



25¢
NOV.

DETECTIVE STORY

MAGAZINE



**MALONE IS
DEAD —
LONG LIVE
MALONE!**

**A NEW
NOVELETTE
by CRAIG RICE**

20 TOP TUNES \$2.98

LESS THAN 15¢ A SELECTION

YOU SAVE \$1.82

NOW AVAILABLE—FOR THE FIRST TIME AT THE MOST SENSATIONAL MONEY SAVING PRICE OF ONLY \$2.98 . . . the 20 TOP HITS that are being whistled and sung all over America. These Records, bought separately in the stores would cost you up to \$17.80. You can choose from packages of Hit Parade songs . . . Hill Billy favorites . . . or the most loved Hymns.

Each package contains a full hour of musical enjoyment. They are *all brand new* and each record plays twice as many songs as regular records, containing *four complete 3-minute selections per record*. They are break-resistant and will play on any standard type 78 rpm phonograph. For those with 45 rpm changers, special packages of 45's are also available.

THE BIGGEST PHONOGRAPH RECORD BUY IN TOWN!

We urge you to fill in and mail Coupon NOW! Play these 20 selections for 10 days in your own home. If

you are not delighted, return within 10 days for FULL REFUND.

DON'T DELAY!
RUSH YOUR ORDER
for your favorite
GROUP NOW!

CANADIAN READERS!
This offer is also available to you in Canada on 78 rpm only. Address: Top Tunes, Dept. J, 198 Wellesley St. East, Toronto 5, Ontario



20 HIT PARADE TUNES

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Anytime | Blacksmith Blues |
| Tell Me Why | Pittsburgh, Pa. |
| Cry | Blue Tango |
| Here Am I Broken Hearted | Forgive Me |
| Please Mr. Sun | Candy-Dancers Ball |
| I'll Walk Alone | Trust in Me |
| Perfidia | Tulips and Heather |
| Wheel of Fortune | Stolen Love |
| A Guy Is a Guy | The Little White Cloud |
| I Wanna Love You | That Cried |
| Kiss of Fire | |

20 HILL BILLY TUNES

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Heart Strings | Music Makin' Mama From Memphis |
| Alabama Jubilee | Driftwood on the River |
| How Long Will It Take | These Things Shall Pass |
| Crazy Heart | Give Me More and More |
| Always Late | Baby We're Really in Love |
| Slow Poke | Let Old Mother Nature Have Her Name |
| Hey Good Lookin' | Somebody's Beatin' My Time |
| I'll Still Want You | Too Old to Cut the Mustard |
| Mom and Dad's Waltz | |
| I Don't Wanna Be Free | |
| Travelin' Blues | |
| Missing in Action | |

20 MOST LOVED HYMNS

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Our Lady of Fatima | The Lord's Prayer |
| Onward Christian Soldiers | The Bells of St. Mary |
| Abide With Me | The Rosary |
| Moonlight Madonna | Deck the Hall With Boughs of Holly |
| Away in a Manger | These Things Shall Pass |
| The Bell | Songs My Mother Taught Me |
| Adeste Fideles | Me |
| Noel | Little Town of Bethlehem |
| Good King Wenceslas | Silent Night |
| Serenata | Spirit of Christmas |
| Ave Maria | |

IMPORTANT—These Tunes are kept constantly up to date —only the latest and most popular hits are kept on the list.

MAIL COUPON NOW—10-DAY TRIAL OFFER

TOP TUNES, Dept. T
79 Cambridge St., Boston, Mass.

Gentlemen: Please RUSH the 20 Top Selections on your NO-RISK 10-day money-back guarantee. I enclose \$2.98 for each group of 20 selections with the understanding that if I am not completely satisfied you will return my money.

20 Hit Parade Tunes \$2.98

20 Hymns \$2.98

20 Hill Billy Hits . . . \$2.98

All 3 Groups of 60 Songs \$7.95

Name

Address

City Zone State

Check if for 45 rpm.

Amazing NEW WATCH with MECHANICAL BRAIN!

Date Changes **AUTOMATICALLY** EVERY DAY

Miracle Achievement of Famous SWISS Precision Watchmakers!



WHAT A BUY!

WHAT A BUY! Now, for only \$8.95 you can own a lifetime Swiss timepiece with features seldom found even in \$75 watches. Our wholesale type merchandising makes it possible for us to bring you this **DIRECT SWISS IMPORT** at a fraction of its worth. Amaze your family and friends with the magic-like action of this **AUTOMATIC CALENDAR — STOPWATCH — CHRONOGRAPH — WRIST WATCH**. See the date change automatically every day. Time races, sports, lab work, photography, etc. And, yes, for gifts, no one will ever guess its modest cost. It's a perfect gift for every occasion: **BIRTHDAY, GRADUATION, ANNIVERSARY, CHRISTMAS** or any other holiday. If you've always wanted a precision watch but did not care to pay \$75.00 or more, don't miss this offer. **ORDER TODAY** while supply lasts.

Special Offer
NOT AT THE \$75 YOU'D EXPECT
\$8.95
PLUS 90¢ FED. TAX
Act Now AND SAVE!

OVER 40 QUALITY FEATURES . . . Seldom Found Even In \$75 Watches!

Imported Swiss Precision Movement. **GUARANTEED ACCURATE**, supremely dependable. **PUSH BUTTON START AND STOP. RED SWEEP SECOND HAND** for instant viewing. **Shatterproof crystal** never needs replacing. Triple chrome plated case **ALWAYS** looks brand new. Fully **SHOCK RESISTANT** and **ANTI-MAGNETIC** . . . electricity can't affect it! **Radium glow dial** for easy viewing at night. **Unconditionally GUARANTEED**. Complete how-to-use instructions included. All these features plus dozens more make this amazing timepiece the **buy of a lifetime**. Don't say later, "I'm sorry I missed out." **MAIL COUPON NOW** while offer lasts.

Unconditionally GUARANTEED FOR TWO YEARS!



SEND NO MONEY!
 Rush coupon for immediate delivery. Wear is 10 days without obligation. Supply is, of course, limited. Order today.



TIMES PLANES



TIMES SHOP WORK



TIMES LAB WORK

FREE

OF ADDED COST...



MATCHING METAL

E-X-P-A-N-S-I-O-N WATCH BAND!

TRY 10 DAYS AT OUR RISK - RUSH COUPON

YOUNG PRODUCTS, DEPT. 469
 2605 ELMHURST AVENUE, DETROIT 6, MICHIGAN
 Send Chrono-Calendar watches at \$8.95 plus 90¢ Fed. Tax each. I will deposit with Postman special low price plus postage. If I'm not delighted after 10 days, I may return watch for full refund of purchase price.

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____

YOUNG PRODUCTS Dept. 469 2605 ELMHURST, DETROIT 6, MICH.

SAVE MORE If you send cash, check, M. O. . . . **PAY POSTAGE**. Same moneyback guarantee.

25c

DETECTIVE STORY

MAGAZINE



VOL. 1

NOVEMBER, 1952

NO. 1

FEATURE STORIES

- MALONE IS DEAD—LONG LIVE MALONE!** Craig Rice 12
 Nobody, but nobody, but the fabulous little lawyer, Malone, could go to sleep and wake up murdered! But that was nothing compared to the search for Aunt Eva's kidnaped stomach . . .
- TALL GUYS COME HIGH.** Fletcher Flora 46
 But the fixers had ways of making a man stoop low.
- CONCERNING MRS. MURDER.** Gordon Shelly 86
 You couldn't walk away from a dame like that—even if you knew it meant being carried away

SHORT STORIES

- DOUBLE HARNESS.** John D. MacDonald 28
 Only over his harness mate's dead body would rookie Ames get a citation.
- A FINE FOGGY NIGHT.** V. E. Thiessen 35
 It was on such a night that my wife disappeared. . . . A good night for clandestine love. . . . Or a good night to hide a murder.
- THE THIN EDGE.** Steve Frazee 62
 Gadsen had to hope the soulless, expressionless horror facing him hid someone who was just a little human . . .
- ROUND TRIP.** Alan Ritner Anderson 70
 When you get framed with a corpse you didn't murder, it's usually best to call the police. But Kent Jansen decided on a safer course . . .
- FOOTSTEPS BEHIND HER!** Francis K. Allan 76
 The love that red top of Sally's had brought her, also brought something more lethal than hate!

FEATURES

- SCOTLAND YARD'S NEMESIS.** Harold Helfer 6
 For twenty years Old Flannelfoot stayed one jump ahead of them.
- LEGAL LAUGHTER.** Bart Cassidy 45

THE NEXT ISSUE OUT OCTOBER 24.

Any resemblance between any character appearing in fictional matter, and any person, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and unintentional.

Published bi-monthly by New Publications, Inc., an affiliate of Popular Publications, Inc., at 1125 E. Vaile Ave., Kokomo, Indiana. Editorial and Executive Offices, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. Henry Streeger, President. John J. McVarish, Treasurer. Entry as second-class matter pending at the Post Office at Kokomo, Indiana. Copyright, 1952, by New Publications, Inc. This issue is published simultaneously in the Dominion of Canada. Copyright under International Copy right Convention and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. All rights reserved, including the right of reproduction, in whole or in part, in any form. Single copy, 25c. Annual subscription for U. S. A., its Possessions and Canada, \$1.50, other coun-tries 50c additional. All correspondence relating to this publication should be addressed to 1125 E. Vaile Ave., Kokomo, Indiana, or 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. When submitting manuscripts, enclose stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return if found unavailable. The publishers will exercise care in the handling of unsolicited manuscripts, but assume no responsibility for their return. Printed in the U. S. A.



Picture yourself going places

You've done it often. Call it day-dreaming if you like, but you've seen yourself in a bigger job - giving orders and making decisions - driving off in a smart new car - buying your family a fine home.

There's nothing wrong with dreams. But how about making them come true? *You can do it, if you're willing to try!*

Look around you. The men who are going places are the *trained* men. They've learned

special skills that bring them better jobs and higher pay. It's the men *without* training whose dreams never come true.


What are you going to do about it? Just wait and wish? If you really *want to succeed*, you can get the training you need by studying at home in your spare time. International Correspondence Schools offer you a course in just about any field you choose, giving you the practical plus the bedrock facts and theory. No skimming or skimping! And you'll be earning while you learn. Students report better jobs and more pay within a few months.

Look over the list of subjects in the coupon below. Pick out the one that interests you most - the one that holds the greatest future for you. Then mark the coupon, and mail it today. *Find out* what I. C. S. can do for you. It costs only a stamp or postcard, but it's the first step if you want to go places!



DON'T let these poor excuses make you **FAIL**

1. I never got started.
2. I want a good time.
3. I don't want any responsibility.
4. I can't stick to it.
5. I haven't enough education.
6. I don't know where to get training.



SMARTEST THING HE EVER DID

"I noticed that the trained men held the better jobs. That's when I decided to take an I. C. S. course. Enrolling with I. C. S. was one of the smartest things I ever did. The position as Plant Engineer I hold today is largely due to the 'know-how' derived from my I. C. S. texts. I. C. S. can help any man who will study."

L. P. S., Elkhart, Ind.

GOING INTO THE ARMY OR NAVY?

Earn more pay, win a higher rating, quicker promotion by having this specialized knowledge and credit. I. C. S. courses have helped thousands advance in the services.

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS



BOX 3279-H, SCRANTON 9, PENNA.

Without cost or obligation, please send me the booklet about the course BEFORE which I have marked X:

- ART**
- Commercial Art
- Magazine and Book Illustrating
- Show Card and Sign Lettering
- Fashion Illustrating
- AUTOMOTIVE**
- Automobile Mechanic
- Auto-Elec. Technician
- Auto Body Rebuilding and Refinishing
- Diesel-Gas Engines
- AVIATION**
- Aeronautical Engineering Jr.
- Aircraft Engine Mechanic
- Airplane Drafting
- BUILDING**
- Architecture
- Arch. Drafting
- Building Contractor
- Estimating
- Carpenter and Mill Work
- Carpenter Foreman
- Reading Blueprints
- House Planning
- Plumbing
- Heating
- Steam Fitting
- Air Conditioning
- Electrician
- BUSINESS**
- Business Administration
- Certified Public Accountant
- Accounting
- Bookkeeping
- Stenography and Typing
- Secretarial
- Federal Tax
- Business Correspondence
- Personnel and Labor Relations
- Advertising
- Retail Business Management
- Managing Small Business
- Sales Management
- Salesmanship
- Traffic Management
- CHEMISTRY**
- Chemical Engineering
- Chemistry
- Analytical Chemistry
- Petroleum-Nat'l Gas
- Pulp and Paper Making
- Plastics

- CIVIL STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING**
- Civil Engineering
- Structural Engineering
- Surveying and Mapping
- Structural Drafting
- Highway Engineering
- Reading Blueprints
- Concrete Construction
- Sanitary Engineering
- DRAFTING**
- Aircraft Drafting
- Architectural Drafting
- Electrical Drafting
- Mechanical Drafting
- Structural Drafting
- Sheet Metal Drafting
- Mine Surveying and Drafting
- ELECTRICAL**
- Electrical Engineering
- Electrician
- Electrical Maintenance
- Electrical Drafting
- Electric Power and Light
- Lineman
- HIGH SCHOOL**
- High School Subjects

- College Preparatory
- Mathematics
- Commercial
- Good English
- MECHANICAL AND SHOP**
- Mechanical Engineering
- Industrial Engineering
- Industrial Supervision
- Foremanship
- Mechanical Drafting
- Machine Design-Drafting
- Machine Shop Practice
- Tool Design
- Industrial Instrumentation
- Machine Shop Inspection
- Reading Blueprints
- Toolmaking
- Gas-Electric Welding
- Heat Treatment-Metallurgy
- Sheet Metal Work
- Sheet Metal Pattern Drafting
- Refrigeration
- POWER**
- Combustion Engineering
- Diesel-Electric
- Electric Light and Power

- Stationary Steam Engineering
- Stationary Fireman
- RADIO, TELEVISION, COMMUNICATIONS**
- General Radio
- Radio Operation
- Radio Servicing-FM
- Television
- Electronics
- Telephone Work
- RAILROAD**
- Locomotive Engineer
- Diesel Locomotive
- Air Brakes - Car Inspector
- Railroad Administration
- TEXTILE**
- Textile Engineering
- Cotton Manufacture
- Rayon Manufacture
- Woolen Manufacture
- Loom Fixing
- Finishing and Dyeing
- Textile Designing
- HOME ARTS**
- Dressmaking and Designing
- Cookery
- Tea Room Management

Please send information about I.C.S. employee training for companies.

Name _____ Age _____ Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Working Hours _____ A.M. to _____ P.M.

Occupation _____

Special tuition rates to members of the Armed Forces. Canadian residents send coupon to International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Ltd., Montreal, Canada.

Scotland Yard's Nemesis

By HAROLD HELFER

To Scotland Yard Old Flannelfoot was no
ghost, but he was almost as elusive.

IN ENGLAND, they put Old Flannel Foot right up there with such legendary master rogues as Robin Hood, Francois Villon and Jimmy Valentine. But there was one big difference, as the British police will tell you, still with something of a gulp. Old Flannel Foot was for real.

In fact or fiction, no more fabulous character exists anywhere in the annals of burglary than he. Consider! For twenty years, in one place, London, he plied his trade, as regular as clockwork, with the organization that's reputed to be just about the greatest manhunt setup in the world, Scotland Yard, on his trail.

And, furthermore, Scotland Yard knew just exactly when he was going to strike. Friday night and Sunday night. In all the twenty years, it is doubtful whether he missed operating more than two or three times on those nights, if he missed any at all. And he never operated on any other nights.

He invariably left his trademark behind on every job. Crumbs . . . They were tiny pieces of flannel and food. The flecks of flannel came from strips of material that he wore at the bottom of his shoes to deaden the sounds of his movements. The

particles of food were explained by the fact that he loved to raid the iceboxes in a house where he was "working" and he had a habit of eating as he went about the task of ransacking. He was especially partial to plum pie and, if there was any of this delicacy around in a home which he tackled, its crumbs were apt to be found in every room of the house.

Old Flannel Foot had a way all his own of breaking into homes. He preferred houses with French doors, and what he would do was scrape away the putty and remove the pane of glass nearest the door knob. Then he'd just reach in, turn the knob and open the door. And when he was through with his job, he did something that was even more unique for a burglar. He would put the glass pane back in place, resealing it with putty which he'd brought along.

Consequently, police were always having to mollify some couple or other. The man would accuse the woman of stealing the money in the house or she'd accuse him. With a sigh, the officers would explain that they'd only been the victims of Old Flannel Foot. And, though there were

(Continued on page 8)

No Question About it...



Lee is your best value
in **Work Clothes!**

America's Best-Made, Best-Known Work Clothes

Union Made. Buy them at leading retail stores coast to coast.

COPYRIGHT, 1962
THE N. & LEE CO.



(Continued from page 6)

not the usual signs of a burglary about the place, no forced entry, no sloppily looted drawers, the police would point to the newly puttied pane in the door or the crumbs on the floor.

Although the thief operated only twice a week, he made up for it by the industry which he manifested on those nights. He'd always knock off at least three houses while he was at it, and sometimes as many as six. There was no lost motions. The houses were invariably in a row.

He never took anything but money—and icebox tidbits. He obviously was not a greedily inclined individual. His take was always five thousand dollars a year, almost on the nose. This apparently was enough to content him.

Another astonishing thing about him was that he appeared to have a peculiar charm over animals. Some of the places he visited kept ferocious watchdogs on the premises. None of them ever seemed to let out a peep when he was around. In fact they seemed to welcome him.

Quite often, at the last house he payed his call on for the evening, he'd make off with a bicycle, using it to pedal home. But he'd nearly always return the bike a day or so later. This habit of his, plus his considerate mending of his victims' glass panes and the neat, tidy way he conducted his "missions," plus the fact that at Christmas Eve he'd call up Scotland Yard and wish them a "happy Christmas and a bright New Year," gave him a reputation for chivalry and gentlemanliness.

He became one of the most popular figures of his day, an almost legendary character despite the fact that every week end he left considerable proof of his reality. He had dozens of imitators, young punks who sought to turn into romantic will-o'-the-wisps with chivalrous gestures and flannel-stripped shoes. The difference was that they'd all be caught, but Old Flannel Foot went on and on, year after year, until even

practical, down-to-earth Scotland Yard began to sometimes wonder if maybe he didn't belong more in the print of fiction than in scribbling of the police blotter. But the stream of complaints that came in after every week end from his victims gave everything an only too realistic touch.

And then there were the jibes that the Scotland Yard men had to take from other policemen. Whenever the Yard operatives were inclined to brag about some case or other, the other officers could always cause



some painful stammering and flushed faces by saying, "Yes, but what about Old Flannel Foot?"

And perhaps the most fantastic part of it all was that Scotland Yard *knew all the time who Old Flannel Foot was!* At least, they had a pretty good idea. Some years before the war—World War One—Henry Edward Vickers had been arrested several times for burglary and he operated just the way Old Flannel Foot was doing now. But knowing who he was and getting their hands on him were two different things.

SCOTLAND YARD had had a number of talks with his wife. He'd left her shortly after his return from the war, taking with him their little girl, Elsie. The detectives were convinced that Mrs. Vickers was telling the truth when she said she

(Continued on page 10)

\$100⁰⁰ A WEEK in CASH
PAID DIRECT TO YOU

FAMILY HOSPITAL PLAN

**Policy Pays for a Day, a Week,
 a Month, a Year—just as long as
 necessary for you to be hospitalized!**

SAVE MONEY!

There's a big advantage to buying this policy by mail. This method of selling is less costly for us—and that's another reason why we are able to offer so much protection for so little money.

JUST LOOK
**The Large Benefit This Low
 Cost Policy Provides!**

This remarkable Family Hospital Policy covers you and your family for about everything—for every kind of accident—and for all the common and rare diseases, and there are thousands of them. Serious diseases such as cancer, tuberculosis, heart diseases, diseases involving female organs, and abdominal operations are also fully covered after this policy is in force six months. Suicide, insanity, and venereal diseases are understandably excluded.

The money is all yours—for any purpose you want to use it. There are no hidden meanings, or big words in the policy. It is the kind of protection that will stand by you when emergency comes. We urge you and every family and also individuals to send for this policy on our 10 day free trial offer—and be convinced that no other hospital plan offers you so much for your \$1.00 a month!

TWO SPECIAL FEATURES
MATERNITY



Benefits At Small Extra Cost
 Women who will some day have babies will want to take advantage of a special low cost maternity rider. Pays \$50.00 for childbirth confinement either in the hospital or at home, after policy has been in force 10 months. Double the amount on twins.

POLIO



Benefits At No Extra Cost
 In lieu of other regular benefits policy pays these benefits if polio strikes—
 For Hospital Bills, up to \$500.00
 For Doctor's Bills while in the hospital, up to \$500.00
 For Orthopedic Appliances, up to \$500.00
TOTAL OF \$1,500.00

3c A DAY IS ALL YOU PAY
for this outstanding new Family Protection

Wonderful news! This new policy covers everyone from infancy to age 70! When sickness or accident sends you or a member of your family to the hospital—this policy PAYS \$100.00 PER WEEK for a day, a month, even a year . . . or just as long as you stay in the hospital. What a wonderful feeling to know your savings are protected and you won't have to go into debt. The money is paid DIRECT TO YOU to spend as you wish. This remarkable new Family Hospital Protection costs only 3c a day for each adult 18 to 59 years of age, and for age 60 to 70 only 4½c a day. This policy even covers children up to 18 years of age with cash benefits of \$50.00 a week while in the hospital—yet the cost is only 1½c a day for each child! Benefits paid while confined to any recognized hospital, except government hospitals, rest homes or sanitariums. Pick your own doctor. Naturally this wonderful policy is issued only to individuals and families now in good health; otherwise the cost would be sky high. But once protected, you are covered for about every sickness or accident. Persons covered may return as often as necessary to the hospital within the year.

**This is What \$100.00 a Week
 Can Mean to You When in the
 Hospital for Sickness or Accident**

Money melts away fast when you or a member of your family has to go to the hospital. You have to pay costly hospital board and room . . . doctor's bills and maybe the surgeon's bill too . . . necessary medicines, operating room fees—a thousand and one things you don't count on. What a Godsend this **READY CASH BENEFIT WILL BE TO YOU**. Here's cash to go a long way toward paying heavy hospital expenses—and the money left over can help pay you for time lost from your job or business. Remember—all cash benefits are paid directly to you.

**Examine This Policy Without
 Cost or Obligation—Read It—
 Talk It Over—Then Decide**

10 DAYS FREE EXAMINATION

You are invited to inspect this new kind of Family Hospital Plan. We will send the actual policy to you for ten days at no cost or obligation. Talk it over with your banker, doctor, lawyer or spiritual adviser. Then make up your mind. This policy backed by the full resources of the nationally known Service Life Insurance Company of Omaha, Nebraska—organized under the laws of Nebraska and licensed in other states. **SEND NO MONEY**—just your name and address! No obligation, of course!

PAYS CASH BENEFITS REGARDLESS OF ANY OTHER HOSPITAL INSURANCE YOU NOW HAVE!

**FREE INSPECTION . . .
 MAIL COUPON**
 The Actual Policy Will Come to You
 at Once Without Cost or Obligation

The Service Life Insurance Company
 Hospital Department J-11, Omaha 2, Nebraska
 Please rush the new Family Hospital Protection
 Plan Policy to me on 10 days Free Inspection.
 I understand that I am under no obligation.



SERVICE LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
 Hospital Department J-11, Omaha 2, Nebraska

Name.....
 Address.....
 City or Town.....State.....

(Continued from page 8)

did not know what had become of her husband and daughter and that she was unaware that her dignified, respectable seeming husband was a burglar.

The big break in the case came in a fashion so melodramatic that Hollywood script writers probably would hesitate using it, for fear that it would have too phoney a ring.



One day a very beautiful dark-haired girl was found roaming the streets of London with her mind blank. She was the victim of amnesia.

Her picture was published in the papers, and Mrs. Henry Edward Vickers recognized the girl as her long missing daughter. She called on the girl, who'd been taken to a hospital, and Scotland Yard learned about it.

But, since the girl's memory of the past was extremely dim there wasn't much that could be ascertained from her. She didn't remember where she'd lived, what her house had looked like, or what name she and her father went by. The only piece of fact from out of the past that had stuck with her was that a woman who had a crippled child and who lived on the highway somewhere between London and Sandringham

used to drop in and visit her father. Now, Sandringham was one hundred miles from London, and running down one individual on such a long and populous stretch would take quite a bit of doing. It is doubtful whether the detectives would have made the effort for any ordinary burglar. But this was their number one nemesis, their tormentor of two decades, and the Yard tackled the job. It was plodding, tedious work, but some weeks later its officers came upon the woman with the crippled child. The man she'd been visiting was someone she knew as "Richard West," but the men shadowing his house recognized him from their rogues' gallery picture file as Henry Edward Vickers.

They didn't pick him up right away for the simple reason that despite his twenty-year career they had nothing on him. They knew they had only to wait a few days, though, for their break. Sure enough, when Friday night came, he stepped out of his house and started walking off into the darkness. They trailed him from one neighborhood to another, watched him as he finally entered a house, nabbed him just as he was leaving, the loot still on him.

He had committed so many burglaries—hundreds and hundreds of them—that the paper work involved alone would have ruled out charging him with all of them. He was indicted for forty; enough, it was calculated, to put him out of circulation forever. But there was something so courtly and gentlemanly about the bearing of the tall, mustached, handsome Henry Edward Vickers . . . and then there was the fact that he was so obviously devoted to his daughter . . . and that he'd been a wounded war hero . . . and that there'd been a kind of gallantry about the way he'd conducted himself on his "jobs" . . . that the jury let him off with a five-year sentence.

And so far as is known, Old Flannel Foot has gone straight ever since, becoming something of a model citizen, don't y' know. ◆ ◆ ◆

ALLURE...

with a
"PERSONAL" TOUCH

EXCITING PANTIES and NIGHTIE With Motto or Initials

There's "Sheer" magic in the breathtaking loveliness of the chantilly style black lace panties. Fetching and fascinating, you "wear your heart on your hip" with a daring, darling motto or personalized initials. The glorious nightie is an inspiring creation that beautifully combines clinging multi-filament rayon with delicate peek-a-boo black lace. The accent is on lovely, lovely you in these glamorous "personally yours" garments. Irresistible gifts that make you irresistible.



Nightie Colors:

Maize Lime
Orchid Apricot
Pink Blue

Panties

in Black Only

Nighties

\$8.95 ea.

Panties

\$5.00 ea.

RUSH COUPON NOW

QUALITY BAZAAR, 214 E. 49th St., New York 17, N. Y.

Please send me ... Nightie, ... Panties. Enclosed \$..... check, cash or money order, postage prepaid. Sorry, no C.O.D.

NIGHTIE—Color, Sizes: 32, 34, 36, 38, 40 [circle size]

PANTIES—Black Only, Sizes: Small, Medium, Large [desired]

MOTTO () I Love You () Forever Yours
[Check One] () Dangerous Curves () No Trespassing

INITIALS

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY..... ZONE..... STATE.....



Malone Is Dead--

By

CRAIG RICE

IM STILL fogged down," the friendly stranger said dolefully.

"I feel the same way," John J. Malone said, nodding sympathetically, before he realized that the airport weather had been under discussion.

Under ordinary circumstances the little

lawyer would have been happy to be fogged down, or out, or even off the track in such pleasant surroundings as Mike Lyman's Flight Deck cocktail lounge, and in such agreeable company as the stranger's, who was even then signaling the bartender.

But the fact remained that he had to be

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" Malone asked.



Long Live Malone!

Nobody, but nobody, but the fabulous little lawyer, Malone, could go to sleep and wake up murdered! But that was nothing compared to the search for Aunt Eva's kidnaped stomach, the tall silent gent with the itchy trigger finger—plus an all too vocal mouthpiece!

home in Chicago by morning to collect a fee—not only because he needed the money in a hurry, but because he had an uncomfortable feeling that something, possibly lethal, might happen to his client before the fee was paid.

"Funny thing, that Cable case," the

friendly stranger said, glancing at his newspaper.

Malone winced, and hoped no one had noticed.

"These old dames that leave screwy wills! They're just asking for trouble. You been following the case?"

"No," Malone lied.

The friendly stranger signaled for another double Manhattan and said, "Inquest must have been lively. You read about it?"

"No," Malone lied again.

"All I possess I leave to the daughter of my beloved friend—" The stranger snorted in derision. "What d'ya think? Was the old babe murdered?"

"I think she's dead," Malone said truthfully.

The friendly stranger slapped him on the back and said, "You're a card, you are!" Then he glanced through the semi-darkness of the Flight Deck in the general direction of the windows and said, "Wonder how our flights are doing. You wanna check, this time?"

"Glad to," Malone said, seizing the opportunity to escape for a few minutes and compose himself.

"Wunnerful," the stranger said. "Take my ticket." He handed it to Malone and added, "Gotta be in San Francisco fast."

The little lawyer hurried down the stairs and walked through the damply cold mist to the TWA offices, thinking of what he would say to his client, Ed Cable, in the morning.

The pleasant-faced girl at the TWA counter checked both flights, and said, "Both of these will be leaving any minute now."

Malone said, "Thank you, beautiful." He'd been hearing that same phrase since four in the afternoon. With a slower step he went back to the Flight Deck where the friendly stranger was discussing football with another friendly stranger who, as Malone approached, said, "Have a good trip, pal," and went away.

"Nices' people in's town," the stranger said. "Never saw guy before, comes over passes time o' day, buys me drink." He downed the last of it, coughed and said, "How's flights?"

Malone deposited the ticket envelopes on the bar and said gloomily, "Not for hours."

The loudspeaker promptly made a liar of him by announcing "Flight one fifty-four is now boarding at gate three. Passengers for Flight one fifty-four, now boarding at gate three."

The friendly stranger looked at his ticket and said, "That's me." He aimed himself at the door, apparently walking with three left feet. Before Malone could rise, a young man seated near the door bounded up to offer assistance, only to be intercepted by a small, determined-looking dark-haired girl wearing a fire-engine red hat. Between them, the friendly stranger was steered toward the door.

Malone stared moodily into his empty glass. The stranger's casual remark had stirred up something he wanted, to forget temporarily. He had nothing to tell his client in the morning except that his aunt, Eva Cable, was dead from natural causes, and that her will appeared to be genuine.

This was according to the doctor who had attended her for years. Perhaps Ed Cable would even refuse to pay his fee.

Besides, there was that definite hunch that something was very wrong. Four days' hard work had failed to uncover even a hint as to what it might be, but it had stayed with him.

On a sudden impulse, he hurried back to the TWA counter. Would it be possible for him to take a later flight? Not a lot later, but a little later? He'd suddenly remembered some very important business in Hollywood.

The pretty girl smiled and said, "I think I can arrange it." She did some fast paper work, handed him back his envelope, and said, "You're on Flight Eleven, leaving at four-ten this morning. Be sure to get back."

"If only to see you smile again, colleen," Malone promised.

Pushing his way through the crowd toward the cab stand, he caught a glimpse of the red-hatted girl, and scowled. What would Maggie, his secretary, be doing here? In a moment of rash generosity, he'd given

her a week's vacation in Hollywood, and she would be out enjoying it. But there was no time to stop and find out, and knowing Maggie, he wasn't sure that he wanted to. He had enough worries already.

The cab drove through the now rapidly lifting fog, and deposited the little lawyer in front of one of the small apartment buildings that fringe Hollywood and Vine. "You might as well wait," Malone told the driver. He went through the cheaply ornate lobby and pushed a bell marked FAULKNER.

The girl who opened the door was small and perfect. Her almost red hair curled softly to her shoulders, her bangs curled softly on her forehead. Her long-lashed gray eyes lighted as she recognized Malone.

"You've decided to stay!" she exclaimed, hurling a smile at him as she ushered him in. "I'm so glad. And you haven't met my brother Eric." She indicated a blond young man who was unfolding six feet of length from the sofa. "He came here when he heard about the trouble I'm in."

"If you call inheriting two million dollars trouble," Malone said. He nodded to the young man.

"Delighted to meet you, Mr. Malone," the young man said, and let it go at that.

"You've thought of something new?" Mici Faulkner asked anxiously.

Malone said, "I came here to ask you the same question."

"Mr. Rufus Cable was here," Mici said. She frowned. "But it was only about the funeral arrangements. He was very fond of his aunt. He couldn't stay for it because he was called back on business."

Malone frowned, too. Rufus Cable. . . . But he had been thousands of miles away at the time of Eva Cable's death—which had been pronounced natural anyway

been close friends in their musical comedy days. Eva had married a fortune, had been widowed, and eventually had died, leaving Mici a decidedly astonished heiress. Of her two nephews, Ed Cable had engaged Malone to investigate the will and the cause of death. Rufus Cable hadn't cared.

But the feeling that something was wrong was even stronger now.

He gave up at last and said a reluctant farewell at the door.

"You'll come back, I hope," Mici said. "Especially if I need you to defend me."

Malone scowled an unspoken question.

"If they should have an inquest and decide Mrs. Cable didn't die naturally," Eric said, "they'll accuse Mici of her murder."

The little lawyer brooded over that all the way to the airport.

Halfway across the lobby he came to a momentary dead stop, then started again at a faster pace. Was the tall, gray-haired man just leaving the cigar counter, Ed Cable? And if so, what was he doing here? Malone shoved frantically through the crowd. This would be a stroke of luck; he could wind up the whole business and collect his fee right now.

At the moment that he saw the gray-haired man disappear through the doors of the ramp, Malone heard the loudspeaker call Flight 11. He headed for the ramp. There was no sign of the gray-haired man. Probably on his plane by now, Malone decided, and he hoped it also was Flight 11. He reached the gate just in time, getting an indignant look from the attendant as he passed through. There was no sign of Ed Cable or any other gray-haired man on board. Well, it was too late to get off now. Malone settled down, the stewardess sniffed thoughtfully at his breath and promptly brought him a pillow.

In spite of his weariness, the pillow, and the pleasant lullaby of the plane's motors, the little lawyer stayed awake, brooding. What would Ed Cable have been doing in Los Angeles, if it had been Ed Cable? Aunt

A QUARTER hour of talking in what always seemed to be circles left them still spinning and getting nowhere. Mici's mother and Eva Cable, then Eva Gay, had

Eva's funeral. . . . But that was tomorrow— Why hadn't he stayed?

There was something infernally wrong with the whole situation, in spite of the verdict at the inquest, and the signature on the will being pronounced genuine by Clark Sellers himself. There was absolutely nothing to indicate anything wrong. But Malone knew in his heart that there was.

Perhaps, he told himself, his feeling was due to his anxiety to collect that fee, and Ed Cable at the airport had been an illusion caused by the same reason. It was a consoling thought, and he began to doze, finally falling asleep just in time to be gently shaken by the stewardess.

"We're coming into San Francisco, Mr. McNabb."

Malone blinked at her. Poor girl, he thought, she must be as tired as he felt. Or maybe this was her first flight. He looked at his watch. Ten to six. No wonder she was tired. It was a terrible time to be anywhere.

He stumbled half-awake, into something between a mist and a drizzle. "Mizzle" would be the name for it, he decided. Objects were strange and unfamiliar in a light that threatened to turn a gloomy gray any minute. Somehow he found his way to the airport office.

Maggie rushed at him. "We can't talk here," she said in a fast whisper. "I've got a cab waiting outside." She hurried him through the door and into the cab before he could catch a second breath. "Give me your checks," she said. "I'll see to your luggage."

Malone obediently handed her his ticket envelope and she vanished.

The little lawyer sat scowling. Had the Chicago airport been moved during his six day absence? And what was Maggie doing here?

She came back with a porter bearing a handsome but unfamiliar grosgrain leather suitcase, and said, "Mark Hopkins Hotel."

Malone said indignantly, "Would you

mind telling me exactly what you're doing with my life?"

"Saving it," Maggie said calmly. "And until we can talk in private, you do whatever I tell you."

She showed him a newspaper and pointed to a headline.

JOHN J. MALONE, CHICAGO ATTORNEY
FOUND MURDERED ON PLANE

Malone stared at it for approximately sixty seconds, and finally said, "But I never felt better in my life."

"Malone," Maggie told him, "you're in a fog."

He glanced through the window of the cab. "You'd compare Niagara Falls to a leaky faucet," he complained bitterly.

"A mental fog," she said firmly. "And I suspect you've been drinking."

"How can I be drinking when I've just been murdered?" Malone growled.

He tried to read the story in the semi-darkness, and finally gave up.

The cab stopped in front of the hotel. Maggie said, fast, "Go in and register as J. J. McNabb from Los Angeles. I'll see you in five minutes. Questions later," she added as Malone opened his mouth to protest.

A bellhop grabbed the suitcase and Malone followed him obediently to the desk. He suddenly became conscious that he'd been sleeping in his suit and that his necktie was under his left ear.

"Rough flight," he apologized to the room clerk. He almost added, "I was murdered en route," and immediately thought better of it.

Cold water on his face, a comb through his hair, and a noble try at straightening his necktie, made a slight improvement in both his appearance and his state of mind. He sat down on the edge of the bed to read the newspaper.

The body of a man tentatively identified as John J. Malone, well-known Chicago criminal lawyer, had been found on a non-

stop plane bound for Chicago. The stewardess had believed her passenger “—he seemed a trifle intoxicated when he boarded the plane—” to be asleep. Later she became alarmed at his appearance and called the co-pilot, who pronounced him dead. An unscheduled landing had been made at Tandem, Arizona, where Bert Gallegos, sheriff of Tandem County, had made the tentative identification by means of the dead man’s flight receipt and the contents of his brief case, there being no identification on his person. . . .

MALONE looked up as Maggie walked in. “I’ve been murdered, and it only makes page two.” He scowled at her. “How did you get into this, and why?”

“I don’t want you to be murdered twice, just when I’ve gotten my first vacation in six years,” she told him. “Besides, I’d be out of a job.”

“But how—”

“I came to the airport to see you off, and naturally looked for you in the bar. The man you’d been talking with started to leave for his plane just as I arrived, and he—” She hesitated.

“Say he was staggering a little,” Malone told her. “Never speak ill of the dead.”

Maggie went on, “Naturally, I lent a hand as far as the gate, where his ticket was checked and I heard him called Mr. Malone. By the time I got back, I saw you going toward the cab stand. So I went to the ticket counter, pointed to you, and asked if you’d canceled your flight. The girl—pretty little thing—said no, you were booked on a later flight for San Francisco. Your plane was full, but there was a seat on the plane just leaving, so I took it.”

Malone nobly refrained from commenting on what curiosity had done to a certain cat.

“I also discovered,” she added, “that you were traveling under the name of McNabb.”

The little lawyer said, “I can see just

how it was,” and went on to tell her what had happened. “And because our luggage was already checked, I got his and he got mine. I hope we wear the same size shirts.” He yawned, reached for the telephone, and said, “I’ve got to call the police.”

Maggie said, “No!”

“One always calls the police when there’s been a murder. Especially, *my* murder.”

She sighed. “Why do you think I rushed you over here from the airport and told you to register as McNabb? You’re the intended victim.”

Malone blinked, thought it over, and said nothing.

“Someone tried to murder you. The murderer may have found out his mistake by now. So you stay right here and don’t stir out of this room. I’ll find out what’s going on and tell you. You’ve got to trust me.”

“With my life,” Malone said gallantly, “or at least, my murder.”

“And meantime,” she went on, “you take off your clothes and get into bed and get some sleep. You look like something turned up by an amateur archeologist.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Malone said meekly.

She paused at the door and looked at him sternly. “Remember now. *Stay here.*”

Left alone, Malone obeyed to the extent of taking off his shoes and loosening his tie. Then he curled up on the bed, and two little sandmen came out from the woodwork and closed his eyes. They left him a pleasant dream in which Mici Faulkner, her brother Eric, and both Ed and Rufus Cable were sliding down the bannister of a spiral staircase which amazingly turned into a rainbow with a pot of gold at the end. The race was turning into a dead heat but no winners had come in, when he was rudely wakened by the phone jangling as though it had taken a personal dislike to him.

For just a moment he hesitated. Still, it might be Maggie. He picked up the receiver and said, “Good afternoon.”

“Mr. McNabb?” the feminine voice sounded definitely secretarial. But also as

though its owner was blonde, delightful, and worth investigating.

"Yes," Malone said.

"I'm sorry. It didn't sound like you."

"A touch of laryngitis," Malone said bravely.

"We've been trying to reach you, and finally we started on the hotels." She sounded faintly reproachful. "Mr. Cable has been trying to reach you from Chicago. About that will case."

"Oh," Malone said, wishing he'd had six more hours of sleep. "Oh, that."

"I took the liberty of telling him where to call you. And a Mr. Linberry has been calling you; he says it's about the same thing. I gave him your number, too."

"Very thoughtful of you," Malone said, wondering if her looks matched her voice, and how he could meet her in person.

He hung up, reached for a cigar and sat wriggling his toes.

"You are J. J. McNabb," he reminded himself sternly, "And, somehow, you are involved in the Cable will case." He wondered if it was Ed or Rufus who had been calling from Chicago. He looked thoughtfully at the suitcase. It was locked, but that was no problem to Malone. Two minutes later he had learned that J. J. McNabb was a licensed private detective with offices in Los Angeles and San Francisco. He also learned that J. J. McNabb was carrying an expensive-looking but gaudy wardrobe, and ten thousand dollars in cash money.

2

MALONE was still arguing with his conscience about abandoning the legal profession and finding out just how long he could live in Tahiti on ten thousand dollars, when the phone rang again. Chicago was calling. Mr. Rufus Cable.

"What happened?" Rufus Cable demanded, without preliminaries.

Malone wished he knew.

"I can't tell you right now," he hedged.

"I understand," Rufus Cable said. "But don't let anything go wrong now. Linberry will call you. You have the money. Make the deal with him. Phone me what time to meet you at the Chicago airport."

Malone said yes to everything.

"By the way," Rufus Cable said, "how will I recognize you?"

The little lawyer smothered a sigh of relief. Rufus Cable and J. J. McNabb had never met. He glanced toward the open suitcase. "I'll be wearing"—he winced—"a yellow shirt, and a red-and-green checkered vest."

He had a definite feeling as he hung up that Rufus Cable was wincing at the other end of the line.

Well, that settled it. J. J. Malone was murdered, and he was J. J. McNabb for at least the next twenty-four hours. He rummaged through the suitcase and found himself wondering if J. J. McNabb fancied himself as a prospective rodeo star, or if he just liked cowboy boots. Still, the clothes looked as though they would fit.

A side-pocket of the suitcase held a passport in its folder. Malone looked through it thoughtfully. Height, weight and general coloring were about the same. The little lawyer pulled himself to his feet, walked to the dresser, compared his image with the passport picture, and shuddered. They were equally terrible, he thought. And on top of everything else, J. J. McNabb wore sideburns.

Well, it was too late to turn back now. He reached for the telephone and called room service.

"Send up six fried eggs, a double order of ham, a double order of hot-cakes, two pots of coffee, a pint of gin, the best barber available, and all the newspapers you can find."

He had finished the food and was half way through the pint of gin when the barber and the newspapers arrived simultaneously. The barber was short, plump, friendly, and deeply apologetic for the delay. Ma-

lone pointed to the sideburns in the passport picture and said, "Put 'em back. Fast as in speed, and fast as in staying put."

The barber surveyed Malone and the picture, opened his kit, and said, "Easy. Just a little trim off the back will give me the hair."

Malone settled back and tried to relax, opening the newspapers. His murder, he noticed with satisfaction, had been moved to page one.

"That Mr. Malone, he was a fine guy," the barber said. "I knew him very well. Now lean back, please, and close your eyes. The glue only smells bad for a minute."

Malone obeyed. "How well did you know him?"

"Oh, very well, Mr. McNabb, very well. I always shaved him when he was in San Francisco."

Malone, who had never been in San Francisco before in his life, said, "That's very interesting."

"A prince of good fellows," the barber went on. "Only I know it for a fact that all his thinking was done for him by his secretary." He added, "And he was always cockeyed."

"Too bad," Malone said. He reached for the rest of the gin, downed it, and closed his eyes. When he opened them again, J. J. McNabb, sideburns and all, stared at him from the mirror.

"And they'll stay," the barber said proudly, "until time wears them off. A long time."

After the barber had gone, Malone stuffed his own clothes in the suitcase with fine disregard for wrinkles, and donned the gaudy outfit. Luckily, he thought, he and McNabb were nearly the same size. He looked in the mirror and decided bright colors became him. For a moment he considered calling the blond-voiced secretary and making a date, then decided that would be pushing his luck too far.

However, he did call the desk and instruct them to send his bill immediately to

Mr. McNabb's office and collect it. One more glance in the mirror, and on a sudden impulse he added, "And I want to send a wire. To Rico di Angelo's Undertaking Parlor, West North Avenue, Chicago."

"The message? Immediately arrange transportation John J. Malone's body from Tandem, Arizona, and arrange for your finest funeral." He paused a moment and added, "All expenses will be paid by Mr. Rufus Cable. Signed, J. J. McNabb. And now," he said, "get me an immediate plane reservation to Chicago."

Whatever happened, he wasn't going to miss his own funeral. While he waited, he picked up the newspaper to read further details from Tandem.

Miss Mary Margaret Gogarty, secretary, had been arrested in Tandem, for the murder of John J. Malone, her employer.

Malone stared at the paper for just thirty seconds, then he said into the phone, "Never mind that Chicago reservation. Get me a plane to Tandem, Arizona, and get it fast."

He was halfway to the door when the phone rang. He swore at it, finally turned back to answer it. A slightly British voice announced that it belonged to Mr. Linberry.

"I got your wire to bring *It* to Chicago," the voice said. "Luckily I called your office before I left and found out you were here. Why the change in plans?"

"A whim," Malone said.

The voice laughed. "Have you got the money?"

"Yes," Malone said.

"I've got *It*. Where shall we meet?"

"At the airport, as fast as you can make it," Malone told him. "I'm leaving immediately for—" He caught himself. "For the East."

On his way to the airport, he wondered if the mysterious Mr. Linberry knew McNabb by sight. That was a chance that had to be taken.

If he had, and if he noticed any slight difference in appearance, Linberry, a tall, thin,

seedy-looking individual, gave no sign. He simply said, "The price ought to go up. I had to give that crooked undertaker four thousand."

"Ten thousand was agreed on," Malone said firmly, wondering what he was buying.

Linberry shrugged as though to say he'd made a good try anyway. Malone opened the suitcase, took out the envelope of money and handed it over. Linberry grinned and said, "All right. It's in the bag." He laughed at what he evidently considered a joke and handed a small traveling case to Malone.

The little lawyer started to open it gingerly, and was promptly stopped.

"Don't open it here. And you don't need to worry." He added, "Aunt Eva's stomach is in there, all right."

Malone managed to repress both surprise and a shudder.

Linberry nodded toward the newspapers. "Lucky for you this other guy got the poison," he said. "Better watch your step."

This called for repressing more surprise. "Maybe it was intended for the other guy," Malone said with a hollow laugh.

The answering laugh was just as hollow. "You know better than that. Well, hope your luck holds out."

Linberry disappeared into the crowd.

Malone sorted that out in his mind as he headed for the plane. One thing was sure. J. J. McNabb had been the intended victim, and hence still was. He, Malone, had taken on the appearance of J. J. McNabb. And it was too late to change back now.

THE Tandem County courthouse and jail was a dreary one-story building that looked as if it had been there for a long time. Malone stood for a minute staring at it, wondering just how he was going to get Maggie's immediate release. The newspapers had given him a few more details. The victim had been given a terrific overdose of chloral hydrate, according to the Tandem county coroner. This had evi-

dently been administered shortly before the victim boarded his plane at Los Angeles.

There followed a few details about John J. Malone, most of them inaccurate and all of them, the little lawyer reflected, underplayed.

But there was nothing to suggest how he was going to get Maggie out of this mess. He considered introducing himself under his real identity, and decided that convincing a county sheriff that he, though alive and well, was the murdered man, would be like talking a frosty-eyed bank teller in a strange town into cashing a check. At last he decided it was time to ad lib, and strode on into the building.

Before he reached the office of Bert Gallegos, sheriff of Tandem county, he heard voices, one raised in indignation, one in weary protest. As he paused at the door, he observed that the indignant voice came from Maggie, who was explaining in detail just how this or any other sheriff's department should be run. And that the other voice—more apologetic than protesting, he realized—came from a gray-mustached, unhappy-looking man with a star pinned on his shirt. But it was the third person in the room who held his attention. Mici Faulkner.

"Hello, Mr. McNabb," Maggie said, with perfect aplomb. She nodded toward Mici. "She read about this—difficulty—in the papers, and flew over here right away."

Mici said quickly, "I explained to Mr. Gallegos that Miss Gogarty had been with my brother and me every minute until we read about poor Mr. Malone being murdered, and then took her to the airport."

Malone nodded, his head whirling. Had Maggie somehow managed to contact Mici and induce her to play alibi, or had it been Mici's own idea? But everyone's presence seemed to be accounted for except his own, as far as Sheriff Gallegos was concerned. He began casting around in his mind for a good story.

The sheriff had finally made up his mind to speak. "You know this lady?" His voice

seemed to add, "If you do, take her away."

Malone nodded. "I'm J. J. McNabb of San Francisco, and—"

"Know who you are," the sheriff said. He jerked his head toward Maggie. "Said you might get here. Guess she can go."

"I should rather think so," Maggie said. "And of all the silly mistakes—"

The little lawyer decided to interrupt before she was put back in jail, this time for disturbing the peace.

"Have a cigar?" he said.

"Thanks," Sheriff Gallegos said, reaching out a hand. "Know this dead fella, Malone?" Before Malone could answer, he went on, "Don't matter. Got identified anyway. Got poisoned in Los Angeles, died somewhere along the way, body landed here. None of our business."

"Any idea where he did die?" Malone asked in a bored voice.

The sheriff bit the end off his cigar, shrugged and said, "Up in an airplane. Over California, Nevada or Arizona. Body already on the way to Chicago to get buried."

"False arrest—" Maggie began.

"I'm sure it was just a mistake," Malone said quickly and smoothly. "There won't be any further trouble."

"Been enough," the sheriff said, reaching in his pocket for a kitchen match. "Thanks again for the cigar." His tone of voice added "Good-by and good riddance."

Out on the sidewalk, Maggie said, "I'd barely gotten here—"

Simultaneously, Mici Faulkner said, "I thought perhaps I could help—"

In the next few moments Malone caught a few phrases, mainly "—the most stupid sheriff—" and "—caught first plane—"

"Save it," Malone said. "It took a little doing to get here because there isn't any regular plane service. But there's a charter flight waiting at what Tandem calls an airport, to take us back to Las Vegas. From there, next stop Chicago. This is going to cost Mr. Cable money." He didn't add

which Mr. Cable. "On the way, you can both do some explaining." He ushered them into the car which had driven him from the airport and said to Maggie, "You talk first."

"Of all the stupid—" She paused. "Never mind. Naturally I wanted you—I mean your body—I mean *that* body—to be identified as you, so the murderer wouldn't try again before I found out who he was. So I came straight over here to make the identification and, incidentally, to find out everything I could."

"What did you find out?"

She sniffed, and didn't answer. "I said I'd last seen the deceased at the Los Angeles airport. Which was true. And because they'd decided the poison had been administered there—"

"They threw you in the can," Malone said without sympathy.

He turned to Mici.

"I knew you hadn't been murdered," she said. There was faint bewilderment in her voice. "Because you'd been with Eric and me at the time."

Malone said, "First time I ever heard of anyone giving an alibi for the victim but not the suspect. Go on."

"And I just knew Maggie hadn't done it. Anyway, I had to find out what had really happened, so I came right here and introduced myself."

"Nice fast work," Malone said admiringly. He waited till they had boarded the charter plane and taken off before he said, "And now you're coming on to Chicago."

She frowned. "Why?"

"Because I want you both present at my funeral," Malone said. "It's going to be a specially nice one. And you can keep Maggie company on the way, because I'm going to sleep."

"We can have a nice long talk," Maggie said in a voice that would have won the confidence of the Sphinx.

Malone yawned. "Mici, how well did you know McNabb?"

"Not well. You see—" She paused.

"Never mind. Tell Maggie." He well knew his secretary's genius for extracting information. "But I still wish I knew why Eva Gay left you all that money. Because it was the motive for my murder—and still is."

Maggie and Mici said, "What?"

"You were right," Malone said to Maggie, "about my being a prospective victim of homicide. I still am. Probably it will happen when we get to Chicago. And meantime, let me sleep."

3

SOMEWHERE over Iowa, Malone was wakened by Maggie sliding into the seat beside him.

"He's Mr. Cable's son, and he's going to meet us in Chicago," she whispered.

"That's nice," Malone said. "Now go away." The stop-over in Las Vegas had been a strenuous and expensive one. The little lawyer felt what was left in his pocket and resolved to do any future gambling in friendly territory.

"Wake up!" she hissed at him. She dumped the bag recently purchased from Mr. Linberry unceremoniously on the floor, to make room for herself.

Malone jumped.

"Be careful of that," he said, retrieving the bag as gingerly as though it might be expected to explode at any minute. Wide awake, now, he changed the subject fast. "You mean that J. J. McNabb was Cable's son?"

"Of course not." The tone of her voice added, "You stupid oaf." She went on, "Eric is. But he uses the name Faulkner. And Mici didn't know he was her brother—or Rufus Cable's son—until a few weeks ago. And she wouldn't have known it then—about Rufus Cable, I mean—except that she happened to learn it from J. J. McNabb."

Malone sighed. "Start at the beginning."

"Mici Faulkner is a very nice, very well brought up girl. Her mother was an actress and a great friend of Eva Cable. But Mici never saw Eva Cable in her life. Mici's mother died when she was very young, and she was brought up by an aunt. When she grew up she became a model, and she hopes to be a Hollywood star someday. She—"

"Mici Faulkner's life story is interesting, but I've heard most of it," Malone said. "Pick it up where the long lost brother appeared."

Maggie sniffed indignantly. "Eric was a son by a former marriage—evidently to Rufus Cable. After his mother's death, he was brought up by other relatives and Mici never saw him. She knew she had a half-brother somewhere, but that was all. Then he turned up in Hollywood—with proof of his identity—and introduced himself. Mici likes him."

"I'm glad," Malone said. He glanced at his watch. Chicago and its probable perils was not far away. And one of the perils was landing there close to broke. What was more, John J. Malone being dead, he couldn't borrow from any of his usual sources.

"A week or so after Eric arrived," Maggie went on, "Eva Cable died and left Mici everything she had in the world. Including jewelry."

Malone sighed again, this time not as contentedly. "Eric had plenty to gain by that. Mici would undoubtedly split with him. But—that will was genuine. It was dated about three months ago. The previous one split the money between Ed and Rufus Cable, neither of whom needed it. The witnesses are sterling characters, both of whom swear to their signatures. According to every handwriting expert, Eva Cable's signature is genuine. And what's more, I examined the will myself. Furthermore, Aunt Eva died of a heart ailment from which she'd suffered for some time."

This time, Maggie sighed. "But you're engaged to find out if anything is wrong,

and on your way to report that nothing is, someone tries to murder you." She glanced again at the bag. "Malone, what is in there?"

"Aunt Eva's stomach," Malone said.

She jumped, then stared at him with obvious disbelief.

"It really is," he said.

He went on to tell her everything that had happened in San Francisco, including Linberry's cryptic statement that McNabb had been the actual intended victim, and still was in danger.

"Now none of it makes sense," Maggie said at last. "Unless somehow there was a—well, a switch of stomachs before the autopsy. But only Mici and Eric had anything to gain by her sudden death, and Mici swears neither of them went near her or even knew her. And I believe her."

"So do I," Malone said, "if only because the woman who had been Eva Cable's companion for years swears the same thing."

"Why did Eva Cable leave all her money to Mici Faulkner?" Maggie demanded. "Why are you carrying her stomach to Rufus Cable? Why was J. J. McNabb murdered?" She frowned. "There simply isn't any motive."

Malone stared at her. "Bless you," he said at last. "I think that's it."

"What's it?"

"That there isn't any motive. I may have to fill in a few details, but that explains everything."

"Malone," Maggie said, "you can be maddening." She frowned again. "But all this means you're still in danger. What are we going to do about it?"

"Take a few simple precautions," Malone told her. "First, after we get to Chicago—" He paused. "Did you say Eric was going to join us there?"

"Mici agreed with me it might be a good idea," Maggie said, with an air of innocence which didn't deceive Malone in the least. She added, "And we might need a bodyguard. So she phoned him from Las

Vegas, and he'll arrive in Chicago before we do."

The stewardess came by and murmured, "Good morning. Fasten your safety belts, please."

Malone pressed his nose against the window and saw, through the murky haze, a faintly yellow corona of lights. He hoped it would turn out to be Chicago, perils or no perils, and not Seattle, Washington, or Nashville, Tennessee.

"Malone," Maggie said urgently, "you need a bodyguard."

"My body," Malone said dreamily, "is already on its way to one of the finest wakes Chicago has known since its late-lamented fire. And you are going to be an honored guest." He paused. "That is, if my body gets there alive. Of course, there are just a few things you could do to help—"

"If I'd been brought up differently," Maggie said, "I'd say that—" She caught her breath. "All right, what do I do?"

"First, don't let Eric know that I'm McNabb, and that McNabb is me. And make sure that Mici doesn't tell him. Register at the Drake Hotel, and keep the two of them safe and out of mischief."

Maggie said, scowling, "you said—safe?"

"They don't know it, but they're an important clue to my murder," Malone told her. "Meantime, you take this." He handed her the small case.

"Oh, no," Maggie said weakly. "I—wouldn't be caught dead with it."

"I sincerely hope you won't be," the little lawyer said. "So be careful. Take it to Captain Van Flanagan of the homicide bureau, and ask him to find out everything he can about the contents—and to do it within the next few hours. Tell him it was my dying wish."

Maggie shuddered slightly and, against her better judgment, picked up the case.

"And when we land, just don't recognize me, and make sure Mici doesn't either."

"But, Malone. . . . What are you going

to do? And where are you going to be?"

"Duck, to the first question," Malone said gloomily, "and to the second—I wish I knew. But you'll hear from me."

AFTER Maggie had gone back to her own seat, Malone carefully pulled his coat collar up over the checkered shirt. The ten gallon hat presented a problem. He hated to abandon it, since it was the first and probably last he'd ever owned, but this was a time for prudence. He solved the problem by asking the stewardess if she had a small brother which, providentially, she had.

Through the window he could see that this was one of the Chicago early spring days that made solid citizens dream of holidays in Bermuda. He could also see a few scattered people waiting to meet incoming passengers. Eric was there, tall and husky-looking. But there was no sign of Rufus Cable.

Malone considered waiting on the plane until everyone was gone, then changed his mind and decided to try losing himself in what was an inconveniently small crowd. He reached the walk outside the airport without difficulty and was heading toward a taxi when he spotted the tall, thin form of Rufus Cable a few feet away.

But Rufus Cable was looking for two things. One, a red-and-green checkered vest and a yellow shirt. The other, a small traveling case. He moved through the crowd, not toward Malone, but toward Mici.

It was, Malone realized, no time to offer help. Maggie would manage somehow. He moved just close enough for a little cautious eavesdropping.

Rufus Cable said, "What are—I didn't expect to see you here." He added, "What a pleasant surprise!"

It was Mici who took over, and introduced Maggie.

"You should have wired that you were coming," Rufus Cable said pleasantly. "Where are you staying?"

"The Drake," Maggie said, and she took

a firmer hold on the little bag she had.

Mr. Rufus Cable regretted that he couldn't drive them into the Loop. It seemed he had to meet a plane from San Francisco.

That was too bad, everyone agreed, but they would all get together later. Oh, definitely.

Malone moved on. Again he reflected that there were several disadvantages to being the victim of a murder, the main one right now being a financial one. His appearance at the hotel where he'd lived for more than twenty years would cause a disturbance, to say the least. So would a visit to any of the acquaintances who would be good for a light touch. On the other hand, he felt that the victim of a murder deserved nothing but the best.

"Ambassador East," he told the driver.

By the time J. J. McNabb, San Francisco, had been comfortably installed in his room, there was just enough cash on hand for one more cab ride. Still, he reflected, that would be all he would need.

The little lawyer gazed longingly at the bathtub and the bed. Sleep on a plane was better than no sleep at all, but not much better. "Later," he promised himself. With a sigh, he sat down on the edge of the bed and reached for the telephone.

The first call was to Rufus Cable's office. Mr. Cable had not come in yet. "Tell him," Mr. Malone said, "that Mr. McNabb called. Circumstances prevented my looking for him at the airport. He'll understand what I mean. I'll meet him at the Di Angelo Undertaking Parlor on West North Avenue—" He glanced at his watch. "At two this afternoon."

The second call was to an old friend and client, one Charles Firman, who had worked his way up from a modest horse parlor to selling stock in imaginary mines. Charlie had not been surprised to hear of Malone's murder; he was not surprised now to hear of Malone's resurrection. He was even less surprised that Malone wanted a favor.

"For you," he said warmly, "anything."

Malone told him quickly what he wanted. All there was to know about the Eva Cable estate, and who had handled it before Eva Cable's death. "And," he finished, "by two this afternoon."

"For me, kindergarten stuff," Charlie Firman said confidently.

"I'll call you," Malone promised, and hung up.

Charlie Firman had an incredible ability for digging up information about people's most private financial affairs.

Malone's last call was to the Drake Hotel. No, Miss Mary Margaret Gogarty was not registered there. That worried him a little, until he remembered her stop at Captain Flanagan's office. Anyway, Maggie had demonstrated more than once in the past that she was perfectly capable of taking care of herself. Malone gave the address of Rico di Angelo's and said, "Tell her to be sure to be there at two o'clock, and to bring

her friends with her." He combed his hair, straightened his tie, and took a taxi to Rico di Angelo's undertaking parlor.

Rico di Angelo shook hands with him twice, held him off at arm's length to stare at him, then shook hands again.

"Ever since your body arrived, I have been expecting to hear from you. Tell me, Malone, is it for your life insurance?"

"You might call it that," Malone said. "Insurance that I'll stay alive, anyway." He gave Rico a brief outline of what had happened. "And how is my body, anyway?"

"Beautiful," Rico said, with professional pride. "Everything the best. And the flowers—" He motioned Malone to follow.

The softly lighted room was filled with flowers, tastefully arranged around an expensive coffin. Malone examined the cards thoughtfully. The names ranged from important political characters to West Side bookies. He was going to enjoy buying drinks for his friends when this ended.



oh-oh, Dry Scalp!

"BILL'S A GREAT DATE, but he's a square about his hair. He's got all the signs of Dry Scalp! Dull hair that a rake couldn't comb . . . and loose dandruff, too. He needs 'Vaseline' Hair Tonic!"



*Hair looks better...
scalp feels better...
when you check Dry Scalp*

NEAT SOLUTION, this "Vaseline" Hair Tonic! Just a few drops a day check loose dandruff and other annoying signs of Dry Scalp . . . make your hair *naturally* good-looking. Contains no alcohol or other drying ingredients . . . it's economical, too.

Vaseline HAIR TONIC
TRADE MARK ®

Listen to **DR. CHRISTIAN**,
starring **JEAN HERSHOLT**,
on CBS Wednesday nights.

"These just came," Rico said. "These" were a delicate bouquet of daisies, with a card attached—BECAUSE DAISIES NEVER TELL. MAGGIE.

Malone grinned. "An old sweetheart," he explained. He turned to Rico. "There's a few other people we want here at two o'clock, and since I'm officially in my coffin, you'll have to call them. Make it urgent." He wrote down Rufus Cable, Edward Cable, and Captain Flanagan. "And then," he finished, "if you've got any money and someone we can send out for a quart of gin, let's have lunch."

EVERYONE was prompt. By two o'clock Captain Flanagan was already there. Maggie arrived with Mici and Eric; the two Cables came in almost at her heels, Rico greeted everyone with sorrowful respect, expressing how upsetting murder always was.

"Mr. di Angelo, I don't understand—" Rufus Cable began, in what was hardly a respectful voice.

Rico said softly "This is hardly the time nor place for—"

"I say it is. I don't understand why you—"

Just then Captain Flanagan, who had strolled near the coffin, said with a heart-felt sigh, "Looks lifelike, doesn't he?" And in the next moment Maggie gasped and Mici screamed.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself for murdering me?" Malone said in a hollow voice, sitting up in his coffin. "And by mistake, too!"

There was a minute of frozen silence. Then Eric screamed, "You told me it would just put him to sleep for a while; you told me it wasn't dangerous!" and flung himself at Rufus Cable, just as Rufus Cable yanked out a small revolver and fired at Malone. The bullet smashed into a vase, Van Flanagan dived at Eric, and Rico dived indiscriminately at everybody. In the en-

suing mêlée, a basket of calla lilies was overturned and dumped gracefully over Malone's chest.

Just as suddenly it was all over. Rufus Cable sat groggily on the floor, guarded by Rico. Van Flanagan, his face gray, had Eric's arms pinned behind his back. Ed Cable closed his eyes and began swaying, and Maggie eased him into a chair. Mici stared at Malone, who brushed a lily from his vest and instinctively reached for a cigar.

"Do you know how much chloral hydrate it takes to kill a man?" Malone demanded.

Eric shook his head. "He told me—the contents of the bottle would just put him to sleep—until after he was taken off the plane. I had to do it because—" He stopped suddenly.

"Because you were already in it up to your neck," Malone finished for him. He turned to Rico. "Is there an emergency exit to this thing?"

Rico helped him out of the coffin silently. Captain Flanagan retrieved Rufus Cable's revolver from the floor.

"If he'd hit me, I don't know what you could have done," Malone said. "Is there a penalty for killing an already murdered man?" He finally got the cigar lit.

"Malone—please!" Maggie said in exasperation.

"You told me the motive when you said there wasn't any," Malone told her. He smiled at Mici. "Too bad, my dear, that there isn't any money. But at least you inherit the jewelry." He pulled a paper from his pocket. "Here's all the information, Captain Flanagan. Rufus Cable, managing all the late Eva Cable's financial affairs over the past ten years, sunk everything in investments of his own. Eva Cable was old and ill, and not expected to live very long. With her estate left jointly to both the Cable brothers, Rufus Cable faced prison when the inevitable accounting came. So he roped Eric in."

"He told me it wasn't his fault—losing the money," Eric said. "But he said there would be enough to make it worth my while—enough for Mici, and for me. Mici didn't know anything about it."

Malone nodded. "So—he visited Eva Cable and coaxed her into making a new will leaving everything to the daughter of her beloved old friend. It must have been easy for him. Soon after, Eva Cable died, of natural causes."

Both Maggie and Van Flanagan started to speak and stopped.

"But Cable had made the mistake of hiring a private detective to keep an eye on things. He kept too good an eye on things, found out the whole plot, and decided to blackmail Cable. So Cable arranged McNabb's murder, using Eric as a dupe. But again something went wrong. McNabb, smelling danger, and knowing that I was flying to Chicago, fixed it to strike up acquaintance with me at the airport bar, and switch tickets with me. He probably figured that the danger would be waiting for him in San Francisco."

"How do you know?" Maggie asked.

"I don't," Malone said. "I'm just guessing." He added hastily, "But that was his fatal mistake. Eric spotted him at the bar while I was downstairs checking our flight time, bought him a drink and slipped the poison in it."

"He told me it wasn't poison," Eric howled.

"Shut up," Malone said pleasantly. "Don't talk until you're alone with your lawyer. That's me." He went on, "But McNabb had an important appointment with a—friend, in San Francisco. He wired him to meet him in Chicago instead and to bring 'it' with him."

Again Maggie and Captain Flanagan started to speak at once, and again Malone waved them to silence. "As a clincher for a nice permanent blackmail setup," he said, "McNabb told Rufus Cable he had proof that Eva Cable was poisoned, and

could buy the proof and deliver it to him to be destroyed. Rufus Cable knew he hadn't poisoned her, but he wanted the proof anyway."

Malone grinned at Captain Flanagan. "What was in that bag, anyway?"

"A stomach," Captain Flanagan said, his face beginning to turn purple. "But not a trace of poison. And it wasn't even a human stomach; it was a calf's stomach. Damn it, Malone, I—"

"Ssh," Malone said, "remember where you are." He went on, "The only person whose plans went right was a guy named Linberry." He wished now he'd made Linberry split with him. "Linberry, a smart con man, sold McNabb a pig in a poke—rather, a calf's stomach in a traveling case. He's probably on his way to Australia right now. McNabb was going to go on blackmailing Rufus Cable with what he thought he was buying from Linberry, and Rufus Cable thought he could get away with murdering McNabb."

The little lawyer laughed. "Yes, all the plans went wrong, except mine. I did everything I set out to do."

Ed Cable nodded. "I engaged you to find out if the will was valid and if Eva died a natural death. You did both, and very well. I'll send you a check."

"Might as well give it to me now," Malone said casually, "and save a stamp."

He turned to Mici, who was weeping on Maggie's shoulder. "Don't cry, my dear. Eric has the best defense lawyer in the world, starting now. And the jewelry is really magnificent. I've seen it."

"The next time I see you off on a plane," Maggie said grimly, "I'll get there early."

"The next time," Malone said, "you'd better come along."

Once more he surveyed the display of flowers. He put a rosebud in his lapel.

"And now," he said happily, "let's start calling all our friends and issuing invitations. All my life, I've wanted to go to my own wake!"



Double Harness

By
JOHN D.
MacDONALD

Ames, the rookie cop, thought he'd get
a citation only over his harness mate's
dead body.

BLOOM sat down in the captain's office with the ponderous dignity of a large patient man who feels that he has been pushed beyond endurance. Captain Lanahan initialed a paper, tossed it in his out-basket and leaned back until his chair creaked. His eyes were cool.

"Well, Bloom?"

"This is a kid I cannot work with, Captain. This is a crazy kid. I am not a tough cop, and I am not a mean cop. Maybe somebody shoots both of us on account of this kid."

Lanahan sighed. He got up and pointedly closed the office door. He came back and hitched one ham up onto the corner of his desk, sat looking broodingly down at Bloom and swinging one stocky leg.

He said, "I had Cole assign him to Forty-six with you, Al, so you could steady him down."

"Maybe I should sit on him?"

"Don't get smart with me, Al. We've known each other too long. This kid is Gev Davidson's



When the shot came, it
was in the wrong place....



nephew. Don't play dumb with me, either. Davidson got Rogers appointed as commissioner. So this crazy kid, this Wiley Ames, wants to be a cop. So he's a cop. Don't make trouble for me, Al."

"The kid has money. All he wanted was a license to push people around."

Lanahan closed his eyes for a moment. He asked softly, "Will the kid ever make a good cop?"

"In a million years, no," Bloom said. "Nerve he's got plenty of. Muscles he's got. But he wants to shoot somebody, so Davidson can make Rogers pin medals on him. I'll tell you a thing, Joe. We're going down Darcey Boulevard. At a light, we spot these two boys, kids in a big Buick. The clothes don't fit the Buick, and they sit too still, not talking, to show how they aren't nervous to have the prowl pull up beside them. I say to Ames, seeing as how the kids are on the inside lane, I'll get the jump and cut them off, and we'll shake them down. Before I can say another thing, Ames, he is out of the prowl and over there, yanking the door open. He belts the driver one and grabs the keys. Turns out that the father of the kid who's driving owns the Buick. They are nervous on account of his learner's permit isn't good unless he's got a licensed driver with him, which he hasn't. That is the only thing that gets Ames out of a jam for belting him."

Lanahan frowned. "And if it had been real bad boys. . . ."

"Ames gets one in the gut when he yanks the door open. I get no chance to cover him."

"Did you give him hell?"

Al Bloom shrugged. "To that crazy kid I am a fat old cop trying to stay out of trouble while I wait for a pension. He gives me this military talk. The element of surprise. Encirclement. Stuff from Korea yet. Phooie."

Lanahan's voice softened. "How's your kid doing?"

Al beamed. "Yesterday we got a letter.

He wrote it the day they were going to rest camp."

"Al, you got to stay with this Ames. Do all you can to keep his nose clean. I'll go this far with you. You get me a report on him I can stand on, and I'll take it directly to Rogers. Don't try to frame him into anything."

"I don't like it that you should say that to me, Joe."

"I wouldn't blame you if you did frame him into something."

Al shook his head sadly. "Something will happen. Two guys, there has to be co-operation. How would you like him covering you, Joe? How would you like that? And I'm senior. I can't give him the dirty end of the stick."

"Keep your head up and ride with it. I wouldn't trust anybody else to handle it."

ON DUTY that night Bloom dolorously thought that, added to everything else, he just didn't *like* the good-looking big-shouldered kid who rode beside him. Wiley Ames acted proud of being tossed out of schools that Al wished he could have sent Harry to. And he kept telling Bloom that now he'd found the right job and nothing was going to keep him from going to the top.

Bloom tried to tell him. "You got to think more about people, Ames. You got to figure them before you move. With the good ones, maybe being careful is a waste of time. But there's no labels on them. The bad ones, they don't give you two chances."

"So you just move quicker than they do, Pop."

"Takes a good man to sidestep a bullet once it's out of the gun, Ames."

"Pop, you've been cautious all your life. So where are you? In this world you got to stand out, or people never notice you."

"So you're going to get yourself noticed. That it?"

Ames sat back, whistling tunelessly. "Dull night," he said after a while.

"The way I like 'em," Bloom said, without thinking.

Ames laughed in what Al Bloom decided was an exceptionally nasty way. Bloom retired into bitter, gloomy silence. This was a kid you couldn't tell anything to. This was a wise kid. He tried to remember the way he had been when he first got on. Scared of doing the wrong thing. Respectful to the older men on the force. Maybe, when you looked at the whole picture, he hadn't done so well. He and Joe Lanahan had come on within six months of each other. The difference was that being inside had driven him nuts, and Joe had thrived on it.

"Take a look at Junior over there," Ames said, leaning forward.

Bloom wished he had spotted the man first. He begrudged Ames even that tiny accomplishment. The man was elderly. He was caroming off the side of a brick building.

He lurched into a light pole, stood clutching it.

Bloom pulled over onto the wrong side of the street. In the glow of the street lamp he saw the man was well-dressed.

They got out. Ames reached the man first. The man, mumbling incoherently, pawed at Ames: Ames' teeth showed white in a flat grin, and he spun the man, clamping him expertly in a hold taught in the school and said, "Open the door, Pop."

"Don't rough him."

"What do you do with a D-and-D? Pat his hand? Open up!"

Bloom opened the back door, caught the man as Ames tried to pile him in roughly. He eased him down into the seat, knelt, found the man's wallet.

"What are you doing?"

"Finding his address so we can take him home, kid."

"Take him home! Take him to the tank."

"And then hang around in the morning and appear against him? This old guy wasn't hurting anybody."

"So next time he's driving a car instead of walking. Then he hurts somebody."

"We're taking him home. I got the address. It isn't far. I'll call in," Al Bloom said.

"Suit yourself," Ames said sullenly.

Bloom made the call. He drove swiftly, expertly, trying to ignore a little nagging doubt in the back of his mind. But it grew stronger. Suddenly he stopped the car.

"What now?" Ames asked, with tired disgust.

Bloom crawled into the back. He scrambled out, slid behind the wheel, spun in a tight U turn and headed east, the siren yowling into the night.

"You gone nuts?" Ames demanded angrily.

"Thought something was wrong with him," Bloom shouted above the siren. "No liquor stink. We're heading for City Hospital."

The attendants loaded the man on a stretcher and took him in. Bloom followed through the door labeled Emergency, after ordering Ames to stay put.

He came back in fifteen minutes. "The old guy died. It was a heart attack."

"What do you know?" Ames said wonderingly.

"Maybe you ought to stop and wonder if you helped him any, roughing him around like you did."

"He grabbed my arm, didn't he?"

"Sure. Trying to tell you he was sick."

"No violin music too, Pop? It was a mistake anybody could make. Don't break your heart over it."

The rest of the tour was uneventful. They broke up a brawl in a neighborhood dive, quieted a woman who was throwing dishes out of a fourth floor window into an air well, and spent a half hour herding people back from the fire lines at a small blaze.

After Ames had left the locker room, Bloom sat in his underwear, wondering if the heart attack episode was enough to use for a report. He decided it wasn't. He got

home and Jenny was waiting, as usual, the kitchen full of good smells. She listened patiently to his griping about Wiley Ames until, hearing the querulous tone of his own voice, he felt ashamed of himself for burdening her with it.

An uneventful week passed. They took their forty-eight and reported at the five-thirty roll-call for the six to two for another week. Even though Al Bloom kept telling himself that the kid wouldn't listen, he kept trying to get his own philosophy across. Wiley Ames sneered periodically.

He isn't a bad kid, Bloom told himself. Just wild and crazy, and he's got the wrong slant on things.

At one o'clock, with an hour to go on the tour, on a rainy Wednesday night, Bloom cut back through the heart of their assigned territory, drifting slowly down an almost deserted thoroughfare. Ames was bored and irritable.

Bloom slowed the car. "What is it now?" Ames demanded.

"I don't know, exactly. Something wrong in that last block."

"There's something wrong in every block. They're all empty."

Bloom made a U turn and cruised back through the block, awake and alert. He turned again.

"Round and round we go," Ames said.

"Shut up. Just as a favor, shut up."

Suddenly Bloom snapped off the lights and coasted to a stop by the curb. He said, "Now I got it! That department store, half a block back. Goyden's. Always they got a night light in the back you can see through the windows. It's out."

Ames reached for the door handle. Al Bloom grabbed his arm, yanked him back. "This goes my way, kid. So maybe a bulb burns out. If somebody's in there, they'll have a car. It'll be in the back. So we take a look, very careful. We see a car, we send out a call and seal off the area."

"Nice and safe and cautious," Ames said sourly.

"Exactly. Now stick with me, kid, and we take a walk and a look down that alley, right over there. It goes to the back of the store. Nothing on your own. Got it?"

Ames gave a disgusted grunt. They walked through the rain to the alley mouth, and down the alley forty feet to where it made a right angle corner. Bloom held Ames back. He looked cautiously around the corner. He pulled his head back, put his mouth close to Ames' ear.

"Now I'm giving you orders, kid," he whispered. "There's a car there, with a guy in it, and the motor turning over. Hear it? I'm going back to our wagon and send in the call. Then I'm going to block the mouth of the alley with our wagon. There's another way out of here, though. So you stay put. Don't move. If they try to leave too fast, see if you learned to shoot at the school. Get a tire first, then try to put one into the block. Take it easy, because it might be the store manager or something, coming to pick up records. We just can't take any chances."

Without waiting for a reply, Bloom hurried back down the alley, trying to move quietly. He made his call, moved the car, hurried back up the alley. He saw no shadow where he had left Ames. He looked around the corner and cursed softly. A shadow was moving, low crouched, toward the waiting car. Bloom had his Special in his hand. He had a moment of indecision when he could not decide on any reasonable course of action.

Ames moved silently, then flung himself at the driver's side of the car. Bloom, cursing wildly, ran flat-footed down toward the car. The door was open. Two shadows merged. The horn on the car yelped once. One shadow melted down against the alley floor. Bloom held his aim dead on the middle of the standing shadow, and heard it say, "Cover the door, Pop. I'm going in."

Wiley Ames slid up over the edge of the loading platform, ignoring the steps.

"Stop!" Bloom whispered harshly.

The steel door was ajar. Ames went in. Bloom trotted to the end of the loading platform, lunged up the steps, trotted to the steel door, panting. He heard Ames' feet on metal treads, climbing fast, two or three steps at a time. A feeble bulb illuminated the stairwell. Bloom went inside. The night watchman lay face down against the wall at the foot of the stairs, his hands taped behind him.

Wiley Ames was out of sight. Bloom took a deep shuddering breath. There was a sharp pain under his heart. He had advised closing in without sirens, so he had no way of knowing how soon the other cars had been able to bottle up the area.

Two shots resounded, one so close on the heels of the other that it was like an echo. The empty stairwell gave the shots a metallic sound, a vicious clanging.

Bloom stood frozen. The safe thing to do was to wait. But there was a cop up there in trouble. And it didn't matter that

Wiley Ames was no cop, and never would be.

Bloom growled low in his throat and churned up the stairs, keeping close to the cement wall, revolver slanting upward, eyes slanting upward. The flights were short, the stairs turning back on themselves once in each flight.

He found Wiley Ames sprawled across the bottom steps of the third short flight. A man sat on the landing above, knees hunched up, arms clamped across his belly, thin mouth puckered with pain. An automatic lay beside him on the landing itself, as though it had been placed there carefully. Pain squeezed the man's eyes shut. He opened them and snatched at the automatic. Bloom shot him in the chest, high and on the right, trying to get the slug solid against bone. The men rolled backward under the impact, legs scissoring.

Bloom gave a hitch to his pants and went slowly and cautiously up the stairs. As he



Round-Up Pete Seg:
"The man who did more to arouse us workmen was the inventor of the alarm clock."

AND THERE'S NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT TO WEAR A PAIR OF—

Carhartt MASTER CLOTH Overalls

Bib overalls, Sanforized, with coats and work caps to match.

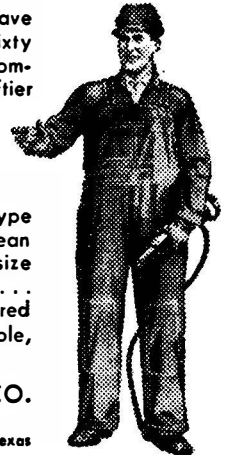


Lace back dungarees and waist overalls in long wearing Carhartt Master Cloth blue denim.

Round-Up Pants —Western style blue jeans — for work or play.

Three generations of the Carhartt family have been producing work clothes exclusively for sixty three years—your guarantee of top quality, roomier cut, more experienced tailoring and thriftier economies.

Whether it's our exclusively made rain repellent, extra heavy Brown-Ducks for those tough, he-man jobs—blue denims for farm and shop—lace back dungarees and waist type overalls—shop coats—Western style blue jean Round-Up pants for the kids—you'll find a size and style to fit you . . . fit your pocket book . . . and fit the job, too. Quality and price considered you can't beat Carhartt's for washable, durable, on-the-job comfort.



HAMILTON CARHARTT OVERALL CO.
 Detroit 16, Michigan
 Carhartt Park, Irvine, Ky. Atlanta, Ga. Dallas, Texas

reached the man who lay on his back, rolling from side to side, eyes squeezed shut again, Bloom used the edge of his shoe to kick the automatic down the steel treads. It clanged and bounced.

There was darkness above. "Come on down with your hands high," Bloom ordered, pausing once in the middle of the sentence to suck air.

He was conscious of the target he made, and he wished he'd stayed down by Ames. He didn't want to stand there, and he didn't want to turn his back. He ducked low and ran for the shadows halfway up the stairs, conscious of all his bulk. He had the feeling that this was a damn fool game for a man his age to be playing. Then the expected slug chipped cement stingingly against his cheek and he fired at the momentary orange wink of flame without consciously willing the shot.

The next bullet numbed his right hand and left it empty, driving the revolver down against his thick thigh, driving it out of his hand. Bloom, for a fractional part of a second, couldn't understand what had happened, and then realized that the revolver had been shot out of his hand. It increased the sense of the ridiculous. He wanted to yell with crazy laughter. This was right out of the double-feature western at the Ritz. A high-shouldered shadow came out of the darkness, moving down the stairs.

Bloom saw the glint as the gun came up. He was not a brave man. He shut his eyes and his knees sagged. In the back of his mind was a bright kitchen, steam clicking the lid of a kettle, Jenny setting the table.

And the shot came—and it came from the wrong place—somewhere below and behind him. And Bloom opened his eyes to see the man above him bend forward from the waist, take one slow careful step and then plunge, breaking himself on the steel treads.

The shots brought the others up the stairs. There was a third man inside. They eventually cornered him in the furniture

department on the third floor, hauled him, sobbing, wet-mouthed, from under a maroon daybed.

Bloom looked back at the trail Wiley Ames had left as he had wormed his way up the steel treads. It was like the silvery track of an early morning snail, but it was black under the weak stairwell bulb. Wiley Ames, with the skin drawn back white and tight against the hard facial bones, whispered, "Had to cover you, Pop."

LANAHAN stood at the window, his back to Bloom, his hands shoved into his hip pockets. Al Bloom reached over and picked up the statement and read it through again, his lips moving over the words.

"I disobeyed the direct order of my superior officer, thereby endangering his life and my own. He was under no compulsion to come in after me. I hereby tender my resignation from the force."

Bloom put it back on the desk, licked his lips, shifted in the chair.

Lanahan said, without turning, "It's all yours, Al. He could have got you killed. He damn near did. I don't blame you, whatever you do. I can endorse it on, recommending acceptance."

Bloom picked it up again. He felt very old and very tired. He ripped it across once, then again. He stood up. "I'll go talk to that wise kid," he said.

"When he goes back on duty, Cole puts him with you, remember?"

Bloom shrugged wearily, walked to the door.

Lanahan sat down at his desk.

Bloom turned, his hand on the knob. "Joe, twenty-six years in this business and this is the first time I shoot at anybody and hit him."

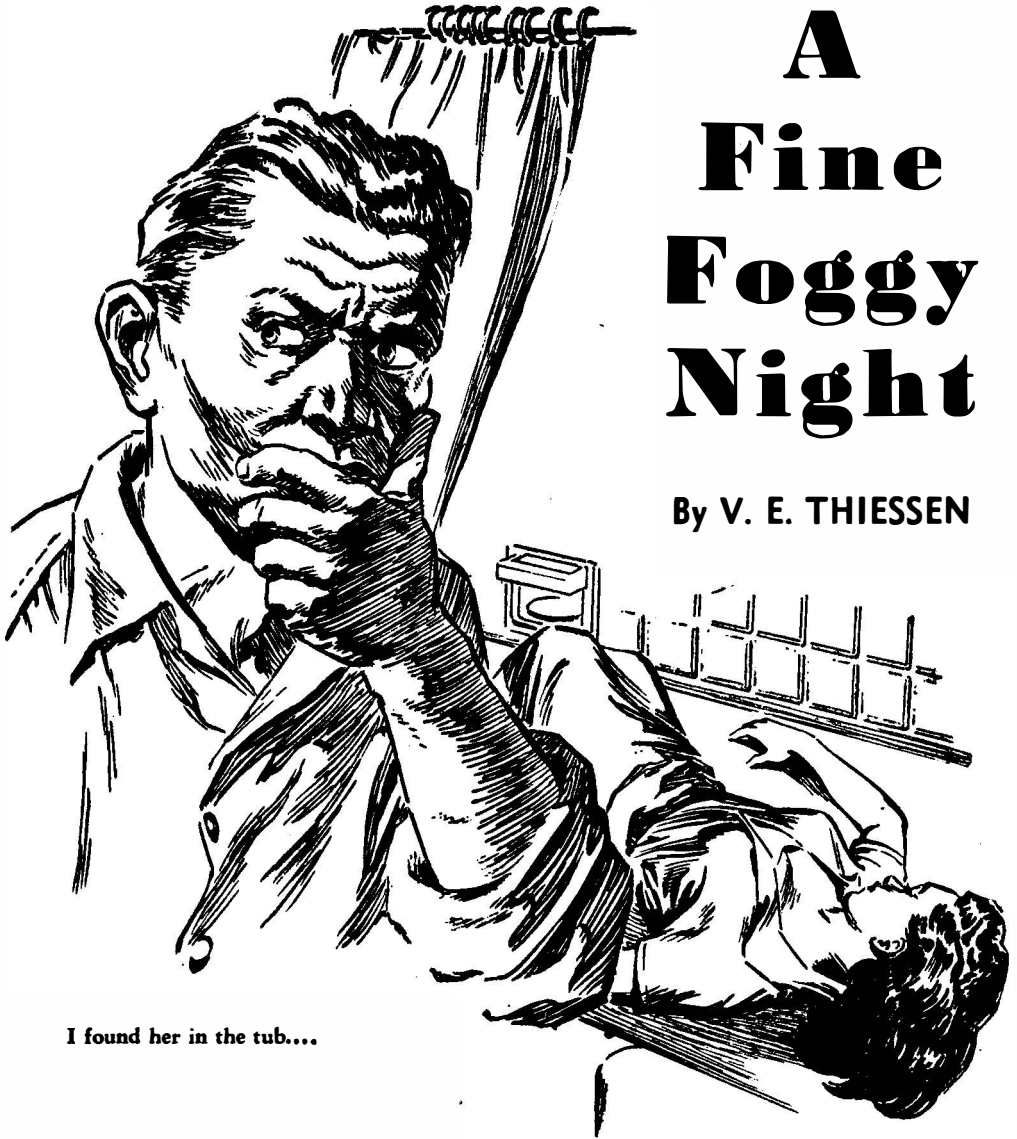
"Sq?" said Lanahan.

Bloom gave an aggrieved sigh. "So now Jenny, she's calling me Humphrey Bogart, and she wants to hang the citation in the living room. And she takes soup to the

(Continued on page 113)

A Fine Foggy Night

By V. E. THIESSEN



I found her in the tub....

It was on such a night that my wife disappeared. . . . A good night for clandestine love. . . . Or a good night to hide a murder.

I REMEMBER I was whistling that night. I was walking home in the fog, my good suit getting wetter and out of press, and the water almost ready to drip from the brim of my hat. The street lights were wet yellow blurs of fog, and the evening chill was beginning to seep into my bones. But I was whistling, whistling on my way home, I remember that. How wrong can you be?

Because I was going home, it didn't mat-

ter about the chill. It didn't matter that I was wet. In a moment I'd be inside our apartment. The place would be warm and Kay would come to meet me and hold me for a moment, as wet as I was.

The door was locked, but I didn't think about that. If she didn't want to be disturbed by a peddler, if she was changing clothes, or taking a bath, Kay usually locked the door.

I let myself in and called. "Honey, where are you?"

There wasn't any answer; the house was quiet. I figured she'd gone to the store, maybe to get a loaf of bread for supper. I got out of my wet coat and took off my tie and went into the bathroom to wash up.

It was quiet in there, too—quiet and neat, as though it hadn't been used all day. But then it was always neat; neat, but comfortable too. That was Kay's idea of home. And I liked it that way; believe me, I liked it.

I washed in hot water, feeling the chill go out of my face. I wondered how long she'd be, and figured I might as well bathe and change right then. I went into the bedroom, thinking I'd wear the blue slacks that hung in the closet. Can you imagine that—I was thinking about the color of the clothes I would wear when I found her note on the bed?

She had never written a shorter one. There were only three words, GOOD-BY—DON'T FORGET.

For a moment I puzzled over that—why good-by? And then fear tightened my throat. It felt like—I don't know what it felt like. It had never been like that before. Her last two words told me more, much more than just good-by. I remembered all the times we'd said those two words to each other. I remembered her face, and her hand reaching across the table by candlelight, and the warm touch as she said, "Don't forget, Johnny, don't ever forget."

Of course, there was more to the thought than that, there had been three more words

at first, just after we were married. "Don't forget I love you," it had been then, but time had shortened the words.

I turned the note in my hands. I don't know what I expected to find on the other side. There was nothing but the white blur of the paper, but when I turned it back the words were still there.

"Good-by—don't forget."

I searched the apartment for her, going into every room again, not looking for anything, just not believing she wasn't there, numb from the shock of that note. Then I went down into the street, and looked up and down, as if I could tell which way she had gone, not caring that my shirt was getting as wet as my coat had been before I took it off. The fog was still there, no longer kind, but shrouding everything from me, even the street—where she had gone.

After a while I went back inside and all the chill in my bones wasn't from the fog. I began to think a little, then, and I came up with just one answer. Kay was in trouble. She hadn't left me for the usual reasons, and I didn't need the note to tell me that she loved me. She must have been deathly afraid, and unwilling to get me mixed up in whatever it was.

I went back into the bedroom and checked her clothes and her luggage. She had packed all right, traveling light. She had taken traveling clothes, too—slacks, blouses and sweaters mostly, and a couple of simple dresses. And while I was dried up inside, some part of my mind said, "She left town—she must have left town."

I noticed one thing more. The bed was hastily made, not neat, as it usually was. I turned the spread down and realized she had lain there for a while, then pulled the bedspread up hastily and left. I reached down and touched the pillow, gently, as though I were touching her. It was wet.

What could I do now? What was there to do? I stood there in the empty bedroom, staring down at her tears on the pillow, wondering. . . .

I went out again into the fog. I went to the police.

I DO NOT know how many hours or how many departments later I finally reached the last office. I do know that I had lost my temper before then. Kay was not a statistic, a lifeless fact to be entered in a file in the proper department and checked in case something turned up. . . . I was not thinking straight, and certainly the police were trying to be helpful. But I wanted action. I wanted Kay, and I wanted every man on the police force to go out and find out what her trouble was. And after a time, after I had been unreasonable enough and threatened to call a dozen people I knew and a dozen more I didn't know, they took me into the office of Lieutenant Brazil.

I said, "It looks as if I'm finally getting somewhere. I want to tell you, Lieutenant Brazil—"

He cut me off, just like that. "You don't want to tell me anything, really! You don't want to complain. . . . You just want to know where your wife has gone."

I stopped talking, and looked at him. He was no longer young, yet the flabbiness of middle age had not reached him. He was as solidly built as an oak keg. His hair and eyes were brown, and he was wearing a brown suit. There was no nonsense about him, and yet now and then there was a shine in his eyes as though some inner wildness still fired him, but was held rigidly under control.

He said, "You had best let me talk for a time, so that you may be angry first, and then let the anger run out. After that, we'll understand each other, and then I can help you."

He smiled. "I called a few people about you as soon as I heard you were raising the devil out there. You're in the loan department of the National Trust Company, doing pretty well, probably due for a vice-presidency soon. Rumor has it that you

and your wife got on well. No kids, though. I know your lodge, and that's about all. Is that correct enough?"

"Right enough," I said.

His voice lashed at me. "Do you know how many women are reported missing in this town? Have you any idea how many of those just stepped out for something, or left a note for hubby which he didn't find? They're always terribly sorry for all the trouble they've caused, and they always show up just after we've disrupted everything because of their carelessness. The boys don't like those cases, but they're pretty pleasant compared to some."

He leaned across his desk and stared at me. "And have you any idea how a policeman feels when he puts in two sleepless nights running down some dame and he finds her, drunk with another guy, and she curses the detective for his pains? And perhaps the next day she's gone again. And now and then we find the husband killed his missing wife, and he's just being clever with us."

I was gripping the arm of my chair. "Damn you!" I cried. "She's gone. She needs help. Can't you understand that?"

His eyes had that shine again. "I understand this. You love your wife. But if she had wanted to be found, she would have told you where she would be. How do I know she's in trouble? You love her, mister, but how do you know she still loves you?"

I could feel the whiteness of my face, and I wanted to smash my fist into his nasty mouth. I stuttered for an instant, and I am not a stutterer.

And then I understood. He was goading me for a purpose. He had to know about me, about her, about everything, and an angry man doesn't hold back. He was good—plenty good in his way—and I had to have his help. I crushed those chair arms in my hands, getting hold of myself, and then I got my voice under control. I showed him the note, and I told him what

she meant when she said "Don't forget."

And I could see a grudging respect in his eyes. Yet he wasn't satisfied. He was thorough, the kind of man who never misses a trick.

"Your wife wash and iron your shirts for you?"

"No. There's just the two of us. She sends most things out, washes lingerie and my wool socks."

"She keep your house or have a maid?"

"We have a girl comes in a couple times a week."

He sat there, considering that. I said, "I think I see what you're trying to figure out. You want to know if she makes a home for me, if she loves me enough for that. I could answer that a hundred ways. Are you married, Lieutenant?"

His voice was as flat and expressionless as slate. "I was once. I'm divorced now."

Shocked for an instant, I rushed the words out. "She does little things for me, things she doesn't have to do. She shines my shoes while I'm gone, sometimes even does them at night while we listen to the radio."

He closed his eyes for an instant, and the tanned line of his jaw was white. Then he opened his eyes and looked steadily at me, and the shine came back.

"I'm sold," he said. "If she left town, she took some kind of transportation—rail, bus, airplane. You won't go home and sleep, and you'll get into trouble if you go away. You might as well come along."

* * *

We started with the railroad stations. We found three different clerks who remembered three different dark-haired women who bought tickets that evening. One was going to Toledo, Ohio, one to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and one to Washington, D. C. When I showed each of the clerks the picture in my wallet, they didn't think it was the same woman, but

they weren't sure, and didn't want to raise any false hopes.

You'd think people could remember, wouldn't you? How could they be so unsure of someone they had seen only a few hours before?

Brazil said, "We'll try the bus station. Suppose you think again. What would your wife be most likely to wear if she were traveling?"

I thought about that, forced myself to remember the clothes that were missing out of the closet. It made the loneliness close in on me again, like the shroud of fog that still lay on the streets.

"She had a gray tweed skirt and a gray sweater that she liked a lot. There's a chance that's what she'd be wearing."

"Okay. Here's the bus station. Let's go in."

I looked at my watch as we entered. Not even midnight yet. It seemed as if Kay had been gone for days. This nightmare search was less than two hours old, yet it had the frightening quality of a bad dream that goes on and on, and from which there is no escape.

I clutched Brazil. "There— There she is!" Then I was running across the room as if my life depended on it. In a way, it did. Kay was my life; the best life I had ever known.

I could see the back of her tweed skirt and gray sweater, and I wanted to cry out, "Thank God, Oh! Thank God!"

I almost stumbled over a man's feet, and then I had reached her and had my hands on her shoulders, turning her around, crying, "Kay, darling! Oh, darling!"

She whirled, startled.

I had never seen the woman before in my life!

I stood, starkly bewildered, stupid. Now, close up, I could see even the skirt and sweater weren't quite like Kay's.

From there it was just a jumble of faces. Faces and voices saying, "No, I haven't seen her. No! No one like that bought a

ticket." It went on until we checked the last little two-by-four charter airplane service at four o'clock in the morning.

Brazil said, "She may have gone by car, and she may still be in town. I'll put some of the boys on the hotels and rooming houses. You'd better go home and get some sleep."

He dropped me in front of the apartment, and I stood on the steps a moment before going up. The first grayness of morning was starting, long before sunrise. The fog had lifted during the night and left only the dampened streets and the clear chill of early morning. I shuddered. I didn't want to go in. I couldn't walk into that empty place, knowing she was gone.

And then the mental fog began to clear a little, too. My mind began to work. I remembered something.

Kay had a sister in Oklahoma City, one whom I had never met. Maybe the man had been wrong when he looked at her photograph. Maybe that had been Kay, after all, who bought the train ticket. Kay had received a letter a day ago from her sister. I had seen the envelope somewhere around the house.

It wasn't much of a clue, but it was better than trying to sleep. I got to the telephone and called that fly-by-night airport. I chartered a two-seated plane for Oklahoma City to leave as soon as I could get to the airstrip.

SOMEWHERE, on the flight, I finally fell asleep listening to the monotonous roar of the little motor. I dozed and I dreamed and in my dream everything was all right, and we were together again.

After several hours I woke again, to hear only the unfeeling drone of the motor and to feel the shuddering of the little plane as she struck rougher weather, and to know Kay was still gone.

It was almost noon when we came over the city. We landed at the airport, well out on the northwest edge of town, and I took

the airport station wagon on in to the business district.

Kay's sister wasn't listed in the telephone book. She might have married, might even have moved away. Now, in the cold reality of morning, I wondered if I hadn't been a complete fool.

I called the railroad. If Kay were here she would have arrived only two hours ahead of me, though she had a head start of most of the night.

There was a chance she had gone to a hotel. I tried the Skirvin first without results. Then I tried the Huckins, and by the time I reached the Black, I was sure I had been completely insane to come here.

I was suddenly aware of weariness along with my discouragement and I realized I had not eaten for twenty-four hours. The quest seemed so futile I didn't even go to the desk first, just went into the coffee shop and ordered coffee. It helped, and I gulped it down and went back to the check desk.

The room clerk said, yes, they'd had a brunette check in just two hours ago. I showed him the picture. He said, yes, that was the one. I couldn't believe him. She was here, and registered in her own name.

I rang her room and got no answer. I showed the clerk identification, told him I was her husband, and proved it. I slipped him a ten dollar bill, and he told me I could go up to the room and wait.

The room was unlocked and I went in. Kay's suitcase stood beside the bed. The bathroom door was half open and I could see a tile floor and green china fixtures. Very nice, I thought. Very nice indeed. I sat down in the easy chair to wait. She'd be here soon, and everything would straighten out. I thumbed through a magazine, as restless as a man can be who is waiting for someone, for something he does not entirely understand. After a time, I got up and went into the bathroom.

The tub was behind the door and there

was a dead woman in the tub. I looked at her, and knew that this was Kay's sister. She was fully dressed; she had even her shoes on, highheeled, gray suede shoes. The marks of a man's hands were on her throat.

It hit me, then. Kay's sister! And that was Kay's bag outside! Kay was in trouble! I figured I'd better wait to report the murder until she arrived, and see what the score was. Something was wrong and I had to protect her. I wanted to be there when she found out about this, and not let her be surprised by some rough-talking cop. So I went back out and sat down to wait.

By four o'clock I had seen the image of the woman and those gray suede shoes in that green bathtub a hundred times. By four o'clock I began to realize something else.

Kay wasn't coming back here.

I had waited hours without reporting this. How was I going to explain that? And the clerk knew I had come up here. I was afraid to call the police now.

But I was more afraid not to.

And, after a while, they came.

* * *

Detective Lieutenant Pollard was a wiry little man with ferret-sharp eyes and a voice as dry as his origin in the Kansas plains. He called me into his office two hours after I had found the body, for a more complete questioning. He had taken a brief statement when the police had first arrived, and after that, had seemed more interested in the room and its contents than in anyone concerned.

He had even been more interested in my clothing than in me. I had been required to strip at the station and my clothes were examined, far more searchingly than I should have thought necessary.

Now, as he turned the full impact of his shrewd little eyes upon me, I knew

these preliminaries were over and he was concentrating on me.

"A few more questions," he said quietly. "I'm sure you'll want to co-operate."

The way he said it, it didn't sound like a question.

He looked at me, and made a sudden movement with his hand, as though he were rolling dice. Several capsules rolled out onto the top of the desk. He said harshly, "You know what those are?"

"No!"

"Can you guess?"

My mind was working rapidly, running over the careful search they had made. "Some sort of dope, I'd guess."

"That's right. Heroin. Not very nice stuff. You have any idea of what this can do to a person's life?"

"Not much."

"It sneaks up on you. Maybe a guy or a girl starts out with reefers, marijuana cigarettes, just for kicks. After a while he takes a couple of these. Pretty soon a guy will kill. A girl will do almost anything, just to get these little capsules. I figure the guys that deal in this stuff are just about as low as a human can be."

He was staring at me, like he was talking about me. I felt an unease sweep over me.

His voice went on remorselessly. "And we don't like strangers, either. It takes an odd man to squeeze down on a woman's throat, to feel that soft flesh fighting under his hands, fighting until it dies and then goes limp like a broken rag doll. *Is that how it feels? Tell me, now, is that how it feels?*"

The sweat was beginning to stand out on my forehead. "I wouldn't know how it feels."

"And you wouldn't know there were a few hundred capsules of heroin in the room—you wouldn't know about that?"

"No."

"Of course, it was just a coincidence you were here, in a town several hundred miles from your home. It was just coincidence

that the girl that was killed looks a lot like a picture you carry in your billfold. It was just coincidence that you came looking for your wife. I suppose it was just coincidence that a woman who could have been your wife hurried out of the hotel just fifteen minutes before you came."

"I told you about that. You can call the police at home. Lieutenant Brazil will confirm my story."

He said, "Tell me about your wife. Why did she leave you?"

His words tortured me out of fear, into a red anger.

"Damn you," I cried. "Damn you, and your evil mind."

"How long has your wife known Lester Fanton?" He shifted his attack.

"Lester Fanton? Who is he? What's my wife got to do with him?"

But he wasn't answering questions. He lashed out with a new question. "How long has your wife been a drug addict?"

I stared at him. He was so impossible he was almost funny.

"Don't be ridiculous. Kay never took dope in her life."

"Maybe not. We can't tell till we get her. Did you get a good look at the dead girl?"

I could feel my eyes widening in amazement.

He stared at me. "I don't know whether you're dumb or just acting. Yeah, she was an addict. The doc says there's no doubt of it."

And now, at last, the tumbled facts were beginning to straighten out. She must have needed help, probably had got in trouble and written Kay. And Kay, thinking of my job, and how it might hurt me if it got out that she was related to a dope addict, had come down here to help.

Pollard said, "I can see you thinking. Come out with it."

"You asked me why she left me. She must have come here because her sister was in trouble."

"Yeah. We figured that, too. But maybe not just the way you figured it."

There was something frightening in his voice. I remembered Kay's bag in the room and her flight. He had mentioned that to see my reaction.

He said, "I did call Lieutenant Brazil to check on you. He backs up your story. And if you find your wife, we want to talk to her."

"Okay," I told him.

"And don't be a fool. You can't hide her. You know the penalty for harboring someone wanted by the police. You can go now. But don't leave town, and let us know where you're staying."

I walked down the steps of the police station into the sunlight, my head reeling. Outside, a red-haired young man in a tweed suit was struggling to light his pipe in the wind.

THERE was no question but that I had learned a lot in the interview. I thought I knew why Kay had left home so suddenly, why she had come here. But I was no further toward finding her than when I started, and if her sister had been in trouble at first, now, with the murder, Kay was in even worse trouble.

And then I remembered something else, a name. The police had asked about Lester Fanton. He must be tied into this some way; therefore, he might be a lead to finding Kay.

But who and where was Lester Fanton? And how would I find that out?

As I stood there, the question began to answer itself. The red-haired young man chucked the match away and came over to me. He said, "I'm Ames, from the *Daily Oklahoman*. I'd like to get a statement."

Here was the answer. A reporter ought to know about Lester Fanton. I said, "Look, friend, I know this is a dry state, but isn't there some place we can find a nice cold beer and a nice quiet booth? I think we could trade a little information."

He grinned, at that. It took him exactly two minutes to get me seated in a taproom booth, with a beer in my hand. He took a sip of his own beer, and said, "Now, how about that statement?"

I shook my head at him. "I want some information first. Who is Lester Fanton?"

His eyes grew veiled, opaque. "Fanton owns a small oil drilling company. His office is downtown here. I forget whether it's in the Fidelity or the Petroleum Building."

He was keeping something back. That was the kind of information I could have gotten out of the telephone directory. I said, "Nuts. If you want a statement, tell me about Fanton."

He looked at me carefully, then shrugged his shoulders. "Okay. I'll take a chance. You know this is a dry state. Bootlegging is still pretty big business here. Rumor has it that Fanton's oil drilling company is just a front, that he's the king bootlegger in Oklahoma County, and lately he's been expanding into other activities. I wouldn't know."

"Would other activities be marijuana cigarettes—maybe heroin?"

"Like I said, I wouldn't know. Now, do I get that statement?"

I gave it to him. I finished my beer and went to Fanton's office. It was on the eighth floor.

The office was small. There was a tiny reception room, with a ninety-octane blonde, and a small, beautifully furnished office beyond. There was nothing more, unless you count photographs all around the wall showing oil drilling operations—too many pictures.

I said, "I'd like to see Mr. Fanton."

She looked at me. She was the kind of girl that would have sent the pulses pounding in a graybeard, and he wouldn't have been thinking about her as his daughter, either. She smiled at me, and I could tell she had been around—plenty. She said, "Is it about oil?"

"Not exactly. It's about the last shipment of goods."

She stared at me. Then she pressed the buzzer at her desk. She gave it three short rings, whatever that meant. Then she said, "Go on in. Mr. Fanton is expecting you now."

I went in. Fanton sat behind his desk. He was a dark man with a hawk's beak of a nose, close-set eyes, and no softness about him. Right now, he was looking at me with a steady, probing expression. He said, "Was there some kind of trouble?" and his voice was as smooth as a black glass marble.

"Yes," I said. "There's trouble, and I'm it." I reached inside my pocket for my billfold, saw him stiffen, and then relax as he saw what I held. I took Kay's picture out of the billfold, and tossed it on the desk. There wasn't time to play it the easy way.

"That's my wife," I said. "I want to know where she is."

He began to stall. "My dear man, why come to me? Go to the police."

"I've been to the police. Now I come to you."

I thought he seemed relieved. I wondered why he'd care whether the police knew where she was.

I was taking long chances, and I knew it. But I had to find Kay; I had to help her. I said, "Look, hard guy, a few hours ago a girl was killed because she knew too much about the dope racket in this town. Believe me, I also know too much. Tell me where my wife is and get us out of this and I'll forget it."

He said, "I don't know what you're talking about, but perhaps I can help you find your wife." He pushed the button, said, "Bring in file twelve."

The girl answered, "In just a moment, Mr. Fanton."

And then the door slammed, and a voice I'd know anywhere said, "I'd like to see Mr. Fanton."

I rushed out the door, crying "Kay! Kay!" And then she was in my arms in the anteroom, and I didn't give a damn for all the ninety-octane blondes in the world. And then, in a moment, I heard the door open and I could feel her tremble. Two men came in. They slid in quietly, along the wall, between us and the door. One of them reached into a shoulder holster and brought out a gun.

The other one wasn't yet twenty-one—just a teenage kid, trying to look tough. But there was a wildness in his eyes that scared me a lot more than the older man did.

I caught on then. "This is file twelve?" I asked Fanton.

Fanton smiled. "I'm afraid so. We're lucky to get you both."

The man with the gun moved suddenly; swiftly, lashing at my head with the gun while I tried to figure things out. I tried to dodge, and failed, and Kay's throat-muffled, frightened scream went with me into the darkness.

THE FIRST thing I noticed when the blackness began to fade was a restless, tossing motion. My head throbbed violently and my stomach didn't feel so good. I tried to move, and realized I was tied and sitting in the back seat of a car.

The kid from the pair in the office was driving. I turned around, feeling like my head was going to drop off. The second

man was sitting in the back seat beside me, still holding the gun.

He asked brightly, "Awake now, lover boy?"

"Where's Kay? What have you done with my wife?"

The kid said eagerly, "Hit him again, Slim."

"Watch your driving. Nah, I'm not gonna hit him. I want him conscious."

"You gonna make him run, Slim?" There was eagerness in the kid's voice, eagerness, and something else that made me shudder.

There was a sweetish, sickly smell in the car and a bit of a smoky haze.

Slim said, "Take it easy, kid. We don't want some traffic cop to pick us up. I know you're high, so take it easy."

The kid said interestedly, "I think there's a car following us."

My heart leaped. The reporter, Ames. He'd picked up my trail. He was hunting a scoop, the rest of his story, and maybe by tailing me, he was going to save me. Maybe they hadn't hurt Kay yet—maybe things were going to work out.

Slim looked back through the rear glass and ordered, "Swing in the next little road and let him go by."

We slid in a moment later, crashed into some brush behind a tree. After a moment the other car roared on by.

Slim said, "Around the other way, now, and step on it!"


AMAZING THING! *By Cooper*

SENSATIONAL NEW TING CREAM FOR FOOT ITCH (ATHLETE'S FOOT)

- REGULAR USE HELPS RELIEVE ITCHING - SOOTHES BURNING BETWEEN CRACKED PEELING TOES - AIDS HEALING AMAZINGLY!



FIRST USED IN HOSPITALS NOW RELEASED TO DRUGGISTS GUARANTEED

TING MUST SATISFY YOU IN A WEEK-OR MONEY BACK!



IN LAB TESTS **TING CREAM** PROVED EFFECTIVE IN KILLING SPECIFIC TYPES OF ATHLETE'S FOOT FUNGI ON 60 SECOND CONTACT!

EVEN IF OTHER PRODUCTS HAVE FAILED TRY AMAZING TING CREAM TODAY! GREASELESS, STAINLESS ALL DRUGGISTS ONLY 60¢ A TUBE

We reversed directions and took a complicated course. We were on the edge of town, in the oil district.

We took a small trail up off the highway. There was no sign of Ames, and I realized that we had lost him.

After a time we stopped. We were in a small clearing in moderately wooded country. The sun was bright and in the distance the rumble of a diesel drilling engine laid a steady pattern of sound.

Slim said, "There's a lot of oil trucks and the like out here. Nobody's gonna notice one more backfire. And nobody's gonna walk out into the woods on Fanton's lease to investigate. Get out, lover boy. You, Junior, bring the shovel out of the trunk."

They might have been talking about digging potatoes. I realized I could walk a little, that my feet had been hobbled with the rope, not bound together. If I ran, I'd fall before I took two steps. I got out. I was scared. I could feel a bullet slapping into my shoulder blades.

The kid said eagerly, "Gonna make him run, Slim?"

"Yeah, I guess so. Cut his legs loose."

The kid pulled out a pocket knife and slashed the rope between my legs. I kicked out and caught him on the side of the head. He went spinning off, out cold for an instant.

Slim was several steps away now, staying out of reach. He said, "Mighty handy, lover boy! Now start running!"

I stood there and looked at him.

His voice dropped conversationally. "I'm going to count to ten. At ten, you start running. I think you'll run, lover boy, because a slim chance is better than none."

He was high, full of marijuana. It showed now, in his eyes, in his eagerness. The kid was still lying there, out cold.

I said, "If this is to be a sporting proposition, how about untying my hands?" I held them out. They had been tied hastily, but tightly, in front of me.

He snickered softly. "Oh, no, lover boy.

But I'll do this. I'll let you get a sprinter's start. Get down there like you were gonna do the hundred."

An idea began to filter through my mind. I leaned down as though I were doing the dash, putting my weight on my bound hands, seeing if I could balance. He was still too far away. I leaned forward, and fell on the ground.

He came closer. "Try again, and fast." I struggled back into a sprinter's crouch.

I hoped he wouldn't notice that my weight was on my hands in front of me, not on my feet. He began to count.

He would expect me to jump the gun. He would expect me to jump off at eight or nine. If I were to surprise him, it would have to be quick. At the count of four, I leaned forward onto my bound hands and kicked back into his shins with both feet, like a frog jumping.

I caught him. He screamed and fell, and I was up, swarming over him, trying to lie on the arm with the gun, trying to keep him down there with just my weight.

And then a shadow fell across me. I figured the kid was up and it was all over. This would be it for sure.

A voice said, "Break it up." A shiny black shoe kicked the gun out of Slim's hand.

Amazed, I staggered to my feet. Lieutenant Pollard was there, with another cop twice as big as life, looking like the Marines. They were armed and ready for trouble. It didn't look like Slim or the kid wanted to give them any.

Pollard said, "Your wife's all right, waiting at the station for you. Things are cleared up now."

"But—" I babbled. "How'd you get here— How?"

Pollard smiled his leather-faced smile. "We had a man following you from the time we let you go."

He grinned dryly. "We've got Fanton, and we've got proof. You know, Brazil

(Continued on page 111)

Legal Laughter

By BART CASSIDY

A police chief in Texas lodged in jail an inebriated man and his dog. A little later the man's wife came, rescued the dog, let the husband stay in jail.

* * *

A Hinton, W. Va., prisoner escaped by sawing a bar from the jail window with a banjo string.

* * *

In Chicago, a holdup man dressed as a railroad engineer and armed with an oil can walked in a tavern, squirted a liquid in the bartender's eyes and made off with \$50 from the cash register.

* * *

When thieves stole a number of choice young camellia bushes from a doctor's yard in Moultrie, Ga., they left a dollar in each hole.

* * *

Answering an urgent midnight call by a man who reported the theft of a money box, police in Pretoria, South Africa, learned that the box had contained 10 cents.

* * *

Carted off to jail after his sixth burglary, a man shook his head and said to San Francisco police: "I don't know why I do these things."

* * *

Two Paris, Tenn., prisoners offered to marry the first two girls who would put up \$3000 bail for their release.

A Cedar Rapids, Ia., woman was very embarrassed when she told police she had no idea that anyone was going to steal her purse containing \$150 or who might have done it. She's a fortune teller.

* * *

A girl arrested for shoplifting in Birmingham, Ala., was found to have a Bible in her purse, which she carried along with her on her theft sprees.

* * *

A man in Watsonville, Calif., who circulated in the bars handing out cards describing himself as a deaf mute and asking contributions, was shortly thereafter carted off to jail. His mistake: He wandered back into the same bars, talking gaily to a girl friend.

* * *

A burglary at Leibnitz, Austria, was traced by police to a group of prisoners in the local jail. They were in the habit of breaking out nightly, meeting their wives and fiancées and returning to jail before dawn.

* * *

Billy of Brookline, Mass., was standing on the sidewalk when an armored car came along. He watched two thieves alight and transfer sacks containing \$15,360 to a brownish car of their own. Throughout the operation Billy's hand was on his holstered pistol—but as he told cops later, "I couldn't use my gun. It wasn't loaded." Billy's 9.

Tall Guys Come

That large and luscious blonde was as tempting to Rufe as the prospect of the fix was to the boys. But whose team could lose with such a lovely mascot?

He felt twisted and cold—and tough. As if he had four aces to play. . . .



High

By FLETCHER FLORA

A TOWERING figure in his long wet overcoat, hands thrust deep into the big pockets, he came into the steamy cement environment of a locker room that was no relief whatever from the oppression of the gray day outside. Over by the wall on a hard bench, leaning forward with elbows on knees, Ira Dodd, the trainer, raised his head briefly, slanting an upward glance from under his shaggy brows. In a moment he resumed his dejected posture, eyes fixed on the damp cement floor.

"Hi, Rufe. McCall wants you. In his office."



Rufe paused, looking down from his great height. He lifted one hand from its resting place in the overcoat pocket and rubbed the fingers softly along the line of his jaw. The fingers were surprisingly slender and sensitive for so big a hand.

"What's it all about, Ira?"

He asked the question, knowing the answer. Knowing it with the acute perception with which one always senses the fulfillment of a dreaded anticipation. In his deep chest there was a sudden accumulation of pressure, forcing inward around his heart. Ira didn't bother to look up again from his detailed study of the floor.

"He wants to see you, that's all. He just told me to tell you."

Rufe turned and retraced his steps to the closed door of McCall's office, rapping shortly and sharply on the narrow horizontal panel above the pane of heavy frosted glass. In response to McCall's invitation, he pushed the door open and entered, stooping a little, hunching his head and shoulders forward to miss the top of the frame.

McCall was across the small room, standing by a narrow window that looked down upon the dreary prospect of a brick side street that retained with recalcitrant delinquency, even under the steady and cold December drizzle, its unwashed appearance. The lifeless light of the dull day gave the tight surface of his bald scalp a soiled appearance. He slumped with one shoulder against the casement, his posture a somewhat upright repetition of the seated dependency implicit in Ira in the locker room. He didn't turn when Rufe entered.

"Rufe? That you, Rufe?"

"Yes."

"Sit down, boy. You ever met Lieutenant Sulky? Sulky's a cop. From Homicide."

Rufe turned to acknowledge the introduction, seeing a short, puffy man rocked back against the wall in a straight chair. A few wisps of limp yellow hair hung down from under the band of a soft hat pushed far back on a round head. A pair of gray eyes so

startlingly light that they seemed almost to shade away into off-white surveyed Rufe with unblinking curiosity. Blubber lips, the lower one pendulous from its own weight, writhed in movement that tried at once to shape a grin and a whistle.

"You're big." Sulky said, making no effort to rise. "My God, you're big!"

"Yeah," Rufe said. "I grew and grew."

He folded himself onto a low bench, the only remaining seat besides McCall's chair behind the desk, and placed his big hands carefully on the knees that jackknifed up in front of him. The pressure in his chest increased, hurting his heart and building up against his lungs. So it had moved over to Homicide. That meant Leary was dead. It couldn't mean anything else. McCall verified the conclusion from the window.

"Leary's dead, Rufe. He died a couple hours ago."

Rufe lifted his hands in unison, pounding the palms against his knees in restrained but measured cadence.

"Why?" he said. "Why?"

McCall shrugged his bulky shoulders almost angrily. "That's why Sulky's here. It's his job to find out why. He wants to ask you some questions."

Rufe gave his attention back to Sulky. Curiosity had died in the light eyes, and now they were shallow and expressionless, shining like two metal disks.

"Did Leary talk?" Rufe asked. "Did he say anything at all?"

Sulky shook his head, drawing his pendulous lower lip in a little tighter against his teeth.

"He didn't even regain consciousness. That boy was a complete mess."

Rufe let his head fall forward, fighting a sudden wave of nausea. His voice sounded muffled, coming up out of his big frame in a fog.

"You can ask your questions," he said.

"Thanks." Looking at Rufe, Sulky raised a blunt finger and began flipping his lower lip, as if in mock mimicry of a mental de-

fective. It was a habitual gesture that had no relationship with his pale, watchful eyes. "I've investigated a lot of murders in a lot of places. I've never investigated the murder of a basketball player before. I'll need help."

"I'll give you all the help I can."

"Good. We can start with your question. Why? You got an idea why someone wanted to kill Leary?"

"No. I have no idea."

Sulky looked at him. The dull light seemed to gather and develop intensity on the pale surface of his eyes, glittering brilliantly.

"You know something? I think you *do* have an idea. I think your coach, McCall here, has an idea, too. And I think I have the same idea as both of you. Trouble is, you don't want to admit it. You don't want to face up. Okay. That was all right as long as a guy had just been beat up a little. But now the guy's dead. He's laid out on a slab, boy, and we got a murder on our hands. Now it's time to face up. Past time. What's the name of your team? Cagers, isn't it?"

"That's right."

"Thought so. I've been reading up a little. Seems to me you were supposed to breeze in this season. Way out in front."

"That's the way they figured us."

"They? You mean the bright boys who do the columns? I guess they make mistakes, same as all of us, don't they?"

"I guess so."

"Sure. Like in the case of the Cagers. You aren't doing so well, are you? You aren't breezing in like was expected."

"We're on top. That's good enough."

"You're on top, all right, I know. I've checked the standings, too. But just barely on top. Not gone and away. Same way with you, big boy. You're supposed to be a genius with a roundball. Hook shot artist. Best post man on the hardwood. But you're slumping. Your average is dropping. See how well-read I am? I went back through

a lot of sport pages in old issues. I know everything but why. That's what I want to know. Why?"

Rufe sat quietly, bitterness rising, the old frustration filling him again, just sitting there thinking about it, with the familiar feeling of rigidly controlled frenzy.

"You named it," he said. "A slump. All athletes have them. In football, in baseball, in ping-pong, probably. Basketball, too. You never know when it'll happen."

SULKY shook his head slowly. The light seemed to skitter and dance on the pale disks of his eyes. Rufe, watching his reaction, could see that he didn't swallow it. No more than Rufe himself swallowed it. Sabotage was the word for it. Deliberate, and carefully planned. Sabotage so expertly executed that you couldn't pin it down. Even McCall, who had smelled it, couldn't expose it.

The point is, a post man has to be fed. He needs a couple of sharp passers with educated fingers to fire the ball in. Leary and Proski had been those men. But lately the passes had been off. A little too far left. Or right. A little too high or low. Sometimes a little too soft, so that the break passed, the defense getting the split second it needed to close up. Just a little off. Just enough to foul up the swift precision necessary to the completion of a scoring play. But not enough to be obvious. In the meanwhile, the sports writers, the bright boys, wrote about big Rufus Miles and his scoring slump.

Sulky brought the front legs of his chair down with a crash. He leaned forward, eyes glittering, blubber lips twisting in a snarl.

"Don't play foxy with me, boy. McCall's already given me the scent. He rubbed my nose right in it. He doesn't think the passes were coming in like they should. Do you think so? You think the passes were right?"

Rufe felt a great weariness, his big frame slumping under it. "No," he said. "They weren't right."

"Why weren't they right? Who gets the ball to you most? Who you been depending on? Leary was one, wasn't he?"

"Yes, Leary was one. Leary and Proski."

"You haven't answered the first question yet. Why weren't they right?"

"Maybe Leary and Proski were off their game."

"Even with Leary on a slab, you got the guts to offer that as a reason? Try again."

Rufe shifted his weight on the hard bench, fighting the sense of angry frustration and frenzy that thinking revived.

"I figured maybe they were sore. Maybe trying to equalize things a little. I've been getting the publicity. I've been getting the credit. Just because I score most, you see. It wasn't right. Leary and Proski were good boys. Sharp passers and good ball hawks. I depended on them. They should have got more credit than they did."

"You mean they were jealous? They wanted to scuttle you because you were the fair-haired boy?"

"Something like that."

Sulky rocked his chair back against the wall again. He hooked his heels over a round and looked at Rufe for a long time while his fat lips relaxed slowly from a snarl to a sneer. His eyes kept on glittering.

"Look, boy," he said softly. "Are you really that green? Are you really that damned country-green? What the hell did Leary and Proski care about a lot of newspaper mush? What did they care, as long as the guys who count, guys like McCall, here, understood how sharp they were? They weren't college kids playing for a lot of corny glory. They were pros, boy. They played for a pay check. They played to fatten next year's contract. If you think hard, maybe you can get a better idea."

"I'm all out of ideas, mister," Rufe said wearily.

He wasn't really, of course. He had one idea left. The big one. The one that Sulky was fishing for. But he wouldn't put it into

words. If Sulky wanted it laid out, he'd have to do it himself. And Sulky obliged. Letting his chair down again, easily this time, he laid it out gently, with restrained relish, his voice sinking to a wet softness.

"I'll tell you something, boy. I'll tell you something that you and McCall both know already. The passes didn't come in because Leary and Proski were bought. They sold out. Someone's been making a great big bundle on Cagers' box scores, and Leary and Proski have been getting their cut. Think back over your games. The games you won. How have the spreads been?"

"Thin."

"Too thin? Thinner than they should have been?"

"Yes."

"That's what I thought. The whole thing stinks. You can't miss it. Leary and Proski have been in on something real fat. The trouble was, Leary got sick of it. He tried to get out, and he couldn't. The boys he was tied up with don't play that way. Finally, though, Leary took command. If they wouldn't let him out, he'd go anyhow, and in his own way. He just bolted, that's all. He just started playing basketball again. Think back now to the last game he played. The night before we found him dumped in that Southside street. How were his passes? They come in all right?"

"They were sharp. Just right."

"Sure. It all figures. And the spread was wide. Wider than it had been for a long time. Wide enough to cost some smart guys a lot of money. Wide enough to cost Leary his life, too. The betting's done on the spread, you see. A few points one way or the other. We're up against some rough characters. Characters who play sure, and play for keeps. We'd like to know who they are. Would you?"

Rufe sat there, remembering Leary and feeling a hot, harsh choking in his throat. A slim, sleek greyhound, that was Leary. Three years out of college, two hours out of the world. A good guy, basically, who'd

gone wrong for a bit and had tried to get straight again. Well, he was straight, all right. Straight and stiff on a slab. . . .

"I'd like to know," Rufe said. "I'd give a lot to know. Why don't you work on Proski? He's still around."

Sulky gave his round head a quick shake, the yellow wisps fluttering on his forehead.

"No good. No good for two reasons. In the first place, Proski's sour. He's bad at the core. He wouldn't want to talk, and even if he wanted to, he'd be too scared, after what happened to Leary. In the second place, we don't want him wise to the fact that we're onto the bribery angle. If he knew, he'd run to the guys who pay off, and everything would close down. It's a murderer we're after now. Bribery comes second. We're keeping the lid on this one. We're keeping it on tight. No one but us on the inside is going to know that we even suspect bribery. We're going to put out that there was another reason entirely for Leary's beating."

Rufe moved uneasily. "Inside, you said. That includes me, I guess. Why?"

Sulky stood up. That way, he was able to look down a little upon Rufe on the bench. He tried to force some friendliness into his voice.

"It's this way. Up to now, they've got only to Leary and Proski. They haven't touched the key man. That's you, boy. Probably they were dubious. Probably Leary and Proski told them you couldn't be had. But you could change that. You could cultivate Proski. You could let it be known, not too obviously, that you're ambitious for the green stuff. Fish for a contact, that is. You could break it open for us, boy."

It was becoming more and more difficult for Rufe to breathe. His words were forced up on his breath with a rasping, asthmatic sound.

"I see. You want me to angle a bribe and then report it."

Sulky's head moved negatively again. "No. Not that quick. Not that easy. You

angle the bribe, all right, but you don't report it. Not openly, that is. Like I said, we've got a murder to clean up. You accept the bribe, and then you pull another Leary on them.

"You pull a double cross. When they close in on you afterward, we'll be there. We'll be under cover, but we'll be watching every move. Wherever they take you, we'll be on their tails. We get them with kidnaping. We get them with assault to kill. Under pressure like that, someone will crack. Someone will sing. We get our murderer."

At the window, McCall jerked around savagely. "Tell him to go to hell, Rufe. Tell him to take his lousy cop business and go to hell. He's got no right to put you on a spot like this."

Sulky just stood there, not minding McCall's words. Not caring at all. Blubber lips moved in a smug, smearsy smile.

"There'll be some risk," he said. "I wouldn't blame you if you wouldn't do it. Even with Leary on a slab, I wouldn't blame you."

Rufe came up suddenly onto his feet, towering over Sulky. Standing changed things, somehow—reversed the command, giving it from Sulky to him.

"Why not?" he said. "If it comes to it, Leary can always move over."

2 AS HE waded across the thick carpet of the bar, heads turned in the wake of his progress, eyes widened a little at the initial shock of his size. A clown at the bar looked up with a start and pushed his drink away with a quick backhand gesture.

"I've had enough," the clown gasped. "I know when I've had enough."

Rufe ignored him. Locating an empty stool beside Proski, he eased himself onto it. The bartender moved over opposite him, leaning a little forward across the bar.

"You're Rufus Miles, aren't you?"

"That's right."

"I saw you against the Eagles. Won a sawbuck. Don't let the small fry bother you."

"I generally don't," Rufe said. "Bourbon in water. Make it pale."

Proski laughed. "You don't have to tell him that. He makes them all pale."

The bartender scowled at Proski. "Wise guy. Always the wise guy Proski."

He mixed Rufe's pale highball and moved away. Proski lifted his own drink, not so pale, and slid half of it down his throat.

"What's on the agenda tonight, hero?"

Rufe ignored that, too. He'd been ignoring a lot the last couple of weeks. Ever since he'd started cultivating Proski. He'd been learning a lot as well. For one thing, he'd learned that Sulky had been right about Proski. A sour guy, Sulky had said. Bad at the core, he'd said. Now Rufe was ready to agree. Proski was a bad one. A genuine bad one. After a while, you got so you could see it even in the little overt mannerisms. The cocky, watchful way he carried his head with its flat-top, yellow crew cut. The way his little eyes went cold and dead at any small thing he didn't like. The frozen set of his flat face when he had his mind on something he wanted. All the little signs that added up.

Now, answering the question, Rufe said, "I don't know. Not much, I guess. I'm about flat."

Proski laughed harshly. "Flat? The big guy? The star? You must make enough to pay the interest on the national debt."

Rufe sipped his drink, shrugging. "Cut it out, Proski. You know how things are. It costs a lot to live. Besides, what chance has a single guy got with the taxes? How much does Uncle leave him?"

"Taxes!" Proski gave the word a profane sound. "You pay taxes on the green that shows. What you need is something undeclared. Something extra under the board."

And there it was. Another feeler. There

had been several now, careful little extensions, always left to die from lack of nourishment. Never any follow-up.

Rufe went along, playing dumb. "Gambling, you mean?"

Proski lifted his square shoulders and let this one die, too. Rufe could read its death in the sudden stony closure of his face, in the quick, curious flatness of his eyes.

"Gambling's one way. A good one, if you're lucky."

"I haven't got much of a bank to start with," Rufe said. "I'm low, I said."

"If you're lucky, you may get high." Proski drained his glass and slipped to his feet. "I'll take you up to the games, if you're interested."

They left the bar and skirted the main room of the club. At the far end, a slick combination was giving a smooth treatment to a sultry tune. A blond girl with a black plaster job was singing with motions about getting ideas. She was giving similar ones to a lot of guys watching from tables. Rufe felt the warm and pulsing rhythm in the muscles that propelled his big frame. There was a light singing in his head. Not because of the pale highball. Because he felt all at once, for no particular reason, that something was on the road.

Upstairs, Proski halted, giving Rufe time to look around for a quick survey of all the fancy setups designed for those who still thought that luck could buck the percentages. Judging from the crowd, a lot of people still thought so.

Rufe's eyes lingered on a thin, hungry-looking woman leaning against a roulette table, eyes hot and avid on the dancing ball. A man in evening clothes brushed past him on the way out, staring ahead with the wide-eyed vacuity of the blind.

"What'll it be?" Proski asked. "Craps?"

"No. Not craps. Craps are murder. I've played some blackjack."

Proski's shoulders hitched faintly. "Blackjack's okay. Nice and simple. If you can count to twenty-one, you're ready to go.

The game's over there in the corner. Maybe I'll see you later."

He moved away, the yellow flat-top cocked arrogantly. Rufe watched him go, feeling the strong visceral reaction of dislike churn unpleasantly within, and then moved himself in the direction of the black-jack game.

He had neither the desire nor the capital to play, so he compromised on a kibitz. That palling promptly, he had about decided to forsake the night's fishing when he felt someone brush against his shoulder and caught a heady whiff of something rare from a bottle.

Turning, he looked into brown eyes that were wide-spaced and friendly under long lashes that had really grown there. The angle of his vision was down, but the angle was obtuse. With a sudden sense of pleasure that was more intense than he would have anticipated, he realized for the first time that he could remember that he was standing beside a girl who could establish a reasonable proportion. A wide, red mouth curved with delight that seemed to equal his own, and he was warmly conscious of superb shoulders, bare, and a black dress smoothly taking long curves downward.

"Pardon me for pushing," she said. "It isn't often I get to measure myself against a man who makes me feel feminine."

He found himself grinning. An easy grin, arising naturally, that was pleasantly devoid of the embarrassment he usually felt when a girl was a factor.

"If feminine is a word for what men want," he said, "you don't have to measure. It's all there and plenty of it."

The curve of her mouth increased. "Six-one, big boy. That's bare-footed. Don't let the idea you're the only one."

"I'm glad I'm not. You don't know how glad."

She took hold of his arm, her fingers long and strong in their grip. "Maybe I do know. Maybe it's mutual. You figuring to play the game?"

"With my roll, I don't even figure to play the slot machines."

"Rufus Miles with no capital? I thought they paid you plenty."

"Not again, please. I just went through that routine. I began with expenses and taxes. You a basketball fan?"

"Because I know who you are? Not particularly. I'm not a baseball fan, either, but I've heard of DiMaggio."

"Thanks for the compliment, but there's quite a difference. Between DiMaggio and me, I mean."

"Well, you're younger than DiMaggio. I'll give you time. Does the sad state of your finances mean that you can't even buy a girl a drink?"

"When they get that bad, I'll get a job. My name seems to have circulated, but yours hasn't. At least, not as far as me. It just shows you how cockeyed our values have become."

"It's Connie. Connie Quarles."

"How are you, Connie?"

"Like I hinted, thirsty."

THEY went downstairs together, drawing attention, and now that it was something shared, enjoying it. In the bar, they found a table and ordered. Rufe, his pale concession: Connie, Scotch on the rocks. He looked at her over his glass.

"How come I found you loose? Something as good as you."

"On the prowl, you mean?"

"No. Without a man attached, I mean."

The soft skin of her shoulders rippled as she raised the Scotch. "There's one around. Somewhere. His name's Morton, I believe. I don't see him in here, so he must be up at the craps table. He loses up there until his liquid courage wears out, then he comes down here for more. He spends his nights going back and forth. If you look closely, you can see his trail on the carpets."

"He must be a dull character. Giving time to a pair of dice that he could be giving to you."

"It doesn't really matter. The dice get more out of him than I do, and I prefer it that way. Thanks, anyhow, for saying nice things."

"They just seem to come. Tell me what you do and where you've been."

"I'm one of Vic Spaden's long-stemmed beauties. The term is the press agent's, not mine. And I've been around. You just haven't been to the right places."

"I'm beginning to see that. Spaden's a gambler, isn't he?"

"He may gamble. As far as I'm concerned, he owns the Oasis and signs my pay check."

"I've heard about the Oasis. Beautiful girls. Tall and beautiful, like you. Only not quite so either, on the average, I'll bet. How come you're not there?"

"Even showgirls rate a night off."

"Sure. I'll have to make the Oasis when you've got a night on."

"Tomorrow night would qualify."

"Sorry. Tomorrow night I do a show of my own."

"Night after?"

"I'm as good as there."

"Save a chair at your table," she said.

By that time they were holding empty glasses. They ordered again and had worked half through the refills, taking it slow and easy, when the excess element showed up. The guy named Morton. Six-foot-one of obvious hostility. It may be that he'd left his good nature at the craps table along with his roll. There was plenty of the hostility, though. Enough to divide between Rufe and Connie. His voice had an alcoholic burr along the edges.

"You playing the field, baby?"

Rufe stood up, holding the reins tight. "I've just been filling in," he said. "Just off the bench for a few minutes."

But the guy was hard to mollify. He looked up at Rufe sourly, his lips twisting.

"To hell with you, big boy. To hell with you and your cute talk." He turned back to Connie. "Come on, baby. It's time to

put this Romeo back on his bench again."

"You've got bad manners," Rufe said softly. "Real bad."

The man swung back. Swung all the way, spinning his weight into an awkward roundhouse that Rufe trapped easily in a big hand. He forced the man's arm down and up again behind him, jerking his body around and holding the hammerlock just below the level of pain. A couple of competent-looking guys in evening clothes appeared quietly.

"You can let him go, big boy," one of them said. "We'll show him the way out."

Rufe released his hold, and the guy named Morton stepped away and turned, cursing softly. He looked at Connie, and Connie looked back. She didn't speak or move. After a few seconds, Morton went away, still cursing softly, sandwiched between the brace of bouncers. Rufe's gaze, following them, was arrested by the figure of Proski just inside the bar door. Proski stood languidly, shoulders against the wall, hands rammed into trouser pockets. On his flat face was an unguarded look of amused contempt. When his eyes met Rufe's, the expression smoothed out, hardened, the contempt retreating to the eyes, the humor vanishing.

"Always the hero," he said. "Even off the hardwood, always the hero."

Connie's voice cut in. "I guess you're stuck with me, Rufe."

Rufe looked at her, tall and beautiful and all ways just right. A swell gal for a tall guy. He looked at her, and he had a crazy feeling that the heart in his big chest was about to fly apart in a burst of excruciating pain. For now, almost intuitively, cued by Proski's unguarded look, he saw the pattern. The oh-so-casual pickup, the table-for-two treatment, the hammed staging of a phony brawl. The last steps to the big contact. In the background, the shadowy figure of a man named Victor Spaden. In the foreground, a big gal named Connie. A big, beautiful gal.

"Yes," he said levelly. "I guess I am."

3

GOING UP in the swift and silent elevator, he thought, *Only a month. Two long weeks of Proski. Two short weeks of Connie. Now who?*

On the top floor, he found the door with the number on it that Connie had mentioned. The door was opened to his knock by a trim maid. He wasn't used to maids, and the uneasy sense of awkwardness she caused in him created in its turn an edge of resentment. At himself for the feeling and at Connie for inviting him to a place where he was subject to it.

"I'm Rufus Miles," he said.

"Miss Quarles is in the living room," the maid said. "She's expecting you."

He said thanks and went past her into a vast living room that had cost a small fortune to furnish. He was disturbed by a fear of his inability to control his own physical members and felt, strangely, that all the inanimate objects in the place were in conspiracy to trap him in a series of humiliating collisions. Navigating a perilous course across the room, he didn't feel safe until Connie rose from a deep, off-white chair by the fireplace to meet him.

"You must have a million," he said. "You must be Miss Gotrocks herself."

She made a contemptuous gesture that took in all the room. "Don't let this junk impress you. Besides, it isn't mine. It's Vic's."

She read the question in his eyes, and laughed softly. It was a generous laugh, big and free-flowing and beautiful, like the body it came from.

"Vic Spaden, you remember. He's a friend as well as a boss. In case you're wondering, there's a Mrs. Vic Spaden, too. More Vic's size."

A small frown replaced the question in his eyes. Vic Spaden was a name he did not at this time want to hear. It filled him

with a sharp uneasiness that was not allayed by the realization that Connie had given him a blind invitation to the apartment. He felt tricked.

"Spaden's a gambler. I shouldn't be here."

She shrugged her broad, bare shoulders, and he looked down upon their smooth motion, as she found a cigarette and touched flame to it. Her words came up in smoke.

"Is it our concern how Vic earns a living?"

"It could be. It could be my concern, at least. I'm wondering why I'm here."

"Because I asked you, I hope."

He put his big hands on her shoulders. Under his fingers, her skin was the color of cream and the texture that cream would be if it were skin. His fingers slipped down her upper arms with that surprising lightness of touch that always filled her with a kind of pleasant wonder.

"From where I stand, that's the reason. How about Spaden? What's the reason from where he stands?"

"He wants to see you. Let Vic talk for himself."

The maid was beside them with two glasses on a tray. He didn't want a drink, but neither did he want to refuse, so he took a glass and held it in his hands, feeling the chill in his dry palms. Connie lifted her glass and looked at him over amber.

"Here's to us, Rufe. You and me. All the twelve-nine of us."

He lifted his glass in return and felt the smooth liquor in his throat just as he felt the smooth voice in his ears. It came from behind him, the voice, prefaced by a cordial laugh.

"A striking twelve-nine, I must say. Taken together, you two are rather overwhelming, you know."

Rufe waited while Connie did the introduction. Spaden's hand in his was small by comparison, almost lost in the big grip, but it was hard and returned pressure in measure. He would have been considered small

in present company only. Five-eleven, probably, with adequate shoulders that owed nothing to tailoring. His hair was gray but thick, and the face below was still firm in planes and projections. He spoke pleasantly and he was pleasant to look at. But Rufe's dislike was rooted below the superficial.

"It's all done with glands," he said.

Spaden smiled and released his hand to take a glass that the maid brought.

"And well done," he said. "I saw you in the Auditorium a week ago, Rufe. You're good, and you'll be better. Better than Mikan."

Rufe didn't care for the easy appropriation of the name his friends used, but he let it pass.

"No. Not Mikan. Mikan's up there alone."

Spaden shook his head, still smiling. "Dempsey was alone once. Tilden was alone. After a while they had company. Don't be modest, Rufe. How do you get speed and precision into so much arms and legs?"

"I guess you haven't been reading some of the critics. There's no speed and precision at all. It's all a matter of being a freak. A goon. In books, you'll find it comes from a hyperactive anterior lobe of the pituitary gland."

He stopped abruptly, embarrassed, aware that some of the bitterness he was trying to keep under wraps had crept into his voice. If Spaden caught the bitter note, he didn't let on.

"In my book, a goon is a guy on the other team who can play basketball better than I can. But let it go. I want to apologize for Neva's absence. She may be in later."

"Neva's the wife I mentioned," Connie said.

Spaden's eyebrow quirked. "A misunderstanding?"

"He just wondered," Connie said sharply. "Naturally."

"Sure. Naturally. Take the word of a guy who's watched the emotions of a lot of

women in his time, Rufe. Don't worry about things with Connie. You're solid. There's only one thing. . . ." He looked down for a moment into his glass, swirling the amber liquid gently around the circumference, and then up again at Rufe with the rueful expression of a man grown wiser and sadder through experience. "She needs dough. She's a big gal and a beautiful gal. She needs lots of dough."

So he knew that it was coming, and he didn't know how to prevent it. He knew in advance that he was going to look like a kid, a big raw kid in a game way out of his league, and he suddenly hated his smooth, gray, expert opponent with an intensity that shook all the joints in his big frame. For the time it gave him, he turned up his glass and emptied it and discovered that the Scotch didn't change anything.

"That's too bad," he said. "Too bad for me."

He waited for Connie to say to hell with dough, but she didn't, and he was able to laugh at himself for even thinking that she might. She'd called the plays to now. From now it would be Vic Spaden who called them. Proski, Connie and Spaden, in that order.

"A guy with your assets doesn't have to worry about income," Spaden said. "Lots of people would be willing to pay for what you've got to offer."

"For instance?"

Spaden deposited his glass carelessly on the arm of a chair and removed a cigar from a soft leather case. He clipped it and lit it, taking his time, applying the fire all around by turning the cigar slowly between his lips. The scent of the smoke was penetrating and rich.

"Me, for instance," he said. "I've got a few thousand right now I'd be willing to invest in a favor."

"It must be a big favor."

"Not so big. Miss a few. Let the other guy make a few. Goals, I mean."

"I know what you mean."

RUFE turned and walked over to a table to get rid of his glass. For a terrifying moment he had the feeling that he would be unable to stop, that he would go walking right on into the table and sprawling on the floor. His feet felt almost too big to pass each other. Hands free at last, he returned to Spaden and Connie.

"I've got a coach," he said. "His name's McCall. He's a good guy. Then there's the rest of the team. They're good guys, too."

Spaden used arms and shoulders in a gesture of reasonableness. "They're only interested in winning. I'm only interested in the spread. We're compatible."

"I see."

He looked at Connie. She returned the look with a little smile and a little shrug and moved her big beautiful body over to the Scotch bottle.

"Okay, Rufe. It's in the open. I brought you here. I was part of the plan. Say I'm working for a bonus. You're still a big boy with a piece of education. You ought to be able to make up your own mind."

"I can make up my mind, all right," he said. "I can make it up about a lot of things."

He no longer felt like a big raw kid. Not at all like he should have felt, having just been taken for a big time, fancy ride. He felt twisted and cold—and tough. As if he had four aces to play.

"You said a few thousand," he reminded Spaden. "That's pretty vague."

"Say three."

"Let's say five."

"Five's a big bundle. That ought to be something to grow on."

"I've grown already. Don't you remember? You just got through teaching me what I'm worth."

Spaden eyed him through blue smoke and laughed in good humor. "You're easy to teach, big boy. But I like a quick learner. Five it is."

They set the spread at eight points for

the game Spaden picked, and Spaden offered his hard hand again, but Rufe happened to be looking some place else at the moment. Still in good humor, Spaden smiled and turned to leave.

"There's Scotch, there's music, there's television," he said. "Then there's whatever you can think up for yourselves. You two have fun."

Connie still stood by the bottle, nursing her glass and not looking at Rufe, and the sight of her brought the bitterness up into his throat and mouth from his heart until his tongue was thick with it.

"How much fun comes with the bonus you get?" he asked.

She looked into her Scotch as if it had suddenly become tainted.

"Look, Rufe. There are two words in the language that everyone ought to know how to use. One's yes. The other's no. You had your pick."

"Sure. I had my pick. So did you. When Spaden asked you to set me up for this, you had your pick. I'll say this for Spaden, he does things right. Tall girls for tall guys. Tailor-made stuff. Thanks for the ride, baby."

She left her glass beside the bottle and crossed over to him. "Listen to me, Rufe. I made a bargain blind, and I had to deliver. Now the bargain's kept. Would it do any good to say that I'd keep on for free? With the ride, I mean."

His throat and mouth felt as if they'd been powdered with alum. "Don't try too hard, honey. We've both made a profit. Everyone's happy."

She waited a minute for a change in what she saw in his eyes, but there was no change. "Okay, Rufe," she said. "Have it your way."

4 SOME call it scuttleball. When the game's ragged, that's what it is. Just five big lugs old enough to know better trying

to throw a little leather ball through a hoop. But when it's smooth, when it's sharpshooters working around a slick pivot, a tall guy who can go up and slam them through from the rafters, it's precision. It's clockwork. It's something to watch. That was the way it was tonight. And the best of all to watch was Rufe. Not even Proski could foul him up tonight.

Drifting in and out of the slot under the bucket, he took the short, hard passes on his finger tips, leaping and hooking in liquid motion that had no perceptible break until the cords were cut and the great roar was up from the thousands who paid to see it. He was quick and deadly, an artist in his way. The ball was light as a balloon in his big hands. He played it off his fingers in flat trajectory with accuracy marked by the single sound of whispering cords.

Now that his body was active, his mind was quiet, only remotely concerned, when it was concerned at all, with the suddenly acquired significance of this rather simple game, originally created for the pastime of boys. His eye was never sharper, and he knew he'd have to roll over and play dead to keep the spread within any semblance of eight points.

At the half, the score was looking as if it might become a matter for astronomers. The spread was twenty, and Rufe, claiming his warm-ups at the bench, looked beyond to the boxes and into the face of Victor Spaden. The face had a blue sheen under as a casaba melon. In the locker room, the lights. It looked as smooth and hard Proski ignored him, eyes stony in his flat, blanched face. Rufe felt weariness that had nothing to do with physical action. Beyond the weariness there was no concern. No concern at all.

The second half added to the spread, and Rufe heard the final gun with relief greater than any he had known. Leaving the floor, he looked again to the box beyond the bench and saw, as he expected, nothing but the empty seat where Spaden had sat. He

wondered how long Spaden had been gone and supplied the answer tiredly. Long enough to make plans for Rufus Miles.

Dressing, he avoided his teammates, killing time until they were showered and gone. Ready to leave at last, he moved toward the door, stopping to avoid contact with McCall, who drifted in front of him.

"Good game, Rufe. You were sharp."

"Thanks, McCall."

"Maybe this was a special game, Rufe."

"Maybe."

"Sure. That's what I thought." McCall paused, looking at a spot on the wall. "Look, Rufe. It isn't your job. Sulky had no right to ask."

"It's all done, McCall. It's too late even to think about it any more."

McCall took him hard by the arm for a second. "Okay, Rufe. You're the big boy. You're the boss. But be careful. Hear?"

"Sure, McCall. And thanks."

He went out into the empty hall, the sound of his heels echoing hollowly, and was not surprised when he picked up company on both sides. The man on his right was eight inches shorter than he and had broad shoulders that moved in an exaggerated swing in tempo with his steps. The man was wearing a soft hat and a covert cloth topcoat. The hat was dark green and had a little red feather stuck in the band.

"You must be tired," the man said. "Such a game you played!"

The man on the left snickered. "Yeah. Tired. We got a car waiting for you."

"Okay," Rufe said. "Where is he?"

"He?" Green Hat took him by the arm, casually, like a friend. "Who mentioned anyone?"

"Vic Spaden."

"Vic Spaden, he says. Just like that." Green Hat gave his arm a squeeze. "For a guy who plays games, you're smart. Real smart."

"Yeah," the other man said. "You're smart for a guy who plays games."

They came even with a swinging door

on their right that had the word **MEN** on it in chaste white letters. Green Hat, between Rufe and the door, stopped suddenly and took a step backward. The man on Rufe's left lunged sideways, putting his shoulder into a powerful thrust that sent Rufe reeling into the door and through. Feet slipping on the tile floor, he spilled headlong. A man standing inside the door looked down at him, grinning.

"Timber," he said.

Rufe stood up. Two more men were leaning against the lavatories, looking at him. One of the two was just a guy, stuff from a common pattern. The other was different. Almost as tall as Rufe, he had washed-out, lifeless eyes, and his mouth hung slightly open in a dull, moronic expression. He didn't seem to understand what was going on. He didn't even seem to care.

Green Hat and his companion had followed Rufe into the room. Green Hat's eyes moved back and forth between Rufe and the big stupe. Finally they settled on Rufe with a glint of slyness.

"Maybe you thought we were a bunch of dummies," he said. "Maybe you thought we weren't wise to the coppers on our tail. They're down the street in their car, waiting for us to make a play for you. Waiting to follow along." He stopped, the slyness fading in his eyes as he made short, brutal chopping gestures. "We had to look a long time for the big boob here, but we finally found him. He's not a very close copy, but from where the coppers are, he's close enough. Take your overcoat off."

The futility of resistance was apparent. Rufe removed his overcoat and tossed it to Green Hat. Green Hat retrieved Rufe's hat from the floor where it had fallen and passed the hat and the coat to the big fellow. Both of them were too large. The poor fit of the overcoat was not conspicuous, but the hat slipped down onto the fellow's huge, fanlike ears, lending his naturally stupid appearance a cast of comic idiocy.

"Get this big boob out of here," Green Hat said. "Get those coppers off our tail."

The two men who had been waiting in the washroom took the big fellow's arms and led him out.

Green Hat turned to his companion, jerking his head at the door.

"Check it. Make sure it works."

Rufe remained with Green Hat. He felt sure that he could overpower the hood and get away, but getting away wasn't part of the plan. He felt somewhat bitter toward Sulky, however. Sulky, the blubber-lipped wise guy. The big planner. The guy who took care of the details. And now, at the end, about to be foxed by a gang of hoods with a substitute.

The bitterness was not excessive. Rufe was too tired for it. Too tired to care. *Okay, Leary*, he thought. *You can begin moving over.*

The door banged inward before the returning hood.

"Slick," he said. "Slick as a whistle. They put the big guy in the car and drove away. The coppers down the street pulled out after them. Everything's clear. I moved the Cad up to the exit."

"Good." Green Hat slapped a hand against a leg. "Let's move out of here."

IN THE Cad, Rufe sat in the back seat with Green Hat and let his head rest wearily against the upholstery. He rode with his eyes closed, keeping them closed even when the image of Connie swam into focus behind his lids, bringing bitterness back, and didn't open them until the motion of the Cad stopped and he felt knuckles in his ribs.

They got out into a narrow alley between old brick buildings and went through a heavy metal door into a dark, cluttered room from which iron steps spiraled upward to a crack of yellow light. Beyond the crack, Rufe found himself in a huge, cement-floored room that looked as if it might be the second story of an old garage. At the

far end of the room, Vic Spaden sat with half his stern on the edge of a battered desk, swinging his foot lazily and watching with a bleak smile Rufe's approach.

"Hello, Rufe. Sorry I couldn't make it the apartment this time. Never do business at home."

Rufe stopped, looking at him without emotion, wanting only to get it over with.

"No? Last time I was there, we did business."

"It just proves my point. Business at home never works out. Someone always loses."

"You can forget the five grand."

Spaden retained the smile. "The five's not important, Rufe. It's what I put on the books. The five wouldn't touch it."

"To hell with it. You got money to bet, you got it to lose."

The smile went away then. For the first time, Rufe felt the cold, controlled fury that raged behind its smooth façade.

"I can't look at it that way, Rufe. If I looked at it that way, I'd go out of business."

"Would that be bad?"

Spaden laughed softly, his shoulders moving with it. "For me, it would. It'd be real bad."

He put his swinging foot to the floor and moved around the desk, standing still on the other side, looking at Rufe across the scarred surface.

"You're young, Rufe. Just a young punk with an overtime gland. Too young to remember Dempsey and Willard at Toledo. Not me. I was there. I was at Toledo that day. I saw the fight. That Dempsey. That giant Willard. It's an experience to see a big guy like that beat to a bloody, helpless pulp, Rufe. Like a baby, he was. Helpless like a baby. Ever since, I've been wanting to see something like it again."

I should be scared, Rufe thought. I should be scared blue. But I'm not. I just wish he'd get it over with.

"I got someone I want you to meet, Rufe.

Never mind an introduction. You boys won't stand on formality."

Rufe turned deliberately to face the man who came at him slowly from an angle. He wasn't big. Not by Rufe's pattern. About six feet. Broad, sloping shoulders narrowed to a slender waist. Strong elastic in arms and legs. He walked on his toes, with a nice balance. Rufe had been around enough locker rooms to recognize what he saw. Speed and power, well-trained. He'd never seen this face, though. Deadly and still, with hunger in its eyes.

"Hello, Rufe," the man said. "You're big. I never met a guy so big."

"Isn't that nice?" Rufe said. "Enjoy yourself."

The guy did. He knew his business, and he loved his work. The hunger burning yellow in his eyes, he cut Rufe down methodically. Rufe did what he could, but it wasn't much. There was no way to block the educated fists that beat his belly scarlet and burst like grenades above his heart. His great frame folded, lowering his chin to the attack, and a rocket tore his head off in a flash of fire.

It was his misfortune, perhaps, that his heart was built to size. Big. It kept him up long after he should have been down, and after he was down, it foolishly got him up again. Up to butchery, deftly performed, that no heart, not even his, could stand forever.

From a distance, at the remote end of a sickening spiral of space, a voice reached him. Listening carefully, he was able to make out the words.

"Get up, big boy. It ain't quitting time. Get up, big boy."

He became aware that he was on his hands and knees and that, after all, his head was still on his body. Cautiously, with shuddering retches that tore at his stomach, he raised himself until he was erect upon his knees, arms hanging. His eyes wouldn't focus, however, and so he was blind to the butcher's last vicious cut. His big body

arched back over his heels with the blow, hanging for a second in cataleptic pose, and rolled sideways, his legs snapping out from under him as if they were on springs.

HE DRIFTED back to consciousness on waves of nausea. Under his raw face the cement was wet with his blood. He turned his head and opened his eyes to the blurred vision of Vic Spaden, perched again on the corner of the desk.

"How you feeling, Rufe boy?"

The question was, Rufe decided, rhetorical. Carefully, he placed his hands flat against the cement and pushed, drawing his knees up under him. He remained in that position for some time, spasms striking at his stomach. He considered the best means of getting safely to his feet and decided to continue as he had begun. Lifting his right knee, he brought his right foot up and got it anchored flat. Balancing precariously, he forced the left one up beside it and elevated his protesting body to its full height.

It was then that the room seemed to explode behind him. Through a pink, frothy fog, he was aware of moving figures. Of violent action and strident noise. He saw with some amazement the impact of sudden fear crumple the hard lines of Spaden's smooth face. The crash of a single shot bounced around the room, and the butcher, turning to run, spun wildly from a leaden blow in the shoulder and fell sprawling. Rufe turned his head very slowly to see with immeasurable relief the ugly face of Lieutenant Sulky.

Sulky grinned. "You don't fight so well, Rufe. You're all cut up."

"Go to hell," Rufe said.

The words were wrecked by his fat lips. They came out mangled. Sulky's grin widened.

"We almost missed you, boy. Almost let you get away. You can thank the big gal that we didn't. She was waiting for you, too, you see. Across the street in a doorway where nobody noticed her. Right away she

caught the tricky shift Spaden's boys pulled. Some gal. A lot smarter than the dumb cops I had planted in the car. I was at headquarters, waiting by the phone. She contacted me there, and here we are."

Rufe heard the words, but they made no kind of sense. They only added to his vast and painful confusion. He sorted them dully, trying to arrange them in some sort of relationship to his planned corruption.

(Continued on page 110)



The Greatest True Adventure Story of '52

ONE THOUSAND CAMP-FIRES TO FREEDOM

By Roland Wild

Based on an interview
by Kouprian Chanoff

AN UNFORGETTABLE dramatic account of the five-year fight 150 men waged in humanity's oldest quest—the right to die as free men. . . . This is the first-hand story told by their leaders, of their epic struggle against the Eastern hemisphere's mightiest nation and deadliest climate—The story of a strange, silent murderous private war that never hit any headlines until it was mercilessly won by a small, bloody handful of men—against red millions!

Also

WHEN EARTH GODS KILL, Novelette, by Steve Frazee

BARRACUDA BAIT, Story, by Charles J. Doyle

LIVE FREIGHT, Story, by Frank Richardson Pierce

A MATTER OF BLOOD, Story, by R. W. Daly

ISLAND OF ADVENTURE, Article, by Aleko Lilius

Many Others

NOVEMBER

Adventure



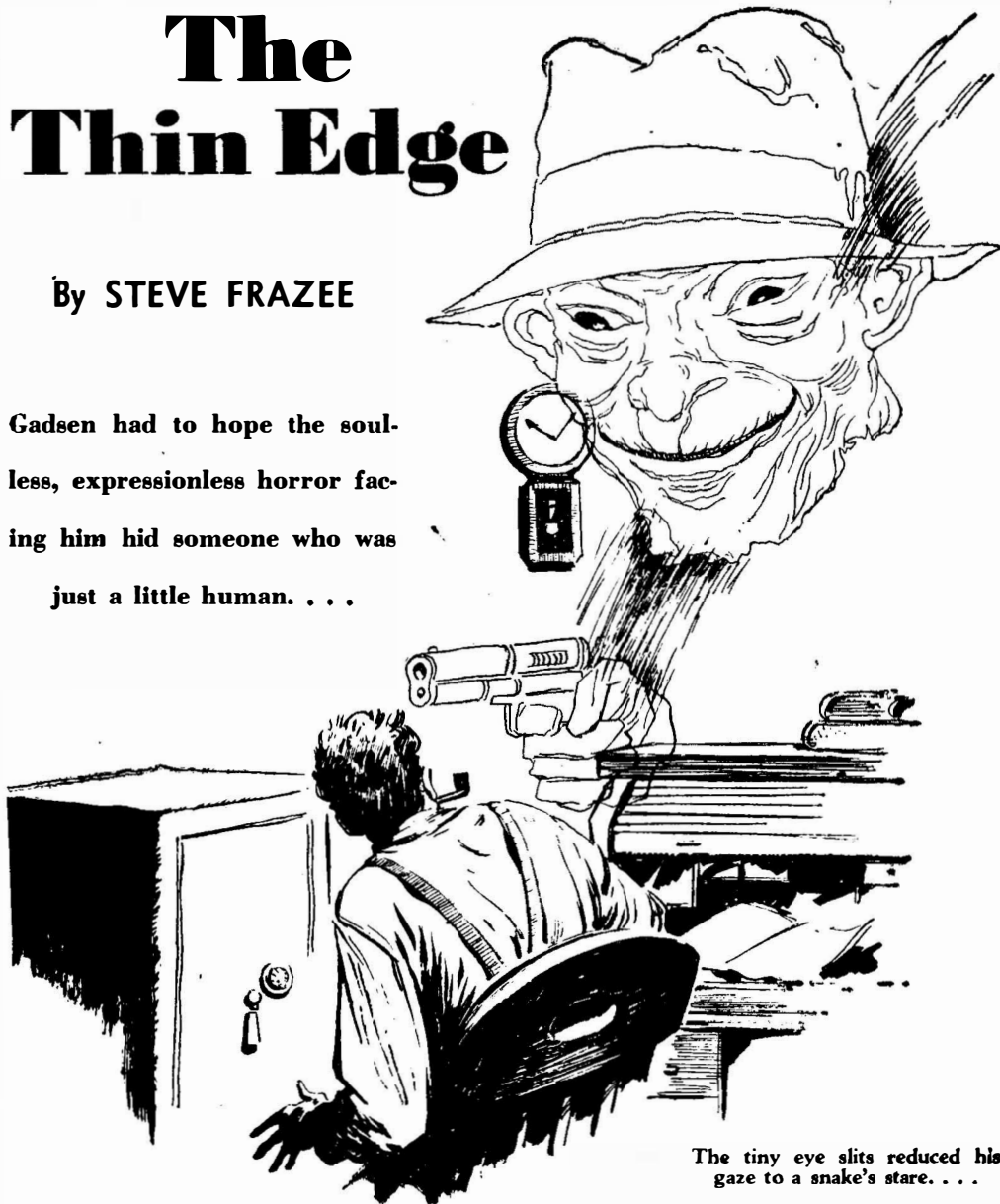
25c

On Sale August 20th!

The Thin Edge

By STEVE FRAZEE

Gadsen had to hope the soulless, expressionless horror facing him hid someone who was just a little human. . . .



The tiny eye slits reduced his gaze to a snake's stare. . . .

TRAIN Eleven ground into Gadsen that night with nothing for me but a can of company floor wax and sixty-four thousand dollars, which was the amount of the railroad payroll.

The express messenger who took the run west of Gadsen groaned when he climbed into the car and saw the safe. "That thing again!"

We hated the weight of the big iron box. It came every two weeks.

"Forty more years of it," I said.

"You punks won't last that long, the way you gripe about every simple detail," said old Tom Hilles, the messenger whose run ended in Gadsen. He folded his coveralls into a bag, adjusted his leather necktie, and came over to give us a hand.

"You look like an old Wells, Fargo man, all right," I said. "Where's your sleeve protectors, Tom?"

"Come on, come on," he said, not impatiently, just pushing a little at routine. We lowered the safe to the platform truck.

I said, "If a man just dumped that safe out of the car some night, let it crash through the truck and went fishing for a week—would that get him fired?"

Tom gave me a weary look. "Sign the book."

I signed for the safe and the sealed envelope that held the combination. Tom and I climbed down.

The west-run messenger started to slide the door shut. "I hope you can get more sleep than I did, Tom," he said.

Main Street was popping and crashing with motorcycles. They were turning and skidding, running the sidewalks, coughing in front of every beer joint and hamburger house in sight. This was the second year the State Motorcyclists' Association had held its summer convention and rodeo in Gadsen. The police had almost given up.

"They won't bother me none," Tom said.

What could bother a man whose whole life had been the inside of an express car on the same run, and the same hotel room at the end of the run? I felt a little bite of fear when I realized I was going up the same rut. Six years, so far. Not quite forty years left, but a long, long time.

Tom gave me a push across the tracks and up the ramp into the "house," the big outer room of the United States Express Corporation. Behind us the diesel grunted its horn and shuddered, and then Number Eleven was splitting the night on the run west. That left nothing to do until Number Fourteen came in three hours later; nothing but sitting and thinking.

"Are you and that fellow doing anything more about your new-fangled ideas of house building?" Tom asked.

"How the hell can I, stuck down here!"

Tom took his bag off the truck. "I just asked." He went out, headed for the hotel, a gray, thin-shouldered old man at the end of a messenger run that had been just like ten thousand others.

I would be an Old Tom Hilles, someday, but I had tried to avoid thinking about it. His question was a little jab that was starting the argument all over. For a long time I had been considering going in with Bill Howland on a construction deal, and finally I had thought I would not.

It was not decision, sharp, real; it was the note of a bum trombone player who slides into everything. That was eating at me now. There was no challenge to my job, but there was a check every two weeks, the security of retirement pay, and other benefits.

The other deal was no cinch. Then, too, I wanted to get married in the fall. How could a woman feel happy about marrying a man whose future was balanced on a lot of ideas that might drop dead any moment?

I had not asked Jean about that. I was answering the question for her.

With a bang, I slammed the truck handle up and glared at the safe. Other people's money. Red tape encased in back-breaking weight. I knew Jean would say go ahead and take the chance; that's why I had not asked her.

"Take a chance, sucker!" The old Navy jeer.

It sounded as if fifty motorcycles were going to crash the south overhead doors. They came down the street in a bellowing charge. Gravel battered the doors as the machines skidded and rocketed off toward the railroad parking lot. A girl's laugh streamed back like a shriek.

I checked the locks and went into the office. I tossed the sealed envelope on top of the floor safe beside a holstered .38 revolver that I wore when working trains only when I knew an inspector was due. It was "a weapon supplied to protect com-

pany property and the employee's life." The second billing always irritated me.

With my feet on the desk I listened to the explosions on Main Street. In three more years I would be off the night job. My father, the Gadsen agent, was due to retire then. He was another old-time expressman like Tom Hilles. "Old-express," we called them. Three more years . . . and then thirty more . . .

After a while I got up and walked around the room. Rate books on the shelves, directives in the basket, and the latest amended rule book. Even a stupe could hold this job forever. Who were the characters who said Americans were over-emphasizing a desire for security? Those guys probably went back to soft, high-paying jobs after every speech.

Take a chance, sucker!

THE DEAL Bill Howland and I had worked out was no cinch. I sat down and got out the sheets with some of our building ideas. It was not long before the motorcycles were just a murmur in the background of my thinking.

Howland was a mechanical engineer. I was not anything, but I had a lot of ideas for homes that would satisfy people, the average sort of people. I thought I knew who they were. Some of my ideas had been worthless, but a lot of them, with the kinks straightened out by Howland, seemed pretty good on paper.

We had no single idea that was new, but the combination of ideas, involving the cutting of costs in home construction, more speed in building, the elimination of several items more conventional than structural, all added up to make a plan that seemed pretty good. It was not pre-fab stuff. You can't sell a woman on some hot-shot metal where she is used to plaster, no matter if you can prove that even a kid can't dent or scalp the metal.

We thought we had something. Howland, who was working for the city, was

ready to go. He wanted to build three homes to test what we had on paper. That would take all the money we could rake up from everywhere. One or two mistakes or a couple of bad bugs we hadn't figured on would wreck us. But if the ideas worked, we would have something big, with the challenge to go on and really build.

If it flopped . . . no pension, no security, no checks every two weeks. Just a couple of busted crackpots with big ideas.

Old Hilles had asked a mild question. He might just as well have said I was afraid to get out of my foxhole.

I got up and walked around the room, and then I could hear the motorcycles again.

Someone hammered the outside office door.

"Who is it?" I yelled.

"I want to ship a motorcycle."

I sat down and put my feet on the desk. "Crated?"

"It's smashed so bad even you guys can't hurt it."

Wise young punk . . .

"Bring it around tomorrow," I said.

"I'm leaving tonight. I want it to go out on the next eastbound."

"It'll cost you plenty—uncrated."

"Who's paying? Is the express company in business, or do I go back to your division office and say you can't take shipments in Gadsen because they cost too much?"

I wanted to punch that smart character, but I said, "Take it around to the big doors."

"It's there already. Did you think I intended to bring it in and put it on the counter?"

Five or six machines blasted by the south doors while I was crossing the house. I flipped the locks and started hoisting one door. The motorcycle on its stand outside did not seem damaged, but I could not see too well because I hadn't turned on the yard light.

He ducked under the rising door. He

grabbed the handle and shoved it down again. There was a little flat automatic in his free hand.

His face was what chilled me. The tiny eyes were nothing but steadiness. His skin was dead, crêpey; and then I realized he was wearing a rubber idiot mask.

He backed me into the office, into my chair. He kicked the company revolver under the floor safe. All I could think of was the .38 would be awful dusty when I raked it out. He checked the shotgun, unloaded it.

Two or three motorcycles stopped outside, the engines pumping, the riders laughing. The Idiot whirled away from the shelves and came to the corner of the desk, holding the automatic toward my stomach. He was wearing a black leather jacket with bright metal tabs, short strapped boots, dungarees, and thin buckskin gloves.

There must have been a hundred outfits like that in Gadsden that night.

The tiny eye slits reduced his gaze to a snake's stare, as he waited for the kids to go away. With his left hand he tore a sheet from a small memo pad. His fingers folded it into little rectangles and when it was almost nothing he let the tension of the doubled ends snap the wad away. That hand was as steady as his eyes.

Suddenly the engines outside went into full roar. They were a block away in seconds.

"Open the safe," the Idiot said. The mask gave his voice a furry, unreal tone.

The fool kid was asking for it now. The floor safe was rigged to a buzzer and a red blinker upstairs. I had forgotten that once, and fifteen seconds after the safe had opened, someone had cursed and I had seen the night special agent standing in the doorway, just putting his gun away.

I stalled a little, now, perhaps a few seconds. You cannot read a rubber mask. "All right," I said.

There was about four hundred dollars in

the floor safe. I rose and started across the office.

The Idiot shook his head. He pointed toward the other room where the portable safe was on the truck. He was holding the sealed envelope with the combination.

THAT WAS when the situation burned in and left me utterly sick. The sixty-four thousand should have been transferred to the big safe immediately after receipt, with someone from the railroad special agent's office and another reliable railroad employee witnessing the transfer.

For a long time I had been violating that regulation, leaving the job for my father to do in daytime. He had raved. He was the kind who fretted over six cents long or short in the petty cash drawer. Finally I had worn him down. Who had heard of an express robbery since Wild West days?

Now my neglect had ruined my old man. I could hear a company special agent asking him, "How long had this violation been going on with your approval?"

"My father would tell the truth. He would not retire in three years with a pension; he would be kicked out next week. I backed up and sat down again.

The Idiot kept pointing toward the other room.

I said, "There's nothing in that box."

He tossed the envelope into my lap.

If I had just put the envelope into the safe . . .

"I've got to get the dials out of the floor safe," I said.

From a hook under a shelf the Idiot took a leather-edged expressman's pouch. The hideous leer seemed human, then. The pouch struck my lap. I knocked it away. The strap caught on the arm of my chair and the two dials inside the pouch rattled when the bottom struck the floor.

"I won't do it!"

"Then maybe I can open the safe, Pop. When another bunch of motorcycles roar by . . ." He moved the thumb safety.

The filthy helplessness of trying to read through a mask like that! *He won't do it!* Fixed idiocy stared at me. I was not yet thirty. *He won't do it!* The red tape inside the portable safe suddenly assumed its real form. Sixty-four thousand dollars. For that much money . . .

Up the street a roaring broke away from the general racket. It came closer. Another group of friends was headed down to make a turn on the parking lot. When the full crescendo of the bellowing engines washed against the building, a gunshot—or three or four—would be nothing.

They came like demons. The gun was steady, the idiot face a mask of death. I could not find the courage. I dug for the dials and leaped up with them.

He stood behind me while I opened the upended safe on the truck.

"This is marked money," I said.

It was not marked. Five, tens and twenties mostly. The railroad paid by check, then cashed the checks.

The Idiot said nothing. He must have known.

The canvas sack with its red wax seal was not large. Just sixty-four thousand dollars. There was a little white sand, a moisture deterrent, in the cold interior of the safe. The dim light gave it a powdery appearance.

I scooped some up in my hand.

"Don't try that," the Idiot said.

If he had been close, holding the automatic against my back, I could have handled him; but I did not know just how close behind me he was standing.

I put my hand on the sack. When the Idiot walked out with that, he was taking my father's life. My old man's pride in a lifetime of integrity with the company was deep and honest. He would take my neglect on himself.

This would kill him, literally.

I put the sack inside my shirt. When I turned, I started sliding my back along the metal edge of the truck, moving farther

from the Idiot. "Hu-uh. You'll have to kill me."

"All right." There was no shred of hope in the furry tone.

The riders came back from the parking lot. They stopped by the south doors, arguing about a bottle of beer. The Idiot moved slowly toward me, and I kept edging away, and I could not keep my hands from holding my stomach, where the automatic was pointing.

Outside, one of the riders asked, "Whose job is that?"

"How can you tell in this mess? I'd like to have those saddlebags, though. Hey! My turn on the beer, chum."

I kept backing away until I bumped into the side of the old truck where we stored "will call" express. A yell for help would do it, but it might enrage the Idiot into touching the trigger too hard. It would not help my father, either.

The violation of regulations was so rank that if I died trying to defend the sack, my father would still be booted out in disgrace. When you are the boss, the responsibility is yours.

About five feet from me, the Idiot stopped. He let the weight bear on me. When those kids outside exploded their engines . . .

My voice was a shaky whisper. "It's a little gun. When the first one hits me, I'm yelling so the guys upstairs will hear."

He moved the gun up, then, and let it look between my eyes. Courage can be no more than stubbornness and a brittle, coppery taste in the mouth. That was all I had.

"Give me that sack."

He was scared too. For the first time he was not sure.

A bottle struck the doors and fell to the ramp and shattered. The engines burst wide open. I saw the Idiot's finger tighten, and I sucked in air. Then the kids were gone, and the Idiot and I were still staring at each other.

I was sure I had won, then, but I kept punching.

"You'll have to kill me. Then the company will get you, no matter if it takes a lifetime, son."

THE SECONDS ran away, and my sureness fled with them. He did not lower the gun. He stood there with his head turned a little sidewise, and it was hard to realize that the lumpy ears of his mask were not the actual receivers of my voice. That the dead moronic stare was not the real expression of his thoughts.

He was trying to gear up to it. I could feel it. There is no way to describe it, but I knew.

And then he lowered the automatic. He backed away to the south doors. Cold night air rolled across the floor and touched my trembling legs. He kicked the motorcycle into life and was gone before I had strength to go over and lock the door.

I started to put the sack in the floor safe, and then I ran back to the portable safe and put the money inside again and locked it up.

The night special agent was giving the yard bull hell, and the yard bull was grumbling because there were so few bums to shove around these days.

Batley, the special agent, gave me a start, when he asked, "What scared you?"

"I forgot and almost opened the safe. Remember what you said the last time?"

"Yeah." Batley started to rise, and then he lowered himself again. He gave me a look as lean and shrewd as his narrow face. "I didn't scare you that much, though. What—"

"I got a tip that an inspector is due on Number Fourteen."

Batley considered me for a while. At last he grinned. "When inspectors put the fear of God into you, you're getting to be a real expressman." He buckled on his shoulder harness.

The warning signals were in the hall

between Batley's office and the dispatcher's office. We told the dispatcher what we were going to do. The night ticket agent made the third man.

The three of us examined the seal on the canvas bag after I opened the portable safe. The ticket agent yawned while I was putting the money in the floor safe. We signed the forms. Everything was regulation now.

"Where's the thirty-eight?" Batley asked.

"Up on one of the high shelves. I moved things around while I was dusting tonight."

"Nice place for it. Sometime you're going to get real careless here, bub. I know you don't give a damn, but your old man will sure be put on the fire." He checked the sawed-off. "Empty. That's nice too."

He and the ticket agent went out. I raked the thirty-eight from under the safe, dusted it. When I sat down my legs pumped up and down until I stretched them out. After a while I tried my lunch, then threw it into the waste basket. The silverfish came streaming from the baggage room on schedule.

The building plans were still on the desk. Nothing had happened; nothing was settled.

You took a chance tonight, sucker. But that was a different kind of chance, short, desperate. The other was something else. It occurred to me that if I had opened the big safe to trap the Idiot, I would have wrecked my father just the same.

The warning would have brought Batley down like a lean silent cat to blast away with his stubby gun; but my violation of regulations would have been revealed in the reports. There was no one I could tell about this night.

ABOUT NOON the telephone knocked me out of bed. For an instant I had dreamed it was the warning buzzer at the station. Bill Howland did not care when he slept, or when anyone else slept, I thought resentfully.

He said, "The bank directors here finally turned us down today. We got to get that last chunk of money somewhere else. Where do you suggest?"

Howland had never doubted that I was going with him on the deal.

"I don't know."

"How about those people you worked on?" he asked.

"I haven't had time to see them again."

"Let's get the time then! This is the month, remember? Have you given notice yet at the express company?"

"Not yet."

"I'll come down tonight and see you. It might be late, because I'm going over to Meldrum after work to see the banker there."

I could not go back to sleep.

That night when Tom Hilles knocked on the door about a half hour before Number Fourteen was due, I made sure who it was before I opened up.

He put his bag in the corner as usual. He sat in my father's chair as usual; and, as usual, he started telling me about the Western matinee he had seen that afternoon. After that, he would get a drink of water and then go outside to wait for the train.

"This one was about Apaches . . ." He went on talking, looking about half alive, as he did when he was discussing Western movies. I never heard a word. He had reached to the desk, where a packet of my father's eyeglass cleaners was lying. The side of his hand held down the book, and his fingers tore a sheet loose, and then they folded it into little rectangles until there was only a wad left.

He never looked at his hand. He let the tension of the doubled ends snap the lavender wad away, and all the time he was talking about cavalymen and Apache Indians. "This one kid—What's the matter?" He was giving me an odd look.

"Nothing. I just didn't get any sleep today."

I looked at his bag. What was under the folded coveralls that he always kept on top. The bag seemed more bulged than usual. A black leather jacket with chromed tabs . . . all the rest? He would have had no chance to throw the stuff away in town.

"Is something wrong?"

"No, no. Go on with the story, Tom."

Sure! Who else would know all the routine that the Idiot had known last night? Still, it would not go down all the way. This harmless old guy giving me the puzzled look, old Tom Hilles! I had to have a look in his bag.

He finished the story. He took his drink out of the cooler.

"Is she on time?"

I nodded. I fumbled with the sheet of an abstract report. Tom picked up his bag and went out to wait for Number Fourteen. During six years he had never taken his bag with him when going out to wait. He always came back for it when the block was red at the lower end of the yards.

I sat there, staring at the desk.

He came back in just a few moments. Once more he put the bag in the corner and sat in my father's chair. "What gave me away?" he asked. "My voice?"

For a while I could not say anything; and then I pointed at the desk. He was folding paper again, this time a memo sheet. I realized then how many times I had seen him do it; but last night, with the automatic on me, my mind had not been working well.

He still did not understand until I told him.

"I went to a lot of trouble," he said. "I planned the details for over a year, ever since the motorcycle crowd held their convention here the first time." He shook his head. "But when I had to kill to get it . . ." He shook his head again.

I began to get sore. "You didn't give a damn about my father, did you!"

He was old and tired. "I considered

him, yes. It hurt like hell; but for a lifetime I've been doing a job I hated, thinking every year I would get out of it. I knew I wouldn't. So the robbery idea began to work on me.

"I thought it would solve everything. In a year or so I would make a bad mistake and get fired, and then I would have the rest of my life to do all the things I couldn't do before. It was no good. Now I know it, and I would have known it even if I had got away with the money. You can't throw away the habits of a lifetime—like the wad of paper that tripped me up."

A diesel switch engine was idling in trembling bursts. Outside of that the yards were dead quiet.

Old Tom had slipped lower in his chair. It seemed that he had shrunk a little in the dull brown suit he had worn ever since I knew him.

"You came within a hair of shooting me," I said.

He nodded. "You'll never know how close it was. But I didn't do it, and now it's gone forever. I'll never come up to it again. I know. I walked the streets all night thinking about it. I'm all right now. If you let me go on to retirement, you'll never have anything to regret.

"If you want to, you can take me upstairs to the railroad special agent right now." There was no appeal in his tone, but stark truth lay in his eyes.

Sometimes, with sureness that is rare, you know the truth when you see it. This was such a time.

"We'll both forget it," I said.

He gave me a brief smile. "You may. I'll try."

I tried to make it lighter. "Why didn't I recognize your voice?"

He rolled a steel ball bearing across the desk. "That was in my mouth."

"How'd you get the machine?"

"In front of a beer joint. I put the mask on down here in the parking lot. The owner of the motorcycle never knew it had been taken and returned."

We stood by the platform truck beside the tracks as Number Fourteen came gliding in.

"You might think I missed the high point last night," Tom said. "But it wasn't then. I missed way down the line, over thirty years ago. I had a chance then to go into the garage business. That's what I've always wanted."

We moved up the tracks as the express car slid past.

"That particular garage failed," Tom said. "There would have been others. The worst failure is not trying at all."

"You meant that last night when you asked about me and Bill Howland?"

"Maybe. It's your business, your life."

He climbed up into the car. The other messenger waited at the desk with forms to sign. Tom Hilles was old-express again, as soon as he dropped his bag and put on his glasses.

When the train was moving, just before he closed the doors, old Tom raised his hand in a little salute, a gray, thin-shouldered man going back on his run.

Bill Howland was coming across the tracks in long strides. "I got a new idea," he said.

"I've got several," I said. "As soon as I write a letter of resignation, we can slap 'em around." ♠ ♠ ♠

A Binghamton, N.Y., woman complained that a neighbor's light was keeping her awake. Police investigated and found the neighbor was "scared of the dark." But the police had a simple solution for the complaining woman: Why didn't she pull her shades down?—Harold Helfer.

Inez warned, "Car coming!"



When you get framed with a corpse you didn't murder, it's usually best to call the police. But Kent Jansen decided on a safer course. . . .

Round Trip

By ALAN RITNER ANDERSON

THE KNOCKING at the door woke Kurt Jensen at midnight. He snapped on the bedside lamp and stared up at the pipes beneath the ceiling of the one-room basement apartment. His taxi driver's cap

was on the table and the badge glittered.

He sneaked to the door and pressed his ear to the thin panel. Three prize alcoholics lived in the basement and he wanted no part of them. The knock was repeated.

He called, "Yeah—who is it?"

"It's Inez, Kurt." Her voice was tearful.

"Go away! I don't even know you."

"I'm your wife."

"Not when I get the dough for a divorce."

"I'm in trouble," she said, her voice desperate. "Bad trouble."

"Naturally. Cheating wives usually get in trouble."

"That's a dirty lie!" she raged. "I haven't cheated on you. I haven't even kissed another man. Why am I living at the Y?"

He couldn't think of an answer to that one, said, "What do you want?"

"Open the door, Kurt. On the chain, if you want. Just so I can't be overheard."

He fastened the check chain and opened the door six inches. Inez' gray cloth coat set off her dark beauty handsomely. Her black hair was worn shoulder length and framed the oval of her dusky face. Her brown eyes were enormous. Kurt's heart kicked up.

"What's wrong?" he asked shakily.

"I'm sorry I ran off," she said. "It was just because you were so crazy to pay for the cab, you never took me any place."

"Well, I . . . well, what's wrong?"

"It's Don Ravenhurst," she admitted.

Kurt's face went hot with anger. He palmed the crew cut of his brassy hair and his blue eyes went smoky. He was twenty-seven, six years older than Inez, but he burned easy. "That zany playboy?" he asked. "The woman-crazy, whiskey-guzzling fool!"

"He's married," Inez interrupted. "He's separated from his wife."

"Like you," he said. "Just like you. A team."

"He's dead," Inez said, whiteness spreading out from the corners of her mouth. "Somebody killed him. Somebody shot him in the head. I got him in the car."

Kurt's anger went down the drain and a chill went up his spine. He unfastened the check chain shakily. Inez threw herself against him and hugged him so hard he had

trouble breathing. "I didn't do it!" she wailed.

He held her close, her verbal bombshell numbing his brain and body. She pressed tightly against him, trembling as if from a chill. He said, "Easy! Tell me!"

"I'm waiting tables out at Luigi's," she explained. "I got the job because I could see the floor show and see people having fun."

She hesitated. Kurt suffered the confused emotions of pride and jealousy. Luigi's waitresses were noted for their youth and fresh good looks. He shoved down the anger, said, "Go on, honey!"

"It's Monday," she said. "No floor show or music. I got off at eleven. Don Ravenhurst saw me about ten. He wanted me to drive his car back to his apartment and put it in the basement garage. He had a date coming out, but she had her car. So I did drive the car back. Only I had a flat. I opened the trunk and . . . and there he was." She mashed her face into Kurt's shoulder and hugged him tighter.

"We got to go to the police," he told her.

"I'm afraid to," she admitted, voice muffled. "He drove me home once. He parked by the river and got fresh. I slapped his face. He opened the glove compartment and got a gun. He shoved it into my hand and told me to shoot him. I was scared. He was drunk, but he meant it. I put the gun back. He got fresh again. I snatched the keys from the dash and threw them in the river."

"You what?" he cried, awe and admiration in his voice.

"Threw the keys in the river. We had to walk two miles to a gas station. He laughed like crazy all the way. Afterward, he told it around that I'd tried to kill him and he was putting me in his will. He was a prize screwball."

"Oh, no!" Kurt said, horror in his voice.

"That's why I can't go to the police," she said.

"It's my fault," he said bitterly. "Hack-

ing all day and half the night was a tough shake for you. I wouldn't want to hang around the crummy apartment so much. I got to get you out of this."

"How?"

"I don't know," he admitted. He picked up his clothes and went into the tiny alcove into which the bed tilted. He dressed shakily while Inez watched him without seeing him, her brown eyes misty and remote. He stepped out, buttoning up his jacket, and said, "Let's go."

THEY went out into the hall and up the rear stairs to the cindered alley. The night was dark and dreary with low black clouds drifting overhead. Kurt unlocked the garage. Inez dutifully climbed into the rear seat, there being a local law that no one could ride with cab drivers.

Out on River Road, Kurt slid the glass partition open, asked hopefully, "Sure it isn't a gag?"

"It isn't," she replied. "He's dead. There's a hole in his forehead. I . . . I felt his hand. It was like ice."

Her voice was edged with hysteria and Kurt warned, "Easy, honey, easy!"

"You're driving without lights," she pointed out.

He turned on his lights. The street was clear and he went along at a brisk forty. He slowed as he approached Polk Street and saw the big red convertible parked under a street light. Inez' sharp intake of breath gave him the answer, and he dimmed his lights to roll to a stop behind the big car. The top of the convertible was lowered and he saw that the flat was the left rear tire.

"Get out and act like you flagged me," he said.

"I looked," she said. "For the gun, I mean. It isn't in the glove compartment. It'll have my prints on it, won't it?"

"Sit behind the wheel and act bored," he told her.

Inez got out. He watched her slide be-

hind the wheel of the convertible. He got out and had to go to her for the keys. Then he went back and unlocked the luggage compartment. He lifted it, and a light came on.

Don Ravenhurst was curled up on his right side. He wore a tuxedo. His handsome face was waxy white and the hole in the center of his forehead was more black than red. His forehead was smudged with pinkness where someone had wiped the blood away.

Inez warned, "Car coming!"

He dropped the lid. A car flashed past. He looked up and saw that Inez was kneeling on the seat looking backward. Her face had a grim determination he'd never seen before. Guts, that's what it was.

He lifted the lid. He could get the tools and spare tire without moving the corpse. The tire change he made in record time. He slammed the trunk lid closed. Inez stared at him with the whiteness still spread out from the corners of her mouth.

He said, "Drive home and park in the alley!"

"Why?"

"I'll put the body in the cab."

"Why?"

He took off his visored cap and rubbed his bristly crew cut. "I don't know exactly," he said, "except that the killer wanted Ravenhurst in the convertible."

Inez sat down behind the wheel. Kurt came up and handed her the keys. He waited until she started the motor and turned the lights on. There was a lot he wanted to say, but he didn't know what the words were. He made a fist and tapped her gently on the side of the jaw. She smiled feebly and her eyes brimmed with tears.

Kurt walked back to the cab and got in. He gave Inez the go-ahead with a toot of the horn. She wheeled the convertible around in a U-turn, strictly against the law, and Kurt had to follow. They got away with it. Inez drove in fits and starts, almost stopping at each intersection and sprinting

on the straightaways. She dimmed lights as she turned into the alley and braked to a stop abreast the open garage doors. Kurt turned out the cab lights, backed into the garage, swung out and backed up against the rear of the convertible.

The night was hushed. Kurt opened both trunk lids. The body was flabby-soft, yet heavy. He swung it into the taxi and slammed the lid closed. He dropped the lid of the convertible. It wasn't hot, but his body was wet and his heart drummed his ribs.

Inez appeared. They just looked at each other for a long time. She finally asked, "What now?"

"When did he ask you?"

She licked her lips reflectively. "About ten, I guess. He ate at seven. I waited on him. He didn't ask me until ten."

"He gave you the keys then?"

"Yes. I left maybe ten after eleven. I drove slowly. The Briarcliff is across town."

"The killer had keys to the car," he said thoughtfully. "It was done there. The kill, I mean."

Inez shivered her shoulders. "You mean you think the killer is still there?"

"Yes. Somebody might remember them if they left early. If they stay, it won't look so bad."

"What are you getting at?"

He rubbed his jaw. "If it weren't for the flat, you'd take the car to the basement garage. So that's where the body was to be discovered. Tomorrow, maybe. If I were the killer, I'd stay at Luigi's."

Inez nodded. "I get it," she said. "You want me to drive the convertible back and park where I got it."

"Got nerve enough?"

Inez nodded, said, "They'd be inside at a table drinking or eating."

"Or at the bar."

"Yes, the bar. I mean, you want me to go in?"

"Yes. I'll trail you. I can keep my eye peeled. The killer should get a jolt when

he sees you. A double jolt when he sees the convertible."

Inez licked her lips. "The waitresses have a room in back next to the chorus dressing room," she explained. "I'll go back there."

"Your locker!" he said excitedly. "Where else?"

"Where else what?"

"The gun," he said. "If they're framing you and your prints are on the gun, it's the logical place to plant it. They can't get in the Y."

"Unless they're a woman," she said.

They looked at each other, not as husband and wife, but as strangers seeing something in the other to be admired and respected.

"Us against everybody," he said.

"Yes," she agreed. "With the cards stacked against me."

"Us," he said. "Your prints may be on the kill gun, but the body's in my cab. Let's go! We're wasting time."

Luigi's was six miles out, a sprawling one-story structure in the center of a two-acre parking lot. Most of the fifty-odd cars were parked in front or at the sides of the building. Inez drove in back and parked the convertible beside a station wagon. Kurt drove behind the two cars and stopped abreast of them some fifty feet away. He got out and walked over to the convertible. Inez stood behind the station wagon.

She said, "The station wagon was right here when I got the car."

Her implication was clear. For all they knew, the station wagon belonged to the murderer and the kill could have been made where she was standing.

"Look!" Kurt said. "Can customers see out here?"

"No. The service rooms are in back, the kitchens and stuff."

"This is just a long shot," he said.

"Why is it?" she asked. "If cops grabbed me at the Briarcliff and found the body, it'd be plenty safe here. There's maybe a hundred people inside."

"Time isn't on our side," he pointed out.

"They never figured on a flat tire. They might even call the Briarcliff garage and see if the convertible is there."

"So what? Couldn't I have taken a ride for myself?"

"I can't think good," he admitted. "I'm sort of numb all over, even my brain, if I have a brain. Only if I had a brain I wouldn't have let you sit home alone. Look! Let's go."

"How? I mean, what do I do?"

Kurt had called for fares at Luigi's often enough to know the layout. The barroom was in front and connected to the main dining room in the rear through an archway.

He said, "Go through the bar and main dining room so everyone can see you. Walk heavy. Go back to your locker. Leave by the back way, and meet me in front."

Inez nodded, and her jaws tightened. She turned and walked away in long strides—as if she wanted to get it over with as quickly as possible. Kurt trailed her by ten feet.

The three men at the bar turned their heads to give Inez an appreciative but respectful appraisal. None of them expressed the shocked dismay Jensen expected.

He tucked his visored cap under his left arm and stood in the archway to look at the barnlike main dining room. Inez was half-way across the small dance floor and her heels came down hard enough to attract attention. He watched her sweep aside a blue curtain beside the bandstand and vanish from view.

JENSEN'S eager eyes scanned the customers. There was a hard lump at the pit of his stomach and breathing was difficult. If their plan failed, they were out of business and there would be nothing to do but go to the police. Inez would be jailed and it was even money he'd be jugged as an accessory.

The redhead flagged his eyes. She was seated at a table for two with a baldheaded man with thick shoulders. Her hazel eyes

stared into space and her face was so white her garish makeup seemed to hang in mid-air. Her face bore the shocked incredulity of a disbeliever who'd just seen a ghost.

The redhead started to get up. Kurt moved without thinking. He walked toward the table and the redhead gave him a startled look, sat down with a jolt. Jensen came beside the table. The man had a swarthy, fat face, and little beads of sweat glistened on his forehead.

"You call a cab?" Kurt asked.

"No!" said the man, his voice a croak.

"Aren't you the . . . Ackermans?"

"No!" The man's voice was stronger.

"You know the Ackermans?"

"Beat it!" the man ordered.

Kurt turned around and walked back to the archway. He turned around as if expecting someone to hail him. The redhead sat shaking her head in gentle negation to something her escort was saying.

Kurt turned and walked the length of the barroom. He pushed open the plate glass doors and stepped out on the terrace.

"Psst!" The hiss came to his right. He walked that way and found Inez crouched behind a small evergreen. Her voice was edged with triumph. "The gun!" she whispered. "I found the gun. In my locker."

Kurt held out a shaky hand. Inez laid a small-bore automatic in it. He got out his handkerchief and rubbed it clear of finger prints. "The one?" he asked. "I mean—"

"The same size," she interrupted. "Same color."

"We pulled the rug out from under them," he said.

"Who?"

He told her about the couple, said, "Oh, what a sickening jolt they got when they saw you!"

"His wife's a redhead," said Inez excitedly. "Flashy."

There was sound and movement at the front door and they crouched in the shadows as a man passed. It was the baldheaded man who'd been with the redhead. Kurt

grabbed his wife's hand and they circled the building in the opposite direction, hugging the walls and the deep shadows.

They stopped at the rear corner of the building and peered out. The man was getting into the station wagon. He got out and went to the rear where he unlatched and opened the top half of the horizontal doors. He closed the door.

"Killing time," Kurt whispered.

The man sidestepped and crouched behind the convertible. They saw the trunk lid raise slowly, then bang down. The man moved behind the station wagon. He just stood there a long time.

"Sweating it out," Kurt said. "He had keys. You have Ravenhurst's, don't you?"

"Yes," Inez said.

"If he starts back this way, get ready to run."

The man didn't. He walked around the station wagon and went back around the west side of the building.

Kurt said, "They'll yak-yak. It'll take time. It's our big chance."

"Chance? For what?"

"Quick! Get in the convertible. and be ready to take off!"

Inez ran well for a woman. She reached the convertible and piled in. Kurt ran to the taxi. He backed it around in a sweeping arc and stopped with the rear two feet from the rear of the station wagon.

He worked with frantic haste. The rear seat of the station wagon could be folded into the floor. He flipped it down. The body was limply inert. He skidded it up against the back of the front seat. The gun bore his prints, which he wiped off, and he tossed the weapon into the station wagon. He lowered the rear doors of both cars.

It occurred to him that the body could

be moved from the scene with ease. He got out the elaborate knife Inez had given him on his birthday. It had a needle sharp, awl-like blade. He punctured the rear tires of the station wagon, and the escaping air made a shrill whistle.

"Follow me!" he ordered Inez.

He got into the cab and drove out to the highway. He fancied that he saw the red-head and the man sitting at their table looking out of the window. Then he was on the highway and barreling toward town with Inez coupled up close behind. She blinked her headlights and he turned his on. His clothing was wet with sweat and he was as weak as a kitten.

The Briarcliff was a twenty-story apartment hotel. A lighted sign on the side street pointed the way to the basement garage. Kurt parked under the sign, and Inez stopped behind the cab.

Kurt went back to the convertible. He said, "Get in the cab! In back. I'll take the car down."

She licked her lips, asked, "What if you don't come back?"

"I will," he promised. She got out of the convertible and got into the rear of the taxi.

Kurt drove the convertible down the ramp to the basement garage. A kid in coveralls came over, said, "Mister Ravenhurst left word for me to check the spare tire."

"Sure," Kurt said. He got out of the car limp with relief. The ramp was steep and his legs ached when he got to ground level. He went back to the cab. Inez sat slumped in the rear seat.

She asked listlessly, "What now?"

"We go back and stand by," he said. "We wait."

(Continued on page 112)

What's in a name? Honesto Clerto, a Manila policeman, was arrested for eating a meal and refusing to pay for it after the restaurateur rejected his counterfeit bill.

Footsteps Behind

Her!

Run, Sally, run—before it is too late!
The love that red top of yours has
brought you is something more lethal
than hate!

By

FRANCIS K.

ALLAN

IT WAS their first wedding anniversary. They had spent it at Coney Island, and now it was night and time to go home. They walked through the crowds, arm in arm. Sally felt tired, drowsy and happy. Under her other arm she carried a ridiculous toy doll she'd won.

"Dan—" she said. "Know something? I love you."

It happened, then.





He threw himself, stumbling, toward the stairs.

At that moment, of all moments, a voice drifted out of the crowd. "Sandra Lynn," it called. Only that name, and nothing more. She stood still. The world had stopped. Or ended.

"What's the matter, Sally?" Dan said. "You look—What is it!"

She barely heard him. People passed. Barkers chanted. She was afraid to turn her head, afraid to look. Yet she couldn't help it. She turned slowly. The lights had left her eyes. Her lovely face had grown

thin and pale. The night, suddenly thick and hot, pressed against her throat.

"Sally, look at me! What's the matter?" Dan asked. He was gripping her shoulders, half shaking her, and she seemed to wake up.

Instead of hot she felt cold, and she trembled. "Let's go home, Dan," she said. "Please, let's go home."

She looked back once more, and she saw only the anonymous faces. Faces she didn't know, had never seen. Not *his* face . . . It

had been only a trick of her ears, she thought frantically. Only the left-over echo of the old, old nightmare.

Dan held her hand on the subway and looked at her uneasily. "It's all right now," she said reassuringly. "I just felt . . . odd for a moment."

"You stayed on the beach too long. The sun does tricks sometimes," he said. And she said, yes, the sun must have done tricks. She was slender, with curly red hair, a lovely mouth and beautiful curves where curves ought to be. Sometimes—often—Dan looked at her with a sensation of unreality. She was really too beautiful to be his. Then her eyes would meet his. She might smile, or sometimes she didn't; but her eyes confused him. They seemed to ask his forgiveness for some unknown transgression, and their sadness hurt him with its loneliness.

Their apartment—a second-floor walkup on Twelfth Street—still held the heat of the August day. She and Dan drank a beer in bed while she brushed her hair and he read the paper. Then they went to sleep.

She didn't know how long it had been, but Dan was shaking her when she woke. The light was on. His face was shocked, and she was clinging to him and sobbing.

"You were having a nightmare," he said. "You kept crying, 'No, no—go away!'" He rubbed her back gently. "That's the first one of those you've had in months. Go to sleep. It's after four, darling."

She buried her face in the pillow, biting her knuckles. "Dan," she whispered, "was that all? Did I say anything else?"

"That was all. Go to sleep, now."

THE next day was steamy-hot. Dan left for the office. Then the knock came at the door. Sally opened it. The face blurred in her vision, then came back again, closer, closer. Like some deep-water fish rising from a murky pool.

He hadn't changed in these last two years. His hair and eyes were black, and his lashes were long, like a woman's. His

mouth was full, like a woman's, and his hips were sleek. He was a beautiful man, or an ugly man, depending on what you knew about him. He came into the room, closed the door and put down his suitcase.

"Sooner or later, I guess, everybody goes to Coney Island," he said. "I thought it looked like you, but you've changed. You've grown up in a couple of pretty places. You're not a kid, are you, Sweetie?" He smiled. "Now, don't tell me you've forgotten your old friend."

He quirked his brow. "Come on," he said wryly. "Remember? Remember little Sandra Lynn from Atlanta? Just out of college, and she used to come tiptoeing into the Blue Moon dance hall like an angel going slumming for the first time. She had an innocent way of kissing—"

"Don't, Lonnie," she whispered. "Don't."

"You've forgotten the nice guy who taught you to tango at the Blue Moon? Aw, Sweetie," he murmured sarcastically, "you hurt me."

"Lonnie," she said in a groping voice. "Lonnie, please—"

"You're trying to forget us—me and little Sandra? But maybe I can help you remember. One night Sandra killed a woman named Dotty. Dotty was big. She got drunk and her bracelets jingled, and she had a big summer house out on a country road, remember? She was a fool, but when she died, they still called it murder. And Sandra ran away. I've always wondered where she was. She was a cute little sweetie." He stopped. He smiled, and his eyes were the color of hot cocoa. Then he kissed her.

She twisted and thrust him away. She slapped him. "Leave me alone," she sobbed.

"Just a shy little bride these days?" Lonnie shook his head. "Not to me, lovely. I'm the one guy in the world who knows you killed Dotty. The cops are still wondering. I could help them. Or you could help me. I need a quiet place to visit for a few days. I could be your cousin from St. Louis.

Your dearest cousin, who used to swing you under the old apple tree, remember?" He winked, then all the laughter slid from his face. "Be nice to me, baby. I could be trouble if I got sore. I'll bet there are lots of things your new lover-boy hasn't heard. And now," he said softly, "we'll try again. Make it good."

He kissed her slowly, insolently, and his lips hurt her lips. She clenched her fingers and her throat hurt. Her heart hurt and fear pounded in her breast and her lips felt soiled against his. Suddenly he shook her angrily. "Wake it up, you phony madonna!"

"Stop it, Lonnie," she sobbed. "What do you want?"

"Lots and lots of things. A warm home-coming. Why don't you run down to the store? Pick up a nice steak and a bottle of Scotch. Get some peroxide. Oh, yeah. And a Philadelphia paper."

"Where would I get a Philadelphia paper?"

"You'd take the subway to Times Square and buy it at that stand. And you'd hurry, baby, because waiting makes me nervous lately."

* * *

The steak and Scotch took a ruinous bite out of the week's shopping money. She climbed the stairs slowly on the way back to the apartment. She dreaded going back. The apartment was no longer hers and Dan's. It was fouled and its joy destroyed. Lonnie had told her to knock five times; he'd locked the door. As she waited for his answer, she saw the headline of the Philadelphia paper:

SEEK LOVE CLUB LOTHARIO IN
WIDOW'S SLAYING!

Lonnie unlocked the door. Sally's eyes hurried on over the paper. A dark-haired handsome dancer was being sought. He was known as Philip Wilde. Through the Lonely Love Club, he had met a wealthy

widow, Rose Herndon, of Philadelphia. Disturbed friends had notified the widow's son in California of his mother's dubious associate. He had flown to Philadelphia, but too late. His mother's body was discovered in the basement of her country home. She had been beaten to death. A valuable diamond necklace was believed to be missing. . . .

"Anything new in the paper today?" Lonnie asked idly.

She looked up, and the moment their eyes met she knew beyond any doubting. His smile was intimate, terrifying. He took the paper with a wink. "Make us a drink of Scotch, Sweetie."

"Lonnie," she whispered. "You—Lonnie, you killed her!"

"Did I? How funny." Then he took a diamond necklace from his pocket and swung it slowly from one finger. "Pretty, pretty," he said. "And tomorrow you'll start hocking it for me. A little at a time. A lady can hock diamonds; they always do. With men, it sometimes makes for questions."

"I won't, Lonnie," she began intensely. "You can't make—"

"Can't I? Won't you?" he said. "Or will you, after all? Remember, you've got a lot to lose these days. You'd hate to say good-by to Danny. Good-by forever, I mean. It would break your little heart." He picked up the peroxide and sauntered into the bathroom.

Sally stood there numbed with fright. Dan, she thought. Good-by forever. . . . Oh, it didn't fit at all! Dan was all of her! Her heart, her soul, her very breath and life! Life was nothing without Dan.

The terror of the past came back at her like a wind howling out of a stormy night. And the terror was greater than ever before. Lonnie was so right: She had more to lose now. . . .

The tormenting irony of *That Night* jeered at her. She hadn't meant to kill Dotty. She hadn't meant to kill anyone,

ever, anywhere. She had just thrown an empty glass. She hadn't even thrown it at Dotty. She'd thrown it at Lonnie, but it had missed Lonnie, and it had hit Dotty on the cheek. And even then it wouldn't have been so bad, except Dotty was standing by the fireplace, and when she fell, her head hit the bricks and she began to moan.

Sally remembered running—down the stairs, down to the lane, along the dark lane. Running desperately and crying as she ran. And then Lonnie had caught up with her in his car and had taken her in. He'd said, "This isn't funny. You threw too hard, and she's dead." Sally had screamed, and he had held her close to him. "Don't, baby," he'd whispered. "It's just me and you, out of the whole world. I'll take care of you. Kiss me!"

Sally closed her eyes and wanted to scream with the memory of that night. Just a thrown glass, one moment of fury. But not murder! It couldn't be murder! It was only a grotesque trick. Something. . . .

Lonnie came out of the bathroom. His hair was blond with peroxide. He sat before the mirror and made Sally put a long bandage down his cheek. "We'll tell Danny Boy I was in a wreck," he said. "What's his pitch? Where did you find him?"

"He's an architect. He was advertising for a stenographer, a beginner, when I came to New York after that . . . that night."

Why didn't I tell Dan the truth that first time, before he ever kissed me? . . . Or the other nights? . . . But Sally knew the answer. It had been too late to tell him. From the first moment it had been too late. She had loved him from the first, and the truth would have shattered that new and tender love. She had promised herself, "Someday, somewhere, when he loves me so much it won't matter. . . . Someday. . . ."

That was what she had told herself, just as she had tried to pretend that she was really another person—not Sandra Lynn from near Atlanta, Georgia. Not a girl

who'd once—for an instant—adored a man named Lonnie who'd taught her to dance, to kiss—and then to despise. . . .

"What big tears you're crying, baby," Lonnie said.

She shook her head heavily. "I didn't know those people, really."

"Which people didn't you know?"

"Me. You. You don't understand. But, Lonnie," she said in a low and intense voice, "leave Dan alone. You hear? Leave Dan alone!"

Their eyes met in the mirror. "You never cried for me," he said slowly. "You stood me up. I tried to help you, but you ran away. You didn't cry for me much." There was hatred in his tone. "But I never forgot you, and I never stopped wanting you. Now, cry about that!" Suddenly he stood up. He gripped her shoulders and shook her furiously. "Stop looking like that! You're no lily!"

His fingers hurt her shoulders. She tried to twist loose. He jerked her back. She felt something lumpy and hard in his pocket, and suddenly she stiffened. It was a gun. Lonnie had a gun.

Panic crawled into her throat. Something would happen. Something would go wrong. Lonnie would blow up. . . .

The front door opened and closed. "Hello, darling!"

Her heart stumbled a beat. It was Dan, home early.

"Where are you?" he called.

"And here's your lover-boy," Lonnie murmured.

ALL gone bye-bye," Lonnie said, holding up the empty Scotch bottle. "Can't you fix it up, Danny?"

"It's after midnight. The stores are closed," Dan said wearily. He was tired. He'd laughed with Lonnie, talked with him, made drinks for him; but he disliked him acutely, Sally sensed. "Anyway, I've got to work tomorrow," he said.

"Working's for the birds. Tell him I

want a Scotch, Sweetie. Go on, tell him."

Dan flushed. "Maybe, but working's how I pay the bills. And something else, if you don't mind. Skip that Sweetie stuff."

Lonnie's eyes brightened slowly. "It's okay, Danny Boy. From me it's perfect. Tell him, Sweetie."

"It—it's only a word, Dan," Sally said anxiously. "It doesn't matter."

Dan blinked at her, and she saw him getting angry. He started to say something, then changed his mind and stood up. "My party is over. I'm going to bed." He picked up the paper he'd brought home. He snatched it up angrily, and the inner sheets showered out and down to the floor at Sally's feet.

She bent over quickly to gather them up. She wanted to get Dan out of here and to bed before something went wrong. Lonnie was drunk. There was a gun in Lonnie's pocket. She couldn't quit thinking of it.

Then her thoughts stopped still. Lonnie's picture was looking up at her from a page of the newspaper. Above it was one word: **SOUGHT!**

The world stood still, then rushed into action again. She pulled the sheet toward her. She glanced up to find Lonnie staring at her hand. He had seen. His cheeks were sunken in, gray.

As Sally watched, he raised his eyes to Dan's face. Dan only stood there, still annoyed, still sleepy, reaching down to take the paper from Sally. He'd take it to bed, read it, recognize—

"That's good enough," he said. "I'll put it together."

Awkwardly, frantically, she wadded the picture sheet under her. "Go on, Dan," she said. "I'll be there in a minute."

He frowned as he took the pages. "The other sheet—under your knee."

"There isn't—Please, go to bed, Dan. Please," she said. Her eyes tried to plead with him. Suddenly it wasn't what might happen to her. Suddenly that didn't matter. Dan was all that mattered.

He looked at her. "Something is making you afraid," he said in an odd voice. Then, before she realized what he was doing, he took her hands and pulled her to her feet. Then he reached down and picked up the sheet of paper.

"Dan," she tried to whisper. But no sound came. Nothing but the crackle of paper as he smoothed out the page.

Lonnie spoke softly. "Anything new, Danny?"

"A woman had quadruplets in Brooklyn."

"What else?"

"They're hunting a man for murdering a woman in Philadelphia."

"Tell me what it says, Danny."

"They know who he is. They've traced some laundry he left at a hotel. He was a dancer in New York and around. His name is Lonnie Crane." Danny looked up. "I don't believe I caught your last name."

"Crane, like it says. Look at the pretty picture."

"I'm looking."

"Now look down where my hand is."

The gun was in his hand. Sally's throat locked. She couldn't breathe. The muscles along Dan's jaw tightened and stood out.

"You're a fool, Lonnie. You can't get away with murder."

"Can't I?" There was sweat on Lonnie's face, but he smiled. "Tell him, Sweetie. Tell him how people can get away with murder."

Sally's throat kept closing tighter and tighter until her chest felt starved for air. But she couldn't breathe or speak.

"Tell him to call the cops, Sweetie," Lonnie said. "Tell him all about the birds and bees." There was a savage delight in his voice, but it was edged with fear.

"What is he trying to say, Sally?" Dan asked quietly.

"Dan," she sobbed. "Oh, Dan. . . ."

Now he would find out. This was such an ugly, naked way for him to find out.

"You've made her cry, Danny," Lonnie

taunted, then frenzy hurried into his voice again. "Turn on the radio. I want to hear what the news says."

Music came over the radio. It was an old song. "Remember?" Lonnie said. "I taught you to dance to that song, and then—"

"Shut up! Please—" She turned to Dan desperately. "Let me tell you in *my* words."

"Make it innocent, Sweetie. With blushes, with the kisses and—"

"Keep out of this, Lonnie!" Dan said sharply, stepping forward.

Lonnie's mouth jerked. He was afraid. He had the gun, but he was still afraid. "Be careful! I can make it hurt, Danny," he said in breathless defiance. "Don't come any closer. Don't pick up anything! You don't know what you're playing with. Ask Sweetie. Ask her about Dotty. Just ask her!"

Sally pressed her hands against her cheeks. The music was playing. Dan was looking at her, waiting. She didn't understand what made her say the next words; yet they were the only words she could find.

"I love you, Dan. Really, remember, I love you."

For some reason the words enraged Lonnie. He stood up, shaking. "She killed Dotty!" he shouted. "Tell him how you killed her!" he flung at her. "I'm the most important guy in your life, Sally, I—"

"Tell me about Dotty, Sally," Dan said quietly.

She told him. She didn't look at him. Her voice was barely a whisper and she looked at the tips of her shoes as she talked. She was telling him things of long ago. Of a girl named Sandra Lynn that she'd hardly known at all—or so it seemed. This girl named Sandra Lynn had been an orphan, she told him, and she'd never had any dates; she'd never gone anywhere. But she made good grades, and she won a scholarship to a small girls' college near Atlanta, Georgia. But her clothes were

comical and foolish, and even in college she didn't have dates. But then. . . . Then, after college, when she'd been taking the typing and dictation course at a business school, she went with a girl she'd met to a dance place outside of town. Just to see, to look, to sit at the table while the other girl danced with the boy who'd taken them. And there was Lonnie. . . .

That was the first time. There were other times, when just she and Lonnie were there. He showed her how to dance a tango. And finally, there was the night with Dotty.

She didn't know the woman's last name. She was big, and wore a diamond bracelet and had a loud, laughing voice. Lonnie knew her well, it seemed. Lots of people knew her. She bought drinks for everyone, and when a certain piece of music was played, she stood up and did a sort of hula by herself. She was about fifty, and she was loud. It seemed as if she were lonely, as if she were trying to buy her joy with money.

When the place closed, Lonnie had said, "Dotty wants us to come over to her joint. She has a neat layout. Let's go."

SO THEY went to Dotty's house, and it was late. It was later and later, and everybody left, until there were only herself and Lonnie and Dotty. Suddenly she found herself alone; maybe she'd gone to sleep in her chair. And when she woke, she heard Dotty crying and arguing in another room, and Lonnie answering.

He was saying that Sandra didn't matter to him; that she was just a kid with time on her hands. A dumb, moonstruck kid. And Dotty was wanting to know where he'd been the last three weeks, and where the Dotty. And then she had loathed him.

Lonnie was telling her, for heaven's sake, Sandra was just a jive-happy kid who kept hanging onto his coat tails.

It was heartbreaking to remember the next part. She followed the voices and opened the door, and Lonnie was kissing

Dotty. And then she had loathed him.

The glass was in her hand, and she threw it at him. But it hit Dotty, and she fell on the fireplace. And then she ran.

The next day she took the bus to New York, and in the little hotel on Tenth Avenue, when the man asked her to sign her name, she had said good-by to Sandra Lynn. She had signed another name. Sally. A new name, a new place, a new life. . . .

Her voice trailed off, and she began to cry, because she hadn't told it the way she'd wanted to. The way it had really been was somehow lost in her words. The fear was lost. The youngness was missing, and all the tears and anguish. If only she could tell Dan how it had felt. . . .

"Be still. I want to hear this," Lonnie broke in. The news report was on. The Russian news. The news from London, Paris. Then the news of the Love Club Killer. The New York police were hunting for him. He'd been seen at a Coney Island dance hall where he'd once worked. He had tried to borrow money. It was believed that he had the diamond necklace. Presumably, he would try to pawn it. Police had alerted the pawnshops of—"

Lonnie cursed and snapped off the radio. The mixture of rage and panic swept his face again. "Cops think they're damned smart!"

"Sometimes they are, Lonnie," Dan said.

"Don't laugh. Sweetie's going on this hockshop trip for me, and you'll stay here with me and the gun, just to make her work hard."

"And after that?"

"I'll go places, and she'll be my insurance until I get a nice setup somewhere. It'll keep you from singing. . . . What time is it?"

"Four o'clock. A long time until the pawnshops open," Dan said. "Sally. . ." he said slowly. At last she raised her head and looked at him. He smiled. Not a full, gay smile. A quiet, direct smile that told her to weep no more. It told her that, be-

tween them, nothing would ever be so wrong that it couldn't be fixed again.

Lonnie stared at them. Sally could almost feel his muscles tightening as he sensed something new in the room—something too secure for him to threaten. His eyes raked their faces, hunting for some suspected trick.

"What's the fancy secret?" he demanded.

Dan looked at him, first with anger and contempt, then with a sudden shifting of expression. "Is there a secret, Lonnie?" he asked. Now his brown eyes were nearly black. He was thinking hard, Sally knew. He looked just the way he did when he was trying to get the hardest word in the Sunday crossword puzzle.

"You're afraid, Lonnie," he said. "You're trying to think of something you've made a mistake about. I can almost see it. You think with your face. Did anybody ever tell you?" he asked softly.

Lonnie's hand started to his mouth, then he jerked it away. "You're funny. Funny, hah-hah," he said loudly—too loudly. "It wouldn't be so funny if Sally got hauled in for murder. Be careful. I can hurt Sally plenty, and that would be hurting you."

A long silence crawled by. "Aren't you thinking about Dotty, Lonnie?" Dan asked slowly.

"Why would I be thinking about her?" He laughed. The laughter was harsh, shrill. It held a flaw, like a badly tuned violin.

Sally felt the flaw echo in the room. She saw perspiration bead Lonnie's face, and Dan kept staring at him. She could almost feel Lonnie fighting to keep his mouth shut, not to reveal any more by the off-tone of his voice.

"Sally," Dan said, "tell me about Dotty again. You threw the glass. It hit her and she fell on the fireplace. You ran. At once? Did you look back at her?"

"Look back at— Oh, no. I only wanted to get away."

"So you don't know, actually, how badly hurt she was when you left her. She simply

fell. She—No, Lonnie, watch me," he broke in. "I like to see your face when it tries to think."

"Stand still!" Lonnie raged. "Stop talking!"

Sweat covered his face. He rubbed his hand across his lips, then snatched it away again.

Silence returned, then Dan's voice plodded on. This was a side of Dan that Sally had never glimpsed. Nor did she understand what he was driving at. But she felt an intense tension mounting—a tension between him and Lonnie. And she could hear Lonnie's shallow breathing.

"You simply turned and ran," Dan said to her. "Presently Lonnie caught up with you in his car. He said you'd killed her. Right?"

Sally nodded.

"Did Dotty wear diamonds? A ring or anything like that?"

"A bracelet. The bracelet was diamonds. I remember the way it twinkled, and once she laughed and said, 'This is my rich boy friend.'"

"It was just a glass. She simply fell. You never looked back," Dan said. Abruptly, he laughed. "You're thinking so hard it hurts, Lonnie. We understand each other now, don't we? Remember very carefully. . . . Sally ran. You were standing there, alone in this house at night with Dotty. Perhaps she was unconscious. Certainly she was dazed. The diamond bracelet was on her wrist. The idea came to you. Remember? . . . Remember how easy it seemed? Just finish it up, you thought. . . . So you slugged her for keeps.

"You told Sally she'd done the job. You were going to be her protecting hero, weren't you, and she would have to be your pretty little yes-girl?"

"A part of it worked. You sold her the murder idea. She was young. How long ago. . . . Twenty, she was. That's young, when you're scared. So you sold her. But she fooled you. She ran away and—"

"Danny," Lonnie said thickly, "I've got the gun. You be careful."

The words, tight and trapped, were almost a confession.

Sally felt something rise in her throat. "Oh!" she cried. "Oh, oh—"

"Shut up!" Lonnie screamed. "Both of you, shut up!"

Again the silence, then Dan's voice insinuated itself again. "Yes. You did it on Dotty. So. . . . What's the phrase? Oh, yes. Habit pattern. You had a habit pattern to work on. A middle-aged rich woman with diamonds. Slug her to death and take the diamonds. It worked in Atlanta. Why shouldn't it work in Philadelphia? So you tried it again. But basically you are stupid, Lonnie, and you loused it up and. . . ."

DAN'S voice went on and on.

Momentarily, his eyes met Sally's. He seemed to be trying to send some silent warning. He was about to do something, she sensed. His voice had dropped to a murmur. She held her breath as she watched him, and something in her cried out silently, Oh, don't, Dan! Whatever it is, don't! He has a gun!

"You're shaking, Lonnie. You're frightened," Dan taunted softly. "Your hand is shaking. You're not sure the safety is off the gun, are you?"

Lonnie blinked and licked his lips, then he responded to the impulse of uneasiness. He glanced down at the gun.

Dan kicked at the lamp cord. The lamp was the only light burning in the room. It crashed to the floor, and darkness rolled in.

Dan shouted. "Fall down, Sally! Stay on the—"

The gun roared. Sally found herself on the floor, without any memory of falling there. Then the echo of the gun was gone, and the room was shrilly still.

She couldn't hear Dan breathe. Her eyes struggled to penetrate the blackness, but she couldn't see him and she couldn't hear him groan. She pressed her knuckles against

her teeth, fighting her frenzy to call out to him.

The building came alive to the shock of the gun's roar. Upstairs something hit the floor. Below a door slammed. Footsteps scuffed in the Barlows' apartment above, followed by the murmur of indistinguishable words. Sally heard a swallowing sound. It was Lonnie. She knew the sound.

"Sally? Dan?" The sound echoed down the old dumbwaiter in the kitchen. It was Cliff Barlow. "Hey, Dan?"

Again the agony of silence, the murmur of words above.

Then, with nerve-shattering shrillness, the phone rang. It was the Barlows, Sally was sure. It stopped ringing, rang again, stopped. It became more than a ringing bell. It became an insistent scream, tortured and demanding, almost hysterical. It maddened Sally. She wanted to scream back at it.

Another door slammed. Feet were rushing about the hallway.

The phone screamed on, unendurably.

Lonnie cracked, with a hoarse, infuriated cry. A chair overturned. Something crashed to the floor. He seemed to be fighting his way toward the phone; but he couldn't find it. He cried out again, frustrated, and lunged through the blackness.

The hall door swung open. The hall light was burning. He stood there an instant, silhouetted in frozen flight—coatless, his wavy hair straggling, his chest heaving, sweat on his face. Then he threw himself toward the stairs and went stumbling out of sight. The main door slammed.

"There he goes," Dan said.

Dan was standing at the front window.

Sally went to him, and they watched Lonnie. He ran toward Seventh Avenue, and his shirt fluttered out absurdly behind him as he passed a street light. He vanished into Seventh Avenue, then a moment later he reappeared, fleeing back in the opposite direction on Seventh.

Going anywhere and nowhere, Sally thought. There he went, with diamonds in his pocket and a gun in his hand.

"He won't go far," Dan said. "And he won't last long. He's done."

"Dan," she said.

He put out his hands and found her in the darkness.

"Oh, Dan," she said.

Then he lifted her in his arms and carried her to the couch. "It's all right," he said quietly.

He fumbled for the overhead light, and they looked at each other until, finally, he smiled and kissed her. "I'm going to call the police now," he said.

"Yes," she said. She wanted him to call them. She wanted it over.

"It may be hard at first," he said, "but it will be all right in the end, and then it will be finished forever. You see?"

"Oh, yes, Dan.. I see. Call them, call them. I'm not afraid."

"I'll be here," he said. "We'll be all right, my darling."

He made the call; then he hung up and sat down beside her on the couch.

She wasn't afraid. She felt serene, at peace. As if all the dank closed doors were open at last, and soon the sun would come streaming in. She put her head against Dan's shoulder and, without talking, they sat there waiting. . . . ♠ ♠ ♠

Summoned by his parents, sheriff's deputies searched six hours for eight-year-old Robert, missing from his Moss Beach, Calif., home. Then they noticed Robert's dog, Sarge, standing outside the dog house. He seemed a little dejected. Now and then he cast a reproachful look in the direction of his little domain. The deputies had a hunch. Sure enough, there was Robert, on the inside, sound asleep.

By GORDON

Concerning



SHE told me she was from San Angelo, Texas, and I believed her. Why not? She could have been from Texas. She was tall and long-limbed, with a wide full mouth that matched the wide-apart green eyes. And her hair was red, matching the freckles buried beneath the deep tan of her face.

She had the drawl, too. Typical of a Southwesterner; the words coming slowly and easily—huskily. And the rest of her story went with the picture. Her father, raised white Herefords on three or four thousand acres of land near San Angelo, which could account for the sleek Cadillac convertible and the three-hundred-dollar suit she wore.

Vital statistics. I got the works. The whole business. Even the part about the husband. He was a flyer—Navy, stationed at Pensacola, Florida. She had just left him and was on her way home to “Daddy’s li’l ol’ ranch.”

A nice, friendly gal—talkative—voluble. But, hell, I didn’t give a damn one way or the other where she was from and if her daddy owned the whole State of Texas. When she had picked me up on the highway about fifteen miles from Atlanta, Georgia, and said she was heading for New Orleans—a brief stop-over on her way home—I wouldn’t have cared if she had

“Keep your hands away from your pockets!” the fat man ordered.

SHELLY

Mrs. Murder

It was almost too good to be true that a dame like her would fall for a guy like me. But she was too much woman to walk away from....

told me she was Sam's favorite daughter with a hundred and one acres of steaming lava in Hell.

But by the time we pulled into Anniston, Alabama, late that afternoon, I was beginning to have my doubts. She was too friendly, too talkative. She had too much to say about nothing. She wanted something. Of this I was sure. But what?

It was a good question, and if I could have foreseen the answer, I'd have gotten out of that car and started to walk to, New Orleans.

We were parked in a gas station waiting for a refill on the twenty-gallon tank, and she was over by the station talking to the buck-toothed attendant. I waited in the car, and I kicked around the doubts and the questions:

I'm no tramp, and although I've got a slightly pushed-in face in spots, I don't look like the kind of character who would go around putting the arm on strange girls and beating old ladies. But, still, she had wheeled on past several young college kids who had their thumbs stuck way up in the air, and had not braked to a stop until she was alongside me. It just didn't add up, and later, when I gave her the run-down



on my busted-out condition—the story about the crooked dice game in Atlanta and the knockout drops and the headache later—she had really gotten friendly. Like she had something in mind and I just fitted the bill.

“Now what?” she had asked.

And I had told her, “New Orleans, and maybe a berth on a freighter to South America.”

She gave no answer; just that “uh-huh” smile.

I looked over toward the station. She was giving the attendant’s arm a nice squeeze; it must have sent blood pressure up a couple of hundred points. He came over and fumbled around at the rear of the caddy, and she started back to the car; all smiles. Watching her, I had to admire her all over again. She was all woman. I opened the door for her, and she gave me the full benefit of that toothy smile.

“Light me a cigarette, Marty,” she said, the words coming from somewhere deep down in her throat. A lot of legs shoved into the car, and I was given a good look at them when I bent over to yank out the dashboard lighter. She didn’t try to do anything about the skirt when it crawled up to a spot just above her knees. I straightened and handed her the lighted smoke.

The attendant finished filling the gas tank, and she gave him the smile when she paid him. And we left him standing there, gawking, when she wheeled the big car out onto the highway, heading it west.

“Help yourself to the cigarettes, Marty,” she said.

I did, and thought, “You’re either a high-class adventuress, Mrs. Patrice Raymond, or you’re a dumb dame with a lot of dough and frustrated.”

The name, she gave me shortly after I got into the car. Real informal like—friendly. “Just call me Pat, and I’ll call you Marty.”

A real puzzler, and she had played it

that way until we were on the other side of Anniston. We stopped at a roadside restaurant, and she said the meal was on her, She said, “Now please don’t refuse, Marty,” and I didn’t.

We went in, sat down, ordered, ate, and were nursing a couple of bottles of beer before she finally opened up and gave me a look at the reasons behind all the friendliness. And still I didn’t get it—not the whole picture—not the true look.

She asked me if I was going to ship out as soon as I got to New Orleans. I said Yes. And she came back with, “Would you consider a wait of, say, two or three days?”

Nothing there, but I waited. I had the feeling this was it. She took her time. Her expression hadn’t changed since we had parked in the booth. She looked like a half-asleep cat, her green eyes veiled, not revealing a thing.

She laughed with a suddenness that surprised me. “It’s your face, Marty,” she said. “You look so serious. What’s the matter? Afraid the big bad woman of the highway is going to take advantage of poor little you?” She reached over to pat my hand, real sophisticated, but I wasn’t playing.

I jerked my hand away and pushed out of the booth and got to my feet.

“Thanks for the meal, lady,” I said. “And thanks for the lift. This is where I get off.”

She stopped laughing and reached for my hand again. “No. Wait, Marty,” she said, pulling me down into the booth. “I’m sorry. Really, I am. I wasn’t serious. I didn’t mean that last crack. I had a reason for asking you about your stay in New Orleans.”

I felt a little like the gas station attendant must have felt when she touched his arm. I listened.

She gave me the rest of her story—it was an invitation to hell, and it was hiding behind a sultry smile, and a body that was

something like a walking bolt of lightning.

She said she wanted me to sit around a certain night club in the New Orleans French Quarter; she named the place and I remembered the name. And when a guy came up to me and said, "White-face Herefords are moneymakers," I was to hand him a package she would give me, in exchange for a package he would have.

"Uh-uh," I said, not liking the sound of it. It was too glib—too pat.

She frowned, and on her it looked good. "You won't do it?"

"I didn't say that," I told her stubbornly.

"Well, then. . . ." she said, brightening a little. "Why the 'uh-uh'?"

"The packages," I said. And she said, "Oh!" like that explained everything, and then I got the rest of the story. It was good; emotional with all the right gestures and overtones. It spelled blackmail. At least that's the way she wanted it spelled. I spelled it her way. We left with me firmly twined around her finger.

IT WAS a nice trip the rest of the way into New Orleans, and she didn't give my doubts a chance to work overtime. She had picked me up Wednesday morning, and we had stopped at the Anniston roadside restaurant late that same afternoon. With both of us driving, we should have been in New Orleans not later than Thursday night. We arrived there late Friday night.

We stopped the car at the corner of Canal and Bourbon Streets and she said, "Here, you'll need this," and shoved a wad of bills into my hand.

"Check in at the Crescent Hotel; it's a couple of blocks from here, down Bourbon Street," she told me. "Get a good night's rest and call me in the morning." She named the hotel she would be staying at, and then she kissed me, her lips soft and warm against mine, and I was sorry to see her drive away.

What a dame, I thought, as I watched the big car roll around a corner and disappear. I looked at the money she had crammed into my hand. I counted it. There were two hundred dollars in tens and twenties. It felt good. I turned and walked down Bourbon.

Later, after I had gotten a room at the Crescent Hotel, I tried the impossible. I tried to sleep. It just didn't work. No one sleeps in the French Quarter. If it wasn't a couple of loud-mouth drunks, it was the scream of blaring trumpets and the steady beat of drums, topped by a crashing cymbal. When sleep finally did come, it hit me like a ton of bricks.

Someone was pounding on a door. I rolled over on the bed, opened my eyes, listened, and finally decided it was my door. "Okay, okay," I called. "Take it easy."

"Ten o'clock, sir," a voice said through the door.

I said, "Yeah. Okay."

The voice left. I heard footsteps carry it away. I got up and showered, shaved and dressed. Fifteen minutes later, I was talking with Pat over the phone. Ten minutes after that she picked me up on the same corner where I had left her the night before.

She looked refreshed and vibrant, but when I tried to put my arms around her, she pulled back.

"Please, Marty," she said. "Not here."

I felt bitter. For a second I had been puzzled. She gave me the package. Her hands were shaking.

"Take it easy, baby," I told her, smiling. "Everything's going to be all right. Personally, I'd like to take the guy apart instead of giving him this dough."

She was frightened. It was all over her face. She grabbed my arm. "Marty, no!" she cried. "Do you understand?"

"Okay. Okay," I said. "I won't lay a hand on the scum."

But she wanted to be sure. "Promise,

"Marty?" she asked, her voice like it had been last night. So I did, and it seemed to satisfy her.

"Where do I reach you when I make the switch with this character?"

"Your hotel."

I wrote down the address and the name and gave it to her. I said I would leave a message with the desk clerk which would let her know when I'd be back in case I was out when she called.

She seemed in a hurry to get away, and before she left me again, she made me repeat my promise to her about manhandling the character I was going to meet.

An hour later I was sitting in one of the many small bars that dot the streets of the French Quarter. The whiskey was good and the atmosphere was dead.

The bartender said it was too early in the day. "Business usually picks up around five, six o'clock," he told me. He was right! By seven, the place was packed, and I was getting bar-stool weary. Other than leaving for an hour to get something to eat, I hadn't left the bar all day.

Once or twice I thought my job was going to end the first day. A couple of characters who strongly resembled the blackmail type, hair-line mustaches, pin-stripe suits, and French-toe shoes, came in late in the afternoon. They looked around like they expected to see someone they knew, and then settled themselves at the bar. Each one went through practically the same ritual. But they were blanks. Not my boy.

About ten that night, a blonde plunked herself down on the stool next to me, told me she'd take a drink if I offered her one, and said her name was Irene.

"Nice name," I said, buying the drink. "Now blow."

Her eyes got as hard as her face. "Louse," she spat when she got up.

I watched her walk to the other end of the bar. She sure knew what to do with what she had to do it with.

At a little after eleven, a newsboy came through the bar. When he got to me, he said, "Your name Martin Warrick?"

Just like that. I felt for the package. It was still in my left-hand, inside coat pocket. I didn't know this kid. In fact, outside of Pat, I didn't know anyone in New Orleans.

"Maybe. . . ."

"Look, mister," the kid said, "let's not play games. Either you are or you ain't. Now what's it going to be?"

Real smart, this kid.

"It is," I said.

He looked like he'd just gone through a terrific ordeal and was finally free of the difficulty. "Okay," he said. "Pat wants to see you right away." He turned to leave, and I reached out and grabbed him.

"Wait a minute, Junior," I said. "Where?"

"Down the street about a block."

The bartender leaned over the bar. "Want another drink, Mac?" he asked.

I shook my head and the blonde walked by. "Louse," she said again. . . .

The kid was like an eel in my hands.

"You want I should draw you a map?"

"Where, down the street?" I asked him.

"Down the street a block. That way." He pointed west.

I let him go, paid for my last drink, and pushed by the blonde.

A guy in a brown suit, drunk, careened away from the bar, hit me. I shoved him aside.

OUTSIDE the place, I glanced up and down the street. To the west, about a block from where I was standing, I saw a red taillight blink on and off. I made the distance in nothing flat, and was sitting in the car with her and asking for an explanation, when I remembered something that had happened when I brushed by the blonde. A drunk had staggered away from the bar and clutched at me, and I had brushed him aside. But was he drunk?

I choked off my questions to Pat, and reached for the inside coat pocket. I knew before my hand got there what I'd find. It was empty.

In the half light of the car, Pat's face looked frightened when she swung me around to face her.

"What is it, Marty?"

I was half out of the car before I answered. "The package—it's gone!"

"Marty!" she cried.

I started running back toward the bar, and I heard the car start behind me. The roar of the motor was loud on my heels. She must have done a hairpin U-turn to bring the car about that quickly. She pulled up alongside me on the wrong side of the street when I was only a couple of doors away from the bar.

She could have stayed right where she was parked in the first place, because I'd done a little fast thinking during my short jog and had come up minus a couple of big answers to equally big questions.

I went over to the car and yanked open the door and shoved in alongside her.

"Okay, Bright-eyes," I said. "Let's cut the comedy."

I was watching her closely. This time I wasn't going to play the sucker.

She frowned, and it almost looked real. "I don't understand," she said.

"It's simple," I said. "You put the finger on me. I can't figure out why, but you duked me."

"What do you mean?"

"The kid. The newsboy. You sent him in to me. You didn't want to come yourself. It would have put you in a bad spot," I told her. "So you sent the kid, and then your stooge nailed me on the way out and clipped the package."

"Marty. No!" she cried, and for a second I would have sworn she meant it.

"I don't get it," I told her frankly. "Why me? And what's in the package?"

"One hundred thousand dollars," she said.

I took out a pack of cigarettes. My hands were shaking when I lit one. One hundred thousand dollars. Her money, and according to my reasoning, she had sent the kid in to me to tip off the guy who had clipped me. It didn't make sense. I told her so.

"What do you expect to get from me?" I asked her.

"Nothing," she said, and she meant it. It was all over her face. She hadn't tipped the guy to me.

"But why the kid, Pat?" I asked finally.

"I wanted you to bring me the package. I'd changed my mind," she told me. "I was going to tell my husband all about the letters and everything."

It could have been that way. It was the only way that made sense, and when I looked at her I had to give her the benefit of any doubts I might have had up until then. I got out of the car.

"Where are you going?"

"To find your dough," I told her, and I started to walk away.

"Wait, Marty!" she called.

I came back to the car, and she handed me something. I looked at it. It was a gun. A flat automatic, a .38. A big gun for a little girl. I put it in my pocket.

"I'll be at your hotel," she said. "Give me your key."

Some dame!

I gave her the key.

I was out of one jackpot and into another. She was too much for me. If I'd have been smart, I'd have walked away from her and kept right on going until my feet were planted on some ship bound for parts unknown. But I wasn't smart. She was too much woman to walk away from, husband or no husband. I'd cross that bridge when I got to it.

I went into the bar.

It didn't make much looking around to let me know he wasn't there. The drunk. The blonde was still there, and on a hunch I eased in beside her at the bar.

"I'm buying," I said. She lit up like a

Christmas tree until she got a look at my face. She started to ease off the stool.

"Louise," she said.

"Take it easy," I told her, smiling. "I'm sorry about before. My wife was due here."

She believed me. We had a couple of drinks and got real chummy. No, she didn't remember a guy bumping into me. But who cared? "Let's you and me have fun."

I told her we would. I asked the bartender if he remembered the guy. I described what I remembered about the character and drew a blank with the bartender.

"A thousand guys look like the guy you describe," he told me.

I was going to dump the blonde and take off and make the rounds of every joint in the Quarter, when I got a bright idea. Take the blonde along. That way, I wouldn't attract too much attention.

We left. She knew every joint in the Quarter. I was looking for a lush wearing a dark brown suit, a hat—that much I remembered—and about medium build, from the feel of him when he bounced into me.

It hadn't been easy digging those fleeting recollections out of my brain. They'd come in snatches, but, like the bartender said, they could fit a thousand guys in the Quarter. I found that out.

2

I LEFT the blonde for a few minutes in one of the bars, and found a phone booth and called Pat. Her voice, heavy with sleep, finally answered after several rings.

"Did you find him?"

"No," I said. Then I frowned. I thought I heard another sound at the other end of the line. Like someone moving around.

"Are you up?" I asked Pat.

"No. Why?"

It made sense. The phone in my room was alongside the bed. But the sound

was still there, and then it was gone as suddenly as it had started. She wasn't up, yet I distinctly heard someone moving around.

"Go back to sleep," I told her, trying to keep my voice steady.

"Please be careful, Marty," she said. I heard a click on the other end and put the phone back on the cradle. Outside the booth, I looked for a back exit, couldn't find one, and went back to the blonde. I had to get away from her and back to the hotel. She saved me the trouble. She was nowhere in sight in the barroom. I left, and in five minutes was back at the hotel. I took the steps two at a time, and when I reached the second-floor landing, I took it easy the rest of the way.

There was only one other way out of that room and that was the window. I turned the knob of the door, pushed in. It was locked. I banged against the wood panel and then listened.

The bed creaked and then there was silence. I banged again.

"Who is it?" It was Pat's voice. There was no other sound in the room.

"It's me—Marty."

She opened the door. She was pushing back her hair with one hand and holding an old robe of mine around her with the other. She was alone unless someone was hiding under the bed.

I must have looked silly when I brushed by her without a word and kneeled on the floor and looked under the bed. But I didn't care. Things were happening too fast since I'd let myself be talked into acting as a very uninformed contact man for a dame I didn't know until three days ago.

"What is it, Marty?" she asked.

I told her. I said, "For a guy who's supposed to know the score, I sure act like a first-class jerk."

She didn't say anything. She was waiting for the rest of it.

"You had company when I called," I told her flatly.

She didn't deny it. She went over and sat on the couch. It wasn't what I expected. I guess I wanted her to deny the accusation, and when she didn't, it set me back. Made me feel an emotion I couldn't put my finger on then.

"Who was it?"

She turned away from me. Wouldn't look at me.

"I can't tell you."

"That's great," I said, completely disgusted with her and with myself. "You hand me a hundred grand, turn me loose in a bar to wait for someone I don't know. I get beat for the money after waiting around the bar all day. And the way I get clipped smells like all the rotten herring in the seven seas, and when I ask you with whom you've been, you say 'I can't tell you.' Nuts!"

Maybe I should have knocked it out of her? Maybe I should have taken her by the shoulders and slapped some answers into her? Maybe I should have done a lot of things! She'd got me involved in something away over my head even after I had made up my mind there was something radically wrong with the whole setup. I couldn't see any comeback to me, but I wasn't sure. Maybe I didn't want to be sure. Maybe I wanted a reason to stick around her. To stay involved. Hell, there were a lot of questions. Too many. Now she gave me another one. I couldn't see her face, but the way her shoulders were jerking was a damn good indication she was sobbing.

I went over and sat down alongside her and turned her around until she faced me. I raised her chin. Her eyes were red from the tears. And then she was in my arms, her face buried on my shoulder, her arms around my neck.

"Oh, Marty, Marty," she sobbed. "Please believe in me. Please do."

Believe in her? What else could I do? She had me, hook, line and sinker, and she knew it. She used every damn weapon in

the books I just couldn't fight against.

I put her away from me and sat back, tired of thinking, tired all over, beat. . . .

I don't know when I went to sleep but I must have dozed a minute, sitting there beside her. I was awakened briefly by the feel of something pressing against my face. I was lying full-length on the davenport. I started to raise up, to brush the weight away, but it held me down. And when I opened my eyes I couldn't see anything, and then a sickening smell was in the room and I was having trouble with my breathing. I fought against the pressing weight, kicking, and jerking around on the davenport, and then the lights went out.

There was an awful roar in my head and I thought I could hear a loud pounding somewhere close to me. It took me a little while to discover it was my heart trying to beat a hole through my chest. I ached in every bone in my body when I rolled on the davenport. A light kept blinking on and off in the room. It came through the window. I eased over to the edge of the bed. The back of my head felt like a truck had slammed into it. My eyes burned, and the sickening smell was all around me.

I waited until my stomach stopped acting up, and then I got up and stumbled over to the window and opened it wide. I'd placed the smell. It was chloroform. The room was full of it, and I could taste it. I must have been full of it.

The phone started to ring just then as I turned away from the window. I went toward the table near the bed, started to pick up the phone, and then stopped, my eyes on a spot across the room. Something or someone was over in the shadows at the other side of the room. My fingers found the lamp switch. I braced myself, cursed the ringing phone, and clicked on the light. I took one quick look and clicked off the light again. I'd found the guy in the dark brown suit.

I picked up the phone. The guy was in no condition to bother me. He was dead.

One look had been enough.

"Mr. Warrick?" a voice asked on the other end of the wire.

"Yeah," I answered.

"This is the room clerk. Are you all right?"

"Yeah."

"Are you sure?"

My eyes were on the deep shadow over against the far wall. Someone had wedged the guy between the wall and the wash-bowl. His hips were riding on the lip of the bowl, his head knocking against his chest.

The hotel clerk was repeating his question. I told him I was all right. I had to repeat it a couple of times before he'd hang up. He finally did. But I had a funny feeling about that phone call. I clicked on the light again and went over and took a closer look at the dead guy. There was a nice, neat hole between his eyes. One a .38 could make.

A quick check of my clothes let me know the gun was gone. I dressed. Called myself all kinds of stupid, woman-crazy fools, and was putting on my coat when I heard the noise outside my room. A lot of feet were thumping down the hall. They all sounded flat. The door was out. I looked toward the window. Two floors to the street. Hell, I should have told the clerk the truth. Now I was a dead duck.

I went over to the door, slipped the safety chain on. I checked the lock, and had just finished shoving a small dresser in front of the door when the first knock came, and the clerk called, "Mr. Warrick!"

One look out the window told me it was going to be a long drop. I stripped the blankets off the bed and was tying them together when I spotted something shiny in among the tangled sheets. It was the gun. I didn't need a fingerprint expert to check to tell me my prints were all over it. Hell, I'd gone this far and the road looked rough. I slipped the gun into my pocket, tied the make-shift blanket rope to

the bed, dropped it out of the window, and was following it when the first pair of shoulders rammed against the door.

I ran out of blanket about halfway down. Without hesitation, I dropped to the alley below. The force of my drop drove my knees into my stomach and I felt sicker than ever. There was a crash and a splintering sound above me, and I took off down the alley and was lost in the shadows when someone called:

"He got out of the window!"

WHEN I stopped running through alleys and jumping over fences and cutting in and out of twisted passages, I was a good three miles away from the hotel. I was hoping that clerk had a poor memory for faces when I finally joined some people walking down one of the Quarter's narrow streets. I don't think anyone ever sleeps in New Orleans. A clock in a pawnshop I passed read 5:10. It had to be 5:10 in the morning.

I slipped into a small restaurant, had a quick cup of coffee, and changed my mind about eating. Hell, I was a fool! I had to get out of the Quarter, and fast. I walked a couple of blocks after leaving the restaurant, and then I grabbed a cab and told him to take me out to Canal Street.

"Any place in particular?" the driver asked me.

"I'll tell you when you get there."

We passed a police cruiser, and I pushed back into a far corner of the cab. I tried to think, but it was no good. I always ended up with a lot of questions I couldn't answer and all of them began and ended with Pat. I'd been a first-class chump. Four days ago I was a guy with only one care in the world: how to get to New Orleans without funds and get me a ship to South America. Now I was tangled up in a murder; tangled right up to my ears—and all because I wouldn't play my original hunch and walk out on Pat back there in Anniston, Alabama.

The questions were all there, but the answers were missing. A married dame with a problem. Along comes a sea tramp who thinks he knows the score. The dame takes him like Grant took Richmond. But why? Why me? Why the murder frame? For the hundred thousand? It was her money in the first place. Why should she want to steal it back and go through all that trouble? It didn't make sense to me. If someone had told me it was going to happen this way, I'd have said they were nuts. Things like this don't happen. Not even in books.

I left the cab about three miles from downtown New Orleans and started doubling back toward the heart of the city. I took all the side streets I could find, walking miles out of the way, and the first of the early Sunday church traffic was heavy on the streets by the time I cut into a street that lead directly to Pat's hotel. About four blocks from the hotel, I went into a small sandwich shop and found a phone booth in the back.

I called the hotel and asked the room clerk for Mrs. Raymond—Mrs. Patrice Raymond—and waited to be told she had checked out. I wasn't told. Instead the clerk said, "Just a minute, please. I'll ring Mrs. Raymond's room."

I almost dropped the phone when Pat answered.

"Hello," she said. "Who is it?"

I was having trouble with my voice. She was there. For once I was going to get a break. . . . But then I remembered something, and instead of answering her, I hung up quickly. Of course. The answer was simple. She thought I was in jail. It was too early for the papers to be out, and she thought I was well taken care of by the New Orleans police.

I got out of there fast, and walked as fast as I dared toward the big hotel.

It should have dawned on me right away. There was no way the cops could connect her with me or the dead guy. Nine chances

out of ten, she had pulled a sneak into and out of my hotel. I had given her my key. She did not have to stop at the desk, and after planting the murder frame, she and whoever was in this thing with her—there had to be someone else—had probably ducked out a back entrance from the hotel.

I had to find out her room number and get up there quickly before she had too much time to think about my call. It was almost too easy. I put on a bold front and,



DEAD MEN AT MIDDLE FORK!

• By William Bender, Jr.

When a new call came to the little band of ragged war's-end heroes, redoubtable Shamus O'Hooley swore—with the help of the Little People, and his own right arm—to guard the westering rails against both scalp-hungry savages and murderous white renegades!

Don't miss this masterly frontier saga and other top-notch stories which make up the big November issue.

On your newsstand now.

Look for it!

25. **BIG-BOOK** 
WESTERN
MAGAZINE

when the clerk gave me the number and asked me if I wanted him to call Mrs. Raymond, I told him "No. I'm Mr. Raymond. Just back from a business trip. Want to surprise her."

He smiled and I left him and got in the elevator.

Outside the door to her room, I waited a couple of seconds, listening. When I was satisfied there wasn't too much activity in there, I knocked, and with my handkerchief in front of my mouth, said, "Bellboy, miss."

There was a click, then a hesitation.

"Bellboy?" Pat said.

"Yes, ma'am," I said. "Telegram."

The door opened a little. "Telegram? But I don't expect. . . ."

I pushed into the room and leaned my back against the door. She backed across the room, a hand to her mouth, her eyes wide from fear. "Marty," she whispered.

WHOM did you expect, baby?" I asked, locking the door behind me. "The guy in the brown suit? The one who clipped me for the hundred grand? He's dead."

"Dead." The word was flat, dull.

"Cut it out," I said. I jerked her hand away from her face and slapped her across the mouth with my open hand. She fell back against the bed and huddled there.

"Go ahead," I told her, my voice tight. "Scream! Yell! Holler cops! They'll come running. Go ahead. Give me another reason to wring your pretty neck."

She didn't say a word. A trickle of blood ran out of the corner of her mouth. But she didn't let out a peep. When I released her, she slumped down on the bed and just sat there staring at me, that same dull, lifeless look in her eyes.

I was shaking all over. I reached down and grabbed a handful of her hair and jerked her head up. She had the answers, and I wanted them, needed them. "Damn you!" I shouted. "Say something!"

"Get out, Marty," she said, her voice hoarse. "For God's sake, get out of here!"

I raised my hand to slap her again, but something in her eyes stopped me. I let it drop to my side and stepped away from her.

"Get out?" I repeated.

She half raised off the bed. "Please, Marty," she begged. "Please, please, get out of here. Now." There was an urgency in her voice I couldn't miss.

Her words had given me time enough to cool off, but I was still walking carefully around her. I deliberately looked beyond her long-legged body, her smooth shoulders, her red hair that was twisted and snarled now.

I stepped to one side of her and looked down at her. "Listen, Pat," I said. "I've got to have some answers, and quick. Every cop in New Orleans is looking for me right now. You've got the answers. It's as simple as that."

"Please, Marty. . . ."

I stopped her. "I know; you want me to blow. But it's not that easy. Sometime last night, you and one of your playmates pinned a murder frame on me. I can't blow."

"Murder?"

Here we go again, I thought. I explained it to her, watching her face. She didn't react the way she should. Her face said she didn't know about the dead guy. I remembered she acted surprised, earlier, when I told her that he was dead.

"He lied to me," she whispered, half to herself. "He lied."

I reached and grabbed her by the shoulders. Shaking her, I asked, "Who lied, Pat? Damn you, who lied?"

Her face was level with mine. Pain was in her eyes.

I released her.

"All right, Marty," she said, her voice low. "I'll give you some answers."

I took a deep breath. It was as if a heavy weight had been lifted from my shoulders.

"Give me a cigarette, Marty?"

My hands shook when I reached for the pack. I pulled one out and handed it to her. She took a couple of deep drags after I lit it for her, and then she said:

"I didn't know about the dead man and what happened to you, Marty."

I didn't want to hear that part of it.

"Never mind the clean-up, baby. Just give me the facts," I told her.

She sighed. "All right, Marty. I guess I've got that coming." She turned and faced me. The cigarette dropped from her lips, her mouth opened and her eyes got wide. I thought she was going to scream, to pull another fast one on me. I took a couple of quick steps toward her, and then I heard it. Behind me.

"Sucker," I said to myself, and tried to whirl and drag out the gun at the same time. The scream came:

"Marty! No!"

The whole world exploded against the side of my head. There was another scream, another explosion, and then blackness.

Voices brought me out of it. My head was pounding and every time I moved, or tried to move, blinding pain stabbed at the back of my eyes. I tried to roll over. I was lying on the floor, my face pressed against the rough carpet. But I couldn't make it. Something held my hands together and I couldn't get the leverage.

I heard the voices again. One I didn't recognize. "A very touching scene," it said. It was high, shrill, whining.

"You must have had a gay time with this character."

"George, I warn you."

Seconds later I heard a loud smacking sound, a gasp, followed by a dull thud. George plays rough. I heard Pat curse him. "Murderer," she said. He slapped her again. I heard the sound. Loud. I struggled, trying to roll, finally did, and I got a look at George. Pat was slumped on the floor against the wall and he was reaching down trying to jerk her up on her feet.

GEORGE looked the real life edition of *Town and Country*. He belonged in the wealthy sportsman class. Blond hair, crew cut; rugged features; wide shoulders—the works. A big he-man who slugged guys from behind and slapped dames around. I was sorry right then I had ever laid a hand on Pat. It put me in this guy's class.

I must have made a noise when I rolled over.

They looked over at me.

George smiled. "Well, well, the boy friend's decided to get with it."

"Very smart," I said. "Ha, ha, you slay me!"

He liked that. "I probably will."

"George. You promised!" Pat cried.

He turned on her. "Always the loving wife," he said. "Looking out for her dear husband. It's really touching," he said, turning to me.

"So you're the husband," I said.

I guess he didn't like the way I said it. He came over and kicked at my face. I drew my head back and caught his size ten along the side of my neck. It gagged me for a second. Pat grabbed at him and he shook her off and kicked at me again. This time it landed against the side of my head and rocked me. This guy had plenty coming.

"Damn you, George!" Pat cried out. "If you don't leave him alone, I'll—"

He reached over and grabbed her and pulled her to him, his hands biting into her. He shook her.

"Answer me," he demanded. "You'll do what?"

I waited for her to say something. I hoped it would be the right answer. This guy was capable of anything, and if she said the wrong thing, wife or no wife, I had a feeling neither Pat nor I would leave that room alive.

She was smart.

"Nothing, George. Nothing," she said through tight lips.

He released her and smiled. "That's better." He looked down at me. I thought I would have to dodge a foot again, but he changed his mind. He turned and faced Pat.

She was real smart. She started talking fast, keeping his mind off me. I was thinking a lot of things and they all had to do with her. She still had a lot of answers I wanted, needed. But this guy George had a few too.

"George," Pat was saying to him, "one murder's enough. Too much. You shouldn't have killed Nick."

"Whoa, girl," he said. "I didn't kill Nick."

Nick must have been the name of the guy in the brown suit. It was. They kicked some more conversation around and a lot of the pieces started falling into place. But I couldn't figure this girl Pat out. Listening to her, I had the feeling all this was for my benefit. She knew George. He was what I pegged him for. Blow-hard. A guy who liked himself, liked everything about himself—his face, his clothes, his voice. She said only enough to keep him going, and I found out plenty.

George was a pilot, like Pat had told me, but he wasn't with the Air Corps. Pat said something about narcotics and a bright light went on in my brain. Narcotics and planes went together. It spelled smuggling. And it placed Pat right smack in the middle of it.

But George wasn't so dumb. He remembered me. He gave me another look. He said he would sap me up just a little; put my hearing out of whack.

She said, "No, George. Sam will be here any minute now and he may want to talk with him about the money."

Sam must be the third part of this partnership. A big partner because mention of his name stopped the playboy and probably saved me another crack alongside the head. I worked on my hands again. I'd been working on them all the time they were

talking and hadn't made any headway. Now I felt a little give back there. My hands were sticky and slippery. The binding had cut into my wrists and the blood and sweat had mixed, making it hard to do anything with my hands.

George talked about the money. It seems Nick was a stooge. Like me. But Nick had big ideas. He was supposed to hand me a package loaded with junk—narcotics—and I was to give him another filled with money. He was to give the money to Sam. I was to give the junk to Pat. Part of this I had to surmise. But I got enough from their conversation to convince me I was right. Nick had tried a double cross. He was going to blow after he clipped me for the money.

The binding on my wrists started to give some more. George was getting impatient. He didn't want to talk. He said so. He was on edge. He looked at me more often now, and when he did I lay quiet, trying to look as groggy as I felt. There were still a lot of questions. Pat was right in the middle of every one of them. It spelled trouble for her, bad trouble.

The binding gave. I waited until George walked away from me, then I slipped my hands free.

The blood rushing into my fingers felt like a thousand pins sticking me. I bit down on my lip. This would have to be it. I would have only one chance. I felt a little like the batter with a three-two count on him, and the tying run on second with two out in the ninth inning.

I caught Pat's eye, jerked my head at her husband's back, said a little prayer and tensed every muscle in my body, waiting. She played it perfect. He was on his way back toward me when she stopped him. She was facing so he had to turn his back to me to answer her. I was off the floor and had him before he could whirl around. But I had trouble. The guy was all muscle.

We spun around and he broke free. I brought one up from the floor. It landed

flush against his chin; his head jerked back. I followed it with a hard left and then I planted my knee in his groin. That did it. He doubled over, his face purple, a gurgling sound bubbling out of his half-open mouth. The next one straightened him and knocked him back against the far wall. I went over and kicked him in the ribs. I was going to kick him again, but Pat pulled me away. I was breathing hard, and he was a mess.

"The gun," I gasped. "Where's the gun?"

Pat took it out of his pocket and handed it to me. Just like that.

"You've got to get out of here," she told me quickly.

3

I LOOKED at her stupidly, trying to clear the fuzziness out of my mind.

She was up close to me. "Please, Marty. Get out."

I shook my head, spit out some blood, looked over at George.

"Get out?"

She was pushing me toward the door. I shook loose from her. "You're crazy," I told her. "Remember me? I'm the guy with a phoney murder beef against me. You think I'm going to walk away from my only out?"

"You're a fool," she told me. "You haven't got a chance."

She didn't make sense. I was hung-up and she knew it. Yet, she wanted me to walk away from the only two people who could clear me.

I jerked away from her, anger boiling inside me.

"Get with it, baby," I told her coldly. "Make up your mind, quick, whose team you're playing with."

There was no mistaking the sincerity in her next words. "They won't believe you. George and Sam have connections. Their pals will deny anything you tell the

police. You're the only one the hotel clerk will remember. No one else was seen going into the hotel. Please, believe me, Marty. I'm really trying to help you."

"Help me!" I laughed. "That's good. You've got me bottled up so tight, it will take a miracle to get me out of this mess." I wasn't kidding. I couldn't see an out. She was right. Who would believe me, a sea tramp? No legitimate spot I could call home. A busted-out sailor.

"I know it," she said. "I know it, I know it. But please, Marty. Let me help you now!"

George stirred, moaned. I guess I went off my rocker a little. I went over and sapped him again with the gun butt.

"Did you have to do that?" she asked, an edge to her voice. She was standing directly behind me. Looking at her, I never felt more helpless in my life. I could cope with a raging sea and storm-filled skies; I could handle myself with the toughest of tough deck hands; and I could take care of myself in a barroom brawl, but with her, I was completely helpless.

Even now, when I was convinced she'd push my head under for the third time if she thought she had to, I grasped at a thin straw. I kept telling myself, "It'll straighten itself out. I'll call the cops, and when they get here she'll give them the straight story."

I should have known better. Experience with her should have told me that I was a fool.

She proved it. "Marty," she said. "I've got some money here. I want you to take it. Go to South America or anywhere out of the country. They'll never find you."

I wouldn't listen to her. "Just like that," I said. "Get out of the country. Forget all about a bum murder beef, Marty. Just leave the country. Stop it," I told her. "It won't work."

She came up close to me, put her hands on my shoulders, her eyes pleading with me. "I'll go with you, Marty."

AMAZING VALUE! Save Up To \$11.50 With This New **AUTOMATIC CIGARETTE LIGHTER!**

Imagine! The same style lighter you'd see for as much as \$12.50—yours now for only \$1.00! Slim, modern case in gleaming chrome finish is suitable for engraving. Double size fluid well. Fully automatic flick-of-a-finger safety action. Order several NOW! Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back.

ONLY \$1 Postpaid (No C.O.D.'s)

ORDER NOW!

M. MARTIN & CO., Dpt. A-1
5 So. Wabash Ave.
Chicago 3, Ill.

Please send, postpaid, lighters @ \$1 each. I am enclosing \$ full payment.

Name
Address
City Zone State

WANT TO MAKE REAL MONEY?

YOU CAN POSITIVELY MAKE \$50 A DAY AND UP

SELL a brand new item going to every type of food and beverage store, factories, laboratories, hospitals, etc. Sustained by national publicity program.

UTILITY DURAWEAR CO. **SAMPLES FURNISHED**
83 W. Jackson Blvd., Dept. PFG-II, Chicago 4, Ill.

ACCOUNTANT

BECOME AN EXPERT

Executive Accountants and C. P. A.'s earn \$4,000 to \$10,000 a year. Thousands of firms need them. We train you thoroly at home in spare time for C. P. A.'s examinations of executive accounting positions. Previous experience unnecessary. Personal training under supervision of staff of C. P. A.'s. Placement company and help. Write for free book, "Accountancy, the Profession That Pays."

LASALLE Extension University, 417 So. Dearborn St.
A Correspondence Institution Dept. 10334H, Chicago 5, Ill.

Learn Profitable Profession in 90 days at Home

MEN AND WOMEN, 18 TO 60. Swedish Massage graduates make big money working full or spare time with doctors or in hospitals, health resorts, sanatoriums, clubs, private practice. A dignified interesting career! Qualify for your graduation certificate. Thorough instruction at home as in class rooms. Write for Illustrated Book—FREE!

The College of Swedish Massage
Dept. 295-M, 41 E. Pearson, Chicago 11

LAW

STUDY AT HOME for Business Success and **LARGER PERSONAL EARNINGS**, 43 years expert instruction—over 114,000 students enrolled. LL.B. Degree awarded. All text material furnished. Easy payment plan. Send for **FREE BOOK**—"Law and Executive Guidance"—NOW!

AMERICAN EXTENSION SCHOOL OF LAW
Dept. B-55, 646 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Illinois

Store Route Plan PAYS BIG MONEY

SELL COUNTER CARD PRODUCTS

Build a good-paying business of your own. Call on retailers of all kinds; supply nationally advertised Aspirin, Cosmetics, Razor Blades and 200 other necessities. Big values at 5c and 10c to \$1. High quality. Attractive displays sell fast. Free book of facts. Write!

World's Products Co., Dept. 69-P, Spencer, Ind.



DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

I shoved her away.
 "Please, Marty."
 "Go to hell, baby. I'm in deep enough."
 "Marty. . . ."
 "We're going away, all right," I told her flatly. "Right to the cops."
 She drew back, one hand to her mouth.
 "No, Marty."
 "You and George."
 "No!"

I walked over toward the bedside table and started to pick up the phone.
 She followed me and pressed her hand over mine, holding the phone on its cradle.
 "You're crazy, Marty. They won't believe you. You'll burn for that murder."

I wrenched her hand away, pushed her to one side and dialed O.

"Operator." A voice said. It was like hearing someone from another world. The hotel room, Pat, George, myself and everything that happened the last twenty-four hours seemed completely removed from reality.

"Operator!" the voice said again.

I looked at Pat, at George, and then back to Pat. She wavered in front of me, her features tense, expectant. I ran a hand over my face, held the phone in front of me a second and then said, "Sorry," and put it back on its cradle.

I heard Pat sigh loudly. I didn't look at her. Instead I went over to the window. She was right. I was a dead duck unless she helped me. I told her so, my back to her. I pleaded with her, I argued, I threatened. I said, "You're willing to take off with me. Okay. Help me clear this up with the cops and we'll take off."

"I can't, Marty."

I swung around and faced her.

"You can't? I don't get it."

"Please, Marty, just do what I ask of you. Leave, and I'll meet you later."

George stirred again. Pat looked at him and then glanced toward the door. She

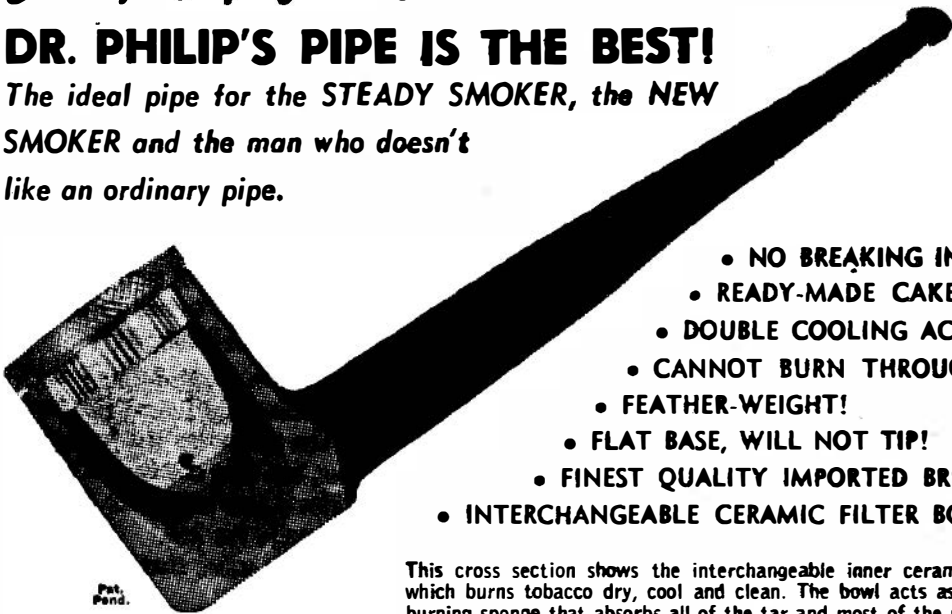
(Continued on page 102)

NOW, the pipe smoker's dream come true!

Every Pipefull Proves . . .

DR. PHILIP'S PIPE IS THE BEST!

The ideal pipe for the STEADY SMOKER, the NEW SMOKER and the man who doesn't like an ordinary pipe.



- NO BREAKING IN!
- READY-MADE CAKE!
- DOUBLE COOLING ACTION!
- CANNOT BURN THROUGH!
- FEATHER-WEIGHT!
- FLAT BASE, WILL NOT TIP!
- FINEST QUALITY IMPORTED BRIAR!
- INTERCHANGEABLE CERAMIC FILTER BOWLS!

This cross section shows the interchangeable inner ceramic bowl which burns tobacco dry, cool and clean. The bowl acts as a non-burning sponge that absorbs all of the tar and most of the nicotine. The metal radiator ring on top of the Dr. Philip's pipe is the only part that can get hot. It takes the heat from the ceramic and

gives it off to the air FAST. The smoke circulates in the space between the inner bowl and the outer briar shell, becoming COOL before you draw it. Your tobacco cannot get wet because cotton or paper tissue packed in the space below the inner bowl absorbs all of the saliva and condensation. Rotate the ceramic bowls over and over again as you would a set of ordinary pipes. Dr. PHILIP'S pipe is EASY to CLEAN. There is no need to knock this pipe against any object to get out the ash. It does not form a cake. There is no need to rest the Dr. PHILIP'S pipe for cooling or drying. It has a constant capacity. The SHORT SMOKE MODEL will hold enough tobacco for a pleasure packed smoke of 15 to 25 minutes and the LONG SMOKE MODEL will last from 45 minutes to a full hour!

THE LONGER LASTING PIPE—YOU GET 4 EXTRA BOWLS!

SHORT SMOKE MODEL

Including 4 EXTRA BOWLS only \$4.50

LONG SMOKE MODEL

Including 4 EXTRA BOWLS only \$5.50

If not satisfied that this is the most amazing pipe you have ever owned, return within ten days and your money will be refunded!

QUALITY AGENCY

214 East 49th Street
New York 17, New York

Please send me postpaid DR. PHILIP'S pipe(s). I enclose \$ to cover the cost of the pipe(s) I have checked below

- SHORT SMOKE MODEL including 4 EXTRA BOWLS @ \$4.50
 LONG SMOKE MODEL including 4 EXTRA BOWLS @ \$5.50

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY ZONE STATE

(Sorry, no C.O.D.'s)

10-52

(Continued from page 100)

still had the money clutched in her hand. She was about to make another offer. I could see it coming.

"Take the money, Marty," she said, coming up close again.

I backed away. It was a lot of money. I reached out and knocked it out of her hand.

"Marty!"

A lot of pieces had started to fall into place. I took a step toward her, and she backed away. I followed her clear across the room until she was against the far wall.

"Listen Pat," I said, emphasizing each word. "Somehow, somehow, you're going to give me all the answers I need. And you're going to give them to me in front of the police. Do you understand?"

She tried to put her arms around my neck. She begged. She said it was for my own good. That she was sorry she had got me into this mess, but that she couldn't go to the police. There was a lot she didn't say. It spelled trouble for her.

"I know you don't want that, Marty," she said.

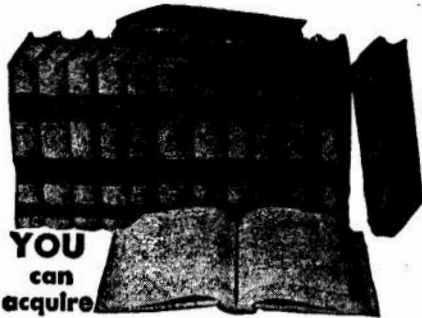
There was more, all pleas, all promises, for us and about us. How happy we'd be. She had money, a lot of money, it was all mine. And it all boiled down to: "Run, Marty, run." And in a hurry. Maybe I'm thick. I don't know. Maybe I should have caught the "Hurry, hurry" earlier. She had been insisting upon speed right from the beginning, when George had dropped out and I had taken over.

I pulled her arms down and stepped away from her. I shot a glance over at George. I wouldn't have to worry about him for a while.

She stepped up to me again. And again I had to pull her arms from around my neck.

"You're good. Really good, baby. The best," I told her. "Shrewd, smart. You almost had me again. Is that the way you got to Nick?"

(Continued on page 104)



**YOU
can
acquire**

**LAW NIGHTS AT HOME!
L. B. DEGREE**

Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever before.
More Ability: More Prestige: More Money step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL.B. We furnish all text material, including 14-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 48-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send NOW.
**LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, 417 South Dearborn Street
A Correspondence Institution Dept. 10334L Chicago 5, Ill.**

Learn to MOUNT BIRDS

Tan SKINS, make up FURS

Be a Taxidermist. Double your hunting fun. We teach you at Home. Mount Birds, Animals, Fish, Heads, common specimens. Fun and profits. Decorate home and den **MAKE MONEY**. Mount game, tan for others. Big profits in spare time. **WRITE TODAY.** 100 game pictures in **FREE BOOK**. Hunters, get your copy. It's **FREE BOOK**. Now Free. Send post card. State your AGE. **NORTHWESTERN SCHOOL OF TAXIDERMY Dept. 4210 Omaha, Nebraska**

Learn BAKING At Home

Baking is one of America's high industries in wages. Nearly depression-proof. Thorough basic home course lays sound foundation. If you have aptitude, write for **FREE BOOKLET, "Opportunities in Commercial Baking."** National Baking School, 835 Diversey Pkwy, Dept. 1937, Chicago 14

HOW TO COURT A GIRL SUCCESSFULLY

5,000 word booklet of hints on dating, grooming, letter writing and the age old question, "What age to marry?" For Men and Women. Send 25c in coin in plain wrapper or envelope to:

DORIS RAY

4207 W. Crystal Street Chicago 51, Illinois

Learn PHOTOGRAPHY at Home

Splendid opportunities. Prepare in spare time. Practical basic training. Long-established school. Send for free book, "Opportunities in Photography." No obligation. American School of Photography, 835 Diversey Pkwy., Dept. 1417, Chicago 14, Ill.

FREE SAMPLE LESSON WATCHMAKING

CHICAGO SCHOOL OF WATCHMAKING
1608 Milwaukee, Dept. 8102, Chicago 47, Ill.

Show me without obligation how I can learn watch repairing at home. Rush free sample.

Name
Address
City Z. State

POKER CHECKS

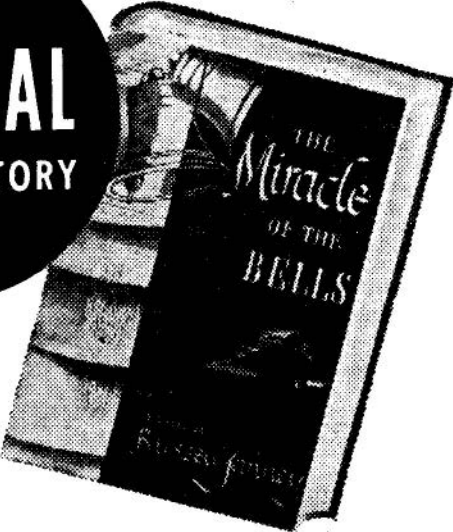
Famous Hub Checks. Non-Duplicate, Square Edge, Heaviest Game Check, Cut and Stack Accurately. Supplied in any color.

FREE CATALOG Expose: The Open Book, Sealed Book, Scientific Betting, Master Key System. How to Control Fair Dice, Runup System, Plastic Playing Cards for "The Old Reliable" Club Use.

K. C. CARD Co., 806 S. Wabash, Chicago 5



GREAT
SPECIAL
INTRODUCTORY
OFFER



\$1.00

YOUR CHOICE OF TWO GREAT BOOKS

DEAD OF NIGHT by Stewart Sterling
(Published at \$2.50)

Gil Vine, the house detective with the fanciest title in the business, is really earning his salary these days. The unknown beauty, Teresa Marino, is enough to cause an epidemic of loss of sleep in her own right; when her true identity becomes known, it is evident that big things are at stake. Radio and Advertising V.I.P.s who must be handled with the utmost delicacy becomes involved in an unsavory murder which challenges the talents both mental and physical of Gil Vine who, while a great respecter of persons wasn't made security chief for his good looks alone. Gil Vine's investigation ranges over the length and breadth of Manhattan, with side trips to Lexington, Kentucky and Long Island, to gather evidence, and to round up suspects. **DEAD OF NIGHT** is sophisticated, exciting and murderous. And you get Gil Vine, too!

THE MIRACLE OF THE BELLS by Russell Janney
(Published at \$3.00)

Eddie Cantor says:
"THE MIRACLE OF THE BELLS is more than a book. It's show business—it's entertaining—it's good Americanism. I defy you to read THE MIRACLE OF THE BELLS and not become a better person."
Kate Smith says:
"I'll guarantee once you've read a few pages of THE MIRACLE OF THE BELLS you'll be unable to put it down . . . it's a love story, first of all . . . an up-to-date tale of Hollywood and movies . . . a dramatic, exciting chronicle of faith in Good."
"A book which achieves remarkable power. Once you pick it up and become immersed in its story it is almost impossible to put it down. I recommend that you read it—you will anyhow."
—Albert E. Idell, Philadelphia Inquirer

OR

You can have either one of these books for only \$1.00—over 60% less than the regular published price—by joining the **MEN'S DOLLAR BOOK GUILD**.

MEN'S DOLLAR BOOK GUILD

Yes— Only one dollar will bring you either one of these truly great stories for men. Note: You are not obligated, as in the case of many book clubs, to buy three, four, or six additional books! This is a special introductory, one-time offer, good only while our limited supplies last. At no cost or obligation to you, also, your name will be added to the list of the **MEN'S DOLLAR BOOK GUILD** and you will receive special notifications sent out on forthcoming book bargains. This service is entirely free and will not obligate you in any way. Send \$1.00 for one book or \$2.00 for both. **NOW**, before our supply is exhausted. **FILL IN THE COUPON TODAY!**

MEN'S DOLLAR BOOK GUILD
Suite 2005, Dept. D
205 E. 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y.

Enclosed please find (\$1.00) (\$2.00). Please send me:
 DEAD OF NIGHT (Published at \$2.50)
 THE MIRACLE OF THE BELLS (Published at \$3.00)
 This does not obligate me in any way to buy further books.

Name

Street and Number

City Zone State

(Continued from page 102)

Her eyes widened. "What do you mean?" she gasped.

"Should I draw you a picture? Nick. The guy in the brown suit. My room," I told her, spitting the words at her. She drew back and I let her have the rest of it. "Poor, stupid Nick. He tried a double cross, but he made a mistake. He went back to his room, probably, and found you waiting for him. Only instead of a gun you used that body. How'd you get him to go with you to my room?" I asked her.

"Marty!" The fear was big in her eyes now. She licked at her lips.

"That's me, baby. Big, stupid, Marty. The guy with the one-cylinder brain. Where'd you hide Nick's body while you played with me?"

"You're out of your mind. Crazy."

THE answers had been there all along. But thick-headed me, I couldn't see them. And when she had given me an opportunity to jump her husband, I was almost convinced she had been a tool in his hands. The reverse was probably true. George could join Nick and me.

And she had almost talked me into running. I shook my head, sick. Sick of myself and of her and of everything that had happened. And still I was a fool. I didn't hear the door open behind me, but I did hear the voice:

"Turn around!" it said.

"I turned around, and I looked into the business end of a .38. "Keep your hands away from your pockets!" the man in the doorway ordered. I did.

"Sam!" Pat cried. She brushed past me. "Stay there, Pat," Sam clipped. "Right beside this guy."

She looked puzzled. "Sam, I don't understand. . . ."

Sam laughed. He was short and fat and his belly jumped with the sound. He looked like a chubby, pleasant little man—all of

CHRONOGRAPH

DON'T RISK A RED CENT WITH
10 DAY FREE TRIAL

**MEASURES DISTANCE
TELLS TIME
IT'S A
STOP WATCH!**

- Antimagnetic • Sweep Second Hand • Swiss Made • Precision Jeweled • Shock Resistant • Expansion Band • Black or White Luminous Dial • Unbreakable Crystal.

SNAKE EXPANSION BAND
Measure speed and distance! Stainless Steel Case! Ideal for all active men!

FULLY GUARANTEED

SEND NO MONEY

Pay postman \$7.95 plus 10% tax or mail only \$8.75 and save postage.



\$7.95

IRA SALES Dept. 72
8684 West Fort Street
Detroit 9, Michigan

**be an invisible reweaver
MAKE BIG MONEY AT HOME**

Profitable hobby and trade—earn over \$20 daily full or part time—repair cuts, tears, rips, burns in clothing or any fabric so hole can't be seen. Big profit, big demand—uncrowded field. Low-cost home-study course includes likeli e equipment. Easy-to-learn, pay-as-you-earn. Income all your life. Details free. Send postcard today.

FABRICOON CO. Dept. D
8342 S. Prairie Avenue, Chicago 19, Illinois

EAR ACHE?

DENT'S

EAR WAX DROPS for fast temporary relief of accumulated wax condition

TOOTHACHE?
ask your druggist for DENT'S TOOTH GUM, TOOTH DROPS or POUltICE

High School Course at Home

Many Finish in 2 Years

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Course equivalent to resident school work—prepares for college entrance exams. Standard H. S. texts supplied. Diploma. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. Single subjects if desired. High school education is very important for advancement in business and industry and socially. Don't be handicapped all your life. Be a High School graduate. Start your training now. Free Bulletin on request. No obligation.

American School, Dept. H-749, Drexel at 58th, Chicago 37

MAKE EXTRA MONEY

**EVERY BUSINESS EVERYWHERE
USES UNION LABEL BOOK MATCHES**

No experience needed to earn big daily commissions. Be a direct factory representative of the world's largest exclusive UNION LABEL Book Match manufacturer.

Prospects everywhere. Feature Glamour Girls, Hillbillies, scenes and dozens of other styles—Double Books—Jumbo Books—nearly 100 color combinations. New, bigger portfolio makes this fastest selling line a real profit maker for you. Write TODAY for full details.



SUPERIOR MATCH CO.

Dept. S-1052, 7528 S. Greenwood Ave., Chicago 19, Ill. West Coast Salesmen, write Box 1087, San Jose, Calif.

CONCERNING MRS. MURDER

him but his eyes. They were cold and hard, set deep, under thin eyebrows. They changed the picture of the little man completely.

The guy was all tightened up inside. It didn't show in the roly-poly smile, the red cheeks, but it was in his eyes. Pat could see it; she was scared. One glance at her and I saw the fear, big. The red tip of her tongue licked at her lips again.

"Where's the money, Pat?"

Pat tried the innocent come-back, looks and all. "Why, Sam," she said, the note of surprise in her voice not lost to me. "You know I haven't got the money." She took a tentative step toward the fat man.

"Stay there, Pat." The rosy smile was there, but the words were cold.

I had the feeling. This is it. This is the blow-off, and I got a sick feeling in my stomach. It didn't look good for me. This guy would kill me in a minute. If I could get his eyes off me for a second I might have a chance to get the gun. There was one chance. It was a gamble but, hell, either way I had only one thing to lose, my life.

"She's lying, Sam," I said.

"Marty, you fool!" Pat cried, and then she took a couple of quick steps toward Sam. "Don't believe him, Sam," she said quickly. "He's lying. He killed Nick and took the money and the stuff."

Sam waved the gun a little. Pat stopped. It was the diversion I'd hoped for, but Sam wasn't buying. The gun still had me dead center. George stirred against the far wall, to Sam's left, near the bed.

"Who's this character?" Sam asked.

Pat told him. She ran her words together. She was shooting the works. It was all or nothing with her. She knew, just as I did, that this was it. But Sam still wasn't buying any.

"You lie, Pat." He took a step toward us, stopped. "You," he said to me. "Get over to that wall." I did. "Now turn around . . . uh-uh, keep your hands high, above your



The Dark Continents of Your Mind

DO YOU struggle for balance? Are you forever trying to maintain *energy, enthusiasm, and the will to do*? Do your personality and power of accomplishment ebb and flow — like a stream controlled by some unseen valve? Deep within you are minute organisms. From their function spring your emotions. They govern your *creative ideas and moods* — yes, even your enjoyment of life. Once they were thought to be the mysterious seat of the soul — and to be left unexplored. Now cast aside superstition and learn to direct intelligently these *powers of self*.

Accept this Free Book

Let the Rosicrucians, an age-old fraternity of thinking men and women (not a religion), point out how you may fashion life as you want it — by making the fullest use of these little-understood *natural faculties* which you possess. This is a challenge to make the most of your heritage as a human. Write for the Free Book, "The Mastery of Life." Address: Scribe I.R.A.

The ROSICRUCIANS

San Jose (AMORC) California

DO YOU HAVE PROSTATE TROUBLE?

General Weakness, Backache, Frequency, Burning Urination, Kidney and Bladder Distress.

The Kansas City Medical Press has just published a revealing booklet which discusses the PROSTATE GLAND in language anyone can understand. Information contained in this book may save you years of suffering. Give name and address.

MAIL COUPON TODAY

K. C. Medical Press
Dept. T-1, 1440 E. 21st,
North Kansas City, Mo.

Please send me by return mail booklets I have checked below.

The Prostate Gland Arthritis
Kidney and Bladder Rupture
Please enclose 10c for each book ordered.

STOP TOBACCO



Banish the craving for tobacco as thousands have with Tobacco Redeemer. Write Today for free booklet telling of injurious effect of tobacco and of a treatment which has relieved over 300,000 people.

In Business Since 1909

THE NEWELL COMPANY
324 Clayton St., St. Louis 5, Mo.

FREE BOOK

MAKE QUICK EASY CASH

BELL Empire CHRISTMAS CARDS



Signewline—quick PROFIT makers. Gorgeous 21 card \$1 Christmas and All-Occasion Assortments. Metallic, Greeting cards. FREE Catalog. 5 NEW Christmas Card name-printed lines \$1 up. Children's books. Scented stationery. NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED—costs nothing to try. FUND-RAISING plan for clubs. Write today: FREE IMPRINT SAMPLES, Box Assortments on approval.

100% Cash Profit!

EMPIRE CARD CO., 802 FOX ST., ELMIRA, N. Y.

FREE SAMPLES

50 NAME PRINTED CARDS \$125

Stationery
Napkins

SEND FOR THIS FREE!



Make money. Know how to break and train horses. Write today for this book FREE, together with special offer of a course in Animal Breeding. If you are interested in Galting and Riding the saddle horse, check here () Do it today—now.

BEERY SCHOOL OF HORSEMANSHIP
Dept. 8410 Pleasant Hill, Ohio

New Relief for the Misery of PSORIASIS

Now you can get relief. V. S. says: "Before using Soriasin, I had large masses of scales for 3 years. I tried everything. Then my first bottle of Soriasin did wonders. I am half way through my second bottle and my skin looks like any normal, healthy skin." New Soriasin softens and removes crusts and scales and aids in healing skin lesions and itching. Definite relief is guaranteed in two weeks or your money refunded. Soriasin is easy to apply—comforting, non-staining. ONLY Soriasin has a new pleasant cosmetic fragrance. It is the FIRST to contain an effective bleaching agent which goes to work at once on ugly lesions after scales are removed. Send 25c for trial size bottle—or write today for free information and helpful facts.

SOUTHERN PHARMACAL CORP.
Suite 610, 1419 H St., N.W., Wash. 5, D.C.

DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

head. That's it. Now just stay there."

I pressed my nose to the wall. The sweat leaked down my back, under my armpits.

I heard him slap her.

"Sam. No. Oh, please Sam. No!" she cried.

I heard them moving behind me.

"Where's the money, Pat?"

There was a dull thud. He must have knocked her down.

My legs were trembling. There was a wild ringing in my head.

"You," Sam said. "Turn around. Turn around and take a look at her."

Pat was huddled on the floor, moaning, her face twisted with pain.

Sam stood there smiling. The guy was inhuman.

"The money, Pat. The money," he droned.

He prodded her with the toe of his shoe.

"She's a pig, a dirty double-dealing pig," he told me.

She had played for big stakes, and she was paying a big price. Even when I remembered what she had done to me, how she had used me, I felt sorry for her. She had tried to play both ends against the middle, and now it had caught up with her.

George stirred again, but Sam didn't seem to hear him. I shot a quick glance at Pat's husband. They were a pair now. One, a weak tool in the hands of a greed-filled woman; broken because of the woman. And the other beaten because of her consuming greed. George was inching along the wall, his features twisted in pain, his eyes on the little fat man who was bent over Pat trying to pull her hands away from her face.

I started to lower my arms.

I took a quick step toward the fat man. He straightened, smiling. "Don't try it, mister," he said flatly. The gun was on my belly.

"You killed Nick?" Sam said to her.

She nodded dully.

Sam shook his head. "Some dame," he

CONCERNING MRS. MURDER

said. He bent over her again, his eyes on me.

She moaned.

"Where's the money, Pat? Make it easy on yourself. Where's the dough?" he prodded her. "I delivered the goods. Now I want the money."

Even then, the greed made her hesitate. She had played tight all the way. She wanted to hold out now. Sam kicked her.

"In the mattress. Oh, God! Sam, stop it! In the mattress!" she cried.

He stepped away from her. All the time he had been talking to her, he had been watching me, his back to George, and I had been trying to watch George without giving him away. At first I hadn't been able to figure out where he was going, what he was after. But now I knew. He eased open the drawer of the bedside table.

"This is the end of the line, mister," Sam told me. "George dies. She dies. You die. I plant the gun on you. Double murder and suicide."

IT WAS simple. So simple it would work. He knew it, and so did I. But I had to stall him.

"You'll never make it stick," I told him.

Pat sobbed. It was the end of the road. She was finished, washed up, and she knew it.

"Sure I will," Sam assured me confidently. "The cops want you now."

I had to keep the guy talking. It was my only out. George was going to carry the ball on the first play, but if I ever intended to squeeze out of this, I had to take it from there. The gun was still in my coat pocket, but with Sam watching me, I couldn't move for it. If I did I'd be dead before I reached it.

"Uh-uh, Sam," I said, trying to keep my voice level, even. "It won't work. How did I get here? What am I doing here? What's my connection with these two?" I snapped the questions at him. Loud, to cover George



ARTISTS ARE IN DEMAND for T.V. ADVERTISING DISPLAYS, etc.

**IT'S FUN!
IT'S SO AMAZINGLY EASY with**

NEW



COMMERCIAL ART TECHNIQUES

by **S. RALPH MAURELLO**

COMPLETE SELF-INSTRUCTION COURSE WITH OVER 500 STEP-BY-STEP ILLUSTRATIONS OF LATEST PROCEDURES.

\$1.00 paper bound

\$3 cloth bound

START NOW ON A SUCCESSFUL AND PROFITABLE CAREER

Artists are in demand now for advertising agencies, publishing houses, displays and T.V. Enter this lucrative field NOW and command the high pay that many artists are earning. This practical, up-to-date book gives you all the essential information you need. Every technique explained step-by-step, plus valuable information on lettering, layout, type, design, reproduction, etc. 128 double size pages, with up to 1000 drawings and photos, clearly explained—easy to follow. Don't miss this golden opportunity to order the best book of its kind on commercial art.

There are hundreds of top paying positions open. You can be one of the fortunate ones if you act now. If you can hold a pencil you can draw . . . and earn big money too!

--- RUSH COUPON TODAY ---

QUALITY AGENCY, 214 E. 49th St., New York 17, N. Y.

Please send copies of COMMERCIAL ART TECHNIQUES () at \$1.00 () at \$3.00

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY STATE

() Enclosed check, cash, m.o., you pay postage.



When **NERVOUS TENSION MAKES YOU ALL "KEYED-UP"**

Take Miles Nervine to relax. See how it can soothe and comfort "jangled" nerves. Contains no Barbiturates. Follow the label. Avoid excessive use. At all drugstores.

MILES NERVINE

LAW FREE BOOK 

Your **FREE** copy of "The Law-Trained Man" shows how to gain prestige and greater earnings through Blackstone home law study. All instruction material furnished including 16-volume Law Library written by 65 well-known law authorities. Lawyers, Judges among our graduates. LL.B. degree. Low cost; easy terms. Write today.
BLACKSTONE COLLEGE OF LAW 225 N. Michigan Ave. Dept. 107, Chicago 1, Ill.
A Correspondence Institution Founded in 1890

START YOUR OWN BUSINESS

on credit. Your own boss. 1586 of our Dealers sold \$5,000 to \$27,500 in 1951. We supply stocks, equipment on credit. 200 home necessities. Sales experience unnecessary. Pleasant, profitable business backed by world wide industry. Write **RAWLEIGH'S, DEPT. J.U-PBL, Freeport, Illinois.**

★ **SONG POEMS WANTED** TO BE SET TO MUSIC
 ★ Submit one or more of your best poems for free examination.
 ★ Any subject. Send poem. **PHONOGRAPH RECORDS MADE.**
 ★ **FIVE STAR MUSIC MASTERS, 620 BEACON BLDG., BOSTON 8, MASS.**

How to Make Money with Simple Cartoons

A book everyone who likes to draw should have. It is free; no obligation. Simply address **FREE BOOK**

CARTOONISTS' EXCHANGE
 Dept. 4810, Pleasant Hill, Ohio

MAKE all the MONEY YOU WANT - FAST!

Make up to \$4.00 a pair selling exclusive Cushion Shoes

New 3-Sole style sensational! 2 Full Leather soles, hand hammered tap sole, heel-to-toe cushion, arch support. Fast sellers in dress, work, sport shoes. **ONLY Cushioned Paratroop Boot.** Big spare time income. No experience or investment needed. Samples to producers. Write NOW for **FREE** OUTFIT.

FREE OUTFIT PARAGON SHOE CO., 744 Columbus Ave., Boston, Mass.

NOSE TROUBLE? SINUS?

Here Is Quick Relief. Miracle CHLOROPHYLL Added

If your nose feels stuffy, drains excessive mucus constantly, brings on headaches, pains around the eyes, hawking with annoying mucus dripping down your throat, here is quick, blessed relief in a matter of minutes, with amazing, new **WEL-NOZE NASAL RINSE**, with pure Chlorophyll added, which kills unpleasant nasal odor. The very first time you use **WEL-NOZE** your nasal passages open up, mucus goes in a hurry, and cooling, soothing, miracle-like relief is yours, and your breath is pure. And so quick too. You feel like living again! Send only \$1.00 for generous supply. (3 for 2.50) No C.O.D. please. Satisfaction Guaranteed or your money refunded. Act now! Send for **WEL-NOZE** with Miracle Chlorophyll added, today, for speedy relief.

DORENE CO., Dept. PF-10, Box 795, Chicago 90, Ill.



DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

who was easing a gun out of the drawer. "Listen mister," Sam said. "The cops'll be so damned glad to clear up Nick's killing, they'll accept things as they find them here without stirring up too many questions."

"I still say you're wrong, Sam," I said desperately, but I slipped up. My eyes went beyond the fat man, warning him. He jumped to one side just as George pulled the trigger. A loud blast rocked the room. I threw myself to the floor, yanking at the gun in my pocket.

Pat tried to grab at Sam's leg. He kicked out at her. George pulled the trigger again. Sam's mouth opened wide. He did a half turn, tried to bring his gun up. He made it. He pulled the trigger, but the bullet went down. It never reached George. It plowed into Pat, hitting her low, jerking her back.

I had a gun and nothing to shoot. Sam was sitting on the floor, a hurt look on his chubby face. He was trying to reach an arm behind him. George's slug had caught the fat man in the back. He couldn't make the reach. His head rolled loosely on his neck and then he toppled over.

But I had made a mistake. George was still in the running. He was sitting over there with his back braced against the wall, looking foolish, the smoking gun in his hand, and now it was going to be my turn. He pulled the trigger. Missed. I snapped a quick shot at him and for a second I thought I had missed. Then I saw the dark spurt just below his chin, coming from his neck.

Pat coughed. I looked over at her. I heard doors opening, running feet outside in the corridor. I crawled over to Pat. She was trying to raise her head. I dropped the gun on the floor and tried to help her. She was scared. I tried to wipe the blood from her face.

She stopped me . . . tried to smile. "No use, Marty," she said, her voice low. I had

CONCERNING MRS. MURDER

to bend my head to hear her. "Listen," she whispered hoarsely. "Sorry. Could have been nice . . . South America."

"Don't talk, Pat."

She coughed again. I wiped at the blood at her mouth. She still was talking, telling me about it, her head cradled in my lap, when the cops busted into the room. I was glad to see them. But when they wanted to move her, I pushed them away. Then I pulled a patsy and passed out.

It was all over when I opened my eyes. A guy from homicide gave it to me. He showed me the reasons—a package of bank notes, hundred and thousand dollar bills. And another package filled with narcotics. "Heroin," he said. "Worth several hundred dollars on the retail market."

Sam Lenniti, the fat guy, was the local wholesale drug connection. The big time importer here. Pat and George were a part of a Mid-western outfit who did business with the fat man. They operated out of St. Louis. This was a big deal. An independent deal Pat had arranged between herself, George, and Sam.

Nick, I knew about. A stooge. A petty hustler who couldn't stand close contact with big dough. Pat had killed him. He must have been the person with her when I phoned.

"I don't get it," I told the detective. "Why did she use me in the first place?"

"She was hot. Narcotic agents at every possible port of importation had orders to be on the lookout for her. She couldn't afford to make a connection. No more than Sam could afford to deliver in person. You and Nick were the answers," he explained.

I looked over at the sheet-covered body. One question still bothered me. When she told me that she would go away with me, I'd have sworn she meant it.

"She gave us the whole story, Warrick," the detective said. "The doctor told her not to talk, but she insisted."

I had my answer. ▲ ▲ ▲

UNIFORMS SELL BIG!



Earn Money—Full or Spare Time with TOPPS—America's Foremost Line of Embroidered Uniforms and Work Clothes!

You need no experience, no special know-how to clean up big spare-time profits with TOPPS Uniforms and Work Clothes, embroidered to advertise. Prospects are everywhere—garages, service stations, factories, lumber yards, institutions, stores—they're all sold on the POW-ER-FUL day-after-day advertising employee uniforms give them. And they buy the TOPPS line after one look—for TOPPS offers the finest fabrics, expertly tailored for long wear and perfect fit—PLUS custom-made embroidery for any business! Yes, you'll take orders fast—and every one puts a big, spot-cash commission in your pocket. One Topps salesman made \$800 profit on single sale.

ORLON Uniforms Available Soon!
TOPPS will be FIRST with uniforms made of Dupont's miracle ORLON fabric. They're snag-proof, mildew-proof, never need dry cleaning. They're washable! Get all the facts and actual sample now!



Mail Coupon for Free Outfit!
Everything you need to start making money at once is waiting for you FREE! The powerful, full-colored Topps Style Book, order forms, etc.—it's all yours for the asking. Just mail coupon below . . . and you're on your way to the biggest earnings of your life by return mail!

1977, Dept. 7310, Rochester, Ind.

TOPPS, Dept. 7310, Rochester, Indiana

Have you ever sold before? _____

What Product? _____

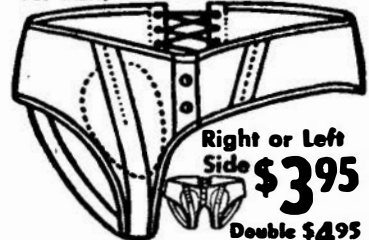
Name _____ Age _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

AMAZING COMFORT—NO SPECIAL FITTING RUPTURE-EASER

Reg. in U.S. Pat. Off. (A Piper Brace Product)
For MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN



Right or Left Side \$3.95
Double \$4.95

A strong, form fitting washable support. Back lacing adjustable. Snaps up in front. Adjustable leg strap. Soft, flat groin pad. No steel or leather bands. Unexcelled for comfort. Also used as after operation support. Mail orders give measure around the lowest part of the abdomen and state right or left side or double. We Prepay Postage Except on C.O.D.'s.

Over 400,000 Satisfied Users! 10 Day Trial Offer
Money-back guarantee if you don't get blessed relief
Delay may be serious—ORDER TODAY!

PIPER BRACE CO.
811 Wyandotte Dept. PFG-102 Kansas City 6, Mo.

EAT ANYTHING WITH FALSE TEETH

If you have trouble with plates that slip, rock and cause sore gums—try Brimms Plasti-Liner. One application makes plates fit snugly without powder or paste, because Brimms Plasti-Liner hardens permanently to your plate. It relines and refits loose plates in a way no powder or paste can do. Even on old rubber plates you get good results six months to a year or longer. **YOU CAN EAT ANYTHING!** Simply lay soft strip of Plasti-Liner on troublesome upper or lower. Bite and it molds perfectly. *Easy to use*, tasteless, odorless, harmless to you and your plates. Removable as directed. Plate cleaner included. Money back if not completely satisfied. If not available at your drug store, send \$1.25 for reliner for 1 plate. **PLASTI-LINER INC., Buffalo 11, New York—Dept. 76-B**



BRIMMS PLASTI-LINER
THE PERMANENT DENTURE RELINER

Be an ARTIST Get **FREE BOOK**
and **TRIAL PLAN**

You Can Draw at Home in Your Spare Time

For 38 years our graduates have enjoyed successful art careers. We can teach you to draw—no risk for you because **TRIAL PLAN** reveals your talent. Commercial Art, Designing, Cartooning all in one course. Get the facts in illustrated **FREE BOOK**, "Art for Pleasure & Profit." Write today. State age.

WASHINGTON SCHOOL OF ART
Studio 9310F Washington 5, D.C.



HYPNOTISM

Learn to apply this tremendous **POWER**. Develop will-power, self-confidence, self-control. **ANYONE** can master this exciting, profitable profession in short time by training at home, with **GUARANTEED RESULTS**. **DON'T DELAY . . . Write to America's oldest Hypnotic school for free information now—today!**

INSTITUTE OF APPLIED HYPNOLOGY
120 Central Park So., N. Y. 19, Dept. 6

TOMORROW—BOOM

TOMORROW? Your dreams of today—a puff of smoke?—or happy realities? *They will be what you make them.* Thrill to the mystery of life's great adventure—**MASTER IT**. Dreams can be Willed into reality—This power is within **YOU**. Tap it and the world is yours. Write for free treatise—**NOW—TODAY**.

THE SEARCHERS

Guide 7, P.F. Florissant, Colorado

Re-Blue YOUR GUN

Instantly with one simple application of **MINUTE-MAN GUN BLUE**. No heating—can't injure steel.

Send \$1 Your money back if not satisfied.

NEW METHOD MFG. CO.
PFG-70 Bradford, Pa. U.S. PAT. NO. 2,527,228

RUPTURED?

Get Relief This Proven Way

Why try to worry along with trusses that gouge your flesh—press heavily on hips and spine—enlarge opening—fail to hold rupture? You need the Cluthe. No leg-straps or cutting belts. Automatic adjustable pad holds at real opening—follows every body movement with instant increased support in case of strain. Cannot slip whether at work or play. Light. Waterproof. Can be worn in bath. Send for amazing **FREE** book, "Advice To Ruptured" and details of liberal truthful 60-day trial offer. Also endorsements from grateful users in your neighborhood. Write: **CLUTHE SONS, Dept. 15, Bloomfield, New Jersey.**

DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

(Continued from page 61)

Sulky's enjoyment of the situation seemed to swell and flourish inside him. "Like I said, some gal! Smart. Smart and beautiful. Big, too, which makes everything even better. There couldn't be too much of what she's got. She's around somewhere, I think."

Rufe didn't bother to speak. He found his way to the door and down the spiraling stairs, clinging to the railing to keep from pitching headlong. In the alley, he leaned for a few minutes against the old brick of the building, the chill night air burning in his tortured lungs. When his head had cleared a little, he moved slowly down the alley to the street.

A tall girl was standing under a street lamp at the curb. He went up close to her and stopped, seeing on her face, by the yellow light, the way that tears had taken.

"We played Dempsey and Willard at Toledo," he said. "I was Willard."

Her eyes took in the wreck of his face. "I didn't understand, Rufe. I didn't understand about Leary. I didn't understand about anything. You've got to believe me, Rufe. When I saw what was happening to you, I wished I were dead."

"That's wonderful," he said wearily. She leaned toward him, tipping her face up into the yellow light.

"Hit me, Rufe. Beat hell out of me, Rufe. Give me back my pride."

But he was too tired to play the part any longer. He didn't want to hit her. He only wanted, like a kid, to lay his head on her broad shoulder and rest.

"I've got no pride to give anyone," he said. "I'm just a beat-up guy who's lost his girl, and I want her back."

The lids dropped over her eyes, and in a moment he saw that tears had reappeared on her cheeks. Slow, soundless tears.

"You—you never lost her," she said shakily. "Oh, Rufe, I—"

Everything, he figured, was going to be all right. ♠ ♠ ♠

A FINE FOGGY NIGHT

(Continued from page 44)

wants Fanton, too, back where you came from. I talked to him awhile ago. A good cop, Brazil; I'd like to meet him sometime. But he'll have to wait for Fanton."

I got in their car.

KAY told me the rest, as we flew back home. Her sister had the drug habit once before, and was cured. Fanton knew her; got her started all over again. That's when she wrote Kay asking for help. She had the goods on Fanton, and hating him for pushing her back in the mire, she collected evidence. When Fanton found out, he killed her. But she had given the evidence to Kay a few minutes before, and Kay mailed it to the police. Then when Kay learned I was in Fanton's office, she got scared and came to try to blackmail him into letting me go. The cops who had followed me picked up Fanton before he got rid of her. . . .

We got home in the evening, back to our old town, heading for our warm apartment.

It was beginning to fog up a bit again, like the night she had left, and the haze blurred the lights as the plane came down into the airport. It was warm, sitting here with Kay as we landed.

A fine, foggy night! ♠ ♠ ♠

AVAST THERE!
BURIED PIRATE LOOT!
SUNKEN TREASURES!
LOST GOLD MINES!
 THRILLING - NEW
 18" X 24" FOUR COLOR
AMERICANA TREASURE MAP
 SEND \$1.00 AND THIS TOPS' L TO:

CUT HERE

MARVEL MAPS BOX 1665 WIL-LABREA STA.
 LOS ANGELES 36, CALIFORNIA

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____

MAIL MAP TO ME POSTPAID!

Success-Winning
VOICE!

Sound like the HE-MAN you are
STRENGTHEN your voice this tested scientific way. Yes—you may now be able to improve the **POWER** of your speaking and singing voice . . . in the privacy of your own room! Self-training lessons, mostly silent. No music required.
FREE BOOK Write TODAY for Eugene Feuchtinger's great booklet "How to Develop a Successful Voice." It's absolutely FREE! You must state your age. Booklet mailed postpaid in plain wrapper. No salesman will call. Send your name and age **RIGHT NOW!** Perfect Voice Institute, 210 S. Clinton St., KY-8, Chicago 6, Ill.



Special Offer

WORK CLOTHES BARGAINS!





WORK SHIRTS
79¢
3 for \$2.29

Blue, Tan, White
Measure Neck & Arm



WORK PANTS
99¢
3 for 2.65

Blue, Tan, White
Measure Waist & Leg



SHOP COATS
\$1.79
3 for \$5

Blue, Tan, White
Send Chest Measure



COVER ALLS
\$1.98
3 for \$5.49

Blue, Tan, White
Send Chest Measure

FREE 10 DAY TRIAL

WHAT A BUY! Surplus stock from a big midwest supply firm makes these gigantic savings available to you! Sturdy, serviceable work clothes, though used, have been washed, thoroughly sterilized and reconditioned. Every garment made of long-wearing wash materials, strongly sewn, with reinforced stitching at points of strain. When ordering please state measurements under item.

SEND NO MONEY! Just send name, complete address, clothing desired (state how many of each), and your color choice (also 2nd color choice). We will ship immediately. Pay postman, plus postage when your order arrives. Or, enclose cash, check or money order, and We Pay Postage. Keep 10 days. Return for FULL refund of purchase price if not completely satisfied. Order TODAY at our risk!

YOUNG DISTRIBUTING CO. Dept. 474 2605 Elmhurst, Detroit 6, Mich.

MAKE EXTRA MONEY

PLASTICS

LEARN AT HOME

LEARN HOW TO MAKE fast-selling PLASTIC NOVELTIES FURNITURE JEWELRY SIGNS TOYS LAMPS WRITE TODAY!

There are RICH OPPORTUNITIES for MEN and WOMEN with "know-how" in Plastics. Interstate's new Plastics course tells and shows how to make hundreds of fast selling items out of Plastics. Gives complete training in fabrication, casting, lamination, molding, internal carving, etc., in simple, easy, step-by-step language and pictures. Plastics and Fabricating Kits for 23 valuable Plastic Items come with training at no extra cost. **START A PLASTICS BUSINESS OF YOUR OWN.** No other industry holds such promise for the future. You can make big money manufacturing novelties, toys, signs, etc., in your own home in spare or full time. Don't wait! Learn NOW how Interstate's Plastics Training qualifies you for success in the Plastics field.

PLASTICS AND SUPPLIES FURNISHED FOR 23 VALUABLE PROJECTS

INTERSTATE TRAINING SERVICE
Dept. C11K Portland 13, Oregon

FISHING TACKLE DIGEST

1952 Beautiful illustrations of 32 fresh water and 40 ONLY salt water game fish with descriptions, habits, geographical distribution and complete standard \$2.50 and light tackle recommendations for all 72 game fish.

Jam-packed with articles and fishing tips by outstanding experts! Hundreds of illustrations of fly, bait casting, trolling, spinning and salt water tackle to help you catch more fish!

Improve your fishing! Send Cash, Check or Money Order to:

QUALITY AGENCY

214 East 49th Street New York 17, N. Y.

INVENTORS

If you believe that you have an invention, you should find out how to protect it. We are registered Patent Attorneys. Send for copy of our Patent Booklet "How to Protect Your Invention," and an "Invention Record" form. No obligation. They are yours for the asking.

McMORROW, BERMAN & DAVIDSON

Registered Patent Attorneys

150-F Victor Building Washington 1, D. C.

GLITTERING Christmas Cards MAKE \$50.00 (AND MORE) CASH

Personal Christmas Cards. Sparkle like Diamonds! Shimmering, Twinkling foldars everyone will love. Show this new sensation to friends, neighbors. Extra Money! Christmas & Everyday Boxes. Name Imprinted cards, 50 for \$1.25 up. FREE GLITTERING SAMPLES plus assortments on approval. WRITE TODAY...

FREE SAMPLES

CHAS. C. SCHWER CO., 816 Elm St., Westfield, Mass.

MAYBE THE STARS HAVE THE ANSWER YOU SEEK

If you wish an interpretation of the planets as they concern YOU and YOU only, send \$1 with day, month, year of birth (hour if known).

JOHN R. HALL
MARSHALL, MISSOURI

Ruptured



TRY THIS!...

If you can obtain relief by holding back your rupture or ruptures in this manner—I CAN HELP YOU! Write today for my valuable FREE information which is based on 23 years of practical experience.

FRED B. MILLER, Mgr.
Dept. G, Hagerstown, Maryland

DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

(Continued from page 75)

"Must we?"

"Yes," he said. "The kid in the garage said he had orders to check the spare."

Inez didn't reply. He got behind the wheel and drove back out River Road at a sedate thirty miles an hour to kill time. Inez didn't say a word. He knew how she felt—drained of strength and too emotionally exhausted to even think.

Big things had happened at Luigi's. Kurt slowed as he neared the place. There was a state police car parked beside the front doors. The ambulance in back had its spotlight shining into the rear of the station wagon and there was a cluster of men standing there. A black coupé marked SHERIFF stood behind the police car.

"One of them cracked," Kurt gloated. "They were trapped. They couldn't drive off and they couldn't carry the body away."

"How did the police get here so soon?"

"The barracks is just a mile ahead. That's where we're going," he said, and he drove past Luigi's and speeded up. "We've got to get square with the law."

Suddenly the steering wheel yanked in his hands and he angled off on the berm as the right rear tire went flap-flap flat. He cut the motor and sat there glowering.

Said Inez woefully, "They'll probably put us in jail. Not in the same cell, either, even if we are married. If you love me at all you'll come back here and kiss me a few zillion times."

"Every night," he said with feeling. "I'll take you stepping every night."

"If you just bring some beer home and..." Inez giggled, said, "It's academic until we get squared with the law. This was a hell of a way to get our marriage back on the beam, wasn't it?"

Kurt Jensen climbed out of the car and got in back, said, "Necking on the highway is against the law. If we're going to get pinched for it, let's make it worth-while."

"Okay," she agreed. "Okay!" ♠ ♠ ♠

DOUBLE HARNESS

(Continued from page 34)

hospital, to that wise kid. Old friends, they are. Both calling me Bogart."

Joe raised one eyebrow. "You've been visiting him too?"

Bloom gave a self-deprecatory shrug. "So now he listens a little. Maybe he learns something." He hurried out, looking guilty.

Joe Lanahan sat quite still for a long time after Al had left. He was thinking of the long-gone summers on his grandfather's farm in Onondaga County, forty years ago. He remembered a fool horse named Blackie. It had taken a whole summer in harness with old plodding Rance before Blackie settled down and began to do his fair share. Then they made a good team.

He came back to the present, through forty long years. He picked up the top report from a stack two inches high and, holding it as though it were something unclean, he began to read. ♠ ♠ ♠

SAVE UP TO 50% AND MORE

OUT OF PAWN VALUES FROM \$10 TO \$10,000

GENUINE DIAMONDS

SAVE ON DIAMONDS FROM ESTATE, BANKS AND UNDETERMINED PLEDGES

TIME PAYMENTS ARRANGED

SEND FOR **FREE CATALOG**

All diamonds reset in brand new modern mountings. Sold with a written iron-clad money back guarantee. Over 100,000 satisfied customers have bought diamonds from Berman's.

Our reference—your own bank or any mercantile agency

Berman's Diamond Loan Bank
Dept. PF-BERMAN BLDG., BALTO. 1, MD.

FREE FOR ASTHMA

If you suffer with attacks of Asthma and choke and gasp for breath, if restful sleep is difficult because of the struggle to breathe, don't fail to send at once to the Frontier Asthma Company for a FREE trial of the FRONTIER ASTHMA MEDICINE, a preparation for temporary symptomatic relief of paroxysms of Bronchial Asthma. No matter where you live or whether you have faith in any medicine under the sun, send today for this free trial. It will cost you nothing.

FRONTIER ASTHMA CO. 160-T FRONTIER BLDG.
462 NIAGARA ST. BUFFALO 1, N. Y.

I Will Train You for Good Pay Jobs in RADIO-TELEVISION

You Learn at Home by Practicing with Kits I Send

Do you want a good pay job, a bright future, security? Want your own business? Then get into the fast growing RADIO-TELEVISION industry. Keep your job while learning. Hundreds I've

I Trained These Men

"I received my License and worked on ships. Now with WEAN as control operator."—R. D. Arnold Rumford, R. I.

"4 months after enrolling, was able to service Radios. Averaged \$10 to \$15 a week spare time."—W. Weyde, Brooklyn, N. Y.

"Am doing Radio Servicing full time. Have my own shop. I owe my success to N. R. I."—Curtis Stath, Ft. Madison, Iowa.

principles from my illustrated lessons; get practical experience from kits sent.

EARN WHILE YOU LEARN

Many of my students make \$5, \$10 extra a week in spare time fixing neighbors' Radios. Mail coupon for actual lesson and 64-pg. book, "How to Be a Success in Radio-Television." J. E. Smith, Pres., National Radio Inst., Dept. 2KR1, Washington 9, D. C.

Good for Both—FREE

Mr. J. E. Smith, Pres., Dept. 2KR1
National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C.
Mail me Sample Lesson and Book FREE.
(No salesman will call. Please write plainly.)

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

Address.....

City.....Zone...State.....

The ABC's of SERVICING

How to Be a Success in RADIO-TELEVISION

AUTO SEAT COVER *Bargains*

BUY BY MAIL
Save UP TO **50%**

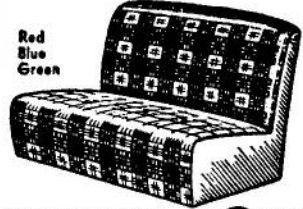
It's the most amazing seat cover bargain in America! Complete protection for the upholstery of your car at a fraction of the prices you'd expect to pay. Our wholesale type merchandising that brings you these outstanding seat covers direct from the manufacturer through Young Products makes these unbelievable low prices possible. Act now. Order today by sending in the convenient coupon.



Red
Blue
or Green

COLORFUL PLASTIC
COMPLETE SETS
for FRONT and
REAR **\$3.89**
\$1.98
FRONT SEAT
ONLY

FITS ALL CARS



Red
Blue
Green

SCOTCH PLAIDS
Front & Rear....\$5 **\$2.98**
Front Only



SIMULATED LEOPARD
Front & Rear....\$5 **\$2.98**
Front Only



LIFELIKE ZEBRA
Front & Rear....\$6 **\$3.69**
Front Only

Try Them
10 DAYS
IN YOUR CAR
AT OUR RISK!

WHAT A BUY! Now at last, you can have the smartest seat covers to protect your upholstery and add distinction to your car at sensational low prices. Tailored of miracle plastic in a CHOICE OF THREE LUSTROUS COLORS to blend or contrast with the color of your car. Or, if you prefer . . . choose from this grand variety of smart patterns. **GAY SCOTCH PLAIDS** in a dominating color of red, blue or green. . . **LIFELIKE ZEBRA** that can't be told from the actual animal skin. . . **SIMULATED LEOPARD** that will amaze you because of its lifelike appearance. Correct fit for your car in the cover of your choice! **NEW SNAP-ON ACTION HOLDS THEM TIGHT.** Colorfast . . . can't fade or shrink! **WATERPROOF . . . STAINPROOF . . . GREASEPROOF!** Resists burns. Cleans easily with a damp cloth. Use the handy coupon below to indicate the seat covers you want. Act now while offer lasts.

MAIL COUPON Now FOR 10 DAY Free TRIAL

Young Products
Dept. 470
2605 Elmhurst
Detroit 6, Mich.

Please rush the following seat covers to me:

- SOLID TONES
 SCOTCH PLAIDS
 LEOPARDS
 ZEBRAS

Front Only Front and Rear

NAME

MAKE OF CAR

ADDRESS

2-Door

CITY..... STATE.....

4-Door

Coupe

Other . . .

Color . . .

100% GUARANTEE
Your Money Promptly
Refunded If You Are
Not Delighted

Send seat covers listed. I will pay postman plus postage.
 I want to save even more. Enclosed is full payment in cash, check or money order. I understand postage will be paid by Young Products.

FREE

STEERING WHEEL COVER
WITH EACH ORDER

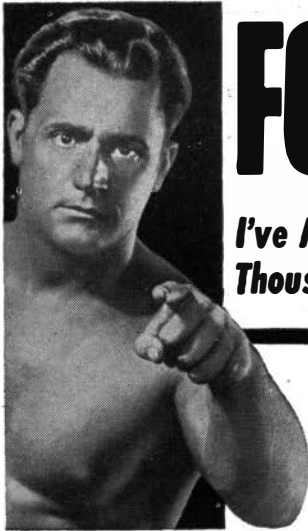
Included at no extra cost with your order for any of the seat covers listed above . . . a handy, attractive steering wheel cover that you'll be delighted to have on your car!

Limited Offer . . . Order Today

YOUNG PRODUCTS

Department 470
2605 ELMHURST AVENUE
DETROIT 6, MICH.

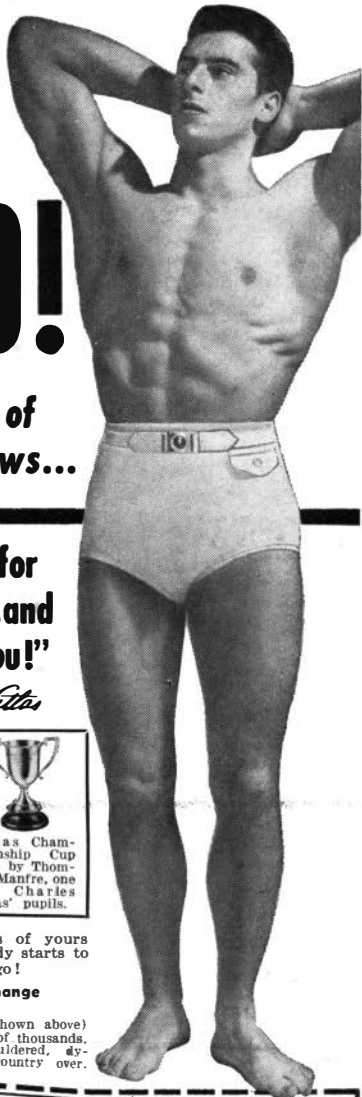
NEW BODIES FOR OLD!



I've Made New Men Out of Thousands of Other Fellows...

"Here's what I did for THOMAS MANFRE...and what I can do for you!"

- Charles Atlas



GIVE me a skinny, peeps, second-rate body—and I'll cram it so full of handsome, bulging new muscle that your friends will grow bug-eyed! . . . I'll wake up that sleeping energy of yours and make it hum like a high-powered motor! Man, you'll *feel* and *look* different! You'll begin to *LIVE!*

Let Me Make YOU a NEW MAN— IN JUST 15 MINUTES A DAY

You wouldn't believe it, but I myself used to be a 97-lb. weakling. Fellows called me "Skinny." Girls snickered and made fun of me behind my back. I was a flop. THEN I discovered my

marvelous new muscle-building system—"Dynamic Tension." And it turned me into such a complete specimen of MANHOOD that today I hold the title "THE WORLD'S MOST PERFECTLY DEVELOPED MAN."

What is "Dynamic Tension"? How Does It Work?

When you look in the mirror and see a healthy, husky, strapping fellow smiling

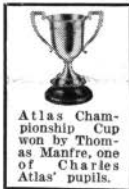
back at you — then you'll realize how fast "Dynamic Tension" GETS RESULTS!

"Dynamic Tension" is the easy, NATURAL method you can practice in the privacy of your own room—JUST 15 MINUTES EACH DAY — while your scrawny chest and shoulder muscles begin to swell, ripple . . . those spindly arms and legs of yours bulge . . . and your whole body starts to feel "alive," full of zip and go!

One Postage Stamp May Change Your Whole Life!

Sure, I gave Thomas Manfre (shown above) a NEW BODY. But he's just one of thousands. I'm steadily building broad-shouldered, dynamic MEN—day by day—the country over.

3,000,000 fellows, young and old have already gambled a postage stamp to ask for my FREE book. They wanted to read and see for themselves how I build up scrawny bodies, and how I pare down fat, flabby ones—how I turn them into human dynamos of pure MAN-POWER.



Atlas Championship Cup won by Thomas Manfre, one of Charles Atlas' pupils.

ARE YOU

Skinny and run down?
Always tired?
Nervous?
Lacking in Confidence?
Constipated?
Suffering from bad breath?

What to Do About It is told in my free book!

FREE My 32-Page Illustrated Book Is Yours Not for \$1.00 or 10c—But FREE

Send NOW for my famous book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." 32 pages, crammed with photographs and valuable advice. Shows what "Dynamic Tension" can do, answers many vital questions. Page by page it shows what I can do for YOU.

This book is a real prize for any fellow who wants a better build. Yet I'll send you a copy absolutely FREE. Just glancing through it may mean the turning point in your whole life! Rush the coupon to me personally, Charles Atlas, Dept. 83X, 115 East 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y.



CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 83X, 115 East 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y.

Send me—absolutely FREE—a copy of your famous book, "Everlasting Health and Strength"—32 pages, crammed with actual photographs, answers to vital health questions, and valuable advice to every man who wants a better build. I understand this book is mine to keep, and sending for it does not obligate me in any way.

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

Address.....

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

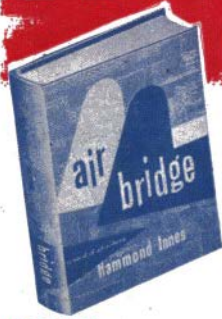
A SENSATIONAL BARGAIN FOR NEW MEMBERS OF THE ADVENTURE BOOK CLUB!

CHOOSE ANY 4 ADVENTURE HITS FOR \$1!

Full-Size, Hard-Bound Books!

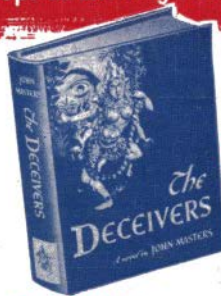
Tops in Exciting Fiction! Up to \$11.00 Value!

when you join



AIR BRIDGE
Hammond Innes

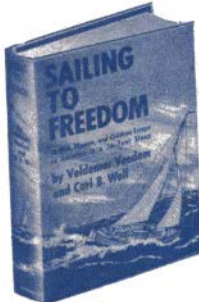
Breakneck adventure against almost impossible odds behind the Iron Curtain in Germany. Thrilling flying story by the master of excitement and suspense.



THE DECEIVERS

John Masters

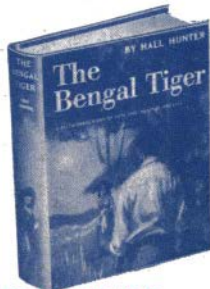
He dared death to uncover the infamous cult of Kali, the Hindu Destroyer-Goddess, practicing murder and robbery on the most terrifying scale in recorded history!



SAILING TO FREEDOM

Voldeemar Veendam and Carl B. Wall

16 men, women, and children escape to America from the clutches of the N.K.V.D.—on a thirty-six foot, seventy-year old sloop!

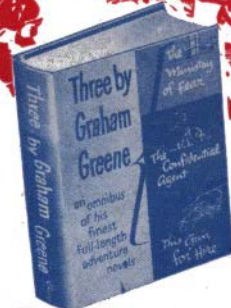


THE BENGAL TIGER

Hall Hunter

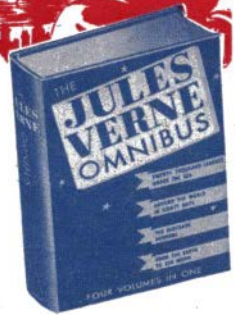
Two men clash in deadly combat in the secret vault of a forbidden temple. Adventure in India's jungles, where beasts—and—men are hunted!

New Best-Sellers! All-Time Favorites! "Big-Name" Authors!

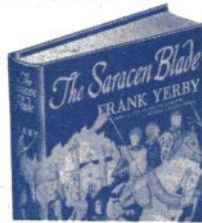


THREE BY GRAHAM GREENE

Three full-length thrillers in one book—the best Graham Greene has ever written: *This Gun For Hire*, *The Confidential Agent*, and *The Ministry of Fear*. Over 500 pages!



THE JULES VERNE OMNIBUS
800 pages—4 complete novels!
20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, Around the World in 80 Days, The Blockade Runners, and From the Earth to the Moon.



THE SARACEN BLADE

Frank Yerby

A peasant and an emperor storm their way together across the blazing world of the Crusades, from the palaces of Sicily to the deserts and harems of the East!

WHY WE OFFER THIS EXTRAORDINARY BARGAIN

Take a Few as Four Books a Year!

IT'S to introduce you to the new kind of club for men you've always wanted! Each month the editors of the Adventure Book Club select the most exciting novels of adventure—action—suspense! These books sell for as much as \$3.50 in the publishers' editions, but you get them for only \$1 each plus a few cents shipping.

Relax the Way Famous Celebrities Do—with an Adventure Novel!

You get the headliners in adventure fiction—by the most famous authors—in variety to suit every taste for thrills! Frontier novels, stories of adventure in the arctic and in the jungle, spy thrillers, action on land and sea and in the air!

You do not have to accept every selection—just four books a year from at least 24 books offered. After purchasing four books, at only \$1 each, you can cancel your membership anytime!

Mail Coupon Now!

Receive at once any 4 adventure books on this page for only \$1, plus shipping cost! When you get this big package of thrills, and realize it is just a sample of the treats in store for you, you will be delighted!

**ADVENTURE BOOK CLUB,
GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK**

MAIL THIS COUPON

**ADVENTURE BOOK CLUB
Dept. 10PFG, GARDEN CITY, NEW YORK**

Please enroll me in the Adventure Book Club. Send me at once the 4 books checked below, and bill me ONLY \$1 FOR ALL 4, plus a few cents shipping cost.

- Air Bridge Bengal Tiger The Deceivers
 Jules Verne Omnibus Sailing to Freedom
 Saracen Blade Three by Graham Greene

I am to receive from the Club Bulletin, Adventure Trails, so I may decide in advance which future selections I want to accept. I need take only four books a year out of the 24 action novels offered, and I pay only the bargain price of \$1 each, plus a few cents shipping cost, for books I accept. After accepting four books, I may cancel my membership at any time.

GUARANTEE: If not delighted, return all 4 introductory books in 7 days and membership will be cancelled.

Name Please Print

Address

City & State

Zone
Same offer in Canada; address 105 Bond St., Toronto 2