using her as a shield. Thorn said, "Walk into the middle of the room, Parks. And no tricks."

Ted walked slowly, as he was directed, and he saw that there was one other man with them. He said, "Hello, Marge. Nice friends you have."

"You should have married me," Marge said, and Ted could detect no quaver in her voice. "These things don't happen to a married woman."

Ted had almost reached the middle of the floor when it happened. He saw Marge grab Thorn's hand with both of her own, then bend her head. There was a curse from Thorn as her teeth bit his wrist.

But Ted was moving. He had his hand in his pocket, on the gun, and he shot through the pocket at the man behind Marge and Thorn—Joe Cardenas. He hit the guy with the second shot, and the man fell.

But Thorn was loose. He had flung Marge to one side, and he was shooting. His first slug hit Ted in the leg, and his second passed overhead as Ted was falling. Ted shot from the floor, twice, and Thorn folded slowly.

Cardenas was still in the corner when Marge came across the room and said, "Well, Parks, this is a fine thing."

Ted said, "Take it easy, baby. My leg is all busted. Please, no jokes."

She knelt beside him, and he said, "But that was a hell of a dumb trick. You might have been hurt. He had his right hand out in front of you, with the gun. He could have turned it easily."

Marge tossed her lovely head. "Of course. He had his right hand out in front of me, and the gun was in it. But there wasn't anything in his left hand. Did you see where he had that? And him almost a perfect stranger!"

THE END

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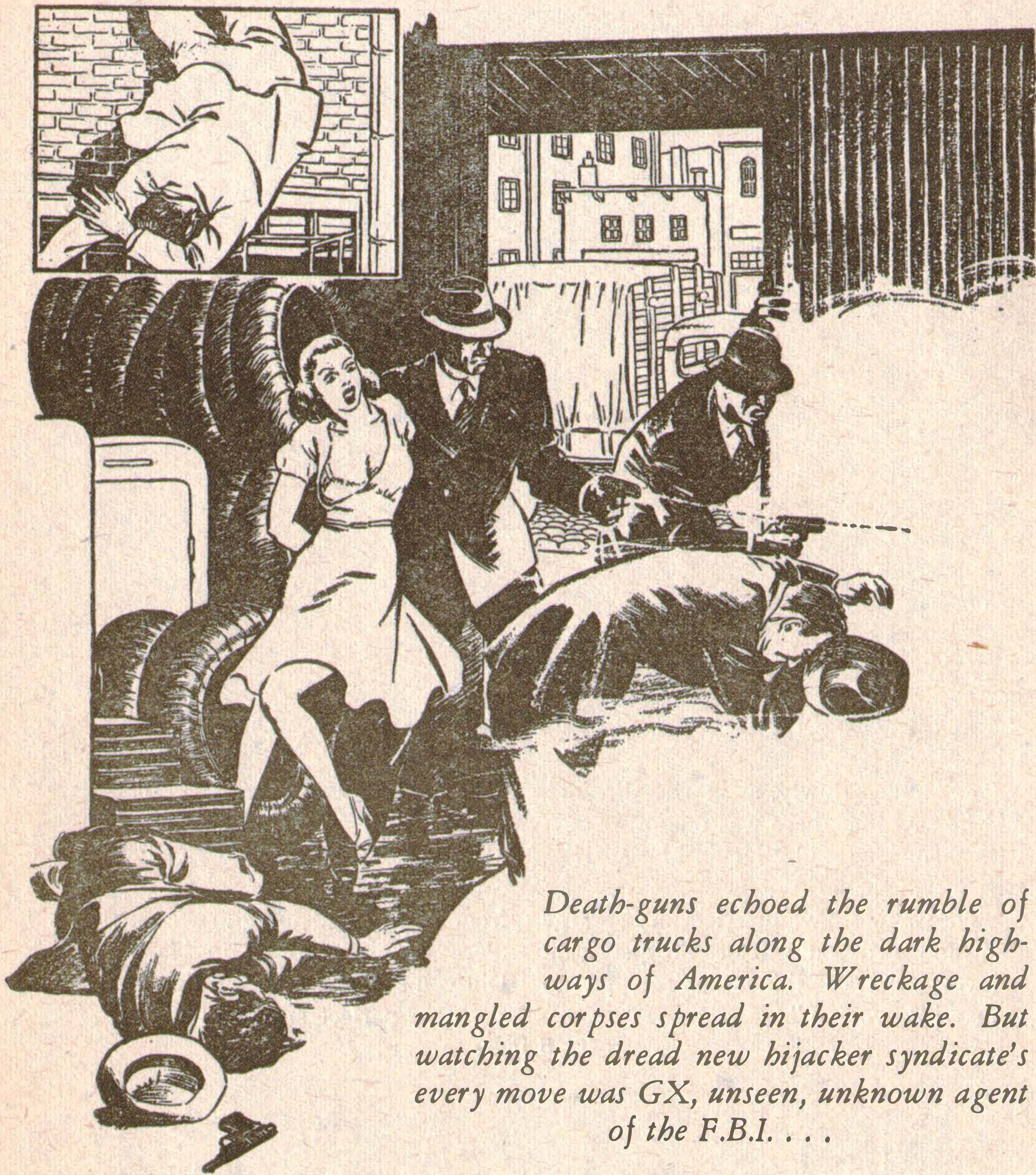
TRADE



MARK



GX AND THE



Death-guns echoed the rumble of cargo trucks along the dark highways of America. Wreckage and mangled corpses spread in their wake. But watching the dread new hijacker syndicate's every move was GX, unseen, unknown agent of the F.B.I. . . .

By Harry Lee Felling

CHAPTER ONE

The Council of Thirteen

JIM PITCHER, G-Man, had already sensed the jealousy between his two captors, and planned to make use of it in attempting his escape. They slashed

the bonds from his ankles and kicked him to his feet, but they didn't remove the blindfold, or unbind his wrists.

The one with the hoarse foreign voice sneered at the other: "I guess you're the fair-haired boy who'll engineer this kill. That'll be half a grand in your kick, Pansy. I get nothing."

HIGHWAY PIRATES



*Gripping Novelette
of the F. B. I.'s Roving
Undercover
Agent!*



Jerry caught his white face over his sights.

The man who smelled of perfume breathed heavily through his nose. It made a whistling sound, an angry sound. "Sometimes I get awful sick of your wise-cracks, Wop!"

"So what? I could break you with my two hands."

"Try it some time, Wop. The cemetery is full of big dumb guys like you! And

now, if you've finished your gripe, let's go. The chief is waiting."

When each of them took one of Jim Pitcher's arms and began leading him along the hall, that terrible slow chill coursed his veins again. He knew his two



captors, even though he was blind-folded. He could smell the strong odor of garlic on the breath of Carlo Pezzo, the ex-circus strong man, at his left. He could feel the great bunched muscles in Pezzo's arm against his side, and the man's huge hand that gripped his biceps like an iron claw.

The slender guy on his right, who smelled of perfume and breathed with a curious whistling through his nose, would be Fox Faversham, dapper gunman par excellence. Faversham's presence was the sinister element.

Hope shrivelled in Jim Pitcher's breast, but stubbornly he clung to what remained of it. Young, dark-haired, and usually smiling, Pitcher had a fighting courage and personality that would have carried him far in his original profession as a lawyer.

And there, too, were thoughts of Molly, his wife of but a few weeks, to buoy him up. It just couldn't be possible that he was to die, be put out of the way like some animal; that he would never again see Molly.

With a pang he realized that she would be waiting for him now, worried because supper was growing cold on the spotless table in the absurdly small dining room. Molly, in her little frilled apron would be making anxious trips to the front gate to stare up the street, a crinkle of worry at the corner of each blue eye.

No, it couldn't be that this was the end. He was still very much alive, forked end down, as his Chief would have put it, and save for a ragged gash on his head that had stopped bleeding, he was physically unimpaired. A lot could happen in a little time during a crisis like this.

He felt his way along stiffly, for his ankles had been bound a long time. He made no show of resistance; he had tried that once before. Also he was very much aware of the vise-like grip of Carlo Pezzo's great paw, and that Fox Faversham held a ready automatic in his hand, eager

to clip him with it, just as he had before.

Jim Pitcher knew when it was time to turn left and enter some sort of door, for he had counted his steps on those other occasions. And always the blindfold had kept his hope alive, for they had not taken it off. So far he had only been able to identify a few of his captors by peculiarities of voice, by odors, and those senses that a blindfolded man must make use of. There was the chance that, as long as he could not identify them positively, he would not be killed.

But this time they walked him to the middle of the big room and fumbled at his blindfold. A great anguish tore at Jim Pitcher, for he was thinking of Molly and wondering if she would die when she saw his dead body. Maybe, though, she would never have to look at his body, for the manners of putting a man out of the way are many, and these crooks were probably well versed in the art.

Jim Pitcher who, up to the time of his joining the F.B.I., had been a quiet-mannered, soft-spoken man, felt an animal-like rage begin to burn inside him. He swore to himself that if given the slightest opportunity, he would wrest a gun from one of his captors and die there on the floor, shooting it out with them.

When the bandage fell from his eyes, he blinked a moment against the lights, then immediately, true to his training, began making mental photographs of those seated about the plain white-walled room.

THERE were thirteen men here, including himself—an ominous sign to Jim Pitcher. In addition to his two jailers, he knew several of them—from identification data that had passed through his hands, from newspaper photos, and from actual previous contacts.

He recognized Grover Hogard, paroled bank cashier, at once. Hogard, fat and gross, sat at the end of the room, his sly evasive eyes staring down his bulbous

nose. Hogard had mulcted millions until the government had wielded a stiff hand over the banking business, and now Hogard had embarked upon this, a bigger and more openly criminal game.

Jim Pitcher was even more surprised to see Anton Stravinsky, wrecker of *Home-Makers' Mutual*. Stravinsky had trimmed his flock of trusting home owners of four million before the law caught up with him. He, too, had been paroled, and it was the dogged opinion of the public at large that Stravinsky had hidden away a great share of his loot.

As part of a mentally rehearsed plan, Jim Pitcher staggered when his captors released his arms. His bound hands made awkward gestures as he tried to balance himself, and he fell heavily to the floor. There was blood on his face from his gashed scalp, but he was not nearly as weak as he appeared.

A voice in the room said: "Unbind his hands. Let him have a full taste of the freedom he can earn by telling us certain things."

As Carlo Pezzo jerked at the knots that bound Jim's wrists, the G-Man stared about the circle of faces, a little mystified. Certainly it was not Hogard who had spoken, neither was it any one of the unrecognized crooks. The voice had a metallic edge to it, and seemed to come from no definite spot.

It spoke again: "G-Man, we are giving you one more chance. If you will answer our question truthfully, we will give you, in addition to your liberty, the sum of ten thousand dollars. *Who is the mysterious operator known as GX?*"

Jim Pitcher thought a moment, then said, "As far as I know, there is no such person on the F.B.I. pay-roll."

The voice rose angrily. "I hope you're not denying the existence of the so-called Phantom Fed, Mr. Pitcher. Some of these men gathered here have seen his mark, his signature—the circle with the

arrow drawn through it. This mark seems to be chalked and carved pretty well the length and breadth of the country. And usually there is a message in some indecipherable code written near the mark. Surely, Jim Pitcher, if this is GX's method of communicating with the F.B.I., you must know this code."

"I don't," answered Jim Pitcher. "I doubt if any ordinary member of the Department could decipher that code."

"Then you admit it is the code of GX?"

"Not at all. Simply that the Phantom Fed is as much a mystery to me as he is to you."

Grover Hogard cleared his throat, spoke. "I have heard that GX is not a member of the F.B.I. at all, but some one whose family has suffered greatly at the hands of—er—crime. Now, Mr. Pitcher, in revealing the identity of a non-member, a free-lance, you might say, you would not be guilty of disloyalty to the F.B.I."

Jim Pitcher's lip curled scornfully at the porcine-joweled Hogard. "You draw a fine line of distinction between a gentleman and a rat, don't you, Mister Banker?"

The little eyes of the ex-banker went sullen. "You see, gentlemen," he said spitefully, "this G-Man does not intend to tell us the truth."

STRAVINSKY, the embezzler, had not spoken up to now. He let his dark shrewd eyes rove from face to face. He recognized among the gathering some of the shrewdest criminal brains in the country: lawyers who had decided that to foster crime was more remunerative than to fight it; racketeers whose rackets had melted before the onslaught of the Department of Justice; smart thieves with ideas too big to permit them to work alone on a small scale. There were petermen, pickpockets, heist-guys and cold killers in the group.

For this was the famed Cabal of the

underworld; the Council of Thirteen. Originally it had been formed as an arbitration board to adjust the differences between the various crooked factions in early days when the rackets were easy. Not until the F.B.I. began its thorough drive on crime did the Council of Thirteen see the necessity of organizing a syndicate with super-running minds to direct it. And now Stravinsky said:

"Gentlemen, until the operator known as GX is identified and put out of the way, I wish to withdraw my name as one of the Council."

Hogard sneered openly. "Surely with the organized force you have behind you, you're not backing down because of one lone man?"

"I hope I'm not superstitious," said Stravinsky, unruffled, "but there's something very uncanny about this mysterious GX. They say he's never been seen."

"He's been seen," put in Fox Faversham drily, "but the torpedoes who saw him never lived to tell about it."

"That's it, exactly," purred Stravinsky. "I don't mind taking my chances with the courts; we have capable legal talent to handle them. But I do object to being shot down by some apparition that ghosts up from behind."

Fox Faversham grinned crookedly, and the grin seemed calculated to hide some quirk of superstition. "Maybe it's the combination of numbers that's got Stravinsky on the run. There are thirteen members of the Cabal. This is the thirteenth day of the month. This guy Pitcher will be the thirteenth G-Man to get knocked off by the mob, and—"

"Enough!" The voice of the invisible leader cut in harshly. Patently, thought Jim Pitcher, this unseen leader of the Council of Thirteen did not like the trend of the discussion. Pitcher could sense the sharp rebuke as the voice continued.

"The Council is not interested in the occult theories of the members. Sufficient

to say that GX is a person of flesh and blood, whom one leaden slug, properly directed, will kill. He is said to travel in the guise of a tramp, a wandering hobo—"

"And he's as apt to be found in a dinner coat!" Anton Stravinsky broke in. "He's so crafty and clever, I'll bet he could even be one of us here right now!"

Jim Pitcher started at the thought. He glanced at the crafty faces about him, saw the faint tracery of fear on each one. He drifted a half pace closer to the gun in Fox Faversham's hands, but the alert Carlo Pezzo saw the move.

With sadistic satisfaction he drove his huge fist to Jim Pitcher's ribs.

JIM PITCHER felt the breath driven from his body, and he slumped to the floor, gasping.

"Perhaps, gentlemen, you don't realize the wide scope of the things we hope to accomplish," resumed the unseen voice unemotionally. "Each day that passes, some four thousand outlawed operations net the operators millions of dollars. It's our purpose to organize these criminal operators, and to take our cut from each bank heist, each theft, each car that's clouted—"

Carlo Pezzo whistled softly. "Millions!" he gloated. "What a take!"

"Quiet! In return we, the Council of Thirteen, will protect our members, as far as possible. To do this, it may at times be necessary to close the mouths of our victims; and, at times, the mouths of any member of our organization who might be, through wounds or capture, tempted to give evidence against us. We have recruited ample gunmen to take care of these; for, gentlemen, you realize that at such times we cannot afford to be squeamish. We must deal with them just as we must deal with this G-Man, Jim Pitcher."

Fox Faversham said: "Tell them about my trucking racket, Chief!"

"Right," said the voice. "Each of you shall be placed in direct control of some certain endeavor. One of these is the methodical robbing of inter-state trucks. There are over thirty thousand trucking companies carrying more or less valuable cargoes across the country; almost railroad proportions. But the take from these trucks is not much above twelve thousand dollars a year. This fertile field should yield as richly as the piracy of older days, and should be developed. Our esteemed member, Fox Faversham, is charged with seeing that it pays, and pays big."

Jim Pitcher listened through a haze of dull comprehending horror. This murderous Council of Thirteen, if left to flourish, could become a deadly octopus, directing every field of gainful crime. The trucking racket would be but one slimy tentacle.

He, Jim Pitcher, was to die—its first victim. But he did not intend to die in vain. Writhing there on the floor from the pain of his crushed ribs, he managed to inch from the waistband of his trousers a tiny sliver of steel, a *picklock* which he always carried. One end had splintered off, and left its edge jaggedly broken, razor keen.

JIM PITCHER'S hand stole back under his shirt front. Laboriously, and with the sweat of agony rolling from his face, he drew the jagged edge of steel across his torn ribs. Slowly he cut into the living flesh the letters: F . . . O . . . X.

He heard the voice of the hidden speaker droning: "Of course, Mr. Stravinsky, it is important that we ferret out and kill the undercover Fed known as GX. I think I know the one man who can discover the secret of his identity."

"And that man?"

"A chiselling, doublecrossing little rat called the Sydney Gimp!" said the voice. "He is egotistical, vicious and has a wan-

derlust complex that keeps him from ever becoming a reliable member of our forces. He roves constantly, sometimes alone, sometimes with one or more companions, so he knows the haunts of wanted men as well as he knows the palm of his dirty hand. And that's where GX, the Phantom Fed, operates—in the haunts of wanted men. We have the underground telegraph busy trying to contact the Gimp. We'll show him a nice fat roll of green money. He would knife his own brother for a grand. And, in certain quarters, we have a reward of ten thousand posted for the head of GX."

"I'm satisfied," said Anton Stravinsky. "If that's the best we can do."

"It is!" said the voice. "And now—"

"Hey!" broke in the coarse growl of Carlo Pezzo. "Whatcha doing there?" His little deep-set eyes glared suspiciously down at Jim Pitcher. He took a stride toward the G-Man. "You got a gun there under your shirt?"

But Jim Pitcher wriggled from his grasp. He did not try for Fox Faversham's gun—it was too late for that. Instead, he surged to his feet and dashed straight across the room toward where the breeze from a barely opened window was shivering the drawn curtain.

Jim Pitcher had been watching that window for some time, had heard street noises coming up into it. As he raced across to it, the pain in his hurt ribs was like the stabbing of a knife. But no shots came immediately; Jim Pitcher had counted on surprise to hold the fire of the Thirteen. It seemed leagues to that window, and now the room rocked with gun-sound.

"Fox Faversham," thought the anguished G-Man, as he felt the hot drill of the gunman's lead.

But he was at the window now, and he dived head first straight into the drawn shade. He felt the impact as sash and glass were carried away, and the flying

shards dug in and sliced at his flesh.

Jim Pitcher caught a brief flash of the lighted street and crawling traffic five stories below him. He felt himself whirling over and over through space. His lips framed the words, "Molly . . . darling!"

The hard pavement whirled upward to meet Jim Pitcher.

CHAPTER TWO

G-Man's Mate

THE Sydney Gimp was all that the Voice of the Thirteen had represented him to be—and more. Now, as he trudged along the sun-blistered highway with the hobo called Jerry, all the acid in his bitter, small soul seemed to have escaped into his wizened face and to have puckered it into the semblance of some particularly unlovely gargoyle.

The eleven miles of sleek black highway that glistened in the sun behind them were filled with bitter memories of futile thumbing at passing trucks that had either ignored them coldly, or had put on an extra burst of speed at their pantomimed appeals for a lift. These serious-faced drivers had lately discovered that picking up strangers was risky business.

"Strike me pink!" the Sydney Gimp snarled at Jerry, as though that quizzically-smiling young man were responsible. "What's eatin' all them blasted truckers? You'd think we 'ad leprosy or something!"

Jerry's dark eyes mocked him. "Cheer up, Sydney! There's nothing like a brisk walk in this desert sunshine to give a man an appetite."

"Appetite!" Furiously the vicious little larrikin turned on his easy-going indulgent partner of the road. "Appetite!" he raged. "Wi' me perishin' of hunger, you make your silly cracks about appetite! Don't be such a bleedin' fool!"

Jerry's answer was a grin that seemed

to fire all the smouldering hate in the Gimp's nature. He berated Jerry venomously, despite the fact that the easy-going rambler had the build of a middleweight, and could hit like the kick of a mule. For Jerry, Sydney had learned, was tolerant—as a mastiff is tolerant of a snarling, diminutive mongrel. The Sydney Gimp mistook that mildness for something else entirely, took full advantage of it when he felt the urge to vent his spleen.

Had he not been blinded by delusions of his own importance, he would have realized that his companion of this strange friendship was playing him along for a purpose. It is doubtful that the Sydney Gimp would have survived the discovery that this genial young hobo by his side was in reality the dreaded Phantom Fed, GX. For Sydney, despite his truculent, blustering exterior, was a complete coward at heart.

But now, the Sydney Gimp's mind was on food. He pointed down the sunbaked desert highway ahead to where three trucks, with their trailer vans, were halted before the only building the eye could discover in that sandy waste.

Sydney's face crinkled maliciously. "Look! There's three of the big lumberin' sons that passed us up. And you know what them truckers are doin' now? They're in that grease joint, stuffin' their guts full of grub, that's what! And me wi'out a red cent to me name!"

This time Jerry hid something in his face that could have been mockery—or contempt. "You'll have plenty of jack, Sydney, when you collect the grand for fingerin' that Federal guy, FX."

Sydney slowed his pace a bit. "Grand, you say? It's ten grand. And what chance I got? Ain't I been on the hunt of the bloomin' Fed for months, long before this hot-shot called the Fox sent me his proposition?"

"Who the devil," asked Jerry innocent-

ly, "is the Fox?" His voice was low.

"I dunno," returned Sydney, "but he's a mean monkey. He's the ginzo who cut his initials on that G-Man, Jim Pitcher, in KC a month ago. He carved his name right on the guy's chest, he did. Then he drilled him with a roscoe and heaved him out a five story window."

Jerry's eyes went grim and darker at that. Sydney had seen those newspaper accounts, too. That's the way the newspapers had stated it, and the heat had gone on the Fox, for fair. Dead or alive, the papers had demanded; preferably dead. But the police dragnet had made a water haul, for the Fox had lost himself somewhere in the far haunts of wanted men.

"And look," went on Sydney. "What chance have I got? First I gotta find GX, who is a ruddy ghost, who ain't human. Just like that. Then I gotta hunt all over hell for the Fox. But I gotta tip." He scowled, hopefully. "I gotta tip that the Fox is the big shot in this highway pirate business. Hijackin' trucks, you know. And the Phantom Fed is on his tail. Yer can bet yer last nickle GX will take up the hunt because the Fox knocked off that G-man, Pitcher. If I could find those two close together—" He sucked in his breath, greedily.

"Yeah." Jerry shut his jaws hard on the one word, and the muscles under his day-old beard hardened. He took off his battered fedora and let what breeze there was touch his dark sweaty hair.

The Sydney Gimp would get those two guys—the Fox and GX—together if Jerry could engineer it that way. After that, the Fox would never cut his initials on another G-man's chest.

THEY trudged on toward the eating place whose sign bore the legend, THE WHITE SPOT, but Jerry didn't talk any more. His thoughts were too busy.

The hijacking of truck cargoes had suddenly taken on formidable proportions. Evidently the crooks had developed an almost perfect intelligence system, as only vehicles carrying valuable cargoes had been molested. The F.B.I. had set innumerable traps, to no avail. Vans carrying special agents concealed aboard went through without mishap, and all the G-men got for their pains was the ride. It would have required a standing army to patrol the thousands of miles of highway.

The Fox, if he were at the head of the racket, was living up to his name. Jerry fostered a hunch that the Fox had a string of warehouses located at strategic points. Find one of these hideouts and you are almost certain to get contact with some of the leaders.

The big chance would come when the Sydney Gimp got in touch with the Fox. But that would not be easy, for Sydney was useful to the Fox only in case he put the finger on GX. Jerry's mind was centered on how to bring that about without signing his own death warrant. A single wrong move would bring the Fox to him, all right, but with a horde of armed thugs at his back.

That the White Spot, which they were about to enter, was a focal point of danger, Jerry well knew. It marked the junction of five national highways, and here the hijacker spies would be working.

Jerry stopped abreast a fringe of trees that skirted the boulevard just across the road from the white painted roadhouse.

"Acme Truck Company," he read aloud on one of the vans parked there.

He heard a gasp from the Gimp.

A man stepped out from the trees and said quietly, "Don't pull any tough moves, boys, and you won't get hurt."

Jerry turned slowly. He saw a long-legged individual with a close-cropped round head. The crotch of the man's bib overalls seemed to reach clear up to his

navel. The ruddy snubnosed face didn't show too much intelligence, nor did his bleak blue eyes, but the gun in his hand bespoke a dogged resolve to shoot if it were necessary.

"What's the beef?" Jerry asked, level-eyed.

"I'm the marshal of Newton, five miles down the road." The guy hitched at his pants. "Some son hi-jacked a truck near there last week. We gotta be careful about you new guys that blow in."

"O.K.! Go ahead, be careful!" Jerry grinned at him.

The guy looked surly. He went around behind the Gimp and began frisking his pockets. He did not find the knife that Sydney habitually carried sheathed down the back of his neck. Nor did he find any weapon when he frisked Jerry. Jerry's role of wandering tramp compelled him to go unarmed and without funds. He jungled up with hobos, ate their food and slept in the open air with them; a wolf travelling with the pack—always with the uncertainty that some criminal wanderer might discover his identity and knife him in his sleep.

The Gimp would have begun a blustering tirade against all hick marshals, for he hated anything that resembled an officer of the law, but Jerry winked him to silence.

The long-legged man didn't indulge in any unnecessary conversation. After he had satisfied himself that neither were armed, he said: "Now you boys just keep on travelin'. They say the handouts are fine over the line in California." He gave Jerry another quick searching look, then he turned abruptly and walked back to his post among the trees.

"Bogus," thought Jerry. "As bogus as phony dice." Somehow the fellow lacked the flavor of a law officer. "A tough gunzel. Probably one of the Fox's gorillas, on the lookout for Federal officers. He knows damn sure now we're without guns."

A sudden premonition that he was walking into a nest of killers made Jerry wish he had a gun. He took a solitary two-bit piece from his pocket, tossed it on his palm.

"Let's go eat, Sydney. We'll shoot the piece."

IN spite of its gleaming interior, the White Spot was redolent with the homely odors of frying onions and steaming java. There was a long horseshoe counter, and Jerry, the Gimp at his heels, went to the far end of it, away from the crowd.

A hard-bitten bunch, he thought. The trucking companies, rendered desperate by their heavy losses, had resorted to hiring truckers who carried guns and knew how to use them. They were up against much the same proposition that the stage coaches of earlier days had had to contend with.

Jerry spun his quarter on the counter. His eyes were on a huge muscled trucker, evidently of Latin birth, a bully, by his overbearing manner and his loud voice. But the girl was coming toward them. She stopped to draw two tumblers of water and the Gimp gave Jerry a violent nudge.

"Gawd blind me," he whispered hoarsely. "Where have I seen that dame before?"

Jerry, too, had felt the sudden pound of quickening pulses at sight of the trim figure. But he gave the Gimp a solid kick under the counter. "Don't stare, Sydney. It's very rude to stare at a lady."

His tone was casual and bantering, but his mind was seething with a sudden excitement. He knew that Sydney was right.

The young girl's hair, once a soft girlish blonde, was now dyed nut brown, coiled about her face demurely. Her

hands were roughened by work. But there was no tricking Jerry's photographic memory, no mistaking the quiet purpose in her blue eyes. And Sydney had seen her picture in a dozen papers. He had remembered the delicate contours of her face.

She was Molly Pitcher. Molly Pitcher, wife of the thirteenth G-man to die by gangdom's bullets. But what, in God's name, could this girl be doing here?

Jerry spun his quarter again. "Two hamburgers and a couple of Javas."

The girl looked down at the twenty-five cent piece.

"Hamburgers are a dime each," she said, hesitatingly.

Jerry looked straight into her blue eyes and smiled that quizzical, disarming smile. "Lady," he said, "it's a hundred miles to that other nickel. Have you ever been hungry?"

Molly Pitcher smiled, a little sadly. She looked earnestly at the sun-tanned young rambler, probed beneath his dusty, travel-tanned exterior. Her eyes saw a wandering, brown-eyed vagabond but her womanly intuition sensed the courage and character and the heart of a *man*.

"Two hamburgers," she said, "and two coffees."

She took the quarter and was gone into the kitchen.

CHAPTER THREE

Little Ol' Fightin' Boy

"I TELL you, I know that dame!" The Sydney Gimp was insistent. "But by blinkin' memory—"

"Can it!" hissed Jerry. Again he kicked the Gimp—made it a good one, this time—for she was returning. She placed two steaming coffee cups before them.

Jerry made an elaborate salute to the coffee. "Little lady," he said, "this is

manna from heaven." Playing the part of the light-hearted, devil-may-care rambler had become second nature to him. "Just enter the other nickel on the books, and I'll have my secretary mail you a check."

A little quickening of her pulses heightened the rare color of her cheeks. "It's all right about the extra coffee," she said, a trifle breathlessly.

She was staring at him oddly, and he could tell that she was either a little excited or a little frightened. More like the latter, he thought, for she kept casting hurried glances toward the big dark man across the horseshoe counter.

Jerry ventured a glance that way, and saw beady black eyes studying him in keen suspicion. The man's bulging muscles made his short-sleeved sport shirt seem absurdly tight. His face was not unhandsome under crisp black curling hair, but his eyes were those of a man who knew his great strength and loved to use it. And, Jerry surmised, he was just drunk enough to bring out the meanness in him.

He brought his great fist down on the counter, made the cutlery jingle. "Ma-ree!" he rapped out, and the girl turned away hurriedly, went over to him.

So, that's the name Molly Pitcher was using—but why? The big guy knew her, all right, yet there was nothing strange about that. These truck drivers had their favorite eating places, made them a habit, and their way with the various waitresses was far from stilted or formal. But the girl was afraid of the man.

He reached forth a great knotted fist and grasped her wrist. "Since when," he demanded, half-possessively, half-angrily, "did you begin neglecting Carlo Pezzo for a couple of road runners?"

So the guy was Carlo Pezzo. Well, it didn't mean a thing to Jerry, but his manner with Molly Pitcher grated on the nerves of the phantom Fed like chisel on

stone. She was the wife of a murdered G-man, and Jerry had consecrated his energies and his life if need be, to bring that murderer to justice. He knew he would need all his cunning, his cool headedness and restraint. But when Carlo laid his predatory hands on the girl, something flamed in Jerry's brain. A slow rage pulled him to his feet.

"Let go, please. You're hurting my arm," the girl said.

Carlo Pezzo's eyes gleamed with the pleasure of giving pain . . . and, besides, jealousy ate at his brain. He had, in his self-sufficient mind, picked the girl with the steady blue eyes to be his own, and her instinctive friendliness toward Jerry had nettled him. He clamped down a little tighter on her arm.

Jerry saw that too; saw her wince with pain. He was close to Carlo Pezzo now. His left hand flicked out, fingers extended, and lanced at a nerve in the base of the big man's neck. Pezzo jerked around face square to Jerry. Jerry swung a hard right-handed punch and knocked him off the stool.

PEZZO, for all of his great bunched muscle, had a certain agility. He rolled to his hands and knees, shook his head like a dog with a flea in his ear, then came to his feet. He spread his fingers, talonwise. Crouched there he laughed loudly and boisterously.

"Do you know why the highway pirates never stop the truck of Carlo Pezzo?" he crowed. "It is because they are afraid. Carlo Pezzo is too strong for them." He bunched his shoulder muscles. "I show you. I break your arm."

Jerry, narrow-eyed, watched him closely. "Sure. You practice up on dining room girls."

He watched the man maneuver around, get between him and the door. Clearly, Pezzo was in no rush to take him apart. He was a showman, wanted to play to

the gallery before he broke this young upstart with his hands.

Pezzo said: "Maybe you're one of these hijackers, hey? Where did you come from?"

"From down in the Tarzan country." Jerry grinned and made a hard knot of his right fist. He wriggled it until Pezzo looked at it. "I had to move out because I played too rough with the gorillas."

A slim dark trucker, leaning against the wall, laughed. He looked like a Southern boy, had the soft drawl of a Southerner. He said: "Shucks, go on and paste him, Rambler Boy. Give him that right hook again."

Pezzo's dark knobby face flushed. Once more he flicked a glance at Jerry's right fist, then hurled himself forward. Too late, he realized he had been talked into neglecting Jerry's long left arm. It stabbed straight out, and Pezzo ran into it with his flattened nose. It straightened him up. Before he could recover, Jerry uncocked a brown right fist that sent the big grappler down between two stools.

"Doggone!" said the Southern boy, admiringly.

Maddened, Pezzo staggered erect. He jerked the revolving top from the stool and hurled it at Jerry.

Jerry felt the wind of it as he ducked, heard it smash against the wall behind him. Pezzo was bending over, trying to jerk another stool free. His bullet-head and massive shoulders offered no target, so Jerry kicked him in the face, hammered him backward with blinding rights and lefts.

The two truckers who had sat with Carlo Pezzo, crowded into Jerry, seized his arm. Pezzo, quick to seize the advantage, clutched Jerry. His face twisted in wanton cruelty now, he clamped his huge arm under Jerry's chin and almost levered his head off.

Molly Pitcher, who had been watching the fight horrified, suddenly screamed. The slim, dark Southern boy stepped in and put a blued automatic against Carlo Pezzo's back.

"Heah, you three-timin' sons," he drawled, "let go of that fightin' boy, less you-all want to be chief mourners at a funeral."

Jerry felt the crushing arm release, instantly. The two truckers let go of his arms. He backed off quickly. The Southern boy's eyes were like pinpoints, and the gun in his hand was steady as a rock. That smiling soft-spoken lad would have blasted Pezzo without blinking an eye. Pezzo knew it, too. He gave Jerry one murderous look.

"Maybe you'll see Carlo Pezzo again, sometime, hey!"

He went out, and his two companions followed him. They held the gun of the Southern boy in as much respect as Pezzo, himself, did. Jerry watched their big Acme truck roll away toward Newton.

The Southern boy said: "Maybe you better hightail it outta this parish, fightin' boy. You done made yourself an enemy." He put forth a slim hand gravely. "My name's de Krastel. Gabe de Krastel."

Jerry grinned, gripped the hand. There was something coldblooded, yet likeable, about de Krastel. "They call me Jerry. I thought I'd drop down toward Newton."

"Shucks, boy, Newton ain't no place for you. That Pezzo fella will sure be a-layin' for you in Newton." Jerry let his glance drift to Molly Pitcher a moment, and de Krastel read something there. He said: "Doggone. You little old fightin' boy, I betcha you aimin' to spit right in that big wop's eye! Well, you won't find a nicer girl than Mary Purcell, anywhere."

AS de Krastel spoke, he was sizing Jerry up, from the serviceable but travel-stained brown whipcord he wore,

to the scuffed but unbroken brogues. He was seeing there what GX wanted observing eyes to see: a devil-may-care rambler, a little bold, a little impertinent, maybe, but clean.

Jerry was getting a tremendous kick out of this nerveless, steady-eyed Southern lad. De Krastel was slim, not much larger than the Sydney Gimp. But the pistol he packed made him loom large in the fighting. He was hill-bred, by his manner, and GX was willing to bet he could shoot the eye out of a squirrel at twenty paces.

When Sydney came over, de Krastel eyed the grimy Gimp with good-humored disfavor. But Sydney had an ego that no eye could abash. He sucked noisily at the shreds of hamburger between his teeth and said, "Gawd, Mister. How's for a lift? My dogs is barkin'."

"Sure-'nuff." De Krastel looked sharply at Jerry. "It might be better that way. It might be just like that Carlo Pezzo to hide out along the road. He'd jump you if you was afoot."

De Krastel had no relief driver. He had a light, not very valuable cargo, he explained. But his battery was down, and he pointedly asked the Gimp to crank the engine. Oddly enough, Jerry suspected de Krastel of deliberately lying about the battery, just to give him an opportunity to speak to the girl. Jerry did not follow them outside.

While the disgusted Sydney was alternately swearing vilely, and heaving on the heavy crank, Molly Pitcher came forward. As she busied herself picking up the dishes, she said, low-voiced, "Don't get in too deep with de Krastel. He'll get you into trouble."

"Trouble?"

"Yes. With the police." She leaned closer. "De Krastel is one of the highway pirates."

"So? And what does that make me?"

"You're too nice a boy," said Molly

Pitcher, "to get mixed up in something that will land you in jail."

Outside, de Krastel's motor roared to life.

"I'll be seeing you," said Jerry. "Thanks again for the coffee."

Seated on the wide seat of the big red truck with de Krastel and the Gimp, Jerry tried to figure out Molly Pitcher's angle in the thing. Had she, with foolhardy valor, picked up the torch dropped by her murdered husband, Jim Pitcher? If so, Jerry knew she was in immediate and acute danger. The ring responsible for the truck hijackings were not a bit above taking the life of a woman if she stood in their way.

Molly Pitcher must be warned away; scared away if necessary. There was just one way in which Jerry could warn her. De Krastel had called her Mary Purcell. So Jerry under pretext of reading a magazine he found in the cab, managed a note to her. He wrote:

MARY PURCELL:

YOU HAVE NOT FOOLED ANY-
ONE. GO BACK WHERE YOU CAME
FROM.

THE FOX.

He took a crumpled, stamped envelope from his pocket and addressed it. He would mail it from Newton.

Possibly, the foolhardy wife of the murdered G-man would disregard this warning. If so, his next course was to report her to Washington. They would know how to handle the situation. But until that time, GX knew he'd have to stand by.

JERRY pointed down the sunwashed desert highway. "Looks hot," he said.

"Hot as the hinges of hell," said de Krastel. "But the truck makes a breeze."

"Been trucking long?" Jerry asked.

He felt the quick impact of the South-

ern boy's dark eyes. "Too long. Why?"

"Thought maybe I'd like to try it."

"Gawd," said the Gimp. "Work! My eye!"

"It'd be kinda nice," said Jerry dreamily. "Keeps a fella traveling. No more flop houses. No more jungles. Maybe a guy could drive a regular route, could build him a little home."

Aghast, the Gimp swore. "Are you balmy or somethin'?"

De Krastel grinned. "It's that girl back at the White Spot," he said. "It's Mary Purcell. Looks like this little old Rambler's done gone over the deep end."

"I've seen that Purcell dame somewhere before," said the Gimp thoughtfully. "But gor-blyme, I can't jest put my thought on where it was!"

"Yeah," said Jerry. "Waitresses get around." He pulled his knees up under his chin and sat on the wide cushion, pretending to stare at the narrow ribbon of road ahead. "How long has she been around here?"

"'Bout three months. They come and go."

"Know many of the boys?"

"All of 'em," said de Krastel. "But not the way you're thinkin', fightin' boy. She's a dog-gone good little old waitress. All the trucks stop there. You can tell the good eatin' places by the trucks."

"Yeah, I guess that's so."

Jerry relapsed into silent thinking. Molly Pitcher, alias Mary Purcell, could have learned quite a lot in three months. Most of it was wrong, probably. Jerry was skeptical of anything but first-hand information. He had to be. One mistake could cost him his life. But she seemed certain enough that de Krastel was a part of the hijacking gang. Jerry was beginning to believe that. De Krastel, restless, adventurous, was the type to turn to highway piracy just for the hell of it. He'd kill, cold-bloodedly, but he wouldn't cut his initials on the victim's chest.

Jerry, in spite of his lazy pose, had been watching the road ahead, keenly. He knew he had not heard the last from Carlo Pezzo. But the road to Newton seemed deserted.

He had not expected attack from behind, nor a shot from that quarter. The big body of the van seemed a shield of security. And so sudden did that attack come, and in such an unexpected manner, that he almost fell into the trap.

The cab went suddenly and mysteriously dark, as though the bright sun had dimmed. What had been a road, stretching through the desert growth before them, melted to a gray nothingness.

Jerry heard de Krastel curse, heard the screech of rubber. He felt a quick moment of surprise that he could see de Krastel, and that de Krastel was jamming on the brakes furiously. Blinded by the curtain before them, the driver was trying to save his truck from the deep sand.

Jerry saw then that it was a curtain, a blanket that had shut off their view so suddenly. Someone had crawled over the van, had dropped it down before the windshield.

The highway pirates! Jerry felt the first thrill of contact with the gang he sought. His eyes went to a rear-view mirror, winged out from the right side of the cab. The device was there to allow the swamper to watch the load. It now served Jerry, who twisted it until it showed him the man on top of the van.

It was Carlo Pezzo and he had a sub-machine gun in his hands.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Fox's Lair

PEZZO'S intentions were evident and deadly. He gripped the gun in both big hands. He leaned out over the cab and swung the muzzle straight down until it was pointing directly at the top of

de Krastel's head. In a split second, Pezzo would blast the driver.

Jerry tensed his arm, crooked it behind de Krastel and the Gimp, who sat between them. It knocked the two men headlong into the dash. Jerry followed through with his body, and the three of them were tangled there as a pandemonium of sound filled the cab.

Machine-gun bullets, advancing like the stabbing needles of a sewing machine, traced a pattern of splintered holes back and forth through the cab roof. The cab filled with bitter cordite. The bullets sewed their pattern the full length of the seat cushion, and but for Jerry's quick move would have made bloody ruin of the three of them.

Jerry's hand fell on cold hard steel—the heavy crank the Gimp had used. His fingers closed on it, and the second the sub-machine gun ceased, GX writhed to his knees. He bent backward, out the cab window. When the hastily-flung tool smacked against the skull of Carlo Pezzo, he felt a savage satisfaction.

He heard Pezzo slump to the cab roof, heard the machine gun clatter to the ground. Swiftly Jerry hid the letter to Molly under the wide seat cushion. The next instant the cab doors flung open, and a man with drawn gun appeared on either side.

"Freeze," snapped one of them, "or we'll let you have it!" The speaker was Highpockets, the pseudo constable who had held up Jerry and the Gimp back there by the White Spot.

The fellow with Highpockets was solid and chunky and his sallow face was deep-cut with brown predatory eyes like a monkey's.

He said: "Jeez. Pezzo got the driver. What'd he wanta do that for?"

The pale eyes of Highpockets burned angrily. "I'll tell you what he done that for. Pezzo had a run-in with the guy back at the White Spot, and this driver

put a gun on him. Pezzo is a damn fool." Highpockets looked about, uncertainly; up at Pezzo, crumpled on the roof of the cab, then at de Krastel, slumped under the steering wheel. There was a trickle of blood on de Krastel's thin dark face.

Highpockets said to Jerry: "You boost that driver down here!" But the thick-set man aimed his gun straight at Jerry's middle. "You stay put," he countered, harshly and quickly. "That driver's got a gun in his overalls and you'd have it out a-shootin'. You just step down here, one at a time and we'll tie you up."

When Jerry stepped down, the chunky man got behind him with a piece of rope. Jerry was seething inside, mostly because of Carlo Pezzo's cold-blooded attempt to murder them. And he was mystified at the hijacking of de Krastel's truck, for Molly Pitcher had said that de Krastel was one of the highway pirates. But his elation at having actually contacted the Fox's gang held him steady. The Gimp would be the next card he would play. Someone in the gang would know the Gimp, would know that he had been commissioned by the Fox to hunt down GX.

So Jerry said softly. "What's the idea of tying a guy up? We're not going to run away."

"You want to argue about it, do you?" snarled the thick-set man, and Jerry felt the hard slap of the man's heavy automatic on the back of his head.

He saw flashing lights, but the blow glanced, and as Jerry whirled about, he brought his fist in an arc to the sallow jaw of the monkey-eyed man. It knocked him staggering against the Gimp who stood goggle-eyed. But before Jerry could follow up, Highpockets slapped him solidly behind the ear with his automatic. Jerry's knees buckled. . . .

WHEN Jerry came out of it, he was tied very securely, and Carlo Pezzo was kicking him in the ribs. Pezzo had a

rag tied around his head. The guy's skull had been too hard for the crank. But Jerry saw something else that sent a chill through his veins.

Carlo Pezzo had the letter to Molly Pitcher in his hand.

Jerry cursed himself for writing it, even as he realized it had probably saved his life. Pezzo was one of the highway pirates. But, patently, he was not the mysterious Fox, their leader. Pezzo was too arrogantly dumb for that. And he wouldn't dare knock Jerry off until he had found out more about that letter which was signed with the Fox's name.

Jerry opened his eyes wide under the repeated kicks. They were in what appeared to be a storehouse. Merchandise of various sorts was stacked against the walls; loot, probably, from some of the thefts. The Gimp was sitting against the wall, tied hand and foot, and de Krastel, his face bloody, was bound likewise. The short stocky man was there, and Highpockets straddled a chair, his arms resting on the back of it. Highpockets was too long-legged to use a chair normally.

Pezzo was drunk; Jerry could smell the sour odor of whiskey on his breath. He was steady on his feet, but his eyes had squinted up and the pupils had contracted to black glass beads with little bloodshot rims around them. He was vicious enough to kill and enjoy it.

He waved the letter before Jerry's face. "Maybe you can explain this, hey? Maybe you and the Fox are working some kind of double-cross on Pezzo."

The thick-set man said: "Shut up and sit down, you big Hunkie. You're drunk."

Pezzo turned on him, sneered. "You think I'm drunk, hey?"

"You damn well know you're drunk. I poured half a bottle of whisky down your throat to bring you to after that wallop you got. Then you guzzled the rest of the bottle."

"Sure," said Pezzo. "What if I am

drunk? You think I let the Fox double-cross me? Who is this girl, anyway?"

"Maybe the Fox didn't write the letter. Maybe one of these guys wrote it."

"That's what I intend to find out!" rasped Pezzo. He went over to de Krastel and kicked him heavily. "Maybe I work you over a little. That'll loosen your tongue."

De Krastel's eyes seemed to film over like those of a poisonous snake. Close-lidded, they held on the big-muscled man murderously. "I'll kill you for that," said de Krastel. "I sure as hell will."

"You ain't gonna kill nobody," sneered Pezzo. "What you spyin' on me for? The Fox put you on that truck to spy on me. You was supposed to knock Pezzo off with that gun of yours. Well, Pezzo beat you to it."

Highpockets stirred on his chair. His eyes grew bleaker. "Pezzo, you talk too much. The Fox ain't tryin' to double-cross nobody. You just want to run the show."

"The hell I do?"

"Sure. You had no business holding up de Krastel's truck. You knew there wasn't anything in it. You just was sore because this Jerry guy knocked you on your fanny. You wanted to bump these guys off."

Pezzo took a gun from his pocket. "Do you know why?" he asked. "This guy de Krastel is a G-Man. He ain't fooled me none. Maybe they are all three G-Men." He raised the gun menacingly. "The quicker we knock them off—"

Highpockets got his gun out slowly. "I ain't got no orders to knock them off. When the Fox says we bump 'em, then you can go ahead. But if you start anything now I'll let you have it."

THE Gimp had been squirming in his bonds. His eyes still rolled in fear. "You let him blast me and the Fox will cut your ruddy throat," he said hoarsely.

"I got a message to give to the Fox."

"What kind of message?" sneered Highpockets.

"It's about that note to the girl at the White Spot. The Fox never wrote that note. I just remembered who that girl is."

Jerry, helpless, cursed futilely under his breath. The Gimp had remembered. An avid curiosity had been eating at his rotten little brain ever since he had first laid eyes on Molly Pitcher. And now that he knew, the Gimp would not be slow in turning the knowledge to good account—for himself. It meant death for Molly Pitcher, the moment the Sydney Gimp spilled the truth.

Just who Sydney thought had written the note was problematical; probably he figured it was de Krastel. Pezzo's remark about de Krastel had sowed the germ of an idea in the Gimp's grasping mind. It would be just like Sydney to claim that de Krastel was GX, in order to collect the reward from the Fox. And Molly Pitcher. . . .

These thoughts flashed through Jerry's mind in a split second. He jerked at the ropes about his wrists. He saw the three highway pirates move in on the Sydney Gimp, eagerly. They'd beat the living daylights out of Sydney. The Gimp didn't have the stamina to resist a beating. He'd blurt out the truth about Molly Pitcher.

Jerry pulled himself to one elbow. "Don't tell 'em, Sydney," he cried. "Once you spill to them, you're a goner. They'll slit your throat and tell the Fox they found out about the girl, themselves!"

The heavy-set guy with the monkey eyes stopped to glare down at Jerry. "A lawyer, huh?" he said, between set teeth. "A regular mouthpiece!" He kicked the supine GX in the ribs, hard. "Close your trap, mug, and keep it closed."

But Jerry knew he had to shut the Gimp's mouth now, or let the murdered G-Man's wife go into the hands of the

brutal Carlo Pezzo. Nothing was important now, save the life of Molly Pitcher.

The brain of GX was working at top speed. There was a single chance to stop the Gimp from talking. Jerry knew he had to make that chance work!

"Highpockets," Jerry shouted, "you'd better stop these guys. The Sydney Gimp is working for the Fox. If you guys butt into the Fox's business, he'll blast you like he blasted that G-Man in K.C.!"

Highpockets paused a moment, fingered his gun.

"Hold on, you guys," he said. His wrinkling forehead indicated the workings of his slow mind.

He backed cautiously away and very carefully covered Carlo Pezzo and the thick-set man.

"I think this guy is right," he said, slowly.

"You bet I'm right," snapped Jerry. "Pezzo is jealous of the Fox. Always trying to stir up trouble. If you know what you're about, you'll send Pezzo after the Fox. Let the Fox come here and settle this himself."

"I think the guy is right," said Highpockets again. "Brink," he said to the thick-set man, "you go and bring the Fox here. Pezzo can stay with me. That big Wop is so sore I wouldn't trust him outside the place; he'd probably shoot me through the window. You go phone the Fox, Brink, and then hurry right back here."

Brink fingered his swollen nose where Jerry had hit him. "Maybe you got something there. But there's just one thing I want to do to this guy before the Fox takes over."

He fingered his hurt nose again, then he went over and kicked Jerry solidly in the ribs a dozen times. It seemed to make Brink feel better, for he went out of the warehouse with his squat shoulders squared.

CHAPTER FIVE

When Pirates Fight

FOX FAVERSHAM, since becoming a king in the highway pirateering, hadn't changed much. He still wore Narcissus perfume and lavender ties, still bore himself with that sardonic supercilious air that had always grated on the nerves of the coarse and bungling Carlo Pezzo. But Fox Faversham had hardened inside, if that were possible. He had learned that to be king of any racket, one had to be ruthless; far more so than Fox Faversham, free-lance gunman.

For not only was Fox Faversham constantly in fear of hard-shooting lawmen, and the ever-increasing drive of the G-Men, but he was threatened from within his own cold-blooded organization. Crackpot killers like Carlo Pezzo were constantly chiseling at the foundations of Fox's leadership. Guys like Pezzo were too dumb to appreciate the advantages of an organization like the one which was behind Fox's racket, they were constantly beefing about the percentage demanded by the Council of Thirteen.

More often than occasionally, it became necessary to eliminate some stool pigeon on the gang, or quietly to knock off some overjealous rival. Fox, feeling himself a step above the ordinary hired killer, had retained the services of Georgie and Albert. These two were constantly with him, like a bodyguard.

Georgie and Albert were not twins, but brothers, who could almost pass for twins. They dressed very much alike, copied their wardrobes after the dapper Fox, as far as he would permit. While either could match Fox with a gun, they lacked the cunning and purpose of the leader of the highway pirates.

Georgie and Albert stood at Fox's shoulder when he entered the warehouse, in answer to Brink's phone message. They

stared with impersonal interest at Jerry and the Gimp and de Krastel, seated on the floor, bound, their backs to the wall. They glanced with supercilious nods—like a couple of shavetail lieutenants—at the elongated Highpockets; at Brink, and the huge-muscled Carlo Pezzo. They were very *deluxe*, very sophisticated, these dapper killers, and they looked down their noses at anyone with dust on his shoes.

Fox Faversham, too, looked at Carlo Pezzo, and his ruthless eyes held that same contemptuous hate.

“Clowning again, Wop?” he said. “Still bungling things, huh?”

Carlo Pezzo seemed to shrink some. He held those two diminutive killers at Fox’s elbows in unholy fear. He said, sullenly. “Look here, we’ve worked this stretch of road to the limit. Just when we’re ready to clean up and move to new pickings, these two guys show up. And this guy de Krastel—”

Fox rested his sultry eyes on de Krastel. “What’s this I hear about you, de Krastel. You pulled your gun on one of our boys. You know what that means, de Krastel. You know the rules.”

De Krastel’s dark face grew hot. “You mean I get a ticket to hell on the hot end of a bullet. You mean after I’ve herded that damned truck over the road, and held my hands up meek as a dago’s monkey whenever your thugs held her up, that you’re goin’ to butcher me like a shoat . . . just because I throwed a gun on this big hunkie!”

Fox Faversham’s face grew a little more sardonic. “It’s not that alone, de Krastel. I’ve grown a little suspicious of you. Maybe I’m wrong, but we can’t take chances. Not in this racket.”

“It’s too bad,” said de Krastel bitterly, “that I didn’t blast the big gorilla while I was at it.”

Fox said: “Yes, it’s too bad. But I’m looking forward to that pleasure, myself, sometime.” He looked at Pezzo sneering-

ly. “Which one of these guys wanted to tell me something about that girl at the White Spot?”

THE Gimp didn’t wait to be introduced. He almost wriggled his bound skinny carcass over to the feet of Fox Faversham.

“It was me,” he gurgled eagerly. “Yer know me, don’t yer . . . the Sydney Gimp?”

“Yes, I know you.” Fox used the same tone he might have in acknowledging that there was a spot on his pale blue trousers. He turned to Highpockets. “Untie this monkey.”

The Gimp arose as the ropes fell, all his audacious ego restored now that Fox Faversham acknowledged him. “Yer see,” he snarled triumphantly at Highpockets. “Didn’t I tell yer?”

“How about these two guys?” asked Brink, nodding toward Jerry and de Krastel.

Fox Faversham smiled thinly. He stood thinking a moment, and the breath wheezed through his thin nostrils with that soft whistling sound. “It’s time to clean up and leave this district. *We’ve gotta leave clean.*” He looked down at Jerry. “Who is this punk?”

“Just a punk de Krastel picked up.”

“Well,” the Fox repeated meaningly. “*We’ve gotta leave clean.* We’ll be working up on the Lincoln Highway and we don’t want to leave anything that the G’s can follow up. I’ll bring that girl here from the White Spot. She’ll tell us what that fake note is about. Come on, you.”

He turned and went out the door. The Sydney Gimp was at his heels. Georgie and Albert wrinkled their disdainful noses and followed.

Jerry had writhed a little closer to Gabe de Krastel. His eyes locked with de Krastel’s dark, intelligent ones in a meaningful glance. Slowly Jerry pulled his feet

up, as if to a more comfortable position, and began fumbling with the sole of his shoe.

From between the layers of leather, he thumbed a razor-sharp wafer of steel, left its keen edge protruding an inch. He tried to reach his bound wrists with that steel, but couldn't. He knew it would be foolhardy to attract attention to himself by any straining movement.

At the precise moment that every eye in the room was following Fox Faver-shani's exit, Jerry's bound feet moved toward Gabe's. His toe touched the cord that bound Gabe's ankles and the razor edge parted one cord only.

Outside, the Fox's big sedan came to life. Its gears made a whining noise as it swung in an arc to speed away after Molly Pitcher. Under cover of the noise, Jerry drew his feet up until his toe touched the bonds at de Krastel's wrists.

When the three highway pirates closed the door and turned back to their prisoners Jerry and de Krastel lay as before. But Jerry felt the cold sweat of excitement bead his face. Given a moment more, they would have been free. But to what avail would it be against three armed hoods? And the precious minutes were ticking by; minutes that could be the last in the life of Molly Pitcher.

Jerry's bonds were cutting into his wrists. His sense of helplessness was lashing him like a whip. He weighed the chances against himself. They were a thousand to one but he began to curl his knees up again, to make another attempt to cut the bonds on his wrists.

Gabe de Krastel watched him with feverish eyes.

Carlo Pezzo's ear caught the slight sound of Jerry's move. Pezzo's suspicious eyes stared down at GX for a moment. Then the light of realization dawned in them, as he saw the bright sliver of steel.

It enraged Pezzo. He snatched the razor blade from Jerry's shoe. "Look,"

he snarled. "A damned G-man trick!"

HIGHPOCKETS and Brink jerked their guns at the sudden exclamation. They rushed over, stood staring down at Jerry. Pezzo's rage burst into fury.

Jerry felt the sharp lancing of pain as Pezzo began to kick him brutally. Jerry spun away, and all three men followed, smothering him in a furious tattoo of rib-crushing kicks.

Gabe de Krastel made writhing motions. His severed bonds fell away and he arose like a wraith directly behind Brink. Before Brink knew what was happening, de Krastel had wrenched the gun from his hand.

De Krastel put the gun to the back of Pezzo's head and when it exploded, Pezzo's face erupted bloody shreds as he pitched forward across Jerry's bound body.

But Brink had grappled with the Southern boy, and, as they struggled, Highpockets backed across the floor. His gun filled the room with roaring sound as he shot repeatedly at de Krastel. Hope for Molly Pitcher went out of Jerry's chest as he saw Gabe sink to his knees.

But Gabe de Krastel was still in the fighting. Still clinging to Brink, he fired upward, under Brink's chin.

Brink stiffened like a poker, seemed to grow taller. He toppled to the floor with a crash, and Gabe snapped a shot at Highpockets that hit square between the eyes.

Gabe de Krastel dropped his gun. He sat on the floor, staring stupidly about, like a drunken man. Jerry tried to writhe from beneath Pezzo's bulky corpse, to roll toward Gabe de Krastel.

"Gabe!" he yelled. "Untie me, Gabe!"

"Shucks!" Gabe turned his eyes toward Jerry, but they were blank and unseeing from shock. "The dirty rats!" he mumbled. "Wanted to bump me off like a houn' dog with rabies. But Gabe de

Krastel and one little o' gun was too big for 'em."

Jerry rolled Pezzo clear. "Gabe! Don't you know me, Gabe?"

Gabe's eyes grew brighter. The bullet had torn away half of his back, seemingly, and the sharp knives of pain had begun to flog his flagging consciousness. "You're GX!" he said, unexpectedly. "You're the Phantom Fed. Should a knowed it the minute I saw you put that big Pezzo down. Nobody but GX could floor that big wop with a punch." He tried to crawl to Jerry.

Frantically, Jerry began to search with his eyes for the razor blade. Tied up as he was, and the Fox returning any minute now. . . .

De Krastel continued dreamily. "This little ol' Southern boy is gonna die. Saw GX and named him, so he's gonna die. But you take my gun, little ol' fightin' boy. You get 'em—all thirteen of 'em. The Council of Thirteen—"

Jerry found the blade, slashed the ropes from his feet. He heard a car roaring up outside. Fox Faversham's car, with three deadly gunmen. Jerry put the wafer-thin blade between his hard white teeth. He sawed at his wrist bonds, wriggled them free. Gabe's gun was on the floor empty, but Jerry picked it up.

"Ca'tridges—here in pocket!" gasped de Krastel. He was fully conscious now, hanging by a thread over eternity. "Been bad—since a kid. Had it comin'. Give you—my gun. You got shootin' eyes. Sharp-shootin' eyes. Little—ol'—fightin'—boy."

De Krastel died.

GX felt a sudden loneliness well up in his breast. A bitter rage followed it. He stuffed cartridges into Gabe de Krastel's gun, was shoving the magazine home when Fox Faversham's two icy-brained killers pushed into the room. Georgie's little black eyes glittered when he saw the dead hoods there on the floor. In that

one glance he realized what had happened.

He shot avidly, with a curse.

JERRY hardly felt the bullet as it burned across his hip. The magazine clicked into place. Gabe de Krastel's .45 blasted in Jerry's hand, and Georgie dropped his gun, leaned against the wall a moment, then slid to the floor. Dirt smudged his elegant attire, but Georgie would never know.

Albert was somewhat smarter. He ducked back out of the doorway. "Kill that damn dame!" he screamed. "She's brought the Feds down on us." He stuck his head around the door jamb, snapped a quick shot.

Jerry caught his white face over the sights.

Albert's body blocked the doorway now. The girl screamed outside. Through the opening Jerry saw her, running in the bright sunlight. She had broken away from the Fox, enraged him.

"You—!"

Fox Faversham had whirled on her, was lifting his gun. There was no other way to stop him. Jerry's bullet hit Faversham just about where the Fox's had hit Jim Pitcher. In the left back, just a little below the shoulder blades.

Abruptly, the girl turned. She snatched up Faversham's gun before it stopped spinning. She had learned about guns from Jim Pitcher. With it, she was ready to face what might come.

Jerry wiped his prints from de Krastel's .45, tossed it to de Krastel's side. He came to the door's edge, but he didn't give her a sight of him.

"I guess we all surrender, lady!" he called. "What's left of us. Can I come out now?"

"Come out," she ordered, "with your hands lifted." And when he walked out into the sunlit yard, she gasped. "You?"

He grinned. "I guess I got in kinda bad company. They wanted me to get

a job drivin' one of these interstate trucks, so I could tip 'em off to valuable cargoes. But they began fightin' among themselves. That boy Gabe de Krastel shot those two little guys and Fox Faversham."

"Fox? The Fox?" Her eyes darkened.

"Yes. He's the fella who killed that G-Man, Jim Pitcher. Now if you could get some of these G-Men here—"

Her blue eyes flashed to Fox Faversham's sedan. "I could take this car. There's a phone at the White Spot."

She started toward the automobile. Jerry said. "There's rewards on some of these guys, maybe. About five grand on Faversham. Now I don't have much use for money, and I wouldn't want to get mixed up with the law—"

"You're a strange person." She smiled at him. "I can't believe you're anything to these killers. You could be gone when I return with the Federal agents."

"Yes'm. I could take this big red truck. Nobody would bother a truck driver now. . . ."

THE big red truck rumbled smoothly down the desert stretch. Jerry saw the forlorn figure of the Sydney Gimp, walking. The big truck overtook him. Jerry blew the horn.

"What th' blinkin' hell—!"

"Jump on, Sydney. We've got to clear out of here. We'll ditch this truck after awhile and hit for the railroad."

"Not me. The Fox promised to send

me a cool hundred bucks cash at Newton."

"The Fox is dead. De Krastel shot him. De Krastel just about killed that whole gang. I pulled my freight when the shooting started."

Cursing, the Gimp climbed up beside Jerry. "Didn't I tell the Fox that de Krastel was a G-Man? And you know what the Fox done? He set me out on the road and told me to keep goin'. Said he would take care of things without my help, the bleedin', blinkin' fool. I told him that G-Man's wife would put the finger on 'im, I did. You kill one of them guys and your ruddy goose is cooked."

Jerry didn't answer. His mind was on what Gabe de Krastel had said about the Council of Thirteen. Sounded like organized crime. Maybe this highway piracy was just one branch of a bigger racket. Maybe the G-Man, Jim Pitcher, in pointing out the Fox, meant to uncover the trail that led to the Council of Thirteen.

Jerry's nostrils flared.

"Yessir!" the Gimp was saying. "That de Krastel was a G-Man. Maybe GX himself. Had a killer eye. Gives me the creeps. I felt it when I was ridin' on this truck with 'im. Gor blyme! Imagine me ridin' on the same seat with the Phantom Fed! Gawd!"

Sydney shivered. Jerry, tooling the big truck, slyly gave him the corner of a slightly sardonic eye.

THE END



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TIPS FROM THE F. B. I.



Here are a few facts and figures gleaned from the current *F.B.I. Law Enforcement Bulletin* and presented through the interested cooperation of Director John Edgar Hoover. To either professional or amateur criminologists, these hints on crime detection should prove engrossing.—The Editor.



THERE is a direct relationship between the adequacy of police protection and crime. A survey just made public by the F.B.I. shows that in cities of more than 100,000 population where police employees numbered 2 per each 1,000 persons, crimes of murder, robbery, assault, burglary and larceny ranged from ten to twenty-five percent less than in cities which provided only 1.2 police to 1,000 persons. The number of auto thefts, however, was unaffected.

* * *

IN the course of criminal investigations it is often of greatest importance to determine the origin of a blood-stained piece of evidence. The Technical Laboratory of the F.B.I. is now one of the best equipped in the world in testing for cattle, chicken, deer, duck, hog, horse, human, rabbit and sheep bloods. The Bureau is pleased to make these tests upon the request of any duly authorized law enforcement agency investigating or prosecuting a criminal case. Such examinations are made without charge and every effort will be made by the Bureau to provide the testimony of its experts in court if desired.

* * *

THE Technical Laboratory of the Bureau has been requested recently to

provide a method to be used in identifying gasoline stolen from a known source. Such thefts are usually from the storage tanks or dispensing pumps of Government reservations or municipalities which supply fuel to official vehicles and occasionally the personnel of such supply stations use the gasoline in their personal automobiles without authorization. A simple method of identifying the gasoline in the tank of an automobile as having come from a particular supply tank has now been developed by the F.B.I.

* * *

THE value of fingerprinting and the necessity of securing complete identification data at the time the persons are fingerprinted is well illustrated by the recent apprehension of Robert Anderson Willard, wanted for violation of the Federal Impersonation Statute in that he had falsely represented himself to be a Major in the United States Army and obtained something of value as a result of that impersonation. Investigation revealed that Willard had been in the Civilian Conservation Corps in Tennessee and his fingerprints were obtained from the War Department in Washington. An examination of fingerprints on file at the F.B.I. showed that Willard had been fin-

gerprinted by the Santa Paula, California, Police Department as an applicant for the position of solicitor of magazines. From the magazine company with which he was employed, Willard's automobile license number was learned. He was thereupon located in Fresno, California, through which he was traveling.

* * *

FROM even fragments of the long bones of the human skeleton, stature of the individual may be determined. Through laboratory technique and the x-ray, age, race and sex are quickly ascertained, and from the skull the facial features of the deceased person can be reconstructed with great accuracy.

* * *

THE use of secret and invisible inks has long been a problem in criminal investigation. The need for such writing fluids by criminals is easy to understand. The criminal investigator himself may find use for such inks for the purpose of marking paper money or other materials which are later to be traced. The F.B.I. has complete facilities for the detection of every known type of secret ink.

* * *

A TABULATION prepared by the F.B.I. for the calendar year 1938 reveals that 44 percent of the persons whose arrest records were examined were found to have prior criminal records. This places emphasis on the fact that efforts of police organizations must be constantly directed toward reapprehending individuals who at some former time had unsuccessfully come into conflict with the law.

Generally speaking, the proportion of prior convictions was greater among those arrested for offenses against property than among individuals charged with offenses against person. This is probably partially explainable on the theory that many murders and less serious attacks

on the person are not premeditated and are committed in the heat of passion, whereas offenses against property are more or less carefully planned and are frequently the product of the professional criminal.

The tendency of the criminal is to repeat the same type of crime.

* * *

THE F.B.I. has recently prepared an application form to be used by the Chief of Police, Sheriff, Superintendent or other administrative head of a law enforcement agency in making application for a representative to attend the F.B.I. National Police Academy. These applications serve the purpose of nominating an officer believed to be best qualified to take the training and then return to his own Department to aid in instructing the other members of his organization. Application forms can be obtained by writing to the Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Washington, D.C., or they may be obtained on request from any of the Field Offices of the F.B.I.

* * *

DIRECTOR John Edgar Hoover in a recent address called it a national disgrace that 12% of all murderers, 29% of all robbers, 33% of all thieves, 46% of all burglars and 54% of all automobile thieves are under voting age.

* * *

IN Washington, during the recent visit of the King and Queen of England, a peddler dropped dead from a heart attack induced by the heat. No identifying papers were found on his person. His fingerprints were taken by the Washington Police Department and submitted to the Identification Division of the FBI. It was thereupon revealed that the man was Joe Miller who had once been arrested in Dayton, Ohio, for violation of a peddler's ordinance, and through it his identification was effected.

THE study of tool marks is rapidly becoming one of the major types of examinations conducted in the Technical Laboratory of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Many times such examinations can provide definite and conclusive evidence for investigation and prosecution.

In most instances the basis of tool mark examinations parallels that of firearms identification. The imperfections of the cutting or prying edges or striking surfaces of metal tools and instruments are of accidental origin and therefore individual to the particular instrument. These imperfections or individual characteristics, which may be prominent or microscopic, are frequently reproduced on an object when sufficient contact is made.

Possibilities are unlimited in this field of laboratory work. Bolt clippers used to cut padlocks and iron bars have been identified by the microscopic markings left on the metal, and knives and axes have been definitely linked with wood which they have cut. Telegraph wire and box car seals have shown by their marks the pliers used to cut them and impressions have permitted the identification of prying bars with locks which have been broken open.

* * *

HOW completely law enforcement agencies try to please is well illustrated by the following extract from material used by the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Police Department—as reported by the F.B.I.

No matter how well a public department is organized, or how efficient and honest its administration, it is judged by individual citizens, and therefore by the community at large, by the nature of its public contact. Each officer every minute of his daily life is making public opinion about his Department. Every time an officer talks to a person, he is leaving behind an impression. In uniform, officers cease to be individuals. They are the properly recognized representatives of the law. They interpret the Government to its citizens.

You officers are employed *by* the people. It is their money, their taxes that supports your Department. The vast majority of people are law-abiding. Only a small element is criminal in its intent. Many infractions of the law are due to ignorance, carelessness, or negligence, rather than any conscious motive. Remembering this and aware of your function in the community—to protect and to serve—you will readily understand the importance of COURTESY.

Statement of ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of March 3, 1933, of Ace G-Man, published bi-monthly at Chicago, Illinois, for October 1, 1939. State of New York, county of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Harold S. Goldsmith, who having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the Ace G-Man, that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Popular Publications, Inc., 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. Editor, Henry Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. Managing Editor, none. Business Manager, Harold S. Goldsmith, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. 2. That the owner is: Popular Publications, Inc., 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y., Henry Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y., Harold S. Goldsmith, 205 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: none. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner, and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. Harold S. Goldsmith, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 10th day of October, 1939. Eva M. Walker, Notary Public, New York County Clerk's No. 20, Register's No. 0-W-49. (My commission expires March 30, 1940.) [Seal]—Form 3526—Ed. 1933.

Thrilling Novelette of
Courage and Heroism
in a Lost-Hope City!

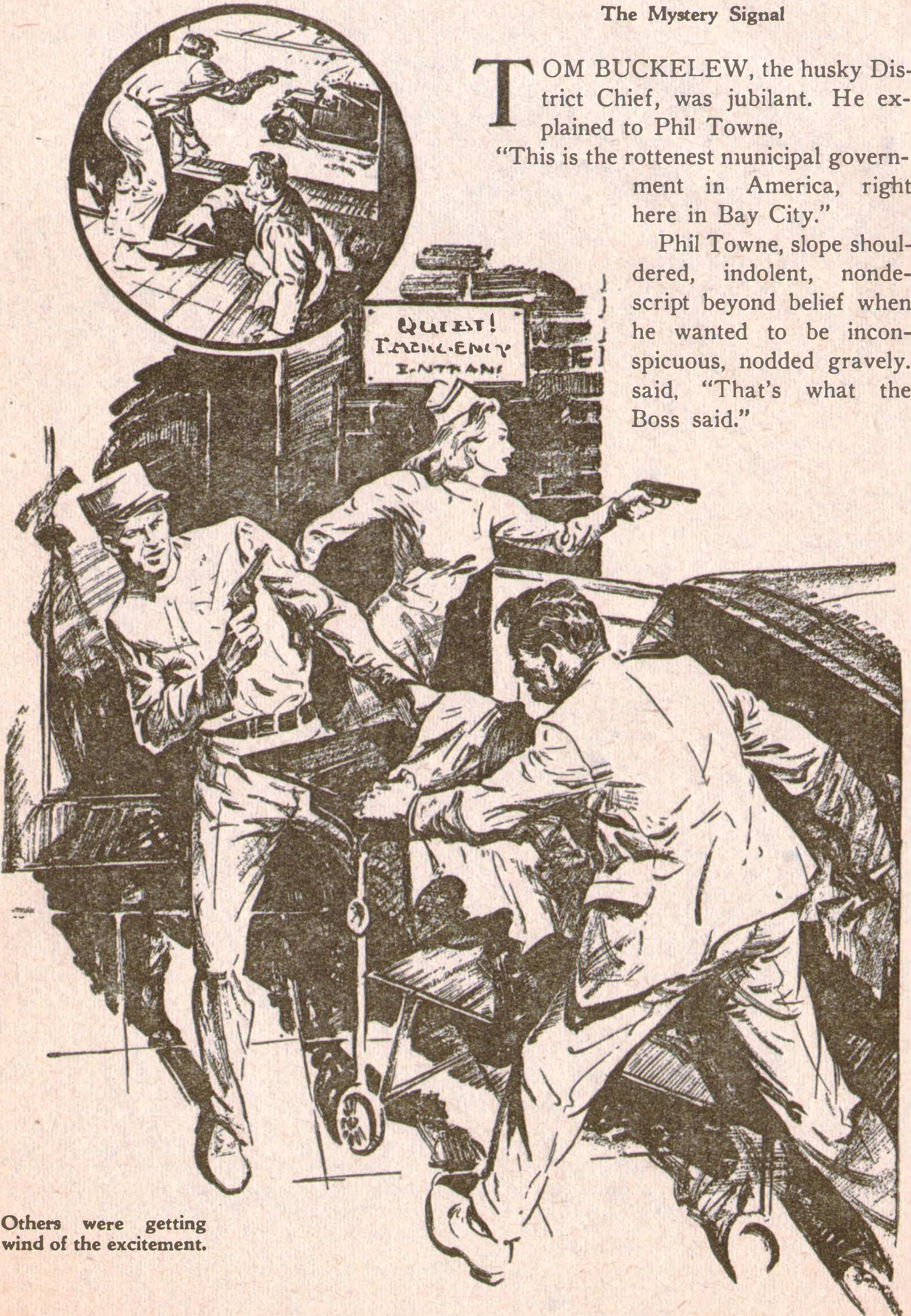
BOMB-PROOF

CHAPTER ONE

The Mystery Signal

TOM BUCKELEW, the husky District Chief, was jubilant. He explained to Phil Towne, "This is the rottenest municipal government in America, right here in Bay City."

Phil Towne, slope shouldered, indolent, nondescript beyond belief when he wanted to be inconspicuous, nodded gravely. said, "That's what the Boss said."



Others were getting
wind of the excitement.

TOWN TAMER

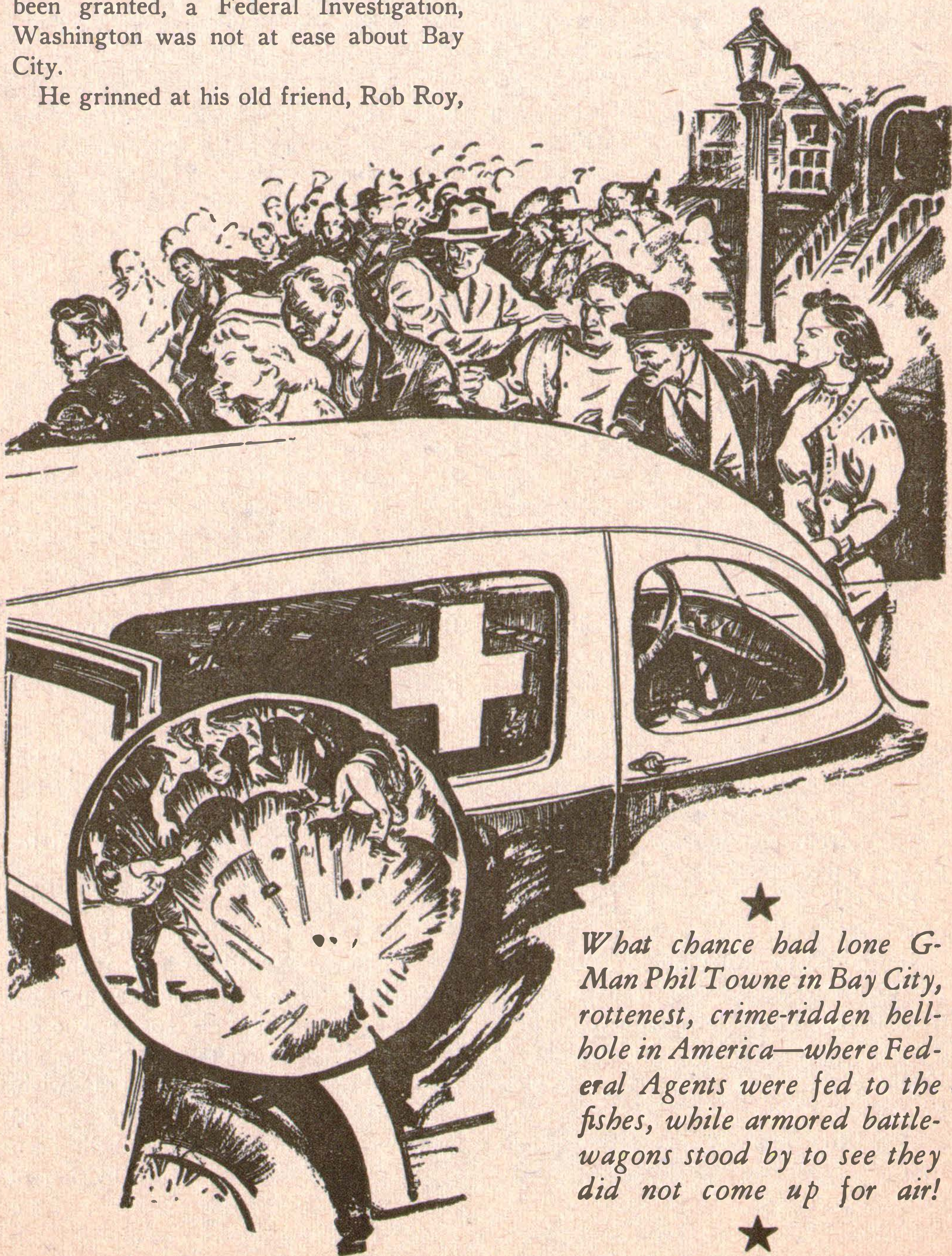
By William R.
Cox

He did not add that he had been sent to the aid of the three Federal Agents, here in the room with him, because Bay City was tough, because even though a City Civic Association had demanded, and been granted, a Federal Investigation, Washington was not at ease about Bay City.

He grinned at his old friend, Rob Roy,

and at the brawny young lawyer-Agent, Jay Kohl. Buckelew, ruddy, energetic, said,

"We've managed to get track of the books of the Welfare Department—they



★
What chance had lone G-Man Phil Towne in Bay City, rottenest, crime-ridden hell-hole in America—where Federal Agents were fed to the fishes, while armored battle-wagons stood by to see they did not come up for air!
★

call it Public Works. The Mayor himself, Storey Cossett, is responsible for that department. When Rob gets through taking those books apart we will put Cossett and half the Board of Aldermen in jail."

Phil cocked an eye at Rob Roy. The veteran Agent was the best accountant in the business. Phil had worked with him before. He was an angular, bespectacled, studious man. Phil said, "You get a gander at those books, pal?"

Rob Roy nodded. He said, "I worked an angle, Phil. I—there's no use talking about that. A stoolie named Cal Hawkins is delivering the books to me."

Jay Kohl said heartily, "We'll nail this mob to the cross, Towne. We've got the job all sewed up."

Buckelew said kindly, "So you see we don't need you, Towne. I know they were worried; Bay City is a tough place. But we've done the job."

Phil got slowly to his unimpressive height of five feet ten. He looked more ordinary than ever.

"There's some fights tonight, I see by the paper," he said apologetically. "I'll drop around and look 'em over. I like fights."

Buckelew nodded sympathetically. "Sure, Towne. Take a day off until you get another assignment from Washington. I know how you get bounced around the country from one job to another. You deserve a day now and then."

Phil said drily, "Thanks. I'll see you before I leave."

He moved toward the door. Rob Roy got to his feet and said, "I have to get those books. I'll go down with you, Phil."

They came out into the twilight of Frank Street. Bay City was a tropical town and the heat had not left the asphalt.

Rob Roy mopped his brow. "This Florida weather is fine if you don't have to wear a collar."

Phil said idly, "The Governor is work-

ing with you, Rob? You got it all lined up?"

Rob Roy said uncertainly, "Yeah, he's in—Buckelew thinks. Buck's a good man, Phil. He's a little high right now; we worked like hell on this case. This is a tough town."

Phil nodded. "You keep tellin' me that."

"Well, it is," said Rob Roy defensively. "You've got the works against you—police, city government, sheriff's office, everything. They got it organized in districts and every vice operator, gambler and blind pigster pays off. They got money—millions in the pot. The gambling alone is enormous, especially when the winter tourists are down. Florida has been trying to curtail gambling, but Bay City. . . ."

"Is tough?" suggested Phil.

Rob Roy made an impatient gesture. "When I get my hands on those books I'll rip it wide open. We got Prendergast; Dewey got Hines; they're after Nocky Johnson. These racketeers must go—and Storey Cossett is as bad as any of them."

"He's tough," put in Phil solemnly.

"I've worked with you before," said Rob Roy heatedly. "I know you're made of ice. I know you freeze danger and eat it. But I tell you, I don't know. I guess I'm scared!"

Phil laughed, standing on the sidewalk, his head back. "You ain't been scared since the pigs ate your kid brother. G'wan—get your bloody books. I'll see you tomorrow."

HE DID not allow the frown to appear on his brow until the lean Agent had entered the taxicab and pulled away. But it was a thoughtful Phil Towne who entered the Spanish restaurant in search of Spanish bean soup and a Cuban sandwich.

He had known Rob Roy for a good many years, when they had both been obscure workers in the old Division of Investigation, before the grand days of the F.B.I. He knew the iron quality of Rob

Roy's nerves, the utter indifference to personal danger which was as much part of the lean man as his spectacles and diffidence of speech.

He knew Rob's wife and the two kids and many times he had planted his feet under Rob's table and partaken of better food than this bean soup and sandwich which he was eating in Bay City, that tough town. He was very grave as he consumed his food.

It had grown dark when he emerged. He found a cab and asked to be taken to the prize fights. If possible, Phil Towne never missed a fight. Curiously, he had a juvenile admiration for boxers. He was a real fan, an elbow-swinging, shouting, Fight Filbert, despite the fact that, locked in a room to battle it out with the athletes he so adored, he would nine times out of ten be the party who walked out!

He bought a box seat, indulging in his one extravagance. The arena was small, the bouts unimportant; nevertheless, a goodly crowd filled the tiered seats. He sat on the wooden chair and glanced curiously about. No one noticed him. No one ever looked twice at Phil Towne, which was one of the reasons Phil Towne was a valuable Federal Agent.

His seat neighbor was a stout man with a scowl. The scowl was pointed at the party in the next box, separated from Phil by only a railing. The first bout was yet to go on, so Phil took time to play his private little game of guess. He studied every detail in the stout man's appearance. Then he ventured,

"Hot, isn't it?"

The stout man grunted, "I'm hot. I'm hot just sittin' here, lookin' at the cool people."

Phil directed his gaze at the party in the adjoining box. There were several men and one woman. He blinked and stared again at the woman. She was beautiful.

She had soft, brown hair and her eyes were hazel and the lashes were long and dark and curling. She wore quiet, good clothes and her demeanor was that of a fine lady. She sat next to a man with a carven, handsome profile and grey temples.

The stout man said, "Our honored Mayor and his gal. Right out in front of God an' everybody. An' all around him his cutthroats an' thieves."

Phil said, "You don't like him? Are you a politician?"

The stout man snorted. "I'd rather be daid."

Phil said, "I'll bet you're a business man."

The stout man said, "I got a small factory. I'm a business man all right—on'y they eat me up in taxes. That crew of pirates would ruin any business."

"Tough, eh?" said Phil. "The gal is his, eh?"

She was not the type, he thought regretfully. She was too calm, too poised and—complete in herself. He looked again at the man beside her. He was a proud, arrogant man. His mouth was firm to hardness despite the full lips.

"Han'some Storey Cossett," growled the fat man under his breath. "Myra Gordon was a good gal until she got t' be his seckatary."

Phil said, "If you people don't like him, why don't you do somethin' about it?"

"We got the Federals in," complained the stout man disgustedly. "But what can they do? Nobody c'n do anything. Cossett's too smooth."

Phil said, "I figured you might belong to the Civic Association."

"You bet I do," said the stout man truculently. "I ain't scared of 'em. They raised my taxes one hundred per cent an' I'm still battlin' them. Abe Forsyte ain't yella."

Phil congratulated himself upon having guessed the fat man as being a business man and a Civic figure. He pursued,

"You're not married, are you, Mr. Forsyte?"

"Not me," said the stout man hastily.

PHIL nodded. He grew bored with his game. The people in the box were more interesting. Doubtlessly Rob Roy and Jay Kohl and the energetic Buckelew were this minute unearthing data which would send them all to Atlanta. He said,

"Who are the other men in the box with Cossett?"

"Thieves!" answered Forsyte. "Joe Collins, Mike O'Malley. Manny Garcia, the lawyer. Parkhill, the prosecutor. Cal Hawkins, the stooge for 'em all. . . ."

The boxers were coming down the aisle for the preliminary. Phil Towne said, "Who? Who was that last one?"

"Hawkins—the skinny guy," Forsyte grunted disgustedly. "The one with the beaky nose. A rat from the No'th. A scummy stooge."

The fighters were in their corners. One was a likely-seeming youth with nice long arms and little hitting muscles under his shoulder blades. Phil said agonizedly, "You sure his name is Cal Hawkins?"

The fat man said, "Ugh." He was listening to the announcer as that worthy bawled into the public address microphone.

Phil hastily figured the time element. He had been a half hour in the restaurant. If Rob had made a swift connection in his cab, snatched the books from Hawkins and returned at once to the office, it would work out. The man, Cal Hawkins, would have time to return to his companions and cover up by appearing with them at the fights.

There was, he told himself, nothing unusual about it. Hawkins would be a fool not to cover himself. There had been plenty of time for the transaction to take place.

The fighters were coming out. Phil watched them, but his fingers clenched

and unclenched. The nervousness of the usually calm Rob Roy had started it. He stole a glance at Mayor Cossett.

Hawkins was in the line of vision. Hawkins seemed nervous. Cossett's eyes were very bright. It could have been the excitement attending the bout. The boy with the long arms had a good left hand. He looked back at Hawkins, puzzled, unsure of what he thought he saw.

He found himself staring into the hazel eyes of the girl. Her pupils widened, then narrowed. Her face was very pale, he noted, and he remembered that he had thought her pale at first glance. He held her gaze deliberately.

Her hand slowly came up. The fingers were long and well-kept. She touched her cheek with them. Suddenly the thumb jerked away from the slim palm. It pointed directly at the exit. Phil almost, in spite of his years of training, started.

He slipped out of his seat, and Abe Forsyte, intent on the fight, never missed him. Bending his seeming slight frame, he eased himself out of the fight club. At the entrance he found a cab just delivering a late-comer.

He snapped, "Ordway Building," and jumped inside.

He could, he thought as the cab drove off, have telephoned. He could have made sure and then he might have seen the fights. He regretted missing the fights. But the signal from the girl had been unmistakable.

That the girl knew him was alarming enough. He knew that he had never seen her before. His anonymity was one of his main stocks in trade. It was almost impossible that this girl in a southern city should recognize him. Yet there had been no doubt about it. She had seen him, and motioned him to leave.

It was necessary now that he find out why Cal Hawkins was at the boxing bouts when he should have been delivering certain books to Rob Roy.

CHAPTER TWO

The Death Bomb

THE cab stopped at the entrance of the darkened Ordway Building. Phil found some money and paid the driver. He crossed the sidewalk and went through the door of the building. The air was oppressively warm. He felt almost suffocated as he located the dim stairway. The elevators were not running. He would have to walk up three flights.

He made the first flight, the second. He was puffing a little, running up the third. The explosion threw him off-stride.

It was a loud, stunning explosion. It shook the six-storied stone building. Phil fought to regain his balance.

He bounded on, three steps at a time. The fourth floor corridor was full of smoke and settling pieces of debris. Phil charged down the hall. There was no doubt in his mind now. He knew where the carnage would be.

The office of Tom Buckelew was without a door. Phil leaped through the shattered portal. The smoke and dust blinded him for a moment, so that he had to pause.

Then he could see. His heart stopped, just for an instant, at the sight. Three men lay strewn about the place in horrible, disjointed attitudes.

Rob Roy was closest. The lean man's left arm was gone and his head was mangled. He lay near the threshold. He was, Phil saw with horrified eyes, partly conscious.

Phil knelt by the side of the lean Agent. Rob Roy whispered, "Mary . . . Sister . . . Baby . . . Phil! Phil Towne!"

Phil said loudly, "I'm here, Rob."

The lean man's voice was a husky whisper, "Books . . . the books . . . Myra Gordon . . . Hawkins . . . didn't. . ."

He could not finish. He just lay there on the floor and died. Phil lifted his head. His eyes were bleak and terrible to behold.

Jay Kohl was a sodden, bloodied corpse, his handsome good looks gone forever. Buckelew was in a far corner. Phil went over to the District Chief.

There was an ugly hole in Buckelew's head. But the Chief was alive. His breathing was regular. His skull was undoubtedly fractured, but Phil had seen worse cases live through it. He had, first of all, to get aid for Buckelew.

He started to get up. There was a piece of string on the floor. He pounced upon it. He tucked it carefully in an envelope which he took from his pocket. The envelope was already stamped and addressed. He ran out into the hall. He dropped the envelope into the mail chute.

AMAZINGLY, the elevator door clanged open. As Phil stared, blue uniforms poured out of the cage. There were several policemen. One, apparently an officer, was in plain clothes. They went without hesitation to Buckelew's office.

Phil, unnoticed, followed. One of the cops whistled at the scene of carnage. The man in plain clothes spoke. "Here's one that's alive."

A sergeant in gold stripes said, "The ambulance is downstairs, Captain."

The Captain turned away. "Leave 'im lay. We'll lug him down later. Case the joint and we'll wait for the photographers. There musta been quite an accident."

Phil said from the doorway, "Yeah. It was quite an accident, Captain. If you have an ambulance downstairs, get this man into it quick or take some G heat!"

The plain clothes officer turned slowly and stared at Phil. He had a large, prognathous jaw and small eyes and he needed a shave. He said, "Who says so?"

Phil snapped, "I'm Towne, on Federal business." He showed the tiny shield, the credentials. "Buckelew can be saved. Get him to a hospital at once, man. They've murdered the others, but Tom is alive, I tell you. He can pull through."

"I ain't blind," said the Captain. "Just take it easy, G-Man."

Phil's voice took on an ominous ring. "Are you going to get a stretcher up here at once?"

The Captain said unexpectedly, "Take him, boys."

They were on him before he could move. Four of them overpowered him. They rushed him out of the ruins of the office, into the hall. They got him, still fighting, into the elevator and ran it down to the main floor.

They piled out into the street. Phil had a hammerlock on one, while the others hauled at him. He managed to throw another off. He dropped the screaming victim of the lock. He threw a left hook at a third policeman and made it good.

Reinforcements pounded from a nearby police wagon.

Twisting, Phil jerked completely loose from his last assailant. He whirled and ran. He turned a corner and zigzagged as shots sounded behind him. He felt for his gun as the rage mounted in him, but they had taken it.

He saw a side street. He plunged into it. He raced past a dark doorway, and something reached out and caught his ankle.

He turned a complete air spring and landed on his feet. But the momentum was too great. He staggered and the blackjack clipped him directly behind the ears.

He went out like a light.

Rough hands seized him. A voice said, chuckling, "He run right into us like a li'l lamb."

Another snapped, "Get his credentials. They gotta be burned. When they pick this mugg outa the bay he's gotta be just another unidentified corpse."

The first voice chuckled. "A unidentified Boy Scout!"

CHAPTER THREE

First Blood

THE awakening was slow and horrible in every detail. The physical discomfort of being bound with stout twine, which cut into ankle and wrist and knees and elbows, was the smallest part. In Phil Towne's sluggish consciousness there lurked like a terrible dream the sight of Rob Roy upon the floor of Tom Bucklew's office, lean Rob Roy, maculated with gore, calling upon the names of his wife and children, trying to the bitter end to give Phil Towne information valuable to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Phil gritted upon the gag which tore at his mouth. There was no hope of escape. He could not even wriggle. He recognized the work of experts.

He was in a dark room, without windows. He could see nothing. He used his back and thigh muscles, lifting both feet. Something was fastened to them, something heavy. He knew then that his end was to be a watery immersion. They had already weighted him for the drowning.

He lay there and counted seconds, striving for sanity. It was the end. Meeting it sometime in his lonely life was not too difficult to contemplate. But death in the midst of a job, death with Rob Roy unavenged, was unbearable.

He resolutely thought of the events which had transpired, beginning with the identification of Cal Hawkins by the disgruntled, stout Forsyte. The girl, Myra Gordon, had sent him on the errand which had brought him here.

How had the girl known him? Had she deliberately sent him into a trap? Or had she thought he might help the luckless three who had received the bomb?

It had been a bomb, of course, instead of the books of the Department of Public Works, which poor Rob Roy was to have received. A detonation bomb, which would explode when the string was undone

Where did the girl figure in it? Why had Rob Roy mentioned her name in his dying breath?

Rob had said, "Hawkins . . . didn't. . . ." What did that mean? Had Hawkins the time to deliver the books and get to the boxing bouts before Phil could eat his meal and arrive at the same place? If Phil knew the pre-arranged meeting place of Rob and Hawkins, he could figure the time element.

Buckelew! Tom was alive. He would surely know the appointed place; Rob would never set out without Buckelew being aware of his every planned step. If Phil could get to Buckelew. . . .

He almost laughed, lying there in the tight bonds, loaded down with a weight to carry him to eternity. Buckelew might live. He might even, given time, piece the mystery together. But Phil Towne would have no part of it. Phil Towne would be feeding the barracuda off the Florida coast.

He lay quite still. He was sure a door had opened. There was a grayish tinge across the room where a moment before all had been jet black. He simulated the slow breathing of unconsciousness, waiting for them to come and get him.

Footsteps crossed the room. His ears, straining for every sound, detected the swish of a skirt. He exhaled sharply through his nose. His spirits soared. A voice in his ear whispered,

"Mr. Towne! Are you conscious?"

He nodded as best he could. Something slashed at the ropes. His feet came free, then his hands. He eased himself to a sitting position. The gag came loose. The voice hissed,

"Not a word. There is still great danger!"

He nodded again, silently. The circulation was slow to return to his limbs, so tightly had he been bound. He rubbed wrists and ankles, gathering his forces.

The girl's voice said, "Give me time

to get clear. There are four of them outside. How you will get past them I can't imagine. But something—we must do something. Here is the knife."

He said, "Where can I see you if I come clear?"

"If you get out," she breathed, "I will find you. I—Mr. Roy—it's all so horrible!"

He detained her, holding her hand. It was slim, hot in his grasp. He whispered, "One thing. You knew me—at the fights. Do they all know me?"

She said, "They know every G-Man in the Service. They have their own Rogue's Gallery. They even knew you were coming here. Storey Cossett. . . ."

There were noises outside. She broke loose from him and was gone.

PHIL TOWNE swore under his breath. He got to his knees, then to his feet. He had located the door when the girl had made her entrance. He wobbled a little, but he got over to it.

It opened inward, which was a break. He examined the knife with his fingers. It was a good six inches long, a hunting knife, evidently. He balanced it against his right palm. He gripped it with his four fingers, the blade along his thumb, pointing upwards for a swinging uppercut.

If he had a weapon for his left hand, he thought grimly, he might be able to accomplish some small deed. Phil Towne, despite appearances, was not a mild man. He was too long in the tradition of Government Service to be pacifistic. At this moment, with men moving outside, intending his death by drowning like a newborn puppy, there was mayhem in the soul of Phil Towne.

He groped on the floor. His scrabbling fingers encountered a piece of metal. His sense of touch told him it was a lead sinker, a smallish one. He wrapped his left hand about it. It would at least make

his knuckles solid for what he must do.

The voices stopped as if by command. Feet shuffled on uneven boards. There was a soft-spoken order and the door swung inward. A man stepped over the threshold, swinging an electric torch.

Phil came gliding out from behind the door. His left came belting. It landed on the first man's ear. The torch hit the floor and went out. Phil leaped to the other side of the door. The second man stopped, exclaiming,

"Hey! What the hell makes—?"

Phil threw the left again, square into the man's teeth. The fellow went backwards. Phil climbed right over him. There were two in the hall. One was reaching into a pocket for a weapon. Phil drove up with his right hand. The knife sank deeply into the man's body. A shriek rent the night air.

The fourth man was diving forward. Phil brought up his right foot in a booming punt. It patted against the man's face. Teeth rattled on the floor like pea beans.

Phil swung about, looking for trouble. There was nothing left for him to fight. He hesitated. It was, strictly speaking, his duty to arrest these men. He thought of the crooked cops of Bay City to whom he would be forced to turn over his prisoners. He shook his head and bent, searching the body of the man he had knifed.

The man groaned, but Phil found the gun under his armpit and the catch of the shoulder holster came loose readily. There was even an extra case of cartridges for the heavy revolver. Phil buckled the harness about him, ignoring the moaning of the wounded.

He was in some kind of shack, he perceived. He found the exit. There were two rooms only. His encounter had taken place in the outer room. He went out the door. The Florida night was star-studded, cool, serene. He glanced at the shimmering black water, only two hundred yards away. He shrugged his shoulders and

turned his attention to getting back to Bay City.

A search of his pockets revealed absolutely nothing. They had even taken his handkerchief, and every mark had been snipped from his clothes. Why they had not bothered to kill him he could not imagine. There were several lumps on his aching head. Maybe, he thought, they had beaten him with the blackjack until they had thought him finished, underestimating the thickness of his skull.

HE WALKED along, keeping in the shadows, searching for a road. He found a path. He took it and went past a looming, darkened factory. The smell of fertilizer came to him and he knew then approximately where he was.

It took him fifteen minutes to get onto a poorly lighted street. There was no traffic. Indeed, he would have been afraid to ask for a ride. He was disheveled; his clothing slit by the shears of the men who had captured him; his head was covered with lumps; he was filthy from lying on the cabin floor.

He stopped by a lonely gas station, considering. He was on the outskirts of town, penniless, known and wanted by every authority. His position as a Federal Agent (which he could not prove anyway) was for once more dangerous than helpful. The police would throw him in jail. The underworld would kill him on sight.

It was Phil Towne against Bay City—and no one man can prevail against a city. He went into the gas station and the lone attendant stared at him. Phil said, "I've just been held up and robbed. I want to use your phone if you'll loan me a nickel."

The clock in the station said two a. m. The attendant was a Spanish youth who seemed unconcerned at Phil's tale. The youth said, "You don't need no nickel. Go ahead and phone."

Phil looked in the tattered directory.

He found the F's. He found Forsyte, A., 105 DeRenne. He dialed the number.

A sleepy voice answered after awhile. Phil said rapidly, "This is A. Citizen. I'm out near the fertilizer works in a Soloney Gas Station. Come out here at once and get me."

The stout man said irately, "Who? What? Is this a joke?"

Phil said firmly, "This is A. Citizen, I tell you. Get here within fifteen minutes. I've been robbed by members of the Orey-stay Ossetcay obmay."

"Orey—what? Are you crazy?—Oh!" said the stout man. "I remember your voice, now. I'm—you serious?"

"If you don't hurry," said Phil, "you will be sorry the rest of your life."

The fat man said, "Stay there. Stay outa sight. I'll be there in no time."

Phil hung up the receiver. He said to the attendant, "Thanks, pal. I'll repay you when my friend comes."

The youth did not look up from his magazine. He said boredly, "It's all right. Lots of holdups around here. Every night a holdup."

Phil went outside. There was the customary green bench of Florida gas stations. It was conveniently out of the glare of the lights. He sat down on it heavily. He was mentally and physically exhausted.

But spiritually he was exultant. He had proved a theory which he had long privately held. An irate citizenry *could* be aroused. His speculation at the ring-side upon the choleric Abe Forsyte had not been in vain.

He would be alone against the City for a little time yet. Abe Forsyte would be the means of getting him aid, but help would not immediately be forthcoming.

Nevertheless, he was alive and a private citizen would soon be at hand with succor. He composed himself and wondered curiously where Myra Gordon could be found.

CHAPTER FOUR

Gate Crasher

ABE FORSYTE lived in an apartment. It was a fine apartment, the best in Bay City. It had three bedrooms and two baths and a southern exposure. Even the corpulent manufacturer rattled a bit in the opulent quarters, he admitted.

"Hadda take it to get the exposure," he said. "It's yours, Towne. If they ever find out you're here it'll mean the death of me. But—it's yours. I got a friend in the clothing business. I can get you a suit and things. There are some of us who don't scare too easy, Towne."

He was a very earnest stout man, sitting in a big upholstered chair, puffing excitedly at a cigar. Phil, bathed and clad in a voluminous dressing gown, said,

"I know. That's why we're in this case. Washington will have men here on the next plane. My code message had nothing to do with that. They know by now of the death of Roy and Kohl. Call the hospital. Find out if Buckelew is alive."

Forsyte hesitated. "They'll know who called. They c'n trace any call, y' know, through the cops."

Phil said, "Right. Don't do it. I'll have to go up there myself. Get me those clothes, Forsyte. I've got to get out."

"Couldn't you wait?" asked Forsyte. "With men coming in tomorrow you could have help."

"Tom may die," said Phil grimly. "I've got to see him."

Forsyte picked up the phone. It took some time to get the clothing dealer out of bed, to acquaint him with their needs. It was broad daylight when the ready-made suit and other furnishings arrived. Phil ate a pick-up breakfast with his rescuer. He got up from the table and said,

"Forsyte, it is for men like you that the F.B.I. functions. You will hear about this officially—whether I live or not. I'm mail-

ing my report at once. You're game."

The stout man blushed to his hair. He stammered, "Anything I c'n do, Towne. I'll—I won't leave the apartment today. If you need me, call."

Phil shook hands. He went down into the street. The suit did not fit him too well. He plucked at it, disarranging it at certain points. He had no hat. He loosened his necktie as though against the heat.

He became at once a slightly disordered figure of no note. He wandered down the street, walking irresolutely. He had the morning newspaper folded sloppily in his grasp.

On Frank Street, not far from the Ordway Building of tragic significance, was the office of the Acme Cab Company. Phil cocked a cigarette in the corner of his mouth and let one eye droop as he sauntered into the office.

The man behind the desk was a tough character with a scar on his nose. Phil said, "I see ya need drivers, bud."

The tough guy stared insolently, questioningly. Phil said, "Yeah, I pushed a hack in Chi, in Frisco, in N'Yawk."

The tough guy said, "Yer hired, bum."

Phil said, "Steady or extry?"

"Y'wanta take a chance on commish—help yourself," leered the cab owner.

"Gimme a cap an' a badge," grinned Phil. "I'm a hustler from away back, bud."

The tough guy said, "You don't know this burg."

"Gimme the badge. I'll loin the boig."

HE DROVE the wheezing, knocking hack out onto Frank Street. The cap slanted over one eye. He was the picture of a cabbie, cruising for fares, lounging expertly behind the wheel, ogling the passing girls. It was, in a way, his favorite role. He had played it in Chi, in Frisco, in New York!

He pulled up to the Municipal Hospital

with great indifference and lounged into the waiting room. A starched receptionist eyed him unfavorably. He said,

"Gotta pick up a fare. Upstairs."

He winked boldly and the receptionist bridled. He went up the stairs. He walked down a corridor and went up another flight, looking questioningly up and down the hall, knowing a guard would be outside the room of Tom Buckelew.

He found it at last, in an isolated wing. There was a big policeman sitting uncomfortably on a straight chair, blocking the door. A nurse came hurriedly out and the cop moved grudgingly.

Phil let the nurse get down the corridor until she had passed out of sight of the officer. Then he moved alongside her, falling into step. Out of the corner of his mouth he said,

"The G-Man. How is he?"

The nurse said sharply, "None of your business."

"I got a knife in my hand," Phil warned. "Take a look. I'll rip hell out of you if you don't tell me."

The nurse turned pale. Phil said in another tone, "I wouldn't, really. I just had to get your attention. I must know how Buckelew is progressing."

He took off the cap and commanded her gaze with steady eyes. She gasped at the transformation of disreputable cabbie into forceful personage. She said, "I—why—Mr. Buckelew is still unconscious."

"Will he live?" demanded Phil.

"I doubt it," she frowned. "He isn't getting—I mean—it's a bad case."

"He isn't getting the attention he should have," said Phil grimly. "I understand that. When they get here from Washington someone will pay for that. See that you do what you can for him, Miss. And don't mention that you saw me if you want to stay clear of trouble."

He left her abruptly, diving for a stairway. He resumed the cap and the sardonic

expression of his role. He walked loosely past the still outraged receptionist. He almost ran full tilt into Myra Gordon.

He caught her elbows, preventing a collision. He said loudly, "Scuse me, Miss. You the one wanted a cab?"

The girl said, "Yes. Come. I'm in a hurry."

They were into the hack in three sudden seconds. Phil spun out of the driveway and down toward the center of town. She said, "You should keep to the side streets, Mr. Towne."

He shook his head. "Nope. People never look under their noses. Especially they don't look at cabbies. Not if they're in a hurry. Everyone'll be in a hurry today. G-Men will fine-tooth this city tomorrow."

"But then it will be too late."

"You mean Buckelew will die?" asked Phil. "How about me?"

"If you don't escape at once they'll find you. They are very clever. The entire police force, every underworld character—they are all on the lookout for you."

"They had me once," said Phil. "You got me loose. What's your story?"

She said rapidly, "My job with Cossett was my first glimpse into what was going on. He—fell in love with me. He boasted to me. He thought I would be impressed. I was desperate. I met Mr. Roy through Cal Hawkins. . . ."

"Then Hawkins didn't deliver the bomb?"

"I don't know," she said uncertainly. "We all met in the box at the fights. Hawkins was the last to enter. He came some time before you did. I gave him the books. . . ."

Phil said tensely, "When? Where?"

"At the Brownely Hotel," said the girl. "They haven't even missed them so far as I know. That bomb—that horrible thing—I can't explain it. If they missed the books, they would immediately suspect

me. They couldn't do anything else."

SHE was very pale still, Phil saw in the rear vision mirror. She was also still very beautiful. She leaned back, her hand before her mouth, pretending not to be holding conversation with him. Her voice was low and husky and very delightful.

"It's a tough spot for you, Miss Gordon," Phil said, "Somehow we've got to prevent their killing Tom in that hospital, to hold them off until the squad from Washington gets here to mop up. I haven't the slightest idea how to proceed, I assure you."

She said firmly, "Storey Cossett is the cleverest racketeer in America. He has lined up Miami, Jacksonville, Tampa. He is ready to elect the next governor—a figurehead—and take over the state. He will be a second Huey Long if he isn't stopped—and behind it all, the vice, the gambling, yes, murder and plunder."

Phil said, "You can help send him to jail, of course. Your testimony will be invaluable. I should put you on a plane and send you to safety."

She was silent. He saw her teeth catch at her lip. He said, "However, you would be invaluable to me also. I have a place—will you stick?"

She did not answer for a moment. He said gently, "Rob Roy had a fine wife and two fine children. Jay Kohl was only twenty-nine. Buckelew is a District Chief—an important cog in the F.B.I."

"Trying to get my books killed them," she said. "Oh, I'll stick. It's just that I don't know whether I can last. My nerves are—shot."

Phil said, "Sure. Mine ain't so good."

He grinned at her comically in the mirror. She giggled. He said, "If you can still giggle you're all right. Can you get a nurse's uniform?"

She nodded, wide-eyed.

"Get one then. Take another cab and

meet me at the receiving platform of the Municipal Hospital at ten o'clock exactly. Set your watch with mine. If you can manage a small gun, conceal it about your person. I'll drop you off here."

He stopped at the curb. She got out and made a pretense of paying him. He held her slim, white hand a moment and muttered, "Make it good, Miss Gordon. It's a man's life—maybe the life of a city."

A light flashed in her warm eyes. "I'll make it, Mr. Towne. Bay City is my city. I was born and raised here."

"Good. One last word. Put on too much makeup and re-do your hair. Wear a pair of spectacles and let the corners of your mouth sag. The nurse's uniform will complete the disguise perfectly. Don't evade anyone—stare at the closest acquaintance and they will look away first. Boldness and change of expression is the only sure disguise."

He drove away, leaving her standing there on the sidewalk. He drove straight to the rear entrance of the apartment of Abe Forsyte. He had much to do.

CHAPTER FIVE

G-Man in White

THE only real trouble had been the fitting of a white uniform to Abe Forsyte. The bulk of the stout man protested to the seams of the starched clothes.

The ambulance had been easy. There was an undertaker in the City Civic Association. He was a close friend of Abe. Phil drove, with Abe staunchly holding onto a strap in the back. They whirred up to the receiving platform and braked neatly.

Myra Gordon was startlingly plain—the red of her cheeks accentuating the dull mediocrity of her haircomb, the wide stupid eyes behind the glasses. Phil beamed approval upon her anonymity. He stalked into the hospital, the stretcher

under his arm. Abe and Myra followed.

They gained the back stairway without incident. On the third floor landing he stopped and said, "Myra, you must stall the nurse in charge of the floor. Make up a fictitious Mr. Jones or someone for whom you were called. When you hear us take the cop, call the elevator. We're probably not going to make this, you know."

He smiled engagingly at them. Abe Forsyte said, "We're gonna try, Phil."

Phil said, "However, I doubt if there is anyone who can do much about it except complain bitterly. Have you got a gun to use on the elevator operator, Myra?"

"It's automatic."

"Thank God for a home town girl," Phil breathed. "Make sure it's up there, above all things."

He pushed open the swinging door and managed his folded stretcher. He walked briskly down the corridor toward Bucklew's room. The big cop got up off the chair and stared suspiciously. Phil nodded.

"Hot, isn't it?"

The cop said, "Nobody ain't allowed in this here hall."

Phil said crisply, "I have an order here. From Mayor Cossett."

He held out a slip of white paper. The cop came forward and reached for it. Phil handed the stretcher to Abe, who crowded close. Abe leaned it against the wall.

Phil seized the outstretched arm of the big policeman. He got his left hand on the cop's elbow, his right on the wrist. He made a quick, Japanese convolution. The cop left his feet and went over Phil's shoulder.

Stout Abe Forsyte had a blackjack. It rapped against the officer's skull even as that unfortunate gentleman struck the cement floor of the corridor with great force. No one paid the minion of Bay City law any further attention.

Tom Buckelew was whiter than the sheets upon which he lay. There was a bandage on his head but there was no one in attendance upon him. His breathing was forced, stertorous.

"They didn't dare kill him so they just left him to die of his own accord," Phil grated. "Can we handle him, Abe?"

The stout man said, "If the gal c'n hold 'em off we c'n get him outa here, Phil."

They were as gentle as they could be, lifting the District Chief from the bed, placing him upon the canvas stretcher. Abe was strong as an ox, Phil perceived as they each took an end. He marvelled again at the courage and persistence of a common man faced with great events. The manufacturer showed absolutely no sign of fear as they moved into the hall with their burden.

MYRA was standing between the elevator and the desk of the floor nurse. There were two other nurses. Myra had a small revolver in her hand. She was trembling a little but the gun was steady enough. Phil said,

"What is it, Myra?"

"They're all Cossett appointees," said the girl. "I know them. And Phil—the elevator's been in constant use. I—I can't get it up here."

The red light denoting that the elevator could not be summoned burned evilly, it seemed to Phil. He was helpless, standing there, holding one end of the stretcher. Sweat formed in little globules upon his forehead, ran down his cheeks. He had not foreseen this.

He said as coolly as possible, "Why then, we'll have to wait. Just keep these girls quiet. Shoot any one who opens her mouth."

They waited a full minute. It was nerve-racking, not knowing what minute relief might appear for the subdued policeman, or when one of the myrmidons of Storey Cossett might come to make sure

everything was not being done for Tom Buckelew.

The red light still burned. One of the nurses swayed under the strain, staring at the door. Phil followed her eyes and saw that the elevator was coming up, the top clearing the solid closed doors, the light reflecting through a crack.

He said, "One word and Miss Gordon will shoot."

The elevator stopped. The doors opened. Phil was unable to stir a hand in defense, holding steadily to his poles. He said, "Myra!"

The girl stepped backwards, not relinquishing her control of the three nurses in the hall. A girl stepped out of the elevator. Phil said, "Hold everything!"

It was, unbelievably, the girl he had spoken with earlier in the day. He said now, "All of you—into the elevator."

The nurse he had recognized said, "What is it? That's—that's Mr. Buckelew."

Phil said, "Are you with us?"

She glanced at Myra, at the others. She was a plain, mousey little creature. "I don't understand—but I guess I'm with you if you don't mean harm to poor Mr. Buckelew."

Phil said joyously, "You're with us. Let's go."

The elevator went down. There was a wheeled stretcher table on the elevator and they rested the stretcher on it. Myra covered the face of the ashen-hued District Chief. At the main floor level they stopped.

Phil said, "You three girls stay right on. One yap out of you and I'll have Miss Gordon kill you—all of you."

There were no closed doors to the platform. The ambulance stood where they had left it. Several people in the hall glanced idly, a couple interestedly. A man in an interne's uniform came toward them. Phil and Abe pushed the stretcher table out on the platform. The

mousey little nurse said unexpectedly, "I'll handle him," and met the interne halfway.

Others were suddenly getting wind of the excitement and began crowding to the platform. Phil reached into the white coat of his disguise and pulled out a large revolver.

It was difficult getting Tom Buckelew off the stretcher table and arranged in the strange sling of the ambulance. They had to be very careful not to jolt him despite their tingling nerves, their expectation of attack. Myra still stayed by the elevator door, her gun trained upon the nurses. The interne stared over the mousey nurse's shoulder.

Phil crawled out of the ambulance's interior. He said calmly, "All right, girls. Myra, in the driver's seat. You—in the back and take care of Tom."

The machinery of the big hospital, suddenly aware that it was not functioning properly, was getting back into motion. The switchboard girl plugged frenziedly. The interne reached out to stay the little nurse, caught sight of Phil's gun and stopped. Myra and the nurse went for the ambulance.

People began milling around. Phil backed out cautiously. Myra raced the motor. The little nurse clanged the rear doors. Phil leaped down and clambered alongside Myra. The ambulance moved smoothly out the driveway.

Phil said, "They'll have every radio squad car after us. They can't miss us very well. It's a question of fighting them off, I'm afraid."

Abe Forsyte had his mouth to the speaking phone arrangement inside the ambulance body. He was saying,

"Miss Gordon! Drive to my factory. It's only a few blocks. We can hold them off down there while we phone Washington."

"It means ruin for you if we fail," shouted Phil.

"It means ruin for Bay City if we fail," corrected the stout man. "Hurry! They can't get to us before we reach my place."

Myra stepped on the accelerator. Phil kept his itching hands away from the siren, which would have been a direct giveaway. They eased through traffic. Phil said,

"You're a marvelous driver, Myra."

"I was always scared to go over twenty before," she assured him. "You've got us all playing this game away over our heads."

THE Forsyte Manufacturing Company was a three-storied building on a side street in the downtown section. Myra ran the big ambulance into the yard and up to a loading platform. Forsyte evidently manufactured reed furniture; there were several items about, ready for shipment. A husky shipping clerk stared in disbelief at the white-uniformed figure of his employer.

It was nearly noon. Forsyte yelled, "Take the afternoon off. Spread the word. We're closin' down."

The whistle blew for lunch. The husky clerk went down into the yard and rang a bell. Forsyte said, "Into that garage."

They pulled into a spacious garage, among a fleet of trucks. Phil said, "Tom's best off in this crate. The gal can get water, I see. Where's the telephone?"

"Through here," said Forsyte.

Police sirens sounded in the street outside. Phil followed the stout man pell-mell up a flight of stairs. There was a large office and frightened girls stared at them.

Phil grabbed a hand-set and dialed frantically. He said, "They'll cut the wires as soon as they get here. We haven't a chance unless. . . . Hello! Airport? . . . When is the next southbound plane due? . . . In fifteen minutes? . . . Good! Have whatever official passenger arrives come immediately to the Forsyte Manufacturing

Company. No—there's no other message."

He hung up, dialed again. The wire sputtered and went dead. Motors roared and died below. Phil said grimly, "The Cossett forces have arrived."

Abe Forsyte dived into a drawer of his desk and came up with a pistol at least two feet long. He said grimly, "I'm gonna kill me a couple crooked cops."

"Cossett will have us described as desperate, crazed killers," warned Phil, unlimbering his own gun. "We'd better get the girls up here. If we can hold them off. . . ."

He went to the window of the office. There was a squad car in the yard and blue uniforms were debouching. Forsyte ran down the steps into the garage. Phil hesitated. A cop produced a bag full of small, potato-like objects. Phil opened the window and said, "Drop 'em."

Someone fired a shot which clipped the sill of the window beside Phil's head. Phil aimed carefully and fired in his turn. The cop holding the tear gas bombs shrieked and clutched at his knee, dropping his burden.

"Next time it's for keeps," Phil called. "Get back and stay back! I'll kill any man who tries to enter this building."

Blue uniforms scrambled in all directions. In two seconds there was not a policeman in sight. Phil examined the scene carefully.

Their position, he decided, was tenable. In order to get at the office in which he stood, an attacking force must cross the open yard. As long as his ammunition held out, no one would get across that yard.

Abe came back into the office and said, "The girls say they had better stay with Buckelew. He needs compresses and drinking water. Myra's got that gun. They're not scared—much."

Phil said, "You got fodder for that weapon of yours?"

Abe peered out the window. His rubi-

cund face was set and not displeased. He said, "I got a thousand rounds. What's more, I'm a good shot, Phil. I'm a target shooter, o' course. But I can hit runnin' rabbits with this thing."

A MAN advanced into the yard and shouted, "You'd better surrender. We know you and we've got you cornered. You can't hold out forever."

Abe aimed carefully. He pulled gently at the trigger and the big gun boomed. The man's hat flew off. The man flew after it, ducking and skidding out of sight. Abe said,

"That was Parkhill, the prosecutor. He's got more nerve 'n brains. But, Phil, he's right. I don't see how a couple men from Washington c'n help us. Cossett'll have a mob out there—a lynchin' mob of crooks and stupid people who will follow any leader."

Phil said, "We'll just hold the fort and wait."

There was silence downstairs. For five minutes nothing happened. Then a motor started and accelerated and an armored car of the sort that delivers money to banks and manufacturers tore into the yard and stopped. A gun nozzle poked out of an aperture. Phil said,

"Down, Abe."

He dropped to the floor himself. He crawled on all fours to a window at the end of the room. The girl clerks in the back of the room screamed faintly. He said to them, "Just lie low and keep quiet. You've nothing to fear."

He came up slowly at the far window. It was a tough angle. He took plenty of time. The gun nozzle was belching bullets. Glass crashed as the windows went out. Phil fired. He fired again.

The gun nozzle wavered. Abe's pistol went off. The gun nozzle disappeared. The driver tried frantically to get the motor going. Phil could see him plainly behind the bullet-proof glass of the

armored car. Phil shot at the tires, at the radiator. The motor sputtered, died.

Abe was firing ricochets, hoping to throw lead up from below to cripple the motor. The man still tried. The motor caught briefly and the car backed out swiftly on its flat tires.

Phil said, "That's a dangerous thing. If they get smart and mount a machine gun in there, it'll be curtains."

Abe said stoutly, "I'll fill the thing with lead every time they run it in."

It was, nevertheless, a weapon to be feared, Phil knew. He looked at his watch. If they rushed behind the armored car, two revolvers could never stop them. If they got Buckelew, he would never live through it. Phil wondered desperately if he should have left the District Chief in the hospital. He was mortally sure that Cossett would not have allowed Tom to live. Recovered, Buckelew's evidence would be dynamite.

Abe said grimly, "They might kill us, but we gave them a battle. If I could get through to some of my pals around town there'd be more of us. Cossett hasn't got everyone scared to death."

"H's got enough of them," said Phil. "Here they come. Pump lead as long as you can and don't waste a shot."

CHAPTER SIX

At Bay

THE armored car came in slowly this time. Phil could see the feet of the men behind it. When it stopped, there would be a half dozen guns trained upon the office. He fired at the feet. He couldn't be sure of a hit each time.

One man fell down and crawled away. Phil let him go, unwilling to kill unnecessarily. A bold officer stood on the far side of the car and threw a tear gas bomb. It came bouncing at Phil's feet.

Phil went after it, scooping it up. With-

out a second's loss of time he threw it back. It lit on the car and exploded. Curses resounded in the yard as the acrid gas rebounded upon its owners.

Phil said, "Those things are overrated. Can you see that guy with the machine gun?"

The man inside was trying to get the range before turning loose the dreaded chopper. Abe said coolly, "I got him."

He fired. The machine gun went out of sight. But it reappeared almost at once. Another motor sounded. Phil said, "They commandeered another armored crate. We're in for it, Abe."

The yard was filling with danger. The targets moved too rapidly. Phil bowled over a big cop who tried to gain the office stairs. Abe dropped another bomb-thrower. But there were too many. The tall, plainclothes officer who had been in charge at the Ordway Building after the explosion was bellowing orders from some hidden place.

It was a question of moments. Phil knew what would happen when they finally rushed the office. There would be swift death for Abe and himself—maybe for the girls, certainly for Tom Buckelew.

He loaded his gun deliberately. His jaw was set in a rigid line. He said to Abe, "I always wanted to go this way. I'm only sorry about Myra."

Behind him a soft voice said, "Don't be sorry. You're the bravest man I ever knew, Phil Towne."

She had the little revolver in her hand. She explained, "Mr. Buckelew is resting easily. I came up to be—near you."

"It looks like curtains, Myra."

She said steadily, "We tried."

"You're the gamest gal in the world."

She said, "Get that leading cop. I'll take the next one."

They were rushing the door downstairs. Phil took the first man in the belly. He collapsed like a balloon. Myra's little gun spoke and the second man piled over the

first. Abe fired and a third draped himself ungracefully upon the heap.

The others ran back around behind the trucks. The machine gun suddenly broke into life. A series of jagged holes, uncomfortably close, appeared in the window sills.

Phil said, "The rush was to allow the gun to get goin'. Now the tommy gun will cover the rush. It's about over."

Abe Forsyte was bleeding where a splinter had cut his face. The embattled manufacturer said, "Let 'em come up the stairs. We'll pile the dead on the steps until the yard's knee deep in blood. We'll teach 'em."

Phil said quietly, "I have no more ammunition for this gun, Abe. You'll have to do it alone."

"I'll do it, too," Abe vowed.

Phil said, "Myra. Myra, I—"

"I know," she breathed. "Here, take this little thing. There's a box of shells, too. Not many, but enough for a few moment's more of life perhaps."

SHE was unafraid, beautiful, standing there, looking upon him with a strange, almost unearthly fondness, as if he were a bright, helpful boy and she a school teacher proud of her pupil. He said humbly.

"I could have got you out of it."

"We gave. Together. It was worth it."

Phil said, "I think they're coming. Good-bye, Myra."

"Good-bye—Phil. It's been—fun."

She smiled, as though it really had been fun. Phil went to the head of the stairs beside Abe. There was no use to attempt to defend through the windows in the face of the machine gun's steady chatter. He wondered if they would be able to get another tommy into the hall. That would really finish it.

The first of them came tearing through. Phil fired the little gun until it was hot.

Abe's big weapon boomed. The rush collapsed. Phil thought again of the strange power of Storey Cossett, that handsome man, that he could send men to die in order that corruption might prevail.

There was a lull. They were re-forming outside. The machine gun noise seemed to redouble. There were loud shouts, followed by a new note in the voices. Phil listened eagerly. Then he sprang back inside the office.

The bullets no longer drummed through the windows. Downstairs, all was confusion. He peered cautiously out. The cops were running again. Another car entered the yard. It belched machine gun fire with merry accuracy. There were four men in the new car.

Phil said, "Downstairs! Get down there and help! It's the boys from Washington!"

They went piling down, all three of them. There was no enemy in sight. From the car a lank youth dismounted and drawled,

"Brewin' up a storm around here, pal. Lucky we brought the tomnies along."

Phil said, "Thanks, Lew. Jack, how are you? Nice goin', Pat and Mike. You got my message at the airport?"

"Didn't miss. Nor your wire, either," said the lank youth.

"Wire?" said Phil. "I didn't send any wire."

The lank Lew said, "It was in code. Told us to be ready for hell to break loose. Told us to get to the Governor. Listen!"

There was a clanking of arms, the measured tread of marching feet. A voice called, "Double time, March!"

Outside, the mob was running. Policemen, citizens in mufti, vicious looking denizens of the underworld raced for parked automobiles. A tall man jumped for a streamlined private car. Another tall man came from nowhere and dived in a long flying tackle.

Phil said, "Let's go. That Cossett."

They tore into the street. The National Guardsmen came swinging around a corner. Lew hastened to meet the keen-eyed young commanding officer. In the street, the two tall men struggled.

Phil reached down and swung his balled fist with speed and accuracy. It caught Storey Cossett behind the ear. The man who had tackled the Mayor scrambled loose and sat up.

Phil said casually, "Howzit, Hawkins?"

The lean man said, "Close, pal. It was too close for comfort."

Phil said, "All's well that ends well, as some guy said one time. So you send code wires to Washington?"

Hawkins said, "I was in service myself until the Governor hired me away."

THEY were in the office of the Mayor of Bay City. The Mayor sat, stony-faced, still handsome, between Lew and another G-Man. Myra Gordon regarded him steadily. Phil lounged, one leg swung over the corner of the desk.

Cal Hawkins said, "The Governor, gentlemen."

They all stood up. The Governor beamed at them. He was a big man with a hearty manner. "Take it easy, men," he said. "How do you do, Miss Gordon? You're lookin' mighty pretty."

He took the Mayor's seat, behind the big desk. He said, "Let's have it."

Phil said, "Tom Buckelew hasn't recovered consciousness and may never do so. But I think I have it, sir."

Storey Cossett spoke in ringing accents. "Governor, these madmen, these glory-seeking G-Men, have disrupted the town of Bay City. They have caused grief and death among our citizenry. I demand a general hearing before a court. This is an arbitrary procedure. I will hold you to account for this, sir."

The Governor was expansive. "Sho, now, Storey. These men have evidence.

I want to hear it. You'll get your court."

Phil said, "Evidence. We must have evidence. We must have those books. Governor, those books are on a country place, belonging to Cossett. There are leghorn chickens on the place and running water. There are sand spurs and various other flora native to sandy country. It is approximately ten miles from Bay City and there is also a lake in the vicinity."

"Why that could be Storey's lake place," said the Governor. "How do you know this, Towne?"

"There was a piece of string," said Phil. "It was tied around the bomb which killed Rob Roy. I sent it to our lab in Washington. They analyzed this piece of string. Under the microscope, the data I have quoted was discovered. The bomb was made at this place, substituted for the books, delivered to Rob Roy by Cal Hawkins."

The lean man's face was lined and sorrowful. He said, "It's true. I made the delivery from a cab, bound for the fights. I had plenty of time. I had obtained the books from Miss Gordon. They were in a safe at the Brownley Hotel until I got them to take them to Roy."

An agitated, perfumed, slick-haired man squirmed in the back of the room. Phil motioned at him and said,

"The hotel clerk will testify that he surrendered the package to a certain John Parkhill, prosecutor of this county. They were returned several hours later. Hawkins picked them up as he said—and Rob Roy died."

Hawkins said, "It was one of those things, Governor."

The Governor said, "You couldn't help it, Cal."

Phil said, "I was uncertain about Hawkins. He didn't look right. I'm no Lombrosian, but Cal lacks the criminal touch. When I saw him at the fights I had an idea, knowing that he was in touch with Rob Roy, that he was an undercover man

of some kind. That was my hunch."

"My best man," nodded the Governor heavily. "I'm sorry he was the instrument of death for your compatriots, Towne." The big official's face darkened. He thundered, "But if those books are on Storey Cossett's place, I'll see that he is electrocuted before another thirty days have passed!"

Phil looked at Abe Forsyte. The big man triumphantly produced a paper-bound, heavy package. He said, "Me an' some of the Civic Association went out there. We found these."

Storey Cossett said, "It won't stand up in court! You can't make it stand up."

Abe Forsyte lumbered forward and planted himself in front of the Mayor of Bay City. He said ominously, "I hope it don't, Storey. I hope they turn you a-loose. There's people in this town that would love to get their hands on you. There's mothers with dead sons and fathers with daughters long gone that would love to handle you, Storey Cossett."

Phil said, "The City always wins. You see? They take it and take it and crime

and politics wallow in the mud together, to the shame of every respectable person. And then, in the end, the City rebels and reclaims its own."

"If the City has a spark to ignite the torch," said Myra softly. "You started it on its final stage, Phil."

Phil said, "Why, that's my job, Myra. Look—how about a date tonight, baby?"

"Right you are, G-Man. Where?"

"I saw in the paper there were some fights in Miami. How about flying down there?"

"Even to the fights, with you."

"There's a kid named Ricco got a good left hook. He's on the main bout. We can just make it."

"Is that all you have to say, Phil?"

"Uh—well. No. I guess I love you."

She sighed. "Thanks, pal. It was nice of you to tell me. . . ."

He really had to kiss her then, right in front of the Governor and everyone. He would rather have fought the City all over again.

On the other hand, he reflected, holding her tightly, it was worth it!

THE END

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No one noticed him as he slipped out.

CHAPTER ONE

Gamble on Murder

SHE HAD never been in a gambling house before and she was very impressed. She stared about her at the long green tables around which men and women grouped, intent, hardfaced, watchful. She stared at the roulette wheels, a blur of color as they spun, with



the little white balls skittering about their outer edges, dropping downward, bounc-

WITHOUT A GRAVE

G-Man Brian O'Reilly was dead, F.B.I. records showed. Who then was the red-wigged phantom terror they called the Ghost, who alone might smash America's Number One killer-for-fun—with the deadliest, blackest art this side of the grave?



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ing, coming to rest. She took in the long rows of slot machines with men and women ceaselessly working the handles. She listened to the sleek and toneless voices calling the plays at the crap tables and roulette wheels, the monotonous, mechanical voice from the Bingo tables in the rear: "Five under B. Five under B. Seventeen under I. . . ."

The boy with her had rarely been here, but it was one of these places where you can shoot two-bits on the crap tables or lay down paper money in packages and the house fades anything. Besides, this was no night to worry, for he couldn't lose. Not tonight. He and Margy were in love. He and Margy were going to be married.

They had been there half an hour when Margy noticed the man at the crap table. He was very tall and thin and the way he leaned against the table he seemed to balance there, as though he were weightless and not touching the floor at all. He had a long face with a strong, hooked nose like the beak of an eagle and his eyes were so deeply sunken that she could not tell their color. It was a strange face, she thought, strong and fierce, and lonely—yet in a way completely expressionless. He was throwing the dice, but from his face she could not tell whether he was winning or losing, or even if he cared.

Margy noticed his hands as he threw the dice. They were remarkably long and thin. They seemed to move lazily, indifferently, yet her eyes had trouble in following them.

The man was winning. He made pass after pass and the money stacked in front of him. Margy saw the stickman lean over and whisper something to the man beside him, the one who paid out the money; Margy didn't know what he was called. And then the tall man with the hooked nose lost and the dice went on to the man beyond him, and then to a woman in a shoulderless evening gown, and then to

the man beyond her. When this man reached out to pick up the dice his cuff slid backward and his wrist showed plainly under the glaring lights. There was an odd semi-circular scar on the man's wrist.

She could not help the sound she made. Sheer, absolute terror wrenched the air from her lungs. But nobody noticed the quick, broken gasp (that sort of thing is common enough around a gambling table) unless it was the man who had just picked up the dice, the man with the scar on his wrist. His gaze came up and met that of the girl.

For perhaps one second—no more than that, though it seemed to Margy that it was an eternity—they stared at one another across the fierce green of the crap table. She had never seen that face before, and yet she knew it. She had never before seen death, but she knew it in this man's eyes.

Her numb lips formed his name, silently, hypnotically, and she could not stop them because her brain was as numbed by terror as her lips.

"Charlie Serana," her lips said, but there was no sound.

THE mans' gaze slid away from hers. He threw the dice. No one had noticed the by-play between these two; or if anyone had noticed, the girl did not know it and neither did Charlie Serana.

He was not looking at her now. He seemed intent upon the dice. The girl could feel little cold nerves trembling in her body, and yet terror still held her brain paralyzed. She thought it must be hours after she had first seen the scar on his wrist; actually it was less than ten seconds. She turned, groping for the boy with whom she had come, whispering, "Tom, Tom. . . ."

He did not notice the tone of her voice. "I'm three bucks ahead, Margy!" he said exultantly. "Let's try the roulette wheels!" And he turned away from her.

She tried to hold him, to reach out and catch him, but there were persons passing and he was lost in the crowd. She did not dare call out. Her voice was frozen.

She had to think clearly. She had to decide what to do, quickly. Quickly! She looked back at the table and Charlie Serana was no longer there. He had disappeared! And then blind panic took possession of her.

She had to get away! Finding Tom would only take extra time, would perhaps get him injured, killed. She had to get away, to reach the police. She didn't know much about gambling houses, but she'd heard rumors. She didn't dare trust the people here. She had to get away immediately. Get to the police. *Get to the G-Men!*

The idea was suddenly clear in her mind. *Go to the G-Men!*

She started toward the door by which she and Tom had entered. She tried to walk casually, but her heart was beating so hard that it seemed her whole body must be trembling. She looked at the faces that were passing: brittle, intent faces, flushed with the fever of gambling. None of them was noticing her. What if she should suddenly scream, "Charlie Serana is here in this building!" What would happen?

There was the door ahead of her. She had only to pass through the small foyer where the three heavy-faced, quiet men sat unmoving. Then she would be out in the side, brightly lighted parking lot, and there would be taxis aplenty.

The outer door of the foyer, the one that let onto the parking lot outside, was closed. Had it been open when she and Tom entered? She couldn't remember. It didn't matter.

She started across the little foyer. One of the heavy-faced, black-dressed men who always sat here like buzzards on a dead limb, got up. "'Scuse me, Miss. But—"

She brushed past him. She was almost to the front door. "'Scuse me."

He put his hand on her shoulder.

A DOOR on the right opened. It seemed to open out of a solid wall where no door should be. A long arm reached through and clutched her. She whirled and saw the dark handsome face she had never seen until a few minutes ago when she had looked across the green baize gambling table at the scarred wrist and raised her gaze and found those dark eyes staring into hers.

She screamed, one shrill terrible cry, as she was jerked inside. But that surprise door on the right fitted tightly—and it had already closed upon her. She was in a small room fitted out with only a couch, a desk, a chair, and a tall filing cabinet. She was alone with Charlie Serana.

Seconds passed, hours it seemed, while he stood and looked at her, smiling faintly, white teeth gleaming. "So you recognized the scar on my wrist," he said. "The place where you bit me."

She did not answer. The muscles in her throat had swollen and sealed it tight.

"I had the best plastic surgeon in the country work on my face," he said. "Not even those damn G-Men can recognize me now. But I never thought about the scar because nobody but you knew about it."

He stood there smiling at her with his dark red lips and white teeth. Now she could see traces in his face of the the face she had known before. Her breasts rose and tightened against her dress. Her throat expanded.

"Yell!" he said. "Yell louder than you did before. The room's sound proof this time. And I'll be watching out for those teeth of yours this time."

He came closer, still with that faint, immobile smile upon his lips. She had backed to the wall; she could go no farther.

He put his hands on her shoulders and slid them downward, across the smooth curves of her body. "You always did make me hot and bothered," he said. "And this time yelling and biting isn't going to help."

She could not feel his hands because she was too numb with fear. "You're going to kill me. I know how you look now. You won't let me go. You're going to kill me."

He said, "Not yet, Baby. Not yet."

He moved very close and his arms went around her.

CHAPTER TWO

Death's Business Office

THE tall thin man with the hooked nose had drifted away from the crap table. He stood at the edge of the crowd, lighting a cigarette, seemingly intent on touching the flame to the very tip of the tobacco. Then he shook out the match and smoke drifted blue-white up past his craggy face. No one noticed him, not even the buzzard-like guards in the foyer of the gambling house—but he saw the girl snatched through that secret door on the right.

There was no change on his face. Casually he wandered back into the crowd, past two dice tables to where he could see the door of Pete Hardwick's private office. Two men who bulged their tailored suits leaned on the wall near the door. He knew what the chances of getting past them without a fight would be—and the door would still be locked from the inside. He didn't want to attract more attention than necessary, but he knew that he had to hurry.

He turned away, slowly, moving so easily, so effortlessly, that he gave the impression he was floating, gliding rather than walking. He stopped at one of the roulette wheels where there were only

three other players. The wheel was already spinning. He dropped a careless wad of bills upon the red.

The red came up.

"Let it ride," the tall man said. He had a voice that was scarcely above a whisper, yet very clear, like the sound of muted bells. And as the wheel spun and the white ball twirled about the outer edge, he added, "And this with it." And he dropped another mass of bills upon the stack before him.

The wheelman's eyes flickered toward the man beside him. The croupier leaned casually forward. . . .

Quickly the hawknosed man reached across the board and caught the croupier's wrist. He bent it slightly, gently, but the man went, a half step backward. "No," the tall man said in that soft voice. "Not on my money." And so they stood facing one another until the wheel stopped and the ball rested in the red seven.

"Pay off, and let it ride again."

There was a moment of motionless silence. The other players were beginning to notice now. "I don't have that much at the table," the croupier said. "We'll have to see . . . see Mr. Hardwick." He motioned, and another man glided up to take his place.

The tall man followed the croupier across the floor to the door of Pete Hardwick's private office. The croupier spoke to the guards, knocked, and there was the oiled click of automatic locks and the door opened. The tall man and the croupier went into the room beyond. The door closed behind them.

Pete Hardwick was small and gray-haired and black mustached. His skin was a dead white and his eyes were black. He stood up, his white mouth curved faintly in a professional and expressionless smile. "This guy—" the croupier began, and stopped.

The tall man made a light gesture and, suddenly, as though it had materialized

out of the air, there was a pistol in his hand, a small .25 automatic no larger than a toy. But Pete Hardwick and the croupier knew better.

Without seeming to move, Pete Hardwick slid his left foot forward an inch. "No," the tall man said. "I don't want to shoot you. I detest bloodshed, as a rule." He was looking straight at Hardwick.

The croupier saw what he thought was his chance, and took it. He started the blow at his knee, swinging his right fist for the tall man's chin and grabbing for the gun with his left.

HE GRABBED the gun, but his fist missed. The tall man had leaned backward, weightless, effortless, as though blown by the wind of the rising fist the way a fly is blown away from the newspaper you try to kill it with. And as the fist whipped past, the croupier was thrown off balance, twisted sideways so that his right ear was toward the tall man.

The tall man struck him. It did not seem to be a hard blow and it was struck with the edge of the hand, not the fist, just below the ear. The croupier fell like a log, face down, and did not move.

It had taken less than a complete second. Pete Hardwick had not moved.

"He's not dead," the tall man said. "I dislike killing, as a rule. But just now I am looking for Charlie Serana."

The muscles of Hardwick's face were stiff, the mouth still curved upward. But there was a pulse beating just over the left corner of his mouth. "Why come here? I don't know where he is."

The tall man's voice grew even softer. In the quiet room you could scarcely hear it. "I want him, quickly. Understand?"

"So do a lot of other people. I don't—"

The tall man stepped forward. The gun in his left hand pointed, forgotten, at the floor. His right hand fastened on Hardwick's jaw. Where the thumb put pressure there was a dint in the man's

white face. Hardwick tried to scream and could not, and sudden great balls of sweat grew on his agony-twisted face.

"Will you please show me which office he's in?" the tall man said.

"All right. All right." He rubbed trembling fingers across his cheek. "This way." He turned and began to unlock a door.

"I shall be very unhappy if I am forced to kill you," the tall man said. "But if anything goes wrong I shall be forced to do it."

Perhaps it was the whispered, bell-like voice, or perhaps the words, or this piled on everything that had gone before; but abruptly Hardwick spun about, staring, his face ash-gray and yellow. For the first time there was terror in his eyes. "You—You—who are you?"

"I am looking for Charlie Serana."

"You are—" He took a deep breath. "*The Ghost!*"

A brittle note came in the man's voice. "I want Charlie Serana. Quick!"

They went across an intervening office that was empty now, to a door on the far side. Pete Hardwick fitted a key to the lock, swung it open. Dim light shown out.

Charlie Serana whirled to face them. The girl was in the corner, half crouched, her hands held clawlike before her. The throat of her dress was torn so that the dim light gleamed on her flesh. Her blonde hair hung loose about her shoulders.

"What the hell do you want?" Charlie Serana yelled.

It was then the tall man stepped through the door, the gun still carelessly held in his left hand and pointing toward the floor.

He said, "You did me out of a job once, Charlie. I doubt if you knew it, but even so I'm not the man to forget that sort of thing easily. So I'm interfering with one of yours."

There were faint scars in Serana's face left by the knife of the plastic surgeon. It

was a handsome face, a face that might have been made of bronze. But the black eyes were cold and calculating and deadly. "Who the hell are you?"

"It doesn't matter."

And Pete Hardwick said, "He's—the Ghost!"

Serana did not move. The girl's terrible drawn intake of breath was audible throughout the room. She stared incredulously at this tall, hawkfaced man whose name was a legend of crime and brutality and horror, a man with a price on his head, dead or alive. A man the police wanted even more than they wanted Charlie Serana.

The Ghost motioned to her, "Come on. You're going with me."

And then it happened.

THE doors which led back to Pete Hardwick's office were still open and someone of the employees had come into Hardwick's office. The Ghost heard the startled exclamation—and then, faintly, the shrill of the burglar alarm.

Even as he whirled, he was smiling grimly, thinking there must be well-oiled palms in a city where gambling houses got excellent police protection.

Spinning to look toward the other room was an error, and Charlie Serana was not a man to make errors against. He was no ordinary killer. His movement was a blur of motion impossible to follow. The gun leaped from its holster. He was smiling. He had the Ghost, and he knew it. The Ghost knew it too. He didn't make many errors, but one against a man like Serana meant death. He went sideways in a long gliding dive, but Serana's gun was following him, Serana's finger was tightening on the trigger.

Margy never knew why she clutched at the gun. What was there to choose between two murderers, between the Ghost and Charlie Serana? A woman's instinct, a judgment of faces, and she acted without

thinking. She grabbed Serana's wrist. The bullet slashed into the floor.

The Ghost had struck the floor, rolling. He fired. But Pete Hardwick was leaping for the outside door, yelling. The bullet took him full in the chest and he whirled twice like a tiring top, and fell. Serana's second bullet plowed splinters inches from the Ghost's face.

The Ghost was back of the filing cabinet now. He tilted his gun upward. Then the guard who had entered Hardwick's office a moment before stormed in, a .45 in his hand. He saw the Ghost and fired once, still running. The Ghost shot him through the stomach.

He heard the girl's shrill scream. Serana had the door into the foyer half open, holding it with one hand, raising his gun with the other. The girl had recognized him. Well, she would never live to tell the police. And the girl was between him and the Ghost.

From his kneeling position back of the cabinet the Ghost dived. He struck Margy across the back of both knees. Even as she crashed down, Serana fired; then he was outside, slamming the door, screaming, "The Ghost! In there! Get him when he comes out!"

Then the door was shut and there was an utter, dead stillness in the room.

Even now the Ghost moved with that effortless floating ease. He helped the girl to her feet. "Are you hurt?"

"I—I don't think so."

"Come on."

But at the door to Pete Hardwick's office he stopped. The door on the far side, the one that led into the main gambling room, was partly ajar. A hand and gun showed through. He could hear many voices. He stepped backward and closed the door into Hardwick's office and locked it.

A swift survey showed that the two rooms, the one in which he had found Serana and the girl, and the one between that

and Hardwick's office, had no other exits. He was trapped.

The girl watched him. Her eyes were blue and deep. She was very pretty, he thought. "What are you going to do?"

"There doesn't seem to be much I can do," he said quietly. "But I don't think any of the guards will try to come in here just yet."

"The police. They'll be here soon. Won't they come in?"

"Yes."

"And when they find you—?"

"They'll shoot to kill." He stood tall and thin and weightless in the middle of the room where the two bodies still lay with blood oozing beneath them. He ran a finger down the thin arch of his nose. He could not leave without facing certain death as he stepped through the door. There would be a half dozen guards at each exit. And in five minutes the police would be here. They would come in, behind a barrage of teargas and gunfire probably. But they would come.

He thought of Serana. Serana would have escaped long before. But everyone had heard his yell about the Ghost. And the police would take no chances with the Ghost. They would shoot first and take their chances afterward.

CHAPTER THREE

The Ghost Vanishes

THE Ghost dragged the corpse of the guard into the middle office and pulled it to one side so that from the other room only the feet were visible. He placed Hardwick's body the same way, but he put it in the dimly lit room where he had found the girl. "So no matter which way they come, they can see only the feet of one of them," he said.

"What are you going to do?"

"Take a chance. That's the only way."

Her blue gaze lifted slowly to his face. She was remembering all the things she had read about this man, a confused blur in her mind now: murder, arson, robbery, every crime in the list had been charged against him. And yet, somehow. . . . She said, "Can I help you?"

He stared at her. "Help *me*? Why?"

"You saved my life."

"To spite Charlie Serana. That was the only reason."

"I don't believe it."

"Why else should I?"

"I don't know why. Because you're not—not as bad as they say you are."

He stood very still, looking at her. There was a dull ache inside him, a lonely ache. And then he remembered the boy he had seen with her outside, and he remembered the life that he must lead until he made a mistake he couldn't get out of. It wouldn't do for persons to believe he wasn't actually what the papers said he was.

"You are simply being grateful. But you've already saved my life once, when you grabbed Serana's gun. That makes us even."

"No. I want to help."

"All right," he said, after a moment. "I'm going to need it. But before the cops get here: how did you recognize Serana?"

"I knew him before the police got after him, when he was running those racket labor unions. I sold tickets at the Capitol Theater. He—he kept after me. The manager said I had to go out with him or lose my job."

"But he's had his face changed since then. And a swell job too."

"Yes. It was his wrist. He tried to make me, to. . . . We fought and I bit his wrist and got away. Tonight I saw the scar where I bit him."

Then came the banging on the door. It cracked open a quarter of an inch and a teargas bomb hurtled through. Gray-

white smoke lifted upward. In a fast husky whisper the Ghost spoke to Margy. Then he stepped back and flattened himself against the wall to the right of the door.

The door cracked open again and another tear gas bomb came through. Margy screamed, "Don't! He's already shot! Let me out!"

The door stayed cracked open. Confused noises came through. Margy grabbed the door and cried, "Let me out! He's over there!" She was rubbing at tear dripping eyes. "He's already hurt!"

The police poured inside, some of them wearing masks, others trying to shelter their eyes and get a view. And then a dark thick cloud of smoke began to mingle with the tear gas and there was the acrid odor of burning wood. Someone screamed, "Fire! Fire!" Police with masks plunged stumbling toward where the girl had pointed. Others were pushed back into the crowded foyer, rubbing their eyes as the tear gas and black smoke floated out into the foyer.

The Ghost joined those with masks, rubbing his eyes as hard as the rest of them and cursing loudly. In his pocket his left hand clutched another of the tiny smoke bombs such as magicians use. No one noticed him as he slipped out of the foyer into the clear night air. He was already around the corner of the building when he heard the cry go up. The girl had become confused in the tear gas and smoke! She had pointed to the wrong man!

The Ghost has escaped!

BUT as he ran, the Ghost was thinking of the girl with very blue eyes, and he was thinking also of Charlie Serana. Serana would not allow the one person who could identify him to the police to remain alive. Not for long. Serana would not need to worry about the Ghost, because the Ghost could not go to the police

to testify. But Margy could. Charlie Serana killed for revenge and to satisfy an insane blood lust. He would certainly kill to save himself.

The Ghost had spent six weeks before tonight looking for Serana, and now Serana had escaped. Was there a chance to find him again, in time?

Brian O'Reilly had not failed many times, but he had failed tonight, had been outdone by the very man he sought to capture. And perhaps it had cost the life of the one person who had blindly trusted him, knowing him only by the name of the Ghost. He cursed softly and bitterly. He was a long way from the Brian O'Reilly who had lived—and died, the records said—a few years before.

The F. B. I. is composed of men who practised many former professions. Besides lawyers and accountants, there are baseball players, artists, musicians, aviators. Brian O'Reilly had been a magician. He had been a good G-Man too, until that day when the Chief had called him into his office. "I've a job," the Chief had said. "One that's got to be done, and yet I can't ask a man to take it."

"What is it?" O'Reilly said. "I've tried tough ones before.

It had dealt with espionage. "Remember," the Chief said, "if you go on this, you go alone—without the department to back you. If you are caught, you're not a G-Man. We never heard of you. You have to win alone, or fail alone. If you were caught and known to be a G-Man it would be a mess that might even end in war."

He had tackled the job under his old stage name the Ghost and he had succeeded, but he had been forced to kill a foreign agent. Now, officially, he was wanted for murder by the F. B. I. The records had been tampered with and, officially, Brian O'Reilly was dead. But the Ghost lived and had been blamed with a thousand crimes.

He was a man with a price on his head, alive or dead, hunted by the police from end to end of the country he had defended. And hunted by criminals also, for the crooks were beginning to notice that wherever the Ghost interfered in a case, it was organized crime that got the worst of it. He was a man whose every movement was as dangerous as that of a tiger alone in a city of armed men.

Yet even so there were times in the dead of night when the Ghost walked the white marble corridors of the Department of Justice Building in Washington. He had been there six weeks before. "Charlie Serana," the Chief said. "Can you find him?"

"I'll try," the Ghost said.

He knew who Charlie Serana was all right. Next to the Ghost, Serana rated as the nation's number one criminal. He had controlled labor unions until growing pressure broke his racket and convicted him. But Charlie Serana had escaped. He had sworn to kill the entire jury which had convicted him, and already five of them had been found dead. Killing was new for Charlie Serana, but he had gone for it as a leopard goes for raw meat. He had turned into a homicidal maniac. He had gone kill-crazy.

The Ghost thought of this as he went silently down the dark streets. And he thought of the girl with the blue eyes. When next Charlie Serana killed, she would be the victim.

CHAPTER FOUR

Home for the Dead

THE house was a monstrous pile of gray stone surrounded by acres of lawns long since overgrown with weed and briar. It had been built in the days of the city's glory before the Civil War, but in the years that followed the family that owned it had lived on aristocracy

alone. The house had molded and decayed, the vast gardens around it had overgrown with weeds and brambles and unkempt shrubs. And finally the family had died out altogether and the house sat alone and empty. It had no modern plumbing, no lights. It was not the sort of place that any normal man would want to rent.

And then, abruptly, the house was rented. The real estate company's books showed the new tenant as a Mr. Montgomery Eaton, and he was supposed to be old and wealthy and eccentric, but no one had ever seen him. The only person ever visible was a single male servant. Yet each morning florists delivered one hundred dollars worth of cut roses which vanished through the massive doors, guarded by the single servant who paid for the flowers in cash. And each afternoon an agency sent five of the prettiest girls it could get to wander one hour about the unkempt grounds. Nobody ever spoke to them; they never saw anyone, not even the servant; but when they returned to the agency there was a ten dollar bill for each of them.

A hundred dollars worth of roses in the morning. Pretty girls wandering the wild, ragged lawns in the afternoon. And no other sign of life.

The newspapers had written everything they could about the house and its strange occupant. They had tried in every way to get interviews, and had failed. Reporters had spent hundreds of hours trying to dig up information about Mr. Montgomery Eaton—and learned nothing. But the rumors flew; he was old and shriveled; he kept whole rooms stacked with roses and rooms stacked with cash; he was fat and blind; he was mad.

The servant, who was the only person ever seen here, was tall and thin and his hair was a flaming red, so bright that you looked at it instead of his face, and afterward you would remember the hair, not the deep-sunken eyes or the high, bent

blade of his nose. It was shortly after dark that he came out of a rear door, locking it carefully after him, and stood for a moment in shrouding oleander bushes. The lawns lay wild and dark and seemingly empty, but he stood there for three full minutes before he started across them and went like a blown shadow, merging with other shadows, silent, invisible.

He was almost to the street when he stopped, half crouching behind a clump of cedars. Ahead of him, in the darkness of another group of shrubs, something had stirred. The redhaired man waited. Then the thing ahead moved again and a stray ray of starlight touched it and he saw that it was a man watching the house from which he had come. The redhaired man smiled grimly and circled to the right and kept going.

Once on the sidewalk he made sure he was not followed, turned south, out narrow, twisting Mulroy Road. The house he sought was on the outskirts of the city, a small place in an almost deserted neighborhood. A FOR RENT sign was nailed on the front and no lights were visible. He circled to the back and knocked, two quick taps, then a third tap with his fingernail. A voice said, "Come in."

He went into a dimly lighted room where a square-jawed man stood waiting for him. He said, "Hello, Chief."

"Hello, Brian."

THEY shook hands. Brian O'Reilly peeled off the red wig. "That damn thing's hot," he said.

The square-jawed man looked worried. "Any progress at all, Brian?"

"Some. The newspapers have made everybody in town certain this mythical Mr. Montgomery Eaton keeps hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash in the house. There have been four attempts to break in. There'll probably be another one tonight because there was somebody watching the house when I left. And the wig and I have been spending some money in a few of the better patronized dives; I've dropped hints that this non-existent Mr. Eaton has taken a lot of precautions, but that if I could find a crook big enough to handle it, I would be willing to make a deal. I've had offers, but none yet that lead to Charlie Serana."

"We've got to get him," the square-jawed man said. "And soon."

"We know he doesn't have much money left," Brian O'Reilly said. "You've jailed all his old sources of income. Pete Hardwick was his last. He'll be almost broke by now, and probably not more than two of his old gang are sticking with him. But still he's not the man to try little holdup jobs. He'll go for something big. I'm offering him the chance."

The square-jawed man nodded, but his eyes were bleak. "He'll have to take it soon, or it'll be too late for the girl."

O'Reilly leaned suddenly forward. "What do you mean? What's happened to her?"

"Nothing's happened. We're guarding her. It's her nerves that are breaking. The strain is too much for anybody to

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stand. He keeps sending her notes saying he may kill her tomorrow and that it may be six months from now, but that eventually he'll get her. There was a can of poison fruit in the groceries one day; we don't know how it got there, but one of our men noticed where the label had been punctured. Since then an agent had gone for the food each day and brought it back."

"Why don't you take her out of town, hide her somewhere?"

"Her mother is ill and can't be moved. The girl won't leave her. She was to be married, but now she won't let the boy come near the house because she doesn't want him in extra danger. Even so, somebody put a bullet through his shoulder three nights ago, and the girl got a note saying it was done to spite her and that the boy would be killed too—and her mother. You can understand the tension she's living under. Her mind won't bear it much longer. It'll drive her mad. And we can't find Serana."

Brian O'Reilly stood up. The muscles in his body were corded and jerking. His mouth was twisted like that of a man in pain. He walked to the curtained window and stood there looking at it with unseeing eyes. "It's my fault," he said huskily. "If she's killed, if she goes mad, I'll be the one who did it."

"You're doing your best. It's not your fault."

"I had Serana in front of me, and I let him get away."

"He got a lucky break. Anyway, you couldn't have shot him down in cold blood. You couldn't have murdered him."

O'Reilly swung away from the window. "That's it!" he cried. "That's the advantage the criminal has, and always will have. I'm supposed to be a crook, but I was the law once, I was a decent citizen once, and so I can't murder in cold blood, not even a man like Serana. But he can

kill without warning. He *enjoys* killing!"

"The law has its advantages too," the other man said.

O'Reilly leaned over him. O'Reilly was four inches the taller of the two, but the other man was not short. "I'm going and find him," O'Reilly said. "I'm going and find him tonight. I'll be damned if I sit twiddling my thumbs while he drives that girl mad!"

"Wait just a minute, Brian. You—"

Brian O'Reilly was already gone.

The square-jawed man sat and rubbed his chin. "I never saw him like that before," he thought. "He must have liked that girl. . . ." He was quiet, staring at the wall. He knew that Brian O'Reilly was dead and that the Ghost could never afford to fall in love. The Ghost was a criminal, and women are the death of criminals. "And I'm the one who gave him that job three years ago," the man thought, and cursed himself and cursed the job that was his and which forced him to send O'Reilly and agents like him out to die.

THERE were no lights showing in the great gray stone mansion which the Ghost had left scarcely more than an hour before. A half moon rode overhead, tearing its jagged way in and out of dark clouds. Patches of moonlight moved fitfully over the unkempt lawns—and as silent as the moonlight the Ghost crossed toward the house.

He did not go direct, but circled, taking advantage of ragged shrubs and bushes. In his deep sunken eyes there was a full glow. Muscle knotted along his jaw. Now and then he stopped to listen, crouched, invisible in the shadows. But finally, sure of himself now, he straightened and walked directly toward the house and the rear door that was shrouded in clumped oleanders. He was whistling softly: a tall, redhaired man who has had several drinks

and maybe more than that and finds the night pleasant.

It was dark where the tangled oleanders clumped about the door. He began to push through them. He staggered a little and said aloud, "That last drink—" Then the shadow to his right, and behind him, moved and became a man. The man leaped forward, slashing down with the blackjack in his right hand.

The blackjack was halfway down when the Ghost spun. He caught the man's wrist, twisted, and the man was whirled about, a sharp screech of pain ripping from his lips. The blackjack made a soft thump as it fell. The man was held with his back close to the Ghost's chest, his right arm twisted up between his shoulder-blades so that his body bent forward from the waist.

The Ghost began to curse with a soft, drunken furiousness. "Of all the stupid, blundering, half-witted bunch of crooks! A town full of imbeciles! Name of God!" With his free hand he slapped the face of the man he held. "A crummy little third-rate punk like you trying to rob this place! A half million lying around for the taking, and only cheap smuts like you to help me get it!" He almost screamed it in a mixture of alcoholic rage and despair.

The crook began to whine, "Listen, Mister! I can help! I can—" His voice went shrill on pain again as the Ghost wrenched his arm.

"You!" the Ghost said. "You smelly punk! Do you think old man Eaton's as blundering a fool as you are? You think I wouldn't have snatched off a fortune for myself years ago if he didn't have his own ways of watching it? Hell! It'll take brains to get this!"

From the darkness at the edge of the oleanders a voice said, "Maybe." It was a voice no louder than the purr of a cat, and there was something animal and deadly about it.

The moon came out of the clouds then

and the Ghost could see a small man crouched there and the sheen of light on a gun. Then the shadows washed over them again. There was the whisper of the little man's step in the leaves as he came forward.

CHAPTER FIVE

Storehouse for Death

"ANOTHER two-bit crook who thinks he's ready to grow up into a half buck," the Ghost said. He had swung the man, he still held, between him and the other. "Look out, Patsy, or I'll take that toy away from you."

The man began to curse, foully, in a thin, childish and deadly voice. He was not more than four feet from the man the Ghost held between them, but in the shadows he was almost invisible—yet the Ghost saw him bring up the gun.

"Shoot," the Ghost said. "This smut I'm holding won't mind being shot; but he'll serve as a reason for the cops to burn you."

The prisoner had gone mad, writhing, sobbing, squirming, crying, "Eddie! Eddie! Don't!" And begging the Ghost, "Don't let him! He'll shoot! He'll kill me or anybody! He's hopped—"

The muscles in the Ghost's body went cold all at once and there was a hollow feeling in his stomach. Luck had finally come his way, if he had not overplayed it, if he could be alive a few minutes from now!

He said quickly, "You're Eddie Harkins?"

"So what?"

The man was sliding closer, keeping out of reach but trying to see enough to make sure of his shot in the darkness. And the Ghost knew that Eddie Harkins had been Charlie Serana's gunman, a homicidal maniac, a hophead who loved to kill the way another man might love a woman.

He had vanished when Serana had. Probably he had stuck with the man who was his master, and who was the only person who could tell Eddie Harkins what to do and live.

"Wait a minute!" the Ghost said. "I've heard of you. You used to work for Charlie Serana."

The man paused. He was crouched over his gun, close enough to shoot now. In the still darkness the Ghost could hear his breathing, heavy and terrible, like that of an animal held back from his food.

"Maybe you know where Serana is," the Ghost said. "He's the one man with brains enough to crack this setup here. He and you and I for a team. And a cold half million waiting."

The other man begged, "That's right, Eddie. And the boss said for us to bring this fellow back to him! The boss wants him alive!"

"I ought to kill the—"

"The boss wants him alive, Eddie."

The little man stepped forward. A cat could not have moved faster. His gun was a blur as he swung it. The Ghost could not have escaped the blow if he had

tried, but an imperceptible instant before it landed he was already falling, dropping downward to avoid the full force of the smash on his skull. The wig helped some.

He lay quietly in the leaves. The darkness was spinning crazily around him. He hoped his wig was still on straight. It had to stay straight! The blow had been harder than he thought. He was barely conscious of the cold touch of steel as the handcuffs went around his wrists, fastening them behind him. From a long way off came that deadly, childish voice, "Maybe I ought to take his keys and go in and blast this old man Eaton now."

"The boss told us to bring this guy to him, Eddie. You don't know what kinda setup there is in this house. This fellow couldn't work it alone."

THEY supported the Ghost between them across the dark lawns. His head was clearing now, but his long chin still rested on his chest; his sunken eyes were still shut. He was realizing now how close it had been there in the oleanders. He had counted on dealing with normal men, not a hopped up maniac with a lust to kill.

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and as a result of that little talk with God a strange Power came into my life. After 42 years of horrible, dismal, sickening failure, everything took on a brighter hue. It's fascinating to talk with God, and it can be done very easily once you learn the secret. And when you do — well — there will come into your life the same dynamic Power which came into mine. The shackles of defeat which bound me for years went a-shimmering—and now—?—well, I own control of the largest daily newspaper in our County, I own the largest office building in our City, I drive a beautiful Cadillac limousine. I own my own home which has a lovely pipe-organ in it, and my family are abundantly provided for after I'm gone. And all this has been made possible because one day, ten years ago I actually and literally talked with God.

You, too, may experience that strange mystical Power which comes from talking with God, and when you do, if there is poverty, unrest,

unhappiness, or ill-health in your life, well — this same God-Power is able to do for you what it did for me. No matter how useless or helpless your life seems to be — all this can be changed. For this is not a human Power I'm talking about — it's a God-Power. And there can be no limitations to the God-Power, can there? Of course not. You probably would like to know how you, too, may talk with God, so that this same Power which brought me these good things might come into your life, too. Well — just write a letter or a post-card to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 20, Moscow, Idaho, and full particulars of this strange Teaching will be sent to you free of charge. But write now—while you are in the mood. It only costs one cent to find out, and this might easily be the most profitable one cent you have ever spent. It may sound unbelievable — but it's true, or I wouldn't tell you it was. — Advt. Copyright, 1939, Frank B. Robinson.

Eddie drove. It was strange, the skill in those fragile hands. He kept within the speed limit, but he went fast down a narrow one way street where parked cars gave only a few inches of clearance. His eyes contracted to such pinpoints it seemed impossible he could see at all, yet seeing perfectly, he turned into a brightly lighted street, one of the neighborhood business sections.

And then it happened.

Eddie said, "Look! It's her! And one of those G-Men!" He had his gun out and was swerving toward the curb before the Ghost saw what he meant. The girl, Margy, accompanied by a nice-looking young man, was just coming out of a grocery store! He saw the glint of light on her blonde hair. Even in that glimpse her face looked drawn and pale from these weeks of constant fear. But she was still very beautiful, he thought.

The car was swinging fast toward the curb. The good-looking man with Margy saw it. His left hand clutched her, whirled her behind him. His right hand flashed under his coat.

He never drew the hand back of his own accord. It tightened, clutched at the shirt above his heart. The roar of Eddie Harkins' gun filled the night. The G-Man bent at the knees and fell. Then the car was skidding to a stop by the curb and Eddie was yelling, "Grab the girl, Sam! Grab her!"

Sam dived for her. He knew that to argue with Eddie Harkins now was death.

The Ghost was leaning forward, his long hands folding into thin columns to jerk at the handcuffs. Then he went back on the seat again. His one chance to reach Serana! If he ruined it now . . . Sam was fighting with the girl, heaving her toward the car, crowding her into the back seat. A policeman was pounding down the block. Eddie Harkins raised his gun again.

It was then the Ghost struck him with

his shoulder, hands still cuffed behind him. The shot went wide. Eddie whirled and smashed the gun into the Ghost's face. Then the car was roaring into action, tires screaming as it took one corner after another.

The Ghost lay limp in a corner of the back seat, blood running from his forehead where the gun had slashed him. A cold numb ~~force~~ was taking possession of him. He had been sure he would win, until the girl was thrown into the affair again. Now the odds would be three to one against him, and he would have the girl to protect as well.

She was crowded beside him, Sam's arm circling her shoulders, his hand fastened over her mouth. Sam held a gun against her ribs. "One squawk," he said, "and I'm going to mess that pretty face of yours."

On the front seat Eddie laughed in a childish, sadistic chuckle. "Charlie's been swearing he'd get his hands on her again before he killed her. He'll mess her up enough without you doing it, Sam."

The girl shivered. The Ghost could feel the little tremors that shook her body. He kept his face averted.

The car turned down an alley that was narrow and dark and smelled of decay. Huge, vacant warehouses were on one side of the alley, a high brick wall on the other. Far off to the right a boat howled at the fog rising from the river.

The car was moving slowly, without lights, and half way down the alley it stopped. Sam dragged the girl out on one side; Eddie opened the door beside the Ghost and yanked. The tall man staggered as he got out and his knees seemed wobbly.

Eddie laughed and struck him, jabbed the gun in his back. "Around this way."

SAM knocked on a door, three quick taps, a pause, three more. The knocks had an odd, hollow sound there in the

G-MAN WITHOUT A GRAVE

darkness. When they had ceased, the Ghost could hear the girl's frightened breathing. Eddie was directly behind the Ghost, and the Ghost's hands were locked in the steel cuffs.

The door cracked open. Beyond there was only solid blackness. Sam pushed the girl through. The Ghost cursed silently and followed, Eddie's gun in his back. The door closed. A narrow slit of light showed to the left and they went toward it.

"Boss?" Eddie whispered.

The person who had opened the door grunted.

"We really brought you something this time, Boss."

The Ghost's hands were twisting gently behind him, the thumbs bending over until they fitted tight against the little fingers—not one man in a hundred thousand could do the trick, not even many magicians. The very bones in the wrist seemed to contract upon themselves.

The strip of light widened abruptly into a doorway. A black figure passed through, the Ghost's view interrupted at once by the merged forms of Sam and the girl. Then the Ghost went through into a small room lighted by a lamp on a table. Eddie came after him and closed the door, standing back of the Ghost, with his gun still ready.

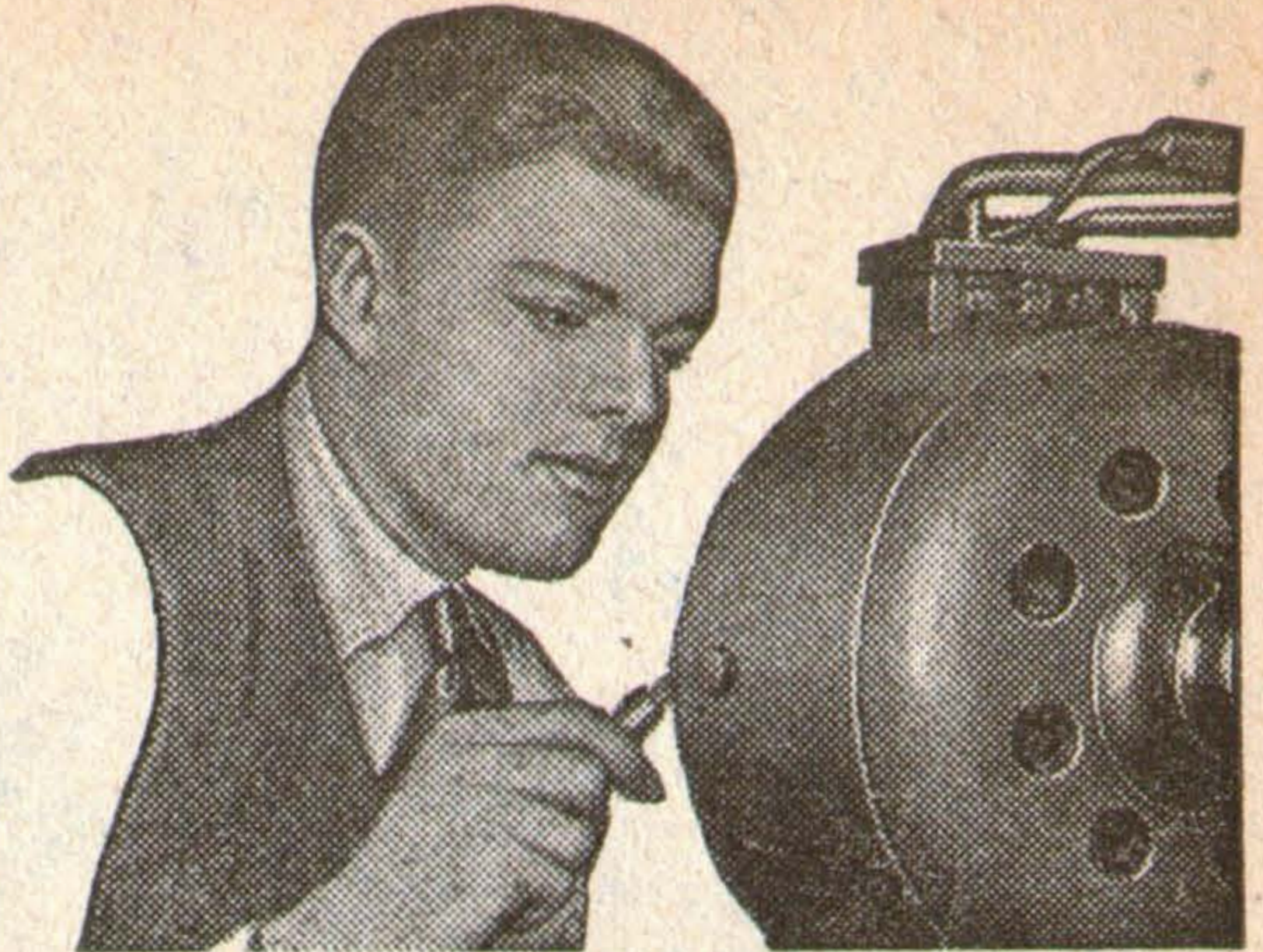
"Look what we brought you, Boss."

The place was filthy, littered with empty cans, old packing boxes, scraps of paper. Near the wall was an iron drum nearly six feet high. To the right was a curtained window.

Charlie Serana stood in the middle of the room staring at the girl. His red lips twisted into their faint smile. His white teeth shown in the lamplight. "So we do meet again. How does it happen this time?"

"I persuaded the guard to let me go out of the house. I couldn't stand it inside longer. We just went to the grocery."

(Continued on page 109)



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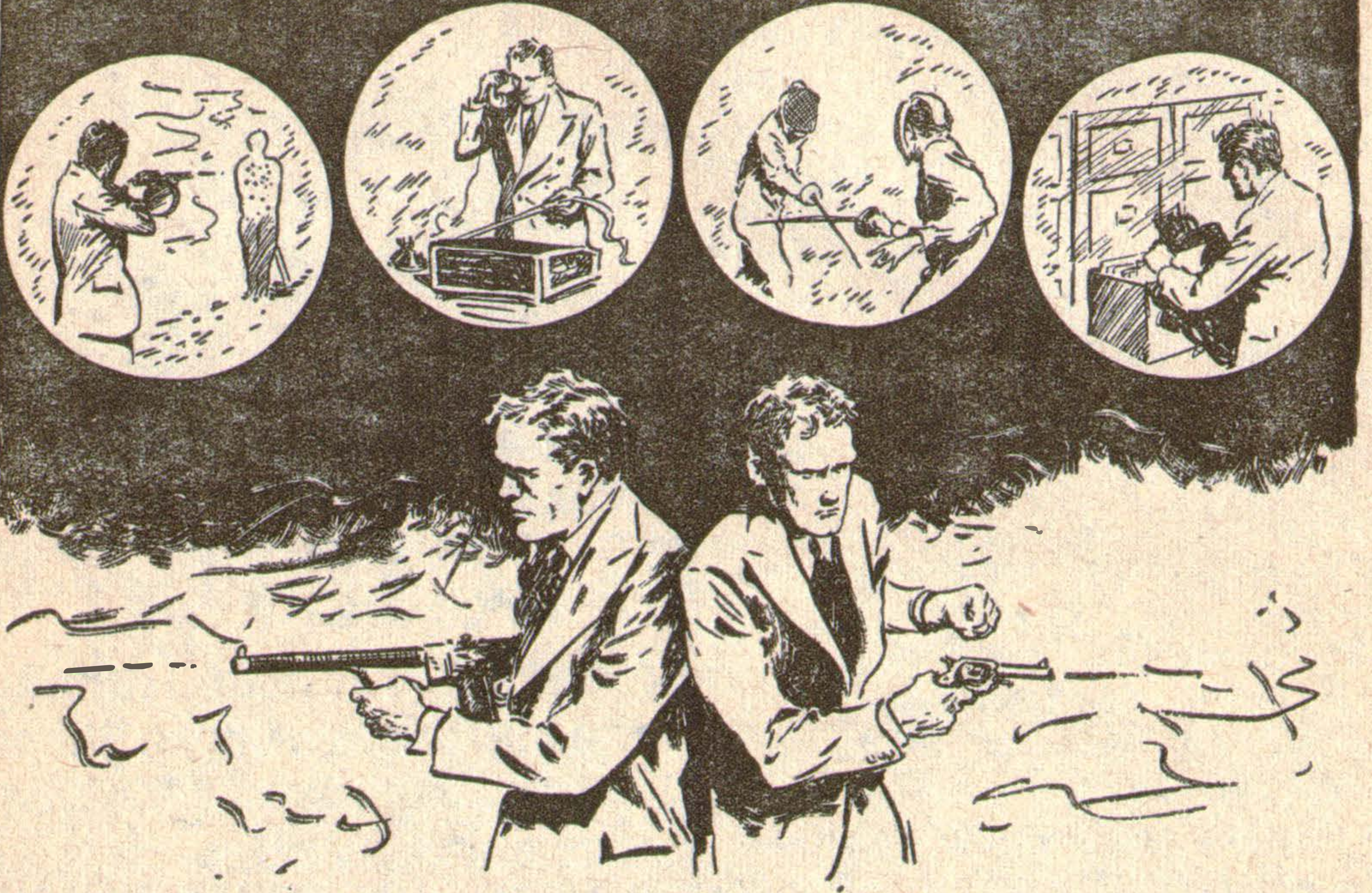
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NOT since World War days has America faced greater problems than it does today. In the maintenance of our country's neutrality undoubtedly lies the only hope for the preservation of the hard-won liberties and democratic government that we prize as a sacred heritage. Even rigid censorship cannot hide from us the disaster that war is today bringing abroad, and the wanton waste of life and resources it effects with ruthless terror upon all concerned.

The new problems in law enforcement that the war brings are many. President Roosevelt has delegated the Federal Bureau of Investigation to take charge wherever espionage, sabotage, subversive activities, and violations of neutrality regulations are concerned.

For over a year now the Dies Committee has been investigating un-American activities. It is hoped that their work will safeguard the freedom and democratic rights of all people alike and that it will in no way unjustly infringe the rights of minorities in their Constitutional guarantees.

J. Edgar Hoover assures us that the F.B.I. will carry on its new special work in the calm, impartial, vigorous but unhysterical manner in which it has functioned

in other connections in the past. If the law has been violated, it is time to take appropriate steps, but no "drives" on the part of any agency will effectively help in the uncovering of espionage activities, and protect us against them, without the backing of the orderly processes of the law.

"In the wave of patriotism that is rising in the country," Mr. Hoover wisely points out, "there lies the danger of overzealous groups or individuals engaging in acts which are distinctly un-American in method, no matter how patriotic in aim. We need no vigilantes in this situation. The vigilante method is distinctly contrary to American ideals of justice."

Of course the cooperation of every man and woman is needed if our law enforcement agencies are to function with the highest efficiency. But this cooperation must take the form only of passing along to the proper authorities any information that comes one's way.

G-MAN WITHOUT A GRAVE

(Continued from page 107)

"And we happened to be passing," Eddie said.

For the first time Serana looked squarely into the face of the Ghost. There was blood down the high bridge of the Ghost's nose, and the red wig was like a flame on his head, but recognition came almost instantly in Serana's eyes. Still he did not move. For five seconds they looked at one another.

"I've been looking for you," the Ghost said in that odd, bell-like voice of his. "That house, that rich Montgomery Eaton stuff, was just a buildup. But I knew you were broke and would come hunting around sooner or later."

"You told me once before you were hunting for me," Charlie Serana said. His black eyes were tight on the Ghost, but there was no fear in them. There was no fear in his body, only cruelty—and besides, there were three to one now. "Why keep looking for me?"

"You crossed me on a job once. I don't forget that."

"What job?"

The Ghost did not answer. The story was only a lie to hide his real identity, his real purpose from whatever person might leave here alive. The fuse was burning short, toward the explosion point.

Eddie Harkins was saying, "Who is this—?"

Serana said, "The Ghost."

The fuse had burned out. The explosion came instantly. Harkins had let the gun droop in his hand. He whipped it up. But the Ghost was balanced and waiting. He kicked with all the weight of his gaunt body against Eddie Harkins' knee, and the crack of the bone was loud and clear before it died under the man's scream and the roar of his gun.

Already the Ghost was spinning, his hands sliding free of the steel cuffs, the small gun plunging down out of his sleeve

(Continued on page 110)

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28x4.75-19		2.45 1.25	33x4	2.95 1.25	33x5	3.75 1.75
29x4.75-20		2.50 1.25	34x4	3.25 1.35	35x5	3.95 1.75
29x5.00-19		2.85 1.25	32x4 1/4	3.35 1.45		
30x5.00-20		2.85 1.25				
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5.60-17		3.35 1.40				
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6.00-17		3.40 1.40				
30x6.00-18		3.40 1.40				
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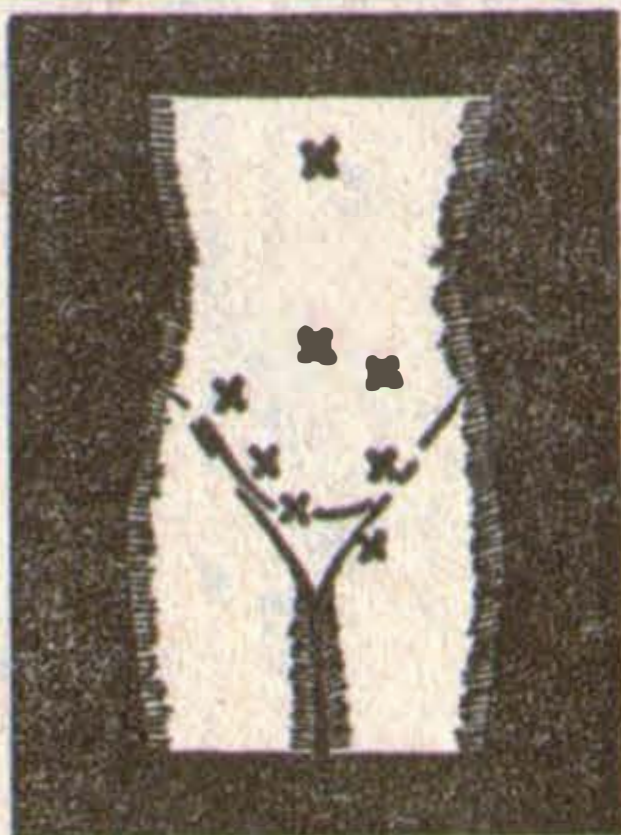
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ACE G-MAN

(Continued from page 109)

into his grip. Serana was jumping backward, pawing for his own gun—but the Ghost was ready first. He brought up the small gun. Then Sam had hurled both arms around the Ghost and they went down with a crash.

Serana's automatic was out now. He was not worrying about the man who had helped him; he was firing furiously, squeezing the trigger time after time. But as they fell, the Ghost had pulled Sam on top of him. He felt the man's body quiver to the shock of bullets. Then he rolled back of the big iron drum and Serana was on the other side.

The girl screamed. He had a glimpse of Eddie Harkins sprawled on the floor, his face twisted in agony, clawing for the big automatic he had dropped when he fell. As Harkins' fingers touched it, the Ghost fired.

THE silence seemed as sudden and thunderous as the gunfire. The lamplight steadied and was still in the room. On one side of the huge iron drum crouched the Ghost and the girl. On the other side was Charlie Serana. The door and the window were in view of both men. Neither of them could escape as long as the other remained alive.

Then, on the stillness, they heard the sudden wail of police sirens! They came closer, fast, and began to stop. The Ghost's face was drawn. Those were city police, not G-Men. They couldn't have come this quick in answer to the gunfire. Then how. . . ?

Beyond the iron drum Serana said, "We are both going to be trapped."

"Not this time. One of us may be. Not both."

"Let's scam. You can look for me again. In fact, I'll be looking for you."

"Just one of us is leaving this room."

Serana's voice got edged. "Neither of us will leave, you damn fool, if we don't

G-MAN WITHOUT A GRAVE

get out quick! The cops are surrounding this place! Let's call it off for tonight."

They could hear dully the smash of police axes on the warehouse door. A police whistle shrilled.

"Are you crazy!" Serana cried huskily. "Do you want us both to die?"

And then, from the doorway it seemed, a thin unnatural voice cried, "Put up your hands!" Serana screamed and spun and blasted three shots into the closed door. At the same instant the Ghost dived past the edge of the iron drum. Serana whirled back toward him. The Ghost fired.

A voice bellowed outside. The police were pounding down toward this room as the Ghost stood up. He grinned at the girl. "Goodbye," he said.

"But who. . .?" She looked from him to the door.

"Ventriloquism. Its' a lousy magician who can't invent a Charlie McCarthy when he has to."

He turned and leaped at the window. He swung himself up.

(Concluded on next page)

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ACE G-MAN

(Continued from page 111)

The door of the room smashed open and a bullfaced cop drove through, skidding. From the corner of his eye he saw the Ghost. He whirled up his gun, finger tightening on the trigger.

Margy said later that she had stumbled and fallen, that it had been accidental. Why should she want to save the life of a murderer, of the most notorious criminal of his age? Of course it was an accident that she stumbled against the policeman's wrist and his bullet went wide. It was only nerves that made her stand trembling, her eyes shut, her hands over her face, when she heard the scattered shots outside where the tall thin man had vanished.

Did they wound him? Did they kill him? She waited for the answer. She heard someone say a patrolman had spotted the car turning into the alley and that was how the police had arrived so quickly. But what about *him*?

Next morning the papers said that despite police gunfire the Ghost had escaped again. But police swore that sooner or later they would get him. Sooner or later he would make the fatal mistake, and they would get him. And orders went out through organized crime also; the Ghost was a man better dead. He was a lone wolf who didn't play the game the way the others did. On one point the underworld and the police were in agreement: the Ghost would have to be killed.

None of them dreamed that three nights later a hawknosed man would move swiftly down the marble corridors of the Department of Justice. The Ghost had just come from that large office on the fifth floor that was the core and center of all F. B. I. activity. He was leaving on a new mission. For Brian O'Reilly was dead these three years now and a Ghost has no vacation, no time for romance.

A Ghost must be about his business of spreading death.

THE END

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