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MYSTERY

THE ILLUSTRATED DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

JUNE

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A TOWER MAGAZINE

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MYSTERY

ONE OF THE TOWER MAGAZINES

Catherine McNelis—*Publisher*

DURBIN LEE HORNER, *Managing Editor* MARY MARSHALL, *Director of Home Service*

VOL. IX, NO. 6 COVER DESIGN BY CHARLES DE FEO JUNE, 1934

Tower Studios

A THRILLING TWO-PART STORY

FIVE EXCELLENT SHORT STORIES

GOSSIP FROM WASHINGTON

STARTLING REAL-LIFE MYSTERIES

EXCITING DEPARTMENTS

Beautiful women deserve to be loved; but here was one who deserved death—and got it!

THE SINISTER DEATH IN THE BLACK ROOM

By HENRY LACOSSITT

Page 46 in this issue

Besides these 22 outstanding features, there is another new, complete book-length novel in this issue—

THE IMPERFECT TWINS

By

CARL MATTISON CHAPIN

Page 111 of this issue

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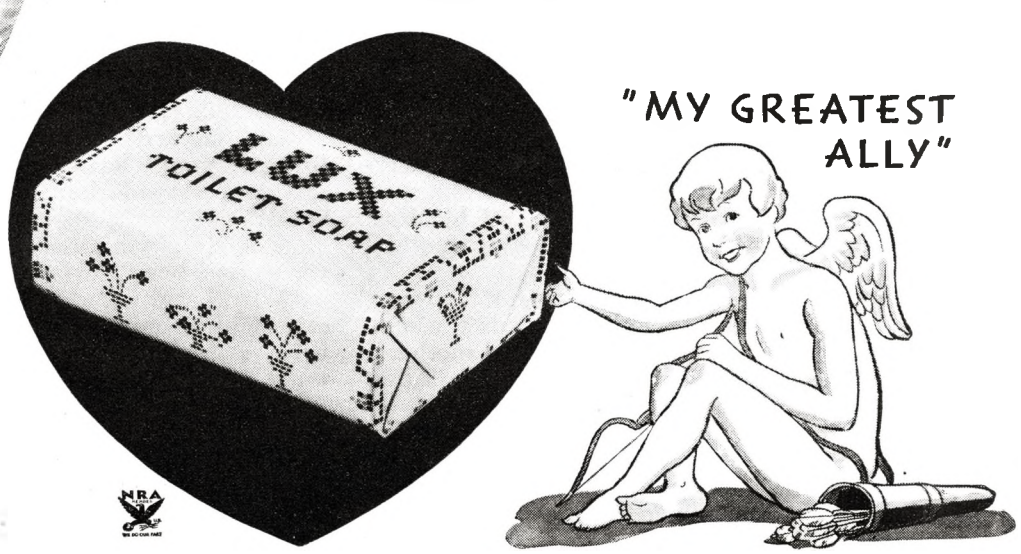


Great Expectations

Dramatized by

BURTON E. STEVENSON

Illustrated by

NICK RILEY

Charles Dickens' mystery masterpiece! The world's greatest detective novels told for the first time in pictures!

LITTLE PHILIP PIRRIP, who could make nothing of his name but "Pip," and so was called Pip by everybody, lived with his sister, Mrs. Joe Gargery, since his mother and father were both dead, and being very unhappy, for his sister was a Tartar, often stole away to the graveyard where his parents and his five little brothers were buried, and sometimes came very near wishing that he was buried there with them. The graveyard was on the edge of the marshes, and beyond them ran the river where the convict hulks were moored, and one evening more than usually gloomy, as he sat there contemplating the family tombstones, he began to cry.

"Hold your noise!" cried a terrible voice, and a man started up from among the graves—a fearful man, all in coarse gray, with a great iron on his leg, a desperate and starving man. "Keep still, you little devil, or I'll cut your throat!"

"Oh, don't cut my throat, sir," pleaded Pip, as the man caught him by the chin, and tilted him savagely backwards.

"You young dog!" and the man licked his lips. "What fat cheeks you ha' got. What's your name?"

"Pip, sir."

"Pip, eh? And where's your mother?"

"There, sir," answered Pip, and then, as the man started to run, " 'Also Georgiana,' that's my mother."

"Oh," said the man, coming back. "And is that your father alonger your mother?"

"Yes, sir; him too, 'late of this parish.' I live with Joe Gargery, the blacksmith."

"Blacksmith, eh?" said the man, and glanced down at his leg. "Now, look here," and he seized Pip again more savagely than before. "You know what a file is? You know what wittles is? You get me a file and you get me wittles; you bring 'em both to-mor, or I'll have your heart and liver out!"

And Pip, terrified by this dreadful threat, promised that he would get the file and the victuals, and would bring them to him early the next morning.

"Say Lord strike you dead if you don't!" snarled the man, and Pip said it, and scampered away toward home.

Pip ran home as fast as he could, but he was late, of course, and only Joe's intervention saved him from an application of Tickler, as Joe called the switch his wife kept hanging on the kitchen wall. But Joe managed to get Pip safe in the chimney-corner behind his leg, where Mrs. Joe couldn't reach him.

"Where have you been, you young monkey?" she demanded.

"Churchyard!" snorted his sister. "If it warn't for me, you'd have been to the churchyard long ago, and stayed there. Who brought you up by hand?"

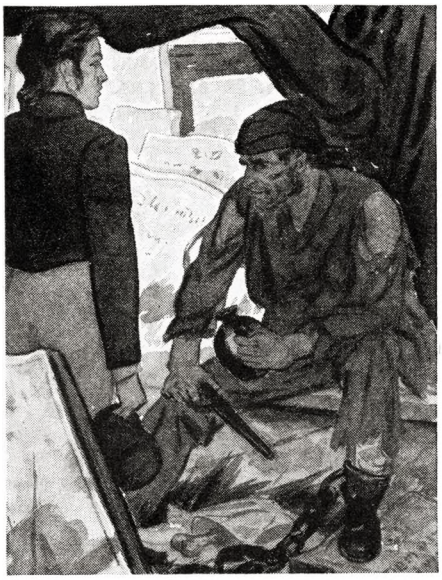
"You did," whimpered Pip, for this was a taunt which had been hurled at him a hundred times.

"Why I did it I don't know," went on Mrs. Joe, and applied herself to the tea things, cut each of them a thick slice of bread, smacked some butter on it, and thrust it at them. "Eat that!" she said.

Pip determined, since this might be the only food he would be able to get hold of, not to eat his, but to slip it down the leg of his trousers; which he managed to do when nobody was looking, and got away with it to his bedroom.

(*Please turn to page* 8)

GREAT EXPECTATIONS



(*Continued from page* 6)

There was little sleep for Pip that night, and as soon as the first gray of dawn appeared he slipped into his clothes, crept down to the pantry and stole some bread, a piece of cheese, a meat bone and a pork pie. Then he filled a little bottle with brandy from the stone jug in which it was kept, and making his way into the forge stole a file from among Joe's tools. With all this tied in a towel, he let himself out of the house and scampered away toward the marshes; and there was the convict, limping up and down and hugging himself and shivering with cold.

"What's in the bottle, boy?" said he.

"Brandy," Pip answered, and the man seized it and took a long swallow. Then he began handing the food down his throat.

"You're not a deceiving imp?" he asked suddenly. "You brought no one with you?"

"No, sir; oh, no, sir!" Pip protested.

"Well, I believe you," said the man, and something clicked in his throat, and he smeared his ragged rough sleeve over his eyes. "You'd be a fierce young hound indeed to want to hunt down a wretched warmint like me. Now, give us hold of that file!"

And Pip, seeing him thus occupied, thought it well to withdraw.

The marshes were searched that night by parties of soldiers, and Pip learned next day that the escaped convict had been captured. Luckily for him, everyone supposed that it was the convict who had forced his way into the pantry and stolen the missing food. But the memory of this adventure was soon driven from his mind by an even greater one.

The town possessed an eccentric character named Miss Havisham, who for twenty years had shut herself up in her great mansion, called "Satis House," and seen nobody nor permitted the light of day to enter it. Twenty years before she had been dressing for her wedding, when a letter came from the bridegroom brutally breaking off the match. She had remained ever since just as she was at that moment, with her wedding gown growing yellow and frayed, with one slipper on and one off, and her bridal flowers.

She was reputed to be very wealthy and lived alone with a young girl named Estella, whom she had adopted. One day when Uncle Pumblechook, one of her tenants, went to pay his rent, she had told him that she wanted a boy to come and play there, and Pumblechook had thought of Pip, and in due course Pip was taken to the house and led to Miss Havisham's room by Estella, who regarded him with contempt.

Pip, of course, found it impossible to play, but Estella was called in and they played at "Beggar My Neighbor" to amuse Miss Havisham, and Estella soon beggared him.

"He calls the knaves Jacks, this boy," said Estella, with disdain, before the first game was out. "And what coarse hands he has!"

Pip was beginning to fall in love with the imperious little beauty, and her contempt stung him almost to tears.

"What do you think of her?" Miss Havisham asked eagerly, and poor Pip stammered in her ear that he thought Estella very proud and very pretty, and that he would like to go home.

So home he went, but every week after that he went back to Miss Havisham's and played cards with Estella, and was taunted by her, and fell more deeply in love with her; and as the months and years passed, his sister indulged in wilder and wilder speculations as to the legacy Miss Havisham was certain to leave him. And then, one day, all these dreams were swept away.

"You're growing tall, Pip," said Miss Havisham, who had been leaning on his shoulder as she walked about her room. "Tell me again the name of that blacksmith of yours."

"Joe Gargery, ma'am."

"You were to have been apprenticed to him, were you not?"

"Yes, Miss Havisham."

"You had better be apprenticed at once, then. Have Gargery come here with you and bring your indentures, and I will arrange for your premium."

(*Please turn to page* 10)

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

(*Continued from page* 8)

And so Pip's dreams vanished into air, and he went to work at the forge. Once it had seemed to him that to roll up his sleeves and go into the forge as Joe's apprentice would make him distinguished and happy. Now he felt only that he was grimy with coal dust.

The thought of Estella was always with him, and his great dread was that some day, when he was at his grimiest, he would see her looking in at the window of the forge. Once he had summoned courage to go and see Miss Havisham. Estella was not there.

"You are looking round for Estella, hey?" asked Miss Havisham. "She's abroad—educating for a lady; far out of reach; prettier than ever; I shall get my revenge through her—my revenge on men. I have moulded her heart as hard as stone! You will see!" and she laughed in malignant triumph.

So four years passed, and Pip grew into young manhood. Never a word had he from Estella, but nevertheless he had labored at his books in every odd moment, determined to get such education as he could. And then, one night, a stranger knocked at the door, and asked to see him and Joe.

"My name is Jaggers," said the stranger. "I am a lawyer in London. Now, Joseph Gargery, I am the bearer of an offer to relieve you of your apprentice; and I am instructed to communicate to him that he has Great Expectations. He will come into a handsome property, and it is the desire of the present possessor of that property that he be immediately removed from his present sphere of life, and be brought up as a gentleman."

Pip's face was shining. His dream was out; his wildest fancy was surpassed by the sober reality. Miss Havisham was going to make his fortune on a grand scale. And he would see Estella again.

"There are two conditions," went on Jaggers. "One is that you will always bear the name of Pip; and, secondly, the name of your benefactor must remain a profound secret, until the person chooses to reveal it. You are positively prohibited from making any inquiry, any allusion or reference however distant. If you have any suspicion in your own breast, you are to keep it there. Do you agree?"

Next day, Pip took his guineas and went into town, and ordered a suit of clothes from Mr. Trabb, the tailor, and a hat from the hatter's, and a pair of boots from the bootmaker's; and then he went to the coach-office and took his place for London for seven o'clock on Saturday morning. And, as the news of his fortune flew about, the tradesmen came to their doors to bow to him, passers-by made way for him respectfully, and for the first time Pip realized the tremendous power of money.

Never more than in the changed demeanor of Uncle Pumblechook, who had begged him to honor him by lunching with him. Uncle Pumblechook, it will be remembered, had suggested Pip to Miss Havisham when the latter asked for a boy to come and amuse her, and he had always bullied and browbeaten the boy, but that was all past.

"My dear friend," he said, taking Pip by both hands, "I give you joy of your good fortune. To think that I should have been the humble instrument leading up to it! Be seated. Here is chicken, here is a tongue, here is wine—let us drink. Thanks to Fortune, and may she ever pick out her favorites with equal judgment!"

Once in London, Pip soon developed into the perfect man-about-town. He rented luxurious chambers, spent money right and left, which Jaggers supplied him without protest, and played the fool generally. His greatest friend was Herbert Pocket, son of the man with whom he was supposed to be studying; and there were two other students, named Drummle and Startop, with whom he also joined in various celebrations. Bentley Drummle was the ugly and vicious son of a rich father, unbearable at times, and never so much so as one evening when Pip had asked the three to dinner.

There was much wine and many toasts, and they were all feeling very gay, when Drummle raised his glass, and called upon the company to pledge him to "Estella!"

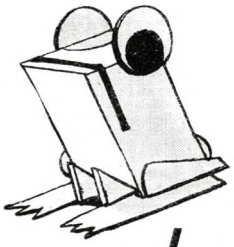
"Estella who?" demanded Pip, half rising to his feet.

"Never you mind," retorted Drummle.

"Estella of where?" persisted Pip.

"Estella of Richmond," answered Drummle, "and a beauty!"

(*Please turn to page* 12)



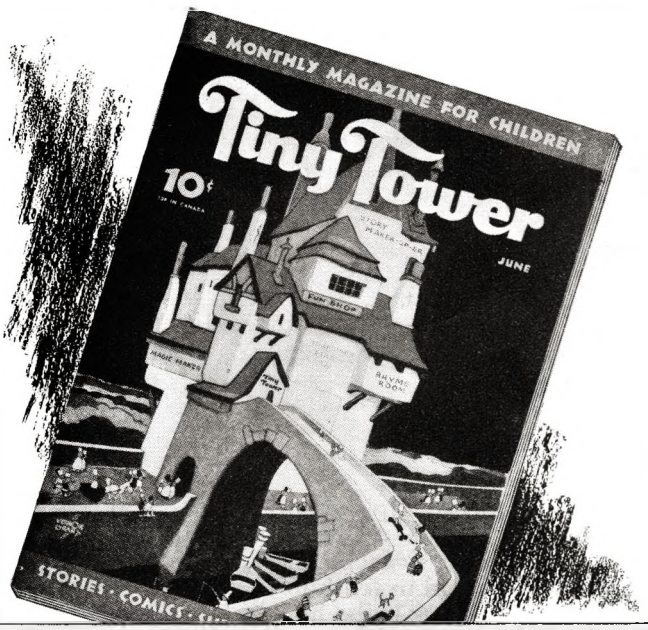
It was a handsome frog!

Marilyn Albright ...of Chicago, who writes: "I am a little girl seven years old. I read Tiny Tower and like it very much. I made the frog bank in Tiny Tower. It was a handsome frog."

OF course it was a handsome frog because Marilyn made it herself—from a page in Tiny Tower. Right there is the secret of this new magazine's sure popularity with small boys and girls: the many delightful things it gives them to DO and MAKE.

Let's look at the June issue. There's the magic page and the Funnywigs to color. A treasure box to make and hidden objects to find. There's a fairyland game and the most fascinating new "picture secrets" you can imagine! Plus stories, rhymes, a song, picture strips—everything children like

The June issue is now on sale at F. W. Woolworth stores and on selected newsstands. After your children have had so much fun with one gay, colorful issue, you'll want them to have a year's subscription ($1.00). The coupon below will start it for you.



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GREAT EXPECTATIONS

(*Continued from page* 10)

There could be no question as to the Estella Drummle had in mind, for the Estella, Pip's Estella, was living with friends at Richmond, launched into the world by Miss Havisham to work havoc with men's hearts, and doing it well! Pip had called to see her as often as he dared, and though his devotion was manifest enough, she had always treated him with the utmost coolness. But now, a terrible suspicion stabbed through him. That she should in any way favor a stupid boor like Drummle was too much, and he posted down to protest. She received him coolly as always.

"Estella," he began, "it makes me wretched that you should encourage a man so generally despised as Bentley Drummle."

"Don't be so foolish, Pip," Estella said. "It's not worth discussing."

"Oh, don't be so proud, Estella, and so inflexible."

"Well, then," retorted Estella, bluntly, "I will tell you the truth. I intend to marry Mr. Drummle. And don't pity me, Pip—pity him!"

But a more dreadful blow was in store for Pip, for that night there came a knock at his door, and when he opened it he found a stranger on the threshold—short, heavy-set man of perhaps sixty, with a bald head fringed with iron-gray hair, browned and hardened by exposure to every weather."

"Is this Mr. Pip?" the man asked.

"Yes," said Pip. "What is your business?"

"I'll tell you in a minute, Mr. Pip," said the man, and pushed his way in and closed the door. "Don't you know me, my boy?" and then, when Pip looked again, he recognized the shivering convict of the marshes, to whom he had taken food and brandy that morning, long ago. "You do know me!" cried the man, and held out both his hand. "You acted nobly, Pip, and I have never forgot it!"

"Stay! Keep off!" cried Pip. "You must understand that I can't renew that chance acquaintance. . . ."

"Why not?"

"I have come into some property. . . ."

"Might a poor warmint ask whose property?" inquired the stranger, quietly. And then, when Pip faltered in his answer, he went on. "It's I that made a gentleman of you, Pip. It's me wot has done it! I swore that time, sure as ever I earned a guinea, that guinea should go to you. I've put away money only for you to spend. It's all yours, my boy—all ours!"

And while Pip listened in horror, the convict told the story. His name was Abel Magwitch, and as punishment for his attempted escape he had been sentenced to deportation for life. In Australia he had been hired out to a herdsman, had acquired some property, had worked hard, had prospered—and all for Pip.

"I lived rough that you might live smooth, my dear boy," he said. "I worked hard that you might be above work. And all the time I told myself that I would come one day and see my boy. It warn't easy, nor yet it warn't safe—but I done it. And here I am. Have you got somewheres to put me?"

"Yes," stammered Pip. "I have another room. . . ."

No doubt as to Pip's gratitude ever entered Magwitch's head. He made himself at home, he ate with a sickening voracity, he lavished endearments upon the boy, and urged him to spend all the money he wanted to—to have horses, jewelry, anything. And all the time Pip was trying to summon courage to tell him that he could not take his money—though what he was going to do without it he could not imagine. He had no profession, no means of livelihood—he had supposed he was to be a "gentleman"!

"It is too dangerous for you to stay here," he said one day, at breakfast, hoping that he might frighten Magwitch away. "You may be recognized and seized."

"The danger ain't so great," Magwitch answered complacently. "Of course, they know I'm back, but unless I was informed agin, the danger don't signify. I don't intend to advertise that I'm back from Botany Bay. If the danger had been fifty times as great, I'd have come to see you just the same."

"And how long do you remain?" asked Pip.

"How long?" echoed Magwitch. "I've come for good!"

And neither of them, as they sat there, suspected that already Magwitch had been recognized and that the hand of the law would soon be extended to seize him.

(*Please turn to page* 14)

I Go Sleuthing

By MARJORY AMES

$100 Prize Winner from Larchmont, New York

Decoration by Robert Fawcett

WHEN you live in a town as small as Marston, North Carolina, it is pretty hard to keep everyone from knowing exactly what goes on. Perhaps one reason the town felt so bitter against Banker Rutherford was that he deceived it so neatly.

No one could understand how the dashing Anna Dell who "could have had anybody" had chosen so nondescript a man as Alan Rutherford; yet he was a devoted husband and father and she seemed well enough satisfied.

Alan Rutherford always wore gray. Gray suit, shirt and tie, with overcoat and hat to match. The only unusual thing about his appearance was the dark glasses he had worn since some slight operation to one of his eyes. Everyone said he had just made a habit of wearing them and couldn't break it. He was that set in his ways.

With the amount of legend as well as fact which any Marstonian can supply, it is not hard to reconstruct his routine.

At seven-thirty each morning he sat down to breakfast. In Winter he took four buckwheat cakes, and two cups of coffee. In Summer he substituted two eggs for the buckwheats.

At eight exactly he passed the Richardson house on his way to the bank. Nelly Richardson laughingly set their hall clock as he passed.

By eight-thirty he had arrived at the bank, opened his mail and was on hand to see the automatic door of the giant safe swing back. He himself had locked it the night before.

At eleven-fifteen, the restaurant next door sent in two sardine sandwiches and a glass of milk. Even important people had to wait while he lunched.

He left the bank at four-thirty and took the River Road home, stopping to see Aunt Henriette on the way. We lived next door and when he left her at five-twenty, I knew it was time for me to go in to supper. I used to pray some day he might be late. He never was.

Everyone speculated about Aunt Henriette. Mr. Rutherford had brought her back with him from New Orleans when he returned from his mother's funeral three years before, and had rented a house for her and her faithful old family servant, Raleigh.

No one ever came to see her, not even Anna Dell, for Henriette who spoke nothing but French would not receive guests. Raleigh gave out she was an invalid. Once a month Mr. Rutherford drove her to Richmond to see a specialist, and they stayed away over the week-end. The bank did not open those Saturdays.

Since Mr. Rutherford often worked for a while after supper, Sheriff Jones thought nothing of it one Friday night when he met Rutherford leaving the bank carrying two suitcases.

"Taking Henriette up to Richmond again," he greeted the Sheriff.

That is the last that was ever heard or seen of Banker Rutherford, Henriette, Raleigh, or the $50,000 which disappeared with them. The runaways had a good start, for the loss was not discovered until Monday. On Tuesday, the car was found half buried in Saunders' Pond, but three days' dredging only proved a loss of time.

Public opinion favored the theory that the couple had driven to Meidsville where a ten o'clock train left for New York, and a ten-ten for Atlanta. No trainman on either train recalled any passengers answering their descriptions. However, Rutherford had only to discard his glasses and change his clothes to become a different man, and no one knew just what Henriette looked like.

Raleigh, left to drive off the car, had accidentally or otherwise, run it into the water. He then worked his way South with the help of friendly colored people who were either unwilling or too frightened to give him away.

In spite of all conjectures, (*Please turn to page* 101)

Contest rules for this department found on page **101**

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

(*Continued from page* 12)

While he was still in this dreadful state of indecision with regard to Magwitch, a note from Miss Havisham that she wished to see him took Pip down to Satis House, and he found its mistress sitting just as always in her darkened rooms, her wedding-gown more yellow and ragged than ever. There was a fire on the hearth, for the weather was cold, and Pip sat down there beside her.

"Are you very unhappy?" she asked.

"I am far from happy," answered Pip miserably. "Is Estella married?"

"Yes, she is married." And then, as she saw his face, she dropped to her knees before him. "What have I done?" she cried. "What have I done?"

"No matter, Miss Havisham," said Pip. "Dismiss me from your mind and conscience," and he rose to go.

Miss Havisham rose, too, and as she did so the edge of her gown touched the flame on the hearth, and in an instant she was afire from head to foot.

There were further anxieties in store for Pip, for when he got back to London he was informed by an emissary from Jaggers that Magwitch had been seen and recognized, and that he must be got out of the country without delay.

Arrangements were made to smuggle him aboard a steamer bound for Hamburg, and early one morning Pip and Magwitch took a small boat down the river, to wait for the steamer to pass so that Magwitch might be put aboard her.

Suddenly they saw that they were pursued by a larger boat, in which were half a dozen officers. They tried to escape, but in the end the larger and swifter boat caught up with them.

"You have a returned transport there," cried a voice. "His name is Abel Magwitch, and I call upon him to surrender!"

And then, in a moment, a wave tossed the large boat upon them, and their little craft was crushed into an egg-shell.

Both Pip and Magwitch were rescued from the river, but the latter was so badly crushed that he died before the sentence of death could be carried out. Pip was offered a position with a business house at Cairo, and, selling everything, paid such of his debts as he could, and within a month quitted England. At the end of eleven years, he was a partner in the firm.

He had heard of Estella from time to time—that she led a most unhappy life, that she had separated from her husband because of his cruelty, and finally that he was dead. At last, he decided, it was time for him to return to England.

His first visit was to Joe, happily married now, for his first wife had died, and there on the hearth fenced in by Joe's leg was—Pip again!

"We gave him the name of Pip for your sake, dear old chap," said Joe.

And then Pip made his way to the old churchyard again, and sat down on a certain tombstone, and facing him was that other stone sacred to the memory of Philip Pirrip, late of this Parish, and "also Georgiana, Wife of the Above."

And, at last, in the gray mist of evening, to Satis House.

There was no house now, for it had burned down years before—only a waste where the garden had been, covered with tangled briers. And as he entered, he saw a solitary figure wandering there.

"Estella!"

"I am greatly changed," she said. "I wonder that you know me. Tell me that we are friends."

"We are friends," said Pip, taking her hands and bending over her.

"And will continue friends apart," said Estella.

Pip did not answer, and hand in hand they left the ruined place; but among all its shadows he saw no shadow of another parting from her.

A NEW COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL

THE *Imperfect* TWINS

Illustrated by SEYMOUR BALL

THE car pitched over a hogback and went yawing down the declivity.

"Hell!" Claine exploded. He jerked home the emergency brake. On locked wheels the car slewed twice its length.

"Fool of a woman," Claine roared, "is it essential that you make a Juggernaut out of my car?"

"Fool of a man"—The first sound of that voice in the storm gave me the strangest sensation I have ever experienced. It seemed to ripple and tinkle and laugh. It made the flesh creep—or crinkle—along my backbone, the way it does when I look down from very high places.

"Fool of a man," it retorted, "is it essential that you do seventy on a one-way road in the fog?"

"Or, in other words, fifteen," Claine said, severely. "Not an adequate excuse for scaring my car to death. And your fog, you know, is clouds; you're on a mountain."

By this time I had swallowed my heart again and focussed my eyes, and I could see her, a slender figure standing squarely in the middle of the road, indistinct in the murk of the afternoon storm. She came forward.

"Your nerves are frightfully jumpy, aren't they?" she remarked. "I was all set to hop out of the way, if I had to. I merely wanted to make sure you stopped."

"You got your wish," Claine said, grimly. "Would it be impertinent to ask why?"

"Not at all—we're wrecked."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Claine exclaimed. He switched off the spark and swung out of the car. I descended on my side and we advanced to meet her.

On the instant that I saw her clearly I thought she was the most wonderful thing that had ever come into my life.

"Anyone hurt?" Claine asked.

"Marmaduke is rather mashed up—he's our Ford, you know; or he was our Ford. But my sister and I are quite all right and there isn't anybody else. She's sitting on a rock, back there, being glum about things. You see, I happened to be driving when we cracked up. It's a perfect Godsend to her."

By now I was becoming aware that her nose tilted upward a little. Her mouth was very small and her lips very red. She had on a tight helmet of heavy cloth, buckled under her chin, and a heavy sheepskin jacket. She wore riding breeches and moccasin hunting boots with red-topped lumberman's socks. Her right hand was bare. She held it pressed against her side. The long driving-mitten projected oddly from it. I was wondering about that mitten when it suddenly fell to the ground. It had been concealing the barrel of a revolver which pointed straight at Claine's midriff.

"One has to be careful," she explained. Claine studied the weapon with interest. He extended his hand. He said,

"Let me see that gun, please."

For the rest of this thrilling story, turn to page 111.

The

A real department for MYSTERY readers! Write your opinions and suggestions for MYSTERY MAGAZINE every month. Tell us what story you like best—who your favorite mystery writer is. For every letter published we will pay one dollar. And, remember, if you don't like this magazine, be frank and say so! Write to the MYSTERY Editor, Tower Magazines, Inc., 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Just What We Think

DAVENPORT, IOWA.—Please, please get Louis Golding and make him tell what happened to "The Man in the Mirror," if you have to use force to do it.

I think your magazine the best ever and I can safely say I've read at least three numbers of every mystery or detective story magazine published. And to think I just discovered it last month. It's a big disappointment to me to think I missed all those good stories I read about in the Line-Up.

Sax Rohmer, Agatha Christie, Ellery Queen, Edgar Wallace and Mary R. Rinehart are my favorite authors and I would like to see a Carolyn Wells mystery in your magazine. And if Louis Golding can write any more like the "Man in the Mirror" or you get another like the "Black King" please print it.

Mrs. J. R. Sexton

Changed It Is, Mrs. Jones

VANCOUVER, WASH.—Having been a steady reader of MYSTERY for fourteen months I think it is time you heard from me.

In riding on a street-car over a year ago a young man was so engrossed in a magazine to the extent that he rode several miles past his station. Being curious to know what magazine could hold his attention to the utter forgetfulness of his immediate surroundings I ventured to look over his shoulder. Needless to say I have been a reader of MYSTERY ever since.

Your book-length novels are great and are worth the price of the magazine alone. Please have some book-length stories by Sax Rohmer, a great favorite of mine, also Edgar Wallace. They have great imaginations. But I'd like to state here I think Walter F. Ripperger certainly had inspiration when he wrote "The Severed Hand."

But I don't like your cartoon in "I Go Sleuthing." I wish you would refrain from the hair on face and hands. Too creepy. I find no fault with the stories so will make the cartoons targets for my bullets.

A life member.

Mrs. Jim Jones

Knock on Wood

BUCYRUS, OHIO—My hearty approval of MYSTERY began several months ago when I was in need of reading material, and I happened to see it on a magazine counter at a local store. Since then I am here to state, I have never seen a magazine that I have enjoyed reading so much.

The hard part to believe is the small price at which the mystery-crammed magazine is sold. I certainly get a dime's worth of enjoyment when I read MYSTERY, and when I read it, it is from beginning to end, and I don't mean maybe.

The best mystery story I have read in a long while is Walter F. Ripperger's "Murder Men of Molokai," and when I purchased MYSTERY that story was the first one I read in each issue. Give us more stories by Mr. Ripperger.

Other stories to my fancy were those in which Hildegarde Withers, Madame Storey and Nurse Keate displayed their detective ability.

All in all, you have an excellent magazine and I hope that it will continue to be so for a long time.

Walter Etsinger

Imagine That!

ALAMOSA, COLO.—I want to congratulate you on a magazine that has everything—your MYSTERY MAGAZINE. There is a wealth of material in it, with something for everybody.

I also want to tell you how the depression taught me where to get the most for my money—at the Tower Magazine counter. Imagine my amazement and pleasure in finding your MYSTERY MAGAZINE. It's a treasure chest of entertainment.

Imagine having a story by Hulbert Footner, Stuart Palmer and many other marvelous writers as well as a book-length novel all for ten cents!

Even though I possessed thousands to spend for magazines of mystery my choice would be the one and only—TOWER MYSTERY MAGAZINE.

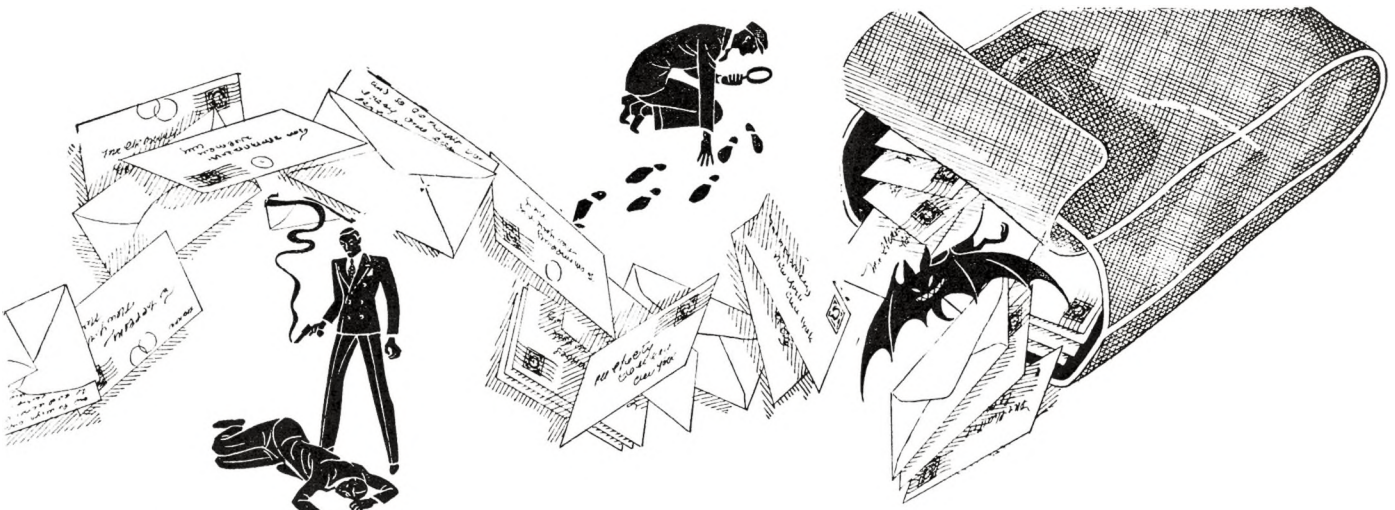
Miss H. R. Jarrett

Are We Tickled?

LEWISTON, MAINE.—This is a challenge to anyone, who can find a better magazine (of this type) at any price.

I have missed but one issue since MYSTERY has been published.

The stories are all fine. Some I like better than others. "Going to St. Ives" was all that I like in a mystery story. Give us more stories by this brilliant author, Colver Harris. Stuart Palmer, Mignon Eber-



Line-Up

hart, Ellery Queen, Maurice Renard, Walter Ripperger are a few of my favorite authors.

I am trying to tell you that I like MYSTERIES from cover to cover. The true stories, the articles, and the general make-up of the magazine leave nothing to be desired.

Thank you for giving the mystery and detective-fiction-loving public the perfect mystery book.

R. Dodge

The Editors Have Weak Hearts

ALLENTOWN, PA.—Just read (cannot say finished reading) your story of "The Man in the Mirror." It is everything you called it—"incredible, provoking, shocking, dramatic" and then some.

Golly, Gee Whiz, oh gosh—Mr. Louis Golding—*"You Nasty Man."*

But please whisper to all us readers—Are we going to have more like that?

Haven't finished reading all the stories, as yet, but if they come up to this one, well!

How's chances for sending you my bill for a wig? I'm mighty afraid I'll need one, although I did not follow your advice this time.

A constant and satisfied reader.

Eve McElray

We Hope That's a Long Time

NILES, OHIO.—I have been reading MYSTERY MAGAZINE since November 1933, and can truthfully say it is one of the best mystery magazines I have ever read. I am only sorry I didn't hear of it sooner.

My favorite author is Sax Rohmer.

I also enjoy Stuart Palmer.

I have never been disappointed in any issue of your magazine. It is a bargain for a dime.

Yours till better magazines than MYSTERY MAGAZINE are edited.

Frank Kopp

Now Here's an Idea

MUSKEGON HTS., MICH.—The public knows what it wants—and gets it in the remarkable MYSTERY MAGAZINE. Its wide variety of stories, be they the short true stories complete on one page, or the book and full-length mysteries to be enjoyed when time is more plentiful. The Rogue's Almanac is very interesting with all the important data.

Furthermore, its wide variety of themes is pleasing to the particular likes of the people. Hats off to MYSTERY for giving the public a magazine that is always different and is good! A magazine of quality and quantity!

My own grievance is that it is not published in several sections tied together with a ribbon, for once the magazine gets into the house everyone makes a beeline to be the first to read it. I, being one of the weaker sex, usually manage to get the worst of the mad scramble, and to top it all have to wait. I know—I buy it!! You see—in this way all we would have to do would be to untie the ribbons, each take a section and peace and contentment would reign supreme. . . .

In appreciation of MYSTERY.

Mary Adams

Don't Stop Eating, Though

CHARITON, IOWA.—I am wondering how many readers from Iowa enjoy your magazine as much as my family and I do. We think it great only don't see why you don't have it twice a month instead of once. I was sick in the hospital sixteen days in January and waited for your magazine to read there but had to wait until Woolworth's got them in—Must say you took enough time in getting out that issue!

I like almost all the stories, but some better than others. The long stories are so good you can hardly wait to finish them. Have taken this magazine over a year now and think I could go without my dinner rather than it—So you see it is very important at our house.

Liked the mystery "Riddle of the Yellow Canary" and "The Three Lame Men" couldn't be beat. Vincent Starret is wonderful. Hoping you will continue with more such mysteries.

Mrs. Arthur L. Johnson

Not a Bad Percentage

HAMTRAMCK, MICH.—I have been a faithful reader of MYSTERY MAGAZINE for a long time. Haven't missed one issue yet. And I intend to keep up the record.

I am of the opinion that there is not another fiction magazine published that can compete with MYSTERY for its fine thrills, romance and surprises.

I've just finished reading the April number. All the stories are great except—well, to tell the truth I didn't care so much about "The Black King." It's too much of a fairy tale. We (*Please turn to page* 109)

Marjorie finds Fun in Life for she has a lovely CAMAY COMPLEXION!

1 "Men were always pleasant and courteous to me. But it ended there. My life was dull, and so was my skin. Then I tried Camay. Almost at once my skin improved. Now I'm a prettier and more popular girl."

2 "Now it no longer makes me unhappy to look at myself in my mirror. I'm mighty proud of my complexion."

Do you get the fun and favors in life—or only the grief and troubles? It's the girl with a lovely fresh Camay Complexion who gets admiration and praise.

LIFE IS A LONG BEAUTY CONTEST

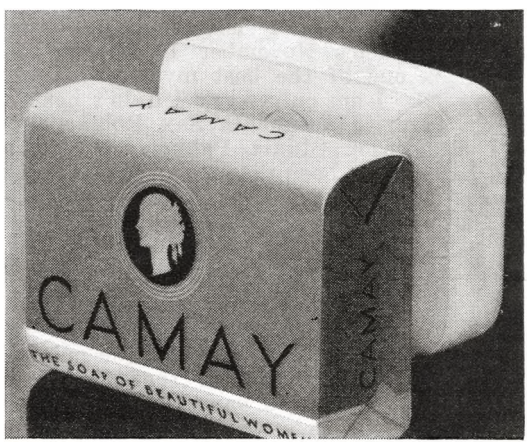
Like Marjorie, the girl above, you are in a never-ending Beauty Contest. It may be at a party, or at some informal gathering of friends that your beauty and your skin will be judged. And you are competing with other women.

So get yourself a Camay Complexion—a skin that is fresh as a flower's petals. Then the eyes of everyone you meet will look at you approvingly.

For Camay, the Soap of Beautiful Women, is gentle as dew on your cheek. Try Camay, faithfully, for one month. The change in your skin will delight you!

Get a supply of Camay today. The price is amazingly low!

Pure, creamy-white and delicately fragrant, Camay comes in a green and yellow wrapper, in Cellophane.



CAMAY The Soap of Beautiful Women

THE TWO-HEADED DOG

By ELLERY QUEEN

CAPTAIN HOSEY BARKER, *the salesman* ISAAC

ELLERY QUEEN MISS JENNY HOSEY

Like his shadow, crime followed Ellery Queen wherever he went. And on a much-needed vacation in a distant corner of the country, he was to stumble on the weirdest mystery of his career, where ghosts, mad dogs, world-famous diamonds, and a beautiful Radcliffe graduate managed to combine themselves into a puzzle that made even the scholarly sleuth a near nervous wreck!

TURN THE PAGE AND BEGIN THIS THRILLING STORY

As the Dusenberg hummed along the murk-dusted road between rows of stripped and silent trees, something in the salty wind, which moaned over the tall slender man at the wheel on its journey across Martha's Vineyard, and Buzzards Bay, stirred him. Many a traveler on that modern road had quivered to the slap of the Atlantic winds, prickled with molecules of spray, responding uneasily to the dim wind-call of some ancestor's sea-poisoned blood. But it was neither blood nor nostalgia which stirred the man in the open car. The wind, which was ululating like a banshee, held no charm for him, and the tingling spray no pleasure. His skin was crawling, it was true, but only because his coat was thin, the October wind cold, the spray distinctly discomforting, and the bare nightfall outside New Bedford infinitely grim and peopled with shadows.

Shivering behind the big wheel, he switched on his headlights. An antiqued sign sprang whitely into view some yards ahead and he slowed down to read it. It swung creaking to and fro in the wind, hinged on scabrous iron, and it flaunted a fearsome monstrosity with two heads whose genus had apparently eluded even the obscure wielder of the paints. Below the monster ran the legend:

"THE TWO-HEADED DOG"
(Cap'n Hosey's Rest)
Rooms—$2 and Up
Permanent—Transient
Auto-Campers Accommodated
In Clean Modern Cabins
DRIVE IN

"Anything would be acceptable tonight," thought the traveler with a wry smile, and he swung the car into a gravelly driveway soon bringing the machine to rest before a high white house crisply painted, its green shutters clear as eyeshades. The inn sprawled over considerable territory, he saw, examining the angular structure in the glare of floodlights over the clearing. Around both sides ran car-lanes, and dimly toward the sides going rearward he made out small cabins and a large out-building which was apparently a garage. There was a smack of old New England about the inn, disagreeably leavened with the modern cabins on its flanks. The huge old ship's lantern creaking and gleaming in battered brass above the front door somehow lost its savor.

"Might be worse, I suppose," he grumbled, leaning on his klaxon. And from the moment the unearthly racket caused the heavy-timbered door to pop open almost instantly, he knew it for the worse.

For the young woman in the reefer, who appeared under the brass lantern, was too beautiful; Isaac, who took his car to the garage, was too gloomy; and the traveler, no sooner having signed his name in the register, and discovering that his fame had preceded him, found that he had caught up with the very thing from which he had been fleeing—notably, discussion of crime in any shape or form whatsoever.

"Ellery Queen, hey?" Captain Hosey, seated behind his desk, had boomed. "Well, well. I've heard tell of ye, young man. Proud to have ye. Jenny, ye go tell Martha to scramble some vittles for Mr. Queen. We'll mess down in the taproom. Meanwhile, if ye'll come with me—"

"We?" said Ellery weakly.

"Well," grinned Captain Hosey, "we don't git such folks as th' usual thing, Mr. Queen. Of course, Jenny here used to bring some mighty nice gals down from Radcliffe to visit with us. But then—" Jenny blushed prettily at this, Ellery noticed, with satisfaction. "Now what was the last case I was readin' about—?"

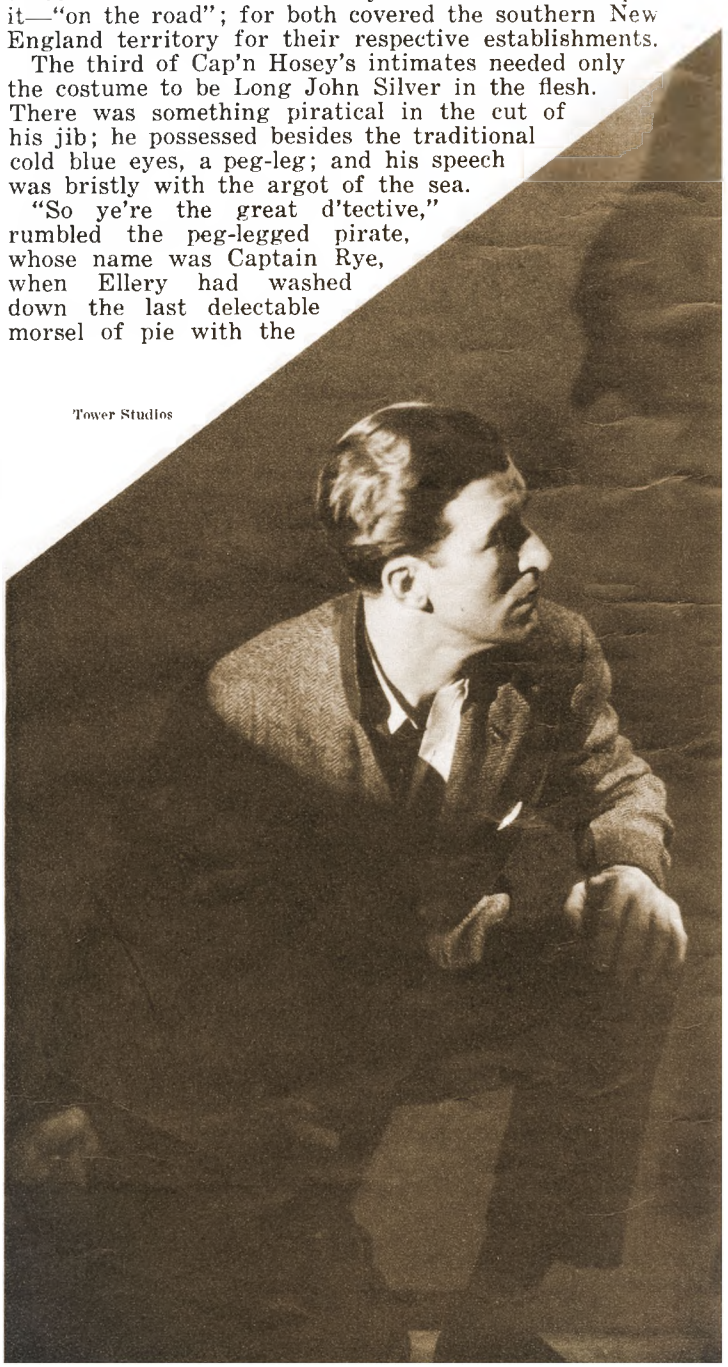
In a brass-and-wooden room downstairs redolent of hops and fish Mr. Ellery Queen found himself the focus of numerous respectful and excited eyes. He blessed his gods privately that they possessed the delicacy to permit him to eat in comparative peace. There were oysters, and codfish cakes, and broiled mackerel, and foamy lager, and airy apple pie and coffee. He stuffed himself with a will and actually began to feel better. Outside the winds might howl, but here it was warm and cheerful and even companionable.

They were a curious company. Cap'n Hosey had apparently gathered the cream of his cronies for the honor of staring at the famous visitor from New York. There was a man named Barker, a traveling salesman "in hardware." As he said: "Mechanics' and building tools, Mr. Queen, cement, quicklime, household wares, et cetera and so forth." He was a tall needle-thin man with sharp eyes and the glib tongue of the professional itinerant. He smoked long cheroots.

THEN there was a chubby man named Heiman, with heavy-pitted glistening features and a cast in one eye that contrived to give him a droll expression. Heiman, it appeared, was "in drygoods," and he and Barker from their cheerful raillery were boon companions, their itineraries crossing each other every three months or so when they were—as Heiman put it—"on the road"; for both covered the southern New England territory for their respective establishments.

The third of Cap'n Hosey's intimates needed only the costume to be Long John Silver in the flesh. There was something piratical in the cut of his jib; he possessed besides the traditional cold blue eyes, a peg-leg; and his speech was bristly with the argot of the sea.

"So ye're the great d'tective," rumbled the peg-legged pirate, whose name was Captain Rye, when Ellery had washed down the last delectable morsel of pie with the



Tower Studios

last warm drop of coffee. "Can't say I ever heard o' ye."

"No?" said Ellery comfortably, lighting a cigarette. "That's refreshing candor. Cap'n Hosey, I begin to like your place."

"Tell Mr. Queen about that business happened here three months ago, Cap'n Hosey," Heiman piped in his high voice.

"Hell, yes," cried Barker. "Tell Mr. Queen about that, Cap'n." His Adam's apple bobbed eagerly as he turned to Ellery. "One of the most interesting things ever happened to the old coot, I guess, Mr. Queen. Haw-haw! Near turned the place inside out."

"Dogs?" murmured Ellery, thinking irrelevantly of the odd name of his host's establishment.

"Jee-rusalem!" roared Cap'n Hosey. "Clean fergot 'bout it. Reg'lar crime, Mr. Queen. Took th' wind slap out o' my sails. Happened—let's see, now. . . ."

"July," said Barker promptly. "I remember Heiman and I were both here then on our regular summer trip."

"God, what a night that was!" muttered chubby Heiman. "Makes my skin creep to think of it."

"Stand back," said Ellery quietly; he stooped and began to remove the boards. Jenny uttered a shriek; beneath the floor lay a horrible corpse.

An odd silence fell over the company, and Ellery regarded them one by one with curiosity. There was a queer unease on the clean fresh face of Jenny, and even Captain Rye had become subdued.

"Well," said Cap'n Hosey at last in a low tone, "'twas round 'bout this time o' month, I sh'd say. Ter'ble dirty weather, Mr. Queen, that night. Stormed all over this end o' the coast. Rainin' an' thunderin' to beat hell. One o' the worst summer squalls I rec-lect. Well, sir, we was all settin' upstairs nice an' cosy, when Isaac—that's th' swab does my odd jobs—Isaac, he hollers in from outside there's a customer jest hove in with a car wantin' vittles and lodgin' fer th' night."

"Will you ever forget that—that hideous little creature?" shuddered Jenny.

"Who's spinnin' this yarn, Jenny?" demanded Cap'n Hosey. "Anyways, we was full up, like t'night—jest one cabin empty. This man comes in shakin' off th' wet; he was rigged out in a cross 'tween a sou'wester an' a rubber tire; an' he takes th' vacant cabin fer th' night."

"Craps, and was he nervous?" muttered Heiman. "Couldn't look you in the eye. About fifty, I'd say; looked like some kind of clerk, I remember thinkin'."

"Except for the chin-whiskers," said Barker ominously. "Red, they were, and you didn't have to be a detective to see right off they were phony."

"Disguised, eh?" said Ellery, stifling a yawn.

"Yes, sir," said Cap'n Hosey. "Anyways, he reg'sters under th' name o' Morse—John Morse—gobbles up a mess o' slum downstairs, an' Jenny shows 'm to th' cabin, with Isaac convoyin' 'em. Tell Mr. Queen what happened, Jenny."

"HE was horrible," said Jenny in a shaky voice. "He wouldn't let Isaac touch the car—insisted on driving it around to the garage himself. Then he made me point out the cabin; wouldn't let me take him there. I did, and he—he swore at me in a tired sort of way, b-but savagely, Mr. Queen. I felt he was dangerous. So I went off, and Isaac, too. But I watched; and I saw him sneak into the garage. He stayed there for some time. When he came out he went into the cabin and locked the door; I heard him lock it." She paused, and for the moment the most curious tension crackled in the smoky air. Ellery, unaccountably, no longer felt sleepy. "Then I—I went into the garage. . . ."

"What sort of car was it?"

"An old Dodge, I think, with side-curtains tightly drawn. But he'd been so mysterious about it—" She gulped and smiled wanly. "I got into the garage and put my hand on the nearest curtain. Curiosity killed a cat, and it almost got me a very badly bitten hand."

"Ah, you mean there was something—somebody in the car?"

"Yes." She shuddered suddenly. "I'd left the garage door open. When lightning flashed I could. . . . It flashed. Something bit into the rubber curtain and I jerked my hand away just in time. I almost screamed. I heard him—it growl; low, rumbling, animal." They were very quiet now. "In the lightning a black muzzle poked out of a hole in the curtain and I saw two savage eyes. It was a dog, a big dog. Then I heard a noise outside and there was the—the little man with the red beard. He glared at me and shouted something. I ran."

"Naturally," murmured Ellery. "Can't say I'm overfond of the more brutal canines myself. A sign of the effete times, I daresay. And?"

"Ain't a hound been whelped," growled Captain Rye, "can't be mastered. Whippin' does it. I mind I had a big brute once, mastiff he was—"

"Stow it, Bull," said Cap'n Hosey testily. "Ye wa'n't here, so what d'ye know 'bout it? Takes more'n jest dog to scare my Jenny. I tell ye that there wa'n't no or'n'ry mutt!"

"Oh, Captain Rye wasn't stopping at the inn then?" said Ellery.

"Naw. Hove in 'bout two-three weeks after. Anyways, that ain't the real part o' the yarn. When Jenny came back we nat'rally talked 'bout this swab, an'—'twas really funny—we all agreed we'd seen his ugly map some'eres b'fore."

"Indeed?" murmured Ellery. "All of you?"

"Well, I knew I'd seen his pan somewhere," muttered the drygoods salesman, "and so had Barker. Later, when the two—"

"Haul up!" roared Cap'n Hosey. "'m I tellin' this yarn or ain't I? Well, we went t' bed. Jenny 'n' me, we bunk in our own quarters in th' little shack back o' th' garage; 'n' Barker 'n' Heiman, here they had cabins that night; bunch o' schoolmarms 'd took up jest 'bout all th' room there was. Well, sir, we took a look at this Morse's cabin on th' way out, but it was darker'n a Chinese lazaret. Then round 'bout three-four in th' mornin' it happened."

"By the way," said Ellery, "had you investigated the car before you turned in?"

"Sure did," said Cap'n Hosey grimly. "Ain't no hound this side o' hell I'm skeered on. But he wa'nt in th' car. Dog-smell was, though. This Morse must 'a' taken th' dog to his cabin after he caught Jenny pokin' round where she had no bus'ness pokin'."

"The man was a criminal, I suppose," sighed Ellery.

"How'd you know?" cried Barker, opening his eyes.

"Tut, tut," said Ellery modestly, and inwardly groaned.

"He were a crim'nal, all right," said Cap'n Hosey emphatically. "Wait till I tell ye. Early mornin'—'twas still dark—Isaac comes a-poundin' on th' door an' when I opens it there's Isaac, nekkid under a reefer, with two hard-lookin' customers drippin' rain. Still squally, 'twas. Make a long story short, they was d'tectives lookin' fer this here Morse. They showed me a picture, an' o' course I reco'nized him right off even though in th' snap he was clean-shaved. They knew he'd been sportin' a fake red beard, an' that he was travelin' with a dog—big police dog—that he'd own'd b'fore he skipped with th' jool. He'd lived in a suburb outside Chicawgo some'eres an' neighbors'd said thy'd see him walkin' out with a dog every once in a while."

"Here, here," said Ellery, sitting up alertly. "Do you mean to say that was John Gillette, the little lapidary who stole the Cormorant diamond from Shapley's in Chicago last May?"

"That's him!" shouted Heiman, blinking his lid rapidly over the eye with the cast. "Gillette!"

"I remember reading about the case when the theft occurred," said Ellery thoughtfully, "although I never followed it through. Go on."

"He'd worked in Shapley's for twenty years," sighed Jenny, "always quiet and honest and efficient. A stone-cutter. Then he was tempted, stole the Cormorant diamond and disappeared."

"Worth a hundred grand," muttered Barker.

"A hund'ed grand!" exclaimed Captain Rye suddenly, stamping his peg-leg on the stone floor. And he sank back and shoved his pipe into his mouth.

"Heap o' money," nodded Cap'n Hosey. "These d'tectives 'd follered Gillette's trail all over creation, al'ays jest missin' 'm. But th' dog give 'm away finally. He'd been seen up Dedham way with th' dog. Lot o' this we found out fr'm them fellers later. Anyways, I shows 'em th' cabin an' they busts in. Nothin' doin'. He'd heard 'em or kep' an eye open, most likely, an' skipped."

"Hmm," said Ellery. "He didn't take the car?"

"Couldn't," said Cap'n Hosey grimly. "Skeered to take th' chance. Th' garage is too near where I bunked an' where th' d'tectives was jawin' with me. He must of got away through th' woods back o' th' cabins. Them fellers was wild. In th' rain there wa'n't no tracks t' foller. Got away clean. Prob'ly stole a launch or had one hid down in th' harbor an' headed either fer Narragansett Bay or ducked to th' Vineyard. Never did find 'm."

"Did he leave anything behind besides the car?" murmured Ellery. "Personal belongings? The diamond?"

"The hell he did," snorted Barker. "He skipped clean, like Cap'n Hosey says."

"Except," said Jenny, "for the dog."

"Seems a persistent brute, at any rate," chuckled Ellery. "You mean he left the police dog behind? You found him?"

"Th' detectives found th' mutt," scowled Cap'n Hosey. "When they busted into th' cabin there was a big heavy double chain attached to th' grate o' th' fireplace. Jest the double chain. No dog. They found th' dog fifty yards off in th' woods, dead."

"Dead? How? What do you mean?" asked Ellery swiftly.

"Bashed over th' skuller. An' an ugly brute she was, too. Female. All blood an' mud. Th' d'tectives said Gillette'd done it th' last minute to git rid o' her. She was gittin' too dangerous t' tote around. They took th' carkiss away."

"Well," smiled Ellery, "it must have been a hectic time, Captain. I don't think poor Jenny's over it yet."

The young woman shivered. "I'll not forget that hideous little b-bug as long as I live. And then—"

"Oh, there's something else? By the way, what happened to the car and the chain?"

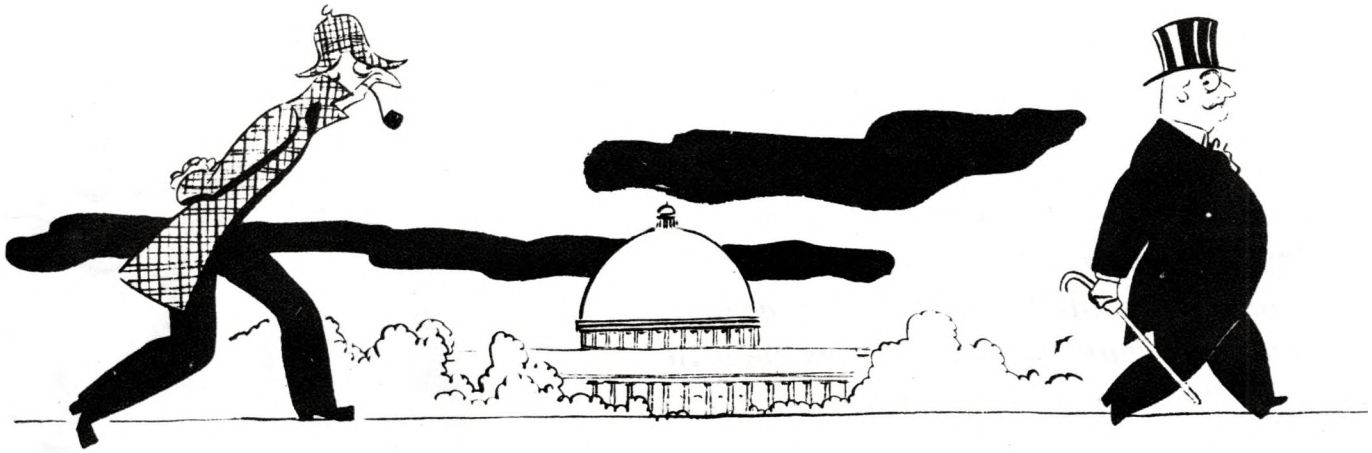
"D'tectives took 'em away," rumbled Cap'n Hosey.

"I suppose," said Ellery, "there's no doubt they were detectives?"

They were all startled at that. Barker exclaimed: "Sure they were, Mr. Queen! Why, reporters were here from as far as Boston, and those dicks posed for pictures and everything!"

(*Please turn to page* 76)

"There're more things in heaven 'n' earth, Horaysheo, than're drempt of in yer philos'phy!" prophesied Isaac.



OFF *the* RECORD

Many funny things happen to our law-makers that never get into print; and here is a new department hot off the political griddle in Washington that will tickle your ribs, as you read of the ridiculous and amusing incidents that occur in the lives of our outstanding statesmen. A new department conducted by our own reporter of Capitol comics—

By
JOHN ALEXANDER

Pigs Is Pigs

SECRETARY of Agriculture Henry Agard Wallace says little pigs aren't good to eat. Senator Robert D. Carey of Careyhurst, Wyo., says they are. The argument has all the makings of a first class political feud, now that the senator has called in the gentlemen of the press to act as judges.

He posted on the bulletin board of the Senate Press Gallery a notice which said that the Department of Agriculture had spent $21,000,000 to destroy pigs which it considered too small to use as food.

"I have been presented with two handsome pigs, each weighing less that fifty pounds," Carey's pronouncement said. "They have been roasted and will be served with trimmings at one o'clock today. I cordially invite the members of the Senate Press Gallery to partake."

The jury reported promptly. Waiters brought in the two pigs on big platters, together with sweet potatoes and baked apples. The jurors grabbed forks and started deliberating. They ate slices from both pigs, just to make sure, and plenty of sweet potatoes and apples, too, because there was no telling when Wallace might start destroying little yams and apples.

Carey encouraged the jurors to consume all the evidence. Then he produced ice cream and coffee. The verdict against Wallace was held in abeyance, however, pending a possible demonstration of his arguments. So far he has fed the press nothing but statistics.

Hush

CAPTAIN COLON ELOY ALFARO, envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary from Ecuador, gets the grand prize for inventing the outstanding diplomatic explanation of all time for an official visit to the State Department.

He puffed up the steep stairs of the building to the second floor, where are located the offices of the Secretary of State. There he met friends. What was he doing at the State Department?

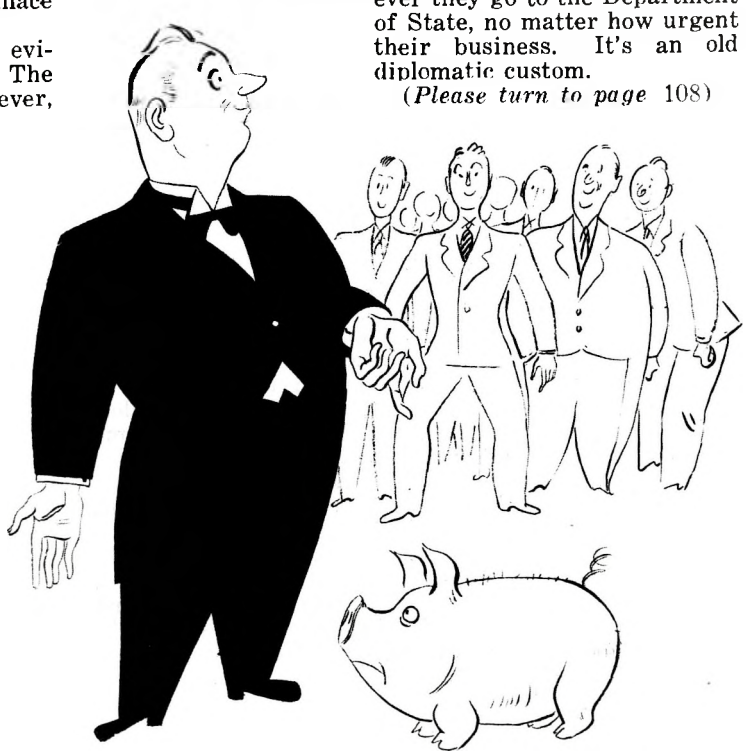
"I just came down here to reduce," smiled his excellency. "As you can see I walk up the stairs instead of riding in the elevator."

"Yes, but that can't be the only reason you're here," insisted his inquisitors.

"That is all," said Alfaro. "That is all."

Alfaro's less imaginative colleagues usually explain that they merely are making "a courtesy call" whenever they go to the Department of State, no matter how urgent their business. It's an old diplomatic custom.

(*Please turn to page* 108)



The WOMAN

The editors elect this story as one of the most human, heart-stirring mystery dramas ever published in this magazine! If you don't want your emotions torn to shreds; if you don't want to sympathize with a murderer, don't read this story!

A mystery masterpiece by—

FRANCIS BEEDING

ALFRED INGLEBY poked the dying wood fire into a blaze and threw on another log. A few sparks shot up the chimney. Ingleby gazed at them resentfully. A fire was about the only thing he could still afford. Wood was to be had for the chopping, plenty of it outside in the forest—that great belt of trees stretching right across the green and pleasant land of Sussex.

He had a letter in the hand that lay listless upon his knee. He had read it many times since eating the slice of bread and the very small chip of cheese which had done duty for lunch. He hardly ever opened letters now. He wished he had not opened this one. It was terse and to the point. He had it almost by heart. It was from Messrs. Blatchett and Blatchett, solicitors at Haywards Heath, and it informed him that they had been instructed to act for his creditors. His creditors were to meet, it seemed, at The Long Man in three days' time, and his presence was urgently requested. He detected in this last catastrophe the hand of old Burstard. Old Burstard was rich and the rich were always keener after their money than the poor. That was why they were rich. Old Burstard had lent him only twenty-five pounds, though he had asked for fifty. And now, of course, he had stirred the others up, paid a round of visits in that ram-shackled old car of his—though they said he was rich enough to run a Rolls if he liked—and had got hold of the other victims. Victims . . . that was the word. He could hear old Burstard using it. There was Popplethwaite, the butcher in Adenham, and Townshend of Wynstead, who supplied agricultural machinery. He owed Townshend a hundred and thirty of the best, the balance of an expenditure of 200 on ploughs and threshers . . . Crows round the carcass, that's what they were, and a dashed lean carcass it was! Ingleby raised his gaunt face, lit by a sullen smile. They have got me beat, he muttered to himself; and an odd feeling of satisfaction pervaded him. At any rate, this was the end. He would never have to struggle any more. He had touched rock bottom.

HE rose from the rickety basket-chair with its faded cushions, and crossed the room to the dresser, a stout oak piece . . . Jacobean, he had heard it said, worth a bit of money; good cottage stuff. Old Burstard would get it now, he supposed. . . . But not what was inside it. No, by God, he would see to that! One hand closed on the neck of a bottle and drew it out of the dresser, while the other sought a corkscrew in the pocket of his old coat.

The cork came out with a slight protesting squeak. Pre-war whisky and seven bottles still left. . . . The only sound thing his father had left him. He poured a generous measure into a tumbler and, adding a little water, drank it off at a gulp. Then he returned to the fire and sat down with the bottle between his feet.

He ran a thick hand, on which the nails were broken

He *had* to KILL

and dirty with hard toil, through his thinning hair, and gazed into the logs, looking over the years of his failure. He had not expected this. Nor had he deserved it. . . . Three years in the army, an acting sergeant . . . gassed in that foul show in Sanctuary Wood . . . Gassed . . . gassed . . . invalided out on a pound a week pension. Told he was lucky to get that much. The pension had long since been commuted and sunk in the clay and mud of the farm

Ingleby drank again, long and deep. That was good stuff, the best thing the old man had left behind him.

Why had it come to this? Could anyone have made a better fight for it? He had taken over the farm, commuted his pension, raised money how, when and where he could, worked like a slave, though sometimes that cough tore his chest inside out and he would start spitting that horrid yellow stuff that he thought he had got rid of in the hospital. And now he was to be put on the mat by old Burstard, and see his home, and what was left inside it, sold over his head. Not that it was much to boast about—little more than a clearing in the woods, five miles away from a decent market, at the end of a mud track half a mile long. But it was all the home he had known. He would have to start again . . . start again . . . He was thirty-eight looked forty-eight, and felt even older than he looked.

Ingleby drank again.

That was better . . . He would attend that meeting at The Long Man . . . tell old Burstard what he thought of him . . . give him something to remember, teach the old Shylock to put the screw on an ex-service man. Yes, by God, he would!

He looked round the room, now very dark. Fantastic shadows played across the uneven walls from which the roughcast plaster was peeling, and the dresser crouching against the wall seemed suddenly menacing. A tall high-backed chair standing in a dark corner raised its protesting arms in the shadows.

A loud knock fell upon the door.

Alfred Ingleby, more than a little drunk, staggered across the room to answer it.

He was cold and wet; drops of moisture fell from his forehead. Yet, though shivering, he felt on fire.

Illustrated by
L. R. GUSTAVSON

"ADVERTISEMENT?" said Ingleby. "What do you mean by that?"

He was seated at the table. There was a lamp upon it, smoking a bit, for the wick wanted trimming. Opposite him was old Baines, the postman, in his uniform, his beard all wet and straggling, his old eyes misty behind a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles, drinking a glass of the pre-war whisky.

Not a bad chap, old Baines. Always friendly when he met you down at The Long Man.

Old Baines was fumbling in the pocket of his blue jacket. After a bit of a struggle he produced the crumpled remains of a copy of the Times.

"Here you are, lad," he said. "The paper was left behind at The Long Man by a saleman. He was reading it only last night and we came across your name. There you are. Read it yourself."

Ingleby stretched a hand that shook, across the table and picked up the paper. It was a little time before his eyes could focus the small print of the personal column, but there at last it was—his name, in capital letters.

> "INGLEBY. If Alfred Ingleby, son of the late John Ingleby of Cripps Corner, Adenham, Sussex, will communicate with Messrs Dutton and Thoroughgood, 418 Lincoln's Inn Fields, W. C. 2., he will hear of something to his advantage."

Ingleby stared at the notice.

"It's all right, lad, isn't it?" came the voice of old Baines, seemingly from a distance.

"Seems to be all right," assented Ingleby.

"What we could not understand," continued Baines, "was why they did not write to you direct instead of putting that thing in the paper."

"Perhaps they did," returned Ingleby. "I haven't been opening any letters lately. Too depressing . . . I just toss them into the fire."

"Well," said Baines, "you never know your luck. If we had not seen that advertisement, you might never have had the legacy."

"Legacy," said Ingleby. "I don't see any mention of that."

"It's sure to be a legacy," Baines cheerfully assured him, getting to his feet and draining his glass. "You must 'a lost a rich relative. But I must be getting along. Thanks for the drink, lad. As nice a drop of Scotch as ever I tasted."

It was Irish whisky, but Ingleby did not put the old man right and scarcely saw him go out. He sat there gazing at that astonishing notice in the Times, and weaving pleasant dreams. And the dreams became continually more pleasant as the bottle became continually lighter, till at last he saw himself in a black coat and striped trousers driving a

handsome cab to the gates of old Burstard's farm to mock him in his lair.

"Something to his advantage" . . . Ingleby, after several unsuccessful attempts, struck a match and peered into the face of the grandfather clock. That was another relic of the old days. His watch had long since gone to the pawnbroker . . . Half-past nine. It was no good trying to get to London that night. Besides he had not even the fare. He counted the coins in his pocket . . . Four shillings and sevenpence . . . that was not enough, and he must somehow raise the balance. After some thought he lit the end of a candle which he thrust into a tin lantern and, opening the door, passed out into the night.

There came a furious flutter of wings and a shrill squawking from the henhouse. Presently he returned with something warm and wet flapping in his hands.

Ingleby inspected his prize hen and prodded her in the breast beneath the wings, while she struggled to escape his detaining hand.

"Not much on you, but you're the best of the bunch," he murmured as he wrung her neck.

IT was past eleven when he entered Victoria Station the next morning. He had put on his one moderately decent suit, light brown, bought second-hand at Brighton five years before, pretty shiny in places, but good enough if you kept out of the strong light. Jane, the prize hen, had fetched six-and-eightpence from Swan at Adenham. Six-and-eightpence with the four-and-sevenpence he had found in his pocket had bought him a third-class return ticket to London and left him with one-and-fourpence to spare. The price of the hen had amused Ingleby all the way up. Six-and-eightpence! It was a lawyer's fee, and he was going to see a lawyer!

Lord, it was good to be in London again. Even though you did feel a hopeless stranger and not a little inclined to scuttle across the traffic-ridden streets with one eye on the policeman. Ingleby sniffed the sooty air with satisfaction as he walked toward the Underground which would bear him to the Temple.

His head was rather thick, and there was an unpleasant taste in his mouth; but that pre-war stuff was good and the morning after not, therefore, so bad. The only thing that troubled him was his boots, for he had been obliged to walk three and a half muddy miles to Adenham. Outside the Temple Station he paused and, with reckless extravagance, expended fourpence in having them cleaned. Then, passing through the garden, he found himself in the square, looking for the front door of Messrs. Dutton and Thoroughgood.

He paused a moment in front of that shiny piece of mahogany. The whole thing seemed suddenly fantastic. What was he doing here in the middle of the City of London (he had not been to London for six years) with the traffic roaring in Fleet Street, a few hundred yards away? He fumbled in the pocket of his shabby overcoat and pulled out the advertisement, reading it again for confirmation. Yes . . . there it was in black and white.

"Here goes," he said to himself and, pushing open the door, he strode in and dealt briskly with the supercilious clerk who greeted him.

Twenty minutes later he found himself facing Mr. Thoroughgood in person.

Mr. Thoroughgood was neat, small and compact, with carefully arranged hair, and a red clean-shaven face.

He wasted no time.

"First," he said, "we must establish your identity."

"I think that you both understand the position,"

Ingleby was prepared for that. The night before, he had searched amongst his father's papers and among them he had found the certificate of his own birth and of his mother's marriage.

These he produced, to the professional satisfaction of Mr. Thoroughgood.

"Well, Mr. Ingleby," said the lawyer, tapping the certificates with a manicured forefinger, "the facts are simple. The advertisement to which you have replied was inserted at the request of Miss Agatha Ingleby of" (here he glanced at a memorandum) "425 Parliament Hill, Hampstead. She was your father's elder sister, I believe."

Ingleby nodded.

"We have dealt with her affairs," continued Mr.

Mr. Thoroughgood said, "and I shall be grateful to receive your decision as soon as possible."

Thoroughgood, "for over thirty years, but I regret to inform you that we shall not be dealing with them for very much longer. Miss Ingleby has been in poor health for some time and has recently informed me that she is suffering from a fatal disease. It is cancer, Mr. Ingleby, and, I fear, quite incurable."

He paused.

"Your aunt," he continued, "has made several attempts, both direct and through ourselves, to get in touch with you. We received, however, no reply to our letters."

Ingleby smiled awkwardly.

"I am pretty bad at answering letters," he said, "and recently I have neglected even to open them."

Mr. Thoroughgood looked at Ingleby. Ingleby did not stir. He did not realise it yet. It seemed, however, that the lawyer expected him to say something.

"Er, yes" he said awkwardly, "I quite understand —her heir."

Then it came upon him suddenly. Old Baines had been right. This was the legacy . . . No, it was more than that, it was an inheritance! The blood surged to his brain.

"Is she . . . is she well off?"

The question burst from him. He made no attempt to conceal the eagerness of his tone.

"I am not authorised to discuss with you the private affairs of Miss Ingleby," replied Mr. Thoroughgood dryly. "But I must tell you at once that she is prepared to make you her (*Please turn to page* 53)

THE FIRST PUBLISHED SHORT STORY BY THE BRILLIANT NEW WOMAN

MURDER *on the*

ANYONE could see that they were bride and groom. Even little Sam Holt, who was certainly not experienced in such matters, was sure that they were. And the smile which Sam turned upon the radiant pair expressed more than a casual interest. Sam positively beamed at their oblivious backs as he hurried along behind them toward the train gates. It was no small struggle for the little man, burdened by a heavy suitcase, to keep up with the carefree, long-legged strides of the gay couple—but Sam was determined to stay near them. Resolutely he trotted in the wake of Romance, heedless of the bag which bumped against his shabby knees at every step. For this setting out upon a train journey was a big event in the dry, dusty life of Sam Holt— an event which spelled Adventure, Excitement, above all—Romance. And he had no intention of passing up this first thrill of the trip, the chance to bask, however inconspicuously, in the reflected glow of a honeymoon couple.

With a sigh of relief and pleasure, Sam put down his suitcase as they reached the train gate. The bride and groom were still just ahead of him. How nice, Sam nodded to himself as he fumbled in a worn wallet for his ticket, how very nice—that they were embarking on the same cross-continent express. That might mean that all the way from Oregon to Chicago Sam could continue his happy ogling of the couple. With his ticket tightly clutched, lest a stray breeze should carry it away, Sam waited—mentally resolving to imitate the young groom's careless gesture when it came his turn to display his upper-berth reservation.

But there seemed to be some unaccountable delay. Anxiously Sam watched the Conductor's sudden frown—a frown which deepened into angry suspicion.

"WHAT'S the big idea?" the Conductor's stare shifted from the ticket in his hand to the young man's blandly smiling face.

"What big idea?" No special concern was evident in the answering question.

"Of *this*," a growl from the Conductor. He thrust the ticket forward and tapped it with a grimy finger. "What is it, anyway?"

"Oh," still unperturbed, the young man peered obligingly, "why—it's my reservation of course.

The young wife pushed her way into the drawing room. "Is he badly hurt do you think?"

MYSTERY WRITER—COLVER HARRIS, AUTHOR OF "GOING TO ST. IVES"

FAST EXPRESS

Little Sam Holt, who hadn't much experience with romance, and none at all with murder, suddenly found himself in the midst of violent death and bride and groom hysterics, and accordingly conducted himself as both Cupid and sleuth, much to his own and everybody's surprise!

Calls for Drawing Room A on the express I believe."

"Yeah. Well, what's the writing on it?"

All anxiety, Sam tried to crane forward for a look. He did hope it was no serious trouble for the young people.

The bride was likewise upset.

"What *is* the matter, darling?" she tugged at her husband's arm. "Let *me* see." Then a moment later she drew back sharply. "Oh—" with a quick gesture of fear the girl's hand flew to her mouth. Her round gaze sought the Conductor's frown. "What *can* it mean?"

In that instant Sam had managed to glimpse the ticket. Across the face of the reservation for Drawing Room A was scrawled a line in heavy black pencil. "DON'T DARE USE THIS OR YOU'LL BE SORRY." Nothing more. Sam's nervous concern increased sharply. He was conscious of a frantic urge to be helpful—to be heroic.

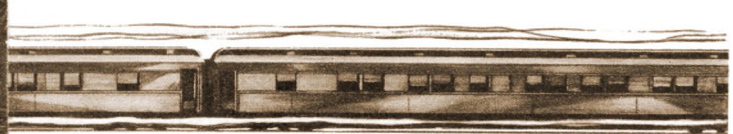
"If I can be of any service—" Sam was startled to hear his own bold offer—but the words were drowned in a quick, impatient snort of laughter from the groom.

"GOOD Lord," the young man pushed the ticket toward the Conductor, "it's nothing but a stupid joke. That damn best man of mine—" he grinned fraternally. "There's nothing he wouldn't do to bother us."

"Oh please," the bride was pleading prettily. "I'm *sure* it's all right. *Do* let us by." Her suede-gloved hand lay on the Conductor's sleeve.

Sam drew a great breath of relief as he saw the official's frown shift into a grudging smile.

"Let it go," the Conductor punched the ticket with a gesture of one bestowing celestial mercy. "Let it go."



Tower Studios

With hurried thanks the young people were on their way, and Sam, thrusting forward his own ticket, was moved to add a further note of gratitude.

"That was—very decent of you," he said, "letting them through. I'm—quite certain it was just a joke, you know."

The Conductor grunted.

"Damn silly joke," he registered displeasure in a vicious punch at Sam's ticket. "Move on there or you'll miss the train."

"Yes, sir." Sam seized his bag once more.

HE was a little dashed, some minutes later, to discover that he must share his section with an elderly lady. A frumpish and severe elderly lady at that. It was not quite in keeping with Sam's romantic anticipations of travel. Nor did her single disapproving look at the moment of his breathless arrival augur very well for possible future conversation. But Sam did his best to improve her attitude by stowing suitcase, overcoat and himself into the small space which she grudgingly allowed him.

"A bit crowded, isn't it?" He offered what he hoped to be a friendly but casual smile.

The woman stared at him sharply for just a moment or two through her rimless spectacles.

"Quite all right," she said abruptly.

Sam made another effort.

"Perhaps if we were to put part of your luggage on my side it would be easier." He stretched a tentative hand toward the bag beside her. "There's plenty of room over here for this—"

The woman's hand shot out to grasp the suitcase handle with a suddenness which made Sam jump back.

"Thank you very much," she spoke distinctly, "but I am quite all right."

"Just a minute, sir," Sam's voice rose to a nervous squeak, "I think I've found something—" In another moment the story was tumbling forth.

This time there was no mistaking the cold emphasis of the spectacled stare. Little Sam Holt sank back, the small, hopeful smile frozen on his face. In a gesture of dignity he adjusted himself to gaze out of the car window—a gaze so absorbed that he failed to observe either the unnaturally tight grasp with which his companion continued to clutch her suitcase handle, or the long and curiously suspicious look she fixed upon his averted face.

Sam was, indeed, still staring with self-conscious concentration at a pile of luggage just outside the window when a voice spoke almost in his ear.

"I beg your pardon—" A soft voice this was, not in the least like the stern accents of the elderly iceberg. "I—beg your pardon—"

Sam whirled sharply—so sharply that he very nearly thrust his nose into a lovely bouquet of gardenias. He raised his eyes. It was the tall young woman who bent near him—the bride from Drawing Room A. She was smiling. Sam struggled abruptly to rise—a gesture made difficult by the presence of a quantity of luggage and the most inconsiderable feet of his section companion—and reached instinctively for his hat. Realizing too late that he was bare-headed, Sam made an effort to disguise the motion by smoothing his already quite smooth hair.

"Yes—?" it was really all Sam could think of to say, much as he would have liked to make a more adequate expression of his delight in being thus suddenly sought out and addressed by the glamorous young lady.

"Don't bother, please," she made a futile protest at his frantic efforts to rise. "I only wanted to say that I heard your very kind offer to help us—about the ticket you know—and to thank you very much."

"Not—at all, I'm sure," Sam had now achieved the aisle. "I—I hope everything is quite all right now."

"Oh, yes. It was just some silly joke. Trying to upset us at the last minute. At least I *hope*—" for just an instant a small look of fear marred her radiant smile, then the remark was quickly checked. "I'm *sure* it was a joke. Thank you again—I hope we'll see you later in the trip." With a final gracious nod she turned to go.

"I hope we will—that is, I hope so." Once more Sam was distressed to find his hand clutching at the empty space above his head. But the lovely bride had not seen his gesture, nor the blush which followed it. She was already halfway down the aisle toward the door of Drawing Room A.

WHEN, some three hours out of Portland, Sam negotiated the long and swaying trip from the dining car back to his section—which was in the extreme forward passenger car—he discovered with some dismay that his berth was made up for the night. Evidently, the bespectacled lady had ordered this done in his absence, and Sam supposed that she had already retired behind the tightly shut green curtains of the lower berth. Not being in the least familiar with the etiquette of Pullman life, Sam wasn't quite certain what to do. The presence of his suitcase and overcoat in the neatly prepared upper bunk suggested that he was, perhaps, expected to retire (*Please turn to page* 91)

LITTLE BOOK OF STRANGE CRIMES

Truth is stranger than fiction! And this new diary of odd occurrences will acquaint you each month with the most peculiar events of the day! A monthly record of strange things that happen to strange people!

THE KEYS TO DEATH

MARIE STANOVITCH, typist for a chemical company in a Czechoslovakian city, suffered from inexplicable ailments—eye trouble, insomnia, severe wrist and finger pains. One day at her work she was, without warning, struck blind. Hours passed before her sight returned as suddenly and mysteriously as it had left.

Evening had come. In the dark office it was noticed that the keyboard of Marie's typewriter glowed with a ghostly light.

"What is it?" one girl asked in a frightened voice.

"Let me see!" commanded a company chemist.

"This is a fiendish clever plot," he said when he had finished investigating. "The keys have been treated with radium. It has been entering Marie's system through her fingertips and poisoning her. All her symptoms should have told us this."

"But who would want to murder Marie?" a stenographer asked with a shudder.

"It could be someone in this office," the chemist asserted. "We have radium in the laboratory."

"That gives me an idea," a clerk put in. "You know Marie used to have a certain admirer." Then she spoke in a low tone to the chemist, who nodded understandingly and left the room. Presently he returned with a wizened, deformed little man.

"Well, Josef Kopriva," he commanded, "what can you tell us about this?"

Kopriva seemed to shrink into himself. "Yes," he said at last. "I did it. I loved her. But she is as beautiful as I am hideous, and refused my attentions. At last I began to hate her, and wanted to punish her for her indifference. Naturally I turned to radium, since I can get all I want of it here."

Kopriva was turned over to the authorities. Meanwhile, Marie wages her desperate fight against slow-working, deadly radium poisoning. Will she be able to throw off the insidious effects of this terrible poison?

A NEW electric frisker will make life harder for the friends who try to smuggle arms to you in prison. The gadget rings an alarm when anyone carrying a gun or knife comes near.

THE MAN WITH TWO HEADS

ALONG the streets of the American-European section of Shanghai, an American policeman was marching his beat, bored and lonesome.

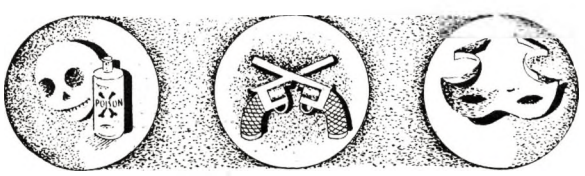
A furtive Chinese with a queer-looking bundle under his arm, rounded the corner in great haste, and paused to peer back in the best Sax Rohmer manner. The policeman lost his boredom.

"Here, you," he ordered, "what're you up to? What've you got there?" Before the Chinese could answer the policeman had seized the parcel—and unwrapped a human head!

In the police station in Bubbling Well Road, this weird episode's even weirder background was revealed.

The Chinese have a superstition that it brings luck in games of chance to sleep near the body of a dead gambler. The man with the extra head was one of a gang of gamblers that had this end in view. In a charity cemetery they unearthed the body of a man who had committed suicide because of his losses, they slept around his coffin for weeks. But this was so uncomfortable that one was sent to decapitate the corpse—the intention being that the gang leader would sleep in his own bed with the head under the pillow.

This extra bit of cleverness spoiled the plan. Corpse mutilation is a serious crime in China. The gang members are now languishing in prison, far from their dice and other diversions, and reflecting on that old saying about letting well enough alone.



AN enterprising young man of Quebec robbed a poor box on Tuesday, married on Wednesday, was arrested on Thursday, became a father on Friday, was remanded for sentence on Saturday, went honeymooning on Sunday.

"A splendid week's work," said the judge, giving him ten months, "but don't try to escape on Monday."

CAREERS FOR YOUNG WOMEN

MAYBE Lottie Coll, not-so-merry widow of Vincent the baby killer, wasn't so dumb when she took a manslaughter plea and a prison term in first-degree murder trial. (For killing a passerby during a holdup.)

Now she will have no major worries (such as a whole skin, three meals a day, and a place to sleep) for the next few years. Pretty soft when you think it over.

Mrs. Diamond was put on the spot just like "Legs." Florence Miller, Ethel Greentree and Margie Criochock, ditto. Verne Sankey killed himself, but his wife still has kidnaping charges against her. Kiki Roberts has had one bad break after another. Frankie Doris left his Gertrude nothing but debts when he sat down in the electric chair. Florence Diggs married Big Tim Murphy, Chicago labor racketeer, and later Dingbat Oberta. Having been violently widowed twice she is

(*Please turn to page* 100)

WHIRLPOOL

A fitting gesture to the death of gang rule is this startling true account of her own life outside the law, written by the wife of one of America's most notorious public enemies! Her story, written with terrifying intensity, portrays the futile attempts of a young couple, forced into a life of crime, who tried to "beat the racket," and almost succeeded. A tragic swan song to an age that has passed!

WHERE was the turning point? Where did I take the wrong branch of the road? All of us have traced back over our lives to some particular time when a different decision would have meant an entirely different life. To have said "yes" when instead we said "no"—to have held firm rather than to have weakened—to have smiled instead of frowned—where was it that we made the mistake?

In looking back through the past few years of bloodshed and horror, searching for the turning point in my life, I follow along step by step until I come to the day I bought a beautiful blue velvet dress. And until the day I die I shall always hate blue velvet.

My husband, Paul Randal, owned a small garage on the lower west side of New York, in which he stored his small fleet of taxis. He was young and ambitious and the greater part of his profits went back into the business to purchase more cabs. With what was left we rented a small apartment on upper Broadway and our home life was very much the same as that of any young couple living in New York. We were happy, contented and very much in love and we spent many hours dreaming of the time when Paul's business would enable us to move out into the country. We wanted a real home and we wanted children.

One afternoon as I walked along Broadway I saw a dress in the window of a little shop. It was blue velvet, trimmed with gray caracul, smartly cut and of a design just a little different from anything I had ever seen before. It seemed that all my life I had wanted a dress like this and the temptation to buy it was too strong to resist.

I hurried home with my purchase and laid it aside while I prepared dinner. Paul was late getting home that night but I did not mind as it gave me a few additional minutes before the mirror and I wanted to look my very best. Throughout the meal he seemed preoccupied and I waited in vain for him to notice my new dress. At first I was amused but as time went past and still he made no comment, my amusement changed to resentment.

"I want you to give me your opinion on something,

Illustrated by HENRY LUHRS

"Which one of you guys is the chemist?" asked the leader of the gunmen.

Vera," he said when we had finished our meal.

Ordinarily I would have been happy to work out any problem with him but tonight I was provoked and my answer was worthy of a child.

"It is strange that you should bother," I said.

HE had been staring abstractedly at the table-cloth but now he lifted his eyes in surprise.

"What's wrong, dear?" he asked. "Don't you want to help me with a little advice?"

"Oh, I suppose so. What is it?"

"It's about the garage," he said. "There was a chap in to see me this morning and he wants to store a few trucks there."

"Well, what of it? You have room for them, haven't you?"

"Yes, there is room now but if I can scrape together enough money to buy four new cabs, then I will need all of my space."

"New cabs, new cabs, is that all you can think about?" I snapped. "Don't you realize that there are other things in the world besides cabs?"

"Why, Vera, of course I do, but this is business and it does come first with us just now. Besides, the man who owns these trucks practically runs the section of the city where my garage is located. I don't see—"

"No—that's just the trouble. You don't see anything. Here I've been sitting across the table from you wearing a new dress and you haven't even noticed it. I spent two hours fixing my hair and trying to look nice, hoping that you would be pleased and you haven't even seen me."

I pushed back my chair, stamped to my feet and without another word walked into the bedroom and slammed the door. I threw myself across the bed and sobbed, but had I known the result of my childish actions that evening, there would have been less of anger and more of pain in those tears.

In the morning Paul was silent throughout the breakfast. He made no further mention of the trucks or of the man who owned them. He glanced at me occasionally as though expecting some question on my part but this had been our first quarrel and I did not propose to be the one to weaken. I maintained a stubborn si-

lence and at length he left for the garage without either of us having spoken.

During the weeks that followed, Paul seldom mentioned any business matters. Formerly he had talked over all of the little problems that worried him throughout the course of the day. Now he said nothing and it worried me.

"What did you do about that truck deal?" I asked one evening.

"Oh, I told that chap he could store a few trucks in my place."

"Who is he, Paul?"

"Ben Klein," he answered.

"Ben Klein?" I said. "Haven't I heard that name before?"

"You may have," answered Paul. "He's been in a little trouble lately but that has nothing to do with me."

"But he is in the liquor business, isn't he, Paul?"

"Sure he is. He's been in it for years. It's the only business he knows anything about."

"But you know selling liquor is against the law."

"What of it? Just because the country has gone dry, there is no need for him to go broke. People still want whisky and he is supplying it. And if you could see how those truckloads of booze are coming in you would realize that he's supplying plenty of customers."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Oh, nothing," he laughed. "By the way, sweetheart, here's a little present for you."

PAUL handed me a small flat package wrapped in white tissue paper. I opened it to find the most beautiful wrist watch I had ever laid eyes on. The tiny face was surrounded by a circle of flashing diamonds and many more of these brilliant gems were set in the flexible platinum bracelet.

"Paul, this is lovely," I cried. "But, dear, it must have cost you a fortune."

"Well, not exactly," he smiled. "It did cost a few dollars but we can afford it."

"Why? Is the taxi business improving?"

"No—but the garage business is."

"In what way, Paul?"

"I made a little arrangement with Klein. You see he is paying me to store his trucks in my place. They come in from upstate with loads of booze. Once they get into the garage, they are unloaded and the stuff is sent out in small batches to the speakeasies. He is using my cabs to make the deliveries and pays me a nice profit for that, too."

"Using your cabs?" I asked.

"Sure. Why not?"

"Of all the idiots in the world, Paul Randal, you take the prize."

"Why, Vera, what's wrong with that?"

"Wrong with it?" I snapped. "Everything is wrong with it. That garage is rented in your name. The cabs are registered in your name. If anything goes wrong, you are the one that will be prosecuted. You'll lose the garage, you'll lose your cabs and you will probably go to jail. That's what is wrong with it."

Klein was even then known to be the owner of a fleet of rum boats and he was starting to weld together the mighty organization that was later to control the liquor traffic throughout the eastern section of the country.

"Why didn't you talk this over with me before you started it?" I asked.

"I tried to, Vera, but you wouldn't listen. Anyway, I think you are making a mountain out of a molehill. Klein pays heavily for protection and he has plenty of government officials on his payroll. There isn't a chance for anything to go wrong."

"Oh, he pays for *his* own protection," I said. "But how about you? If there was any trouble do you think he would take care of you? You know very well you would be the one to suffer. I think the best thing you can do is to tell Ben Klein you have changed your mind and ask him to use some other garage."

"If I do that you won't get any more diamonds," laughed Paul. "And it will be quite a while before we can get that home in the country, too."

"Never mind the diamonds," I said. "I would rather go without them and keep my husband."

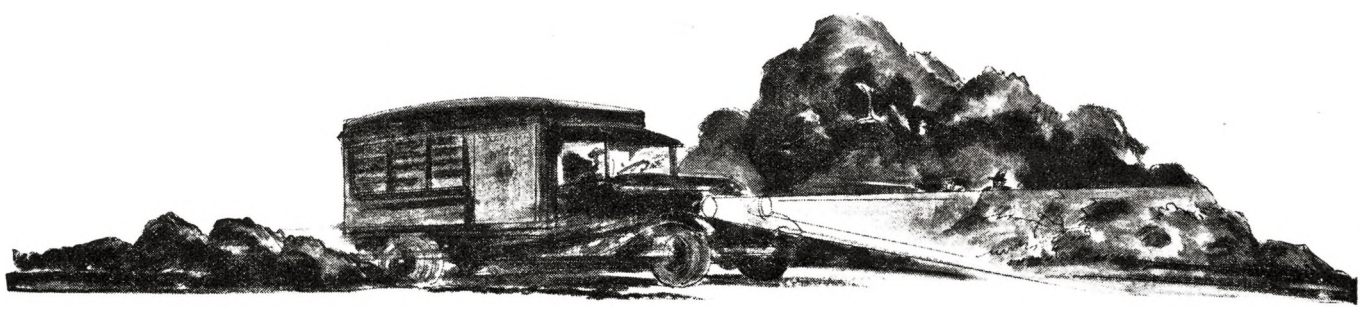
"I'll do a little thinking," he grinned, "and maybe you can have both. After all, a beautiful woman deserves beautiful jewels, even if she does get snippy sometimes."

That ended the discussion; but the Paul that laughed and teased me that day when Ben Klein came into his life, is now the man whose hard, bitter face looks out at you from the newspapers, beneath the caption—Public Enemy.

SHORTLY after my husband met Ben Klein a relative of mine came to visit us at our apartment in the city. He was a chemist employed at the time by a Philadelphia concern. Mark Handt was the type of man who could step into a laboratory and experiment with his beloved chemicals for weeks on end. If someone said that a thing could not be done, he would prove with his test tubes that that person was wrong.

It was natural then, when the government chemists claimed they had succeeded in medicating alcohol to make it unfit for consumption, that Mark should try his luck at it.

As usual he was successful and had perfected a



process that removed the poison and left the alcohol absolutely pure. Now he wanted to sell the formula, and hoped that Paul could steer him on to a buyer.

"That's a great idea you have there," said Paul. "I happen to have a friend who might be interested in it."

"I suppose you are talking about Klein?" I interrupted.

"Of course I am," answered Paul. "I think that would strike him just right."

Even though I liked Mark, I was not at all in favor of the proposition. Paul was getting along very well at the garage even though he was not keeping strictly within the letter of the law. Of course, thousands of others were making money indirectly from the liquor business; but I could see no reason for Paul to promote a deal from which he would get nothing but trouble.

But Mark was so eager, that at length I consented.

"Very well," I agreed, "do it if you wish but I think you are foolish."

"Will it take you long to get in touch with Klein?" asked Mark.

"No," said Paul. "I'll see him in the morning and we can probably finish the whole thing up tomorrow night."

The following afternoon Paul telephoned from the

His face was ghastly. "What is it, Paul?" I cried. "Roy," he muttered. "Roy—they got the kid—"

garage and asked me to send Handt downtown to meet him. I was about to give Mark the message when suddenly it occurred to me that this might be a good opportunity for me to meet Ben Klein. I had heard and read a lot about the man and I was naturally anxious to see him. Therefore I decided to accompany Mark rather than let him go alone.

My brother, Roy, had arrived during the day for his first visit to New York, and not wishing to leave him alone I suggested that he come along with us, too.

Roy was my favorite. He had just been graduated from college and was in hopes of securing a position in New York; and as I had always been more of a mother to him than a sister I was naturally anxious to help him. He was a lovable youngster, just past his twenty-second birthday but in appearance not over seventeen. At the time he was endeavoring to grow a mustache and the few straggling tufts of hair on his upper lip were, in his estimation, quite an accomplishment.

I hailed a cab and in less than a half hour Roy, Mark and I arrived at the garage. Paul seemed a bit surprised to see me but he made no comment. It was four in the afternoon and the day shift was turning over the cabs to the night drivers. I watched the men who were taking the cabs out for the night and I seemed to note a difference in the type of drivers that Paul was now employing.

"What happened to your old crew?" I asked when we stepped into the office.

"What do you mean?" he said.

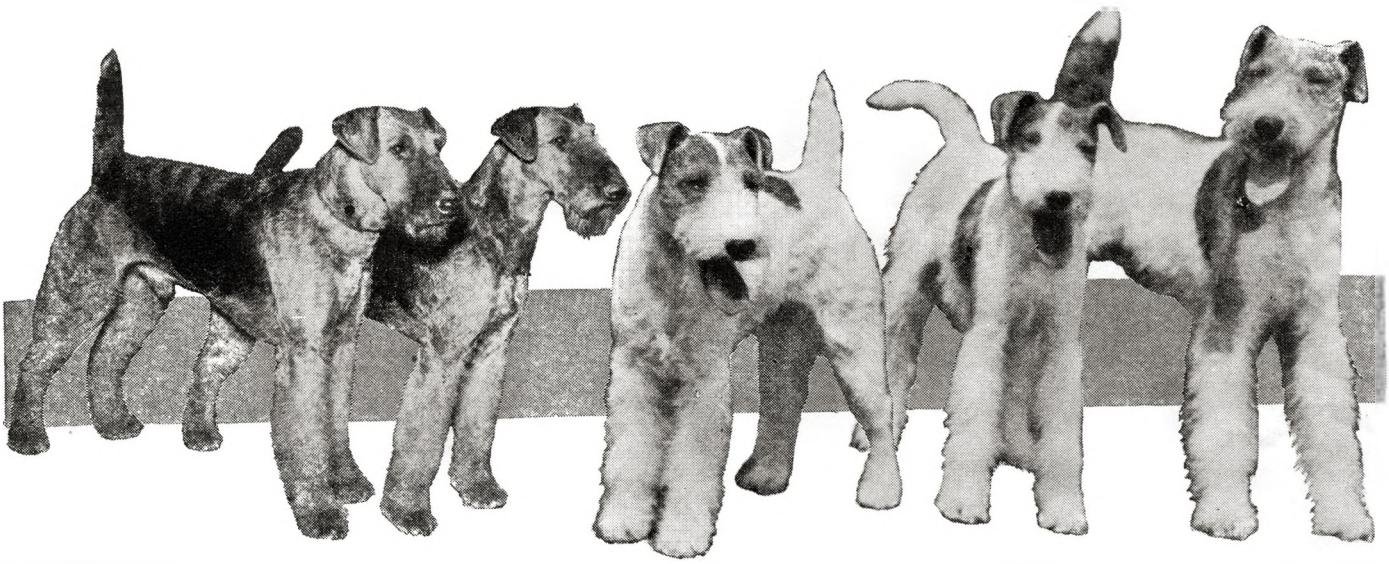
"I mean the men that used to drive your cabs at night. They seemed such nice clean-cut fellows. These drivers that you have now are a hard-looking lot."

"Oh, that's your imagination," said Paul. "These are nice chaps. Most of them are Klein's men."

"Klein's men?" I asked. "I thought they were working for you."

"They are," said Paul. "I simply mean that they were recommended by Klein."

An expensive limousine swung in to the curb and from it stepped a tall, heavily set man. He was immaculately dressed and his sharp, (*Please turn to page* 102)



The RIDDLE of the

This is more than a story about dogs; it is a story about a madman with a diabolical sense of humor—and Miss Hildegarde Withers. The schoolma'am-detective enlists the aid of a wire-haired terrier and goes on the case, only to find that, for once, her best friend and rival, Inspector Piper, outguesses her and saves the day!

WHO'S afraid of the big bad wolf?
Big bad wolf, big bad wolf?
Who's afraid of the big bad wolf?
dum diddy dum di dum. . . .

Emilie Vail had sung the one about "Fairies at the Bottom of My Garden," and "Birmingham Bertie," and she had her audience, as was her wont, in the hollow of her hand. Now, as she concluded a spirited rendition of another classic of yesterday, an angular lady who sat in the fourth row of the mezzanine turned to her somewhat grizzled companion and said, "Oscar, aren't you sorry that you didn't take me to the Philharmonic, after all?"

But Inspector Oscar Piper preferred the Palace for his evenings of relaxation. "Watch her," he told Miss Withers. "She's good."

As the song ended, Emilie Vail took a quick step backward and locked arms with two charming if somewhat plumper young ladies who suddenly appeared from the wings. All three cavorted about the stage to the catchy tune, now and then displaying enough of their backs to show that each wore, over her evening gown, a gayly twisted tail affixed behind.

"Three Little Pigs," said the Inspector joyously. At that moment the three gaily dancing figures stopped short. From behind a "prop" tree there bounded onto the stage a grotesque creature wearing black trousers and an insecure silk hat. It was a *Borzoi*, a Russian wolfhound, looking fearsome and tremendous except for the fact that his tail was, naturally, wagging. But Ivanitch was a fair actor. He approached the three terrified women, stopped short facing them, and braced himself upon his haunches. He barked, hollowly, and then a wind machine offstage began to roar.

"He's supposed to be blowing their clothes off," the Inspector confided.

The Three Little Pigs wept and begged and pleaded, but off went their hats in a wild swoop to the wings, followed by the vari-colored silken coats. With exaggerated ripping sounds, a dress gave way, and the plump little girl on the right stood arrayed only in make-up and a lacy wisp of French underwear. The crowd roared.

The *Borzoi* barked obediently once more, and the dress of the plump girl on the left gave way and flew off in two pieces. She, too, was huddled in fragile nothings. More frantic applause.

And then the *Borzoi* barked a third time. Emilie Vail screamed frantically, and her shimmering gown followed the others, leaving her standing triumphant in a complete suit of old-fashioned red flannel underwear.

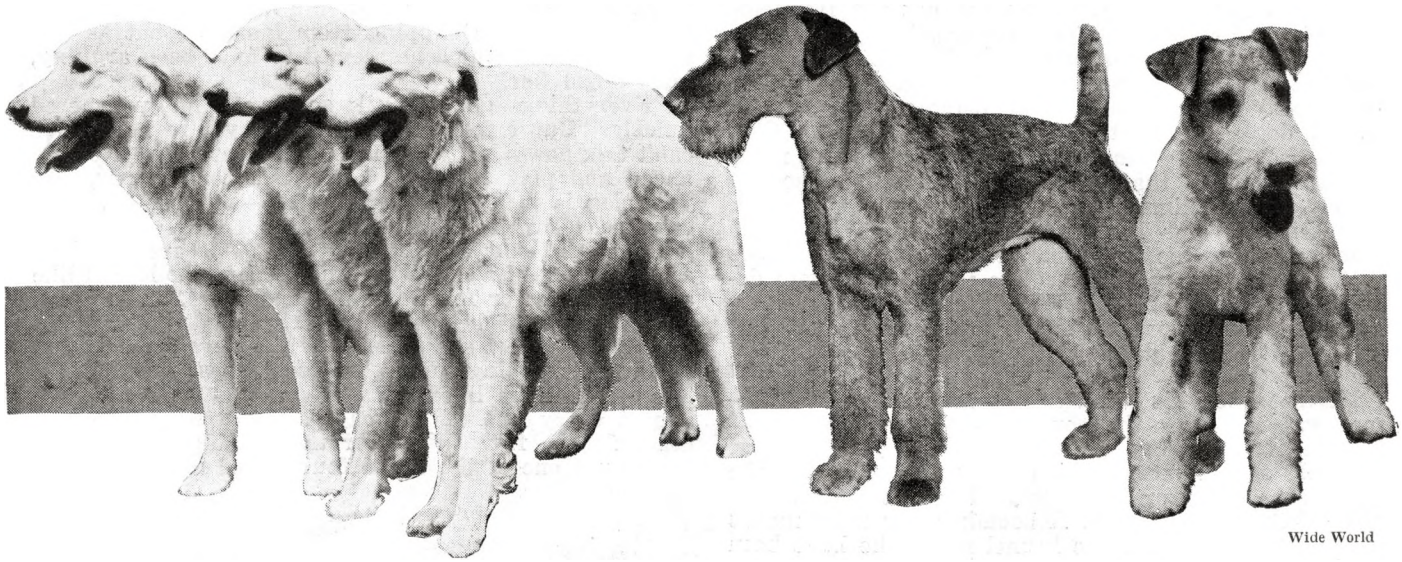
The Big Bad Wolf turned and scooted for the wings, his tail between his legs. The Three Little Pigs broke into gay song again, and circled the stage in tremendous leaps, amid a roar of hysterical applause.

The curtain fell, and rose to display the incredible Emilie Vail as a completely gowned and coiffed lady again, her diamond-weighted hand resting on the head of the perfectly groomed wolfhound. She took three bows, and then as was her custom, suffered herself to be helped down into the auditorium for a triumphal march up one aisle, across the house, and back again to the stage. She had led the magnificent Ivanitch on parade in that fashion for every performance of the week. But tonight something went wrong just before they regained the stage.

The big dog halted, and his mistress turned back toward him, snapping her fingers so that every bracelet jingled.

Ivanitch did not obey. Then, as the last laughter died away among the audience, the magnificent big wolfhound fell awkwardly forward in a sprawling heap.

A woman in an aisle seat screamed, and rose to her feet. Emilie Vail, who had reputedly smiled when men shot themselves for her fair sake, was huddled on the carpet with the head of a dead wolfhound in her arms.



Wide World

Blueblood Murders

By STUART PALMER

"WELL, if it's a publicity stunt we'll read all about it in the papers tomorrow morning," said the Inspector, as he took Miss Withers home. Yet strangely enough, there was no mention of the scene in the theater in any New York daily. A human stooge took the place of poor Ivanitch in the act at the Palace, and the show went on.

Miss Hildegarde Withers and her old friend Inspector Oscar Piper were in the habit of meeting once a week for a mild orgy of spaghetti and the theater. She entered his office at Centre Street one rainy afternoon some days after the tragedy aforementioned, and found him deep in a telephone conversation.

He waved to her, and went on talking. "But it's not up to the Homicide Squad! Your friend would do better to see a vet, or get in touch with the S.P.C.A."

Miss Withers was graced with a long and inquisitive nose, and for most of her forty-odd years she had been completely unable to keep it out of other people's business. Her nostrils widened a bit now, as she scented a faint suggestion of the adventure for which she had secretly longed for weeks.

"See him!" she said tersely.

The Inspector looked up at her. "But it's not in my line!"

"It may be in mine," said Miss Withers.

The Inspector shrugged his shoulders and returned to his telephone. "Sorry, Tomlinson. Had a crossed wire. Yes, tell your friend I'll see him. How about Monday?" There was a pause. "Why—yes, I suppose so. He's in the city, you say? Very well, I'll stick around for half an hour, if he can get here by then. Name's Neville, you say? Right you are. G'bye."

He swung around in his chair. "See what you've done? That was Chief Tomlinson of the Bronxville force. Wants me to see a man about a dog. Now we've got to stick around here until dark."

Miss Withers was fumbling in her capacious handbag. She finally found the clipping for which she sought, and handed it to the Inspector. He read aloud: "For sale, very cheap to good home, pedigreed 18-months-old terrier, wonderful pet, female, must sell, as dog poisoner in neighborhood, phone Prospect 6-4435."

"I clipped that out of the "Times" last Sunday," she told him.

"Looking for a mate for Dempsey?" asked Piper. He smiled, remembering his spinster friend's one unwilling venture into dog-breeding, which had transpired at Catalina Island a year or so before. At the climax of a thrilling series of adventures in murder, the good lady had discovered herself the guardian of a pedigreed wire-haired fox-terrier, the most effervescent, roguish, combative puppy that ever gnawed a slipper.

"I was not," she answered him shortly. "But what do you make of this—and of what happened in the theater the other night?"

"Nothing," said the Inspector. "It happens every now and then that some misbegotten crank takes it into his head to sneak about, poisoning his neighbors' pets because their barking annoys him. This can't have anything to do with the trouble in Bronxville—the phone exchange mentioned is in Brooklyn."

Miss Withers opened her mouth to say something, but closed it again as the office door opened and the uniformed man in the outer office ushered through a quiet gentleman who announced himself as Henry Neville, president of the Knickerbocker Kennel Club. He wore a pince-nez and a worried look.

"I'll wait outside," suggested Miss Withers. The Inspector said nothing, knowing full well that wild horses could not have dragged her from her chair. Neville looked at her through his glasses, and the Inspector motioned him to proceed. "This lady is my unofficial assistant, Miss Withers," he announced.

"Assistant!" muttered the school teacher indignantly. But Neville was getting right down to cases.

"INSPECTOR," he began, "you may not be aware of the fact, but in the last six weeks more than a hundred dogs have been murdered within a radius of fifty miles of this city. This is not the usual matter of a neighborhood crank. With those the S.P.C.A. is quite capable of dealing. But these animals are mysteriously killed, sometimes in broad daylight, by a poison which leaves no traces that veterinary surgeons can discover in the stomach. Sometimes they are even stricken while being walked on a leash by their owners. . . ."

"The Big Bad Wolf," said Miss Withers cryptically. She was listening eagerly.

"I came to you," Neville went on, "because I happen to know the chief of police in my home town, and he promised to use his influence."

"Yes," objected Piper, "but what has the Homicide Squad got to do with suburban dog poisonings?"

"The squad knows poisons," said Neville. "And this may not be a suburban matter very long. Three weeks from today we are holding, or planning to hold, the annual dog show of the Knickerbocker Kennel Club in Madison Square Garden. It has occurred to many of our members that perhaps this fanatic, who has largely confined himself to ordinary mutts on the street, may seize his—or her—opportunity to do wholesale murder among the thousand or so canine bluebloods that will be gathered there. I've talked to private detectives, and found them totally incapable of protecting us and our exhibitors. So I ask your advice."

"Here it is," said Piper, biting his cigar. "Call off the show."

Neville shook his head. "Not as easy as that, Inspector. All over the country—in England, even—breeders of fine dogs are depending upon this show. Handlers and trainers, skilled men who sadly need the work, are beginning to train and condition the elite of dogdom for the bench. A booming dog show means increased business for the kennel men, who have been raising dogs mostly for the love of it these last years. It means that the public will be moved to invest a few dollars in a lifetime friend and companion whom they're proud to be seen leading on a leash; it means——"

"You've got me sold," said Miss Withers softly, thinking of Dempsey.

"If we call off the show, it not only admits failure, it means disappointment, and worse, for hundreds," finished Neville.

"And it also means," the Inspector agreed, "that you'll be knuckling under to a madman who'll go right on murdering harmless, friendly pooches on the street."

"Blast him!" Miss Withers said fervently. Neville sensed an ally in this surprising lady.

"Hmm," said Piper. "I might detail a couple of plain-clothes men to cover your show. Or give you a squad of reserves to keep order, if need be."

"Excuse me a moment," broke in Miss Withers. "I've got a better idea even than that." Her angular face was alight, and her nostrils wider than ever. "Just suppose——"

For the next half hour the two men listened, and nodded.

Then Henry Neville leaped to his feet. "I'm convinced," he announced. "If you're willing to run the risk. Naturally, the Club will stand all costs." He scribbled an address on a card. "Send your dog to this man, and he'll put him in such shape that you won't know him." He paused—"I do believe that you're going to be our Guardian Angel, ma'am."

"With a guardian flatfoot or two in the background," amended the Inspector.

MISS WITHERS, out of breath from hurrying, showed her badge to the man at the door of Madison Square Garden, and was immediately admitted. It was not, this time, the borrowed badge of the New York detective squad, but only a brass-bound ribbon bearing the gilt letters "Owner."

There was a fair crowd passing in toward the amphitheater, and she followed where they led. Sounds of distant barking came to her ears, and in her nostrils was the pleasantly mingled odor of disinfectants, sawdust, and canine personality that is so characteristic of a dog show anywhere.

The rows of seats in the Garden itself were more than half filled with spectators. Half of the big oval in the center was bare except for a small square platform where officials congregated—the rest of it was taken up by rows upon rows of high boxes with wire-screen fronts, placed like the houses and built-up blocks of a city. Indeed, this was a city—a veritable metropolis of dogdom.

An usher moved to direct her, but relaxed again when he saw her badge. Miss Withers passed down into the arena, and was almost immediately greeted by Mr. Henry Neville, resplendent behind a gold badge marked "President." He was in a highly nervous state, with his pince-nez slipping from his nose, but he left the group with which he seemed to have been arguing, and joined her.

"Everything going well so far," he whispered quickly. "But I feel better now that you're here. We can't talk now—but we'll have a chat later on. Now go ahead and play the part. You're a fond owner, and your dog is in number—let me see—number 82. Excuse me, I have to see a man. . . ."

He turned and bustled off. Miss Withers saw him seize the arm of a tall, saturnine person who looked like a character actor for British colonel roles. "See here, McGrath . . ." he began, angrily, and the two of them passed from sight. Miss Withers went on toward the kennels, trying to look as dog-wise as her fellows. She would have liked to stand in admiration before almost every one of the cages, but tonight she had other fish to fry. Whatever the villain of this piece it was not one of the bored four-footed aristocrats behind the wire.

Miss Withers began to withdraw, but she had time to see the larger man extend his palm full into the face of Henry Neville, and shove.

She passed on, trying to find number 82 without much success. She tried all the main avenues, growing slowly warmer, and then stepped into a little blind alley nearest the barrier that separated the seats from the arena, shut off from view of the crowd. This, too, was lined with wire-fronted boxes.

A dog ahead of her was barking furiously. She paused beside a small fat man in modish knickerbockers, who was engaged in staring through the netting of a cage almost at the end of the line.

He whirled toward her, and she found herself staring into a strange and tremendous instrument which looked like a twisted megaphone. The little man was smiling pleasantly.

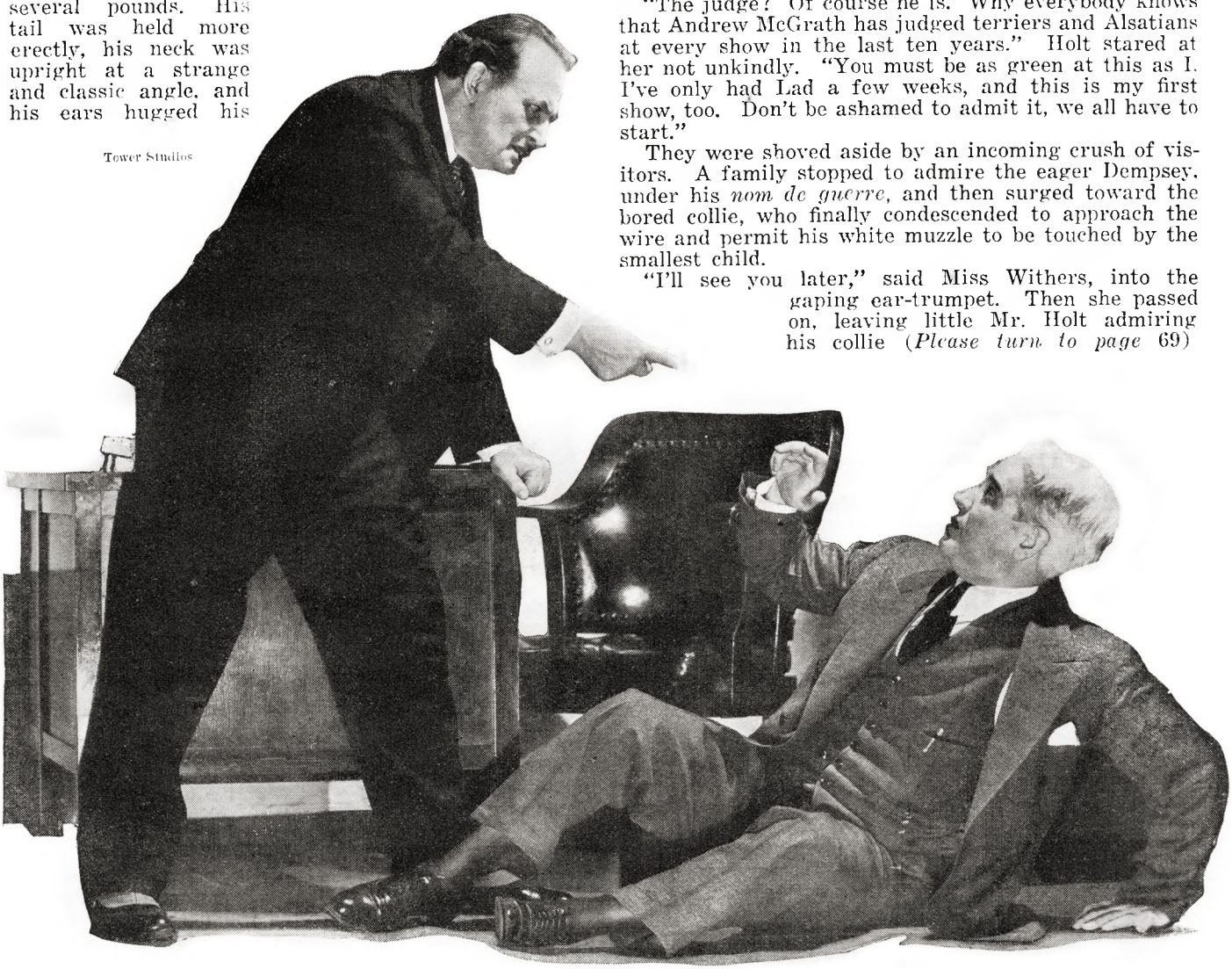
"Did you speak?" he asked. He wore a badge similar to her own.

She shook her head. "I am slightly deaf," he continued. He put away the ear-phone. "But I read lips rather well. Beautiful animal, isn't he?"

She agreed that the beast inside was magnificent, in spite of the barking that assailed her ear-drums. The name on a card above the box was "Surefire Scout." He was a wire-haired terrier, this immaculate beast, and as she glanced at his eager face Miss Withers realized that her own poor Dempsey would look sad indeed beside such a perfect specimen of his kind.

Her companion was rattling on, evidently glad of somebody to talk to who did not interrupt. The dog behind the wire whined and cocked his head first to the left, then right, and Miss Withers noticed his eyes. Good heavens—this *was* Dempsey! Sure enough, the box bore the figures "82"—there was no mistake.

His furry hair had been plucked from his body except on face, forelegs, and chest. He had been conditioned so as to lose several pounds. His tail was held more erectly, his neck was upright at a strange and classic angle, and his ears hugged his skull as they had never done in real life. But it was Dempsey, all the same. For a moment the schoolteacher forgot her mission and rubbed the shiny black button of a nose that was pressed to the netting. "*Surefire Scout* indeed!" she said.



Tower Studios

THE little man was beaming. "And to think," he said bitterly, "that there are people in this world who can poison a little fellow like that!"

Miss Withers looked up suddenly. The man had voiced her innermost thoughts. Her companion pointed to the wire netting. "Ought to be glass," he said. "Why, any one of the thousands of visitors who walk past these cages could toss a bit of poisoned meat inside, and be on his way before the dog was dead."

She agreed that it was possible. The little man introduced himself as Peter A. Holt, of the Holt Color and Dye Works, Hoboken, and said that he was very glad to meet Miss Hildegarde Withers. "Now I've admired your dog, you'll have to have a look at mine," he said, leading her down the alley a short distance. "Devonshire Lad's his name."

Devonshire Lad was a collie, a great tan and white creature with a long, pointed muzzle. As his master approached, the collie looked up, and then dropped his head on his paws again.

Miss Withers praised him, but Holt shook his head. "I'm afraid Lad is out of his class here. You're going to be luckier than I. That terrier of yours ought to go into Winners. Yes, ma'am, I have an idea that the great Mr. McGrath will pin a red, or even a blue ribbon on that dog of yours."

"Oh, is he the judge?" Miss Withers asked, and could have bitten off her tongue.

"The judge? Of course he is. Why everybody knows that Andrew McGrath has judged terriers and Alsatians at every show in the last ten years." Holt stared at her not unkindly. "You must be as green at this as I. I've only had Lad a few weeks, and this is my first show, too. Don't be ashamed to admit it, we all have to start."

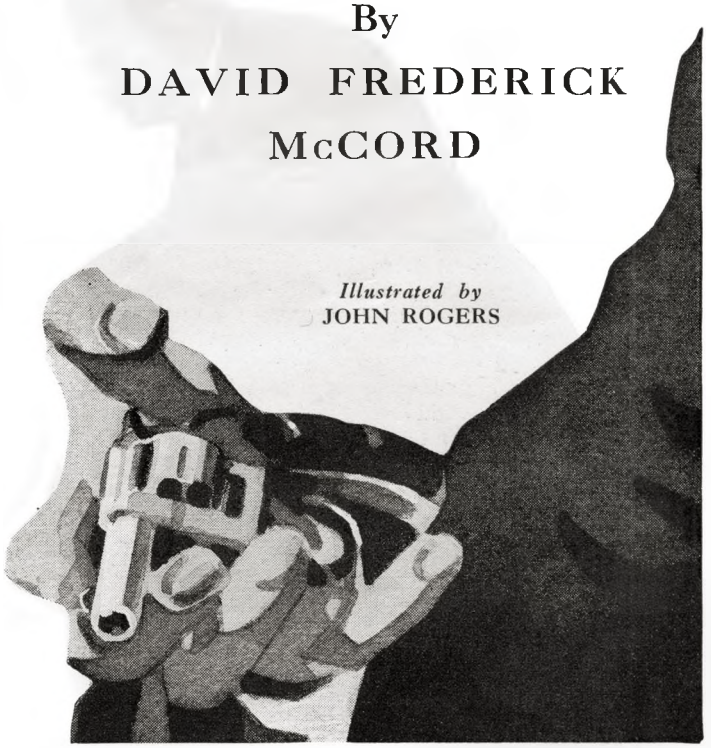
They were shoved aside by an incoming crush of visitors. A family stopped to admire the eager Dempsey, under his *nom de guerre*, and then surged toward the bored collie, who finally condescended to approach the wire and permit his white muzzle to be touched by the smallest child.

"I'll see you later," said Miss Withers, into the gaping ear-trumpet. Then she passed on, leaving little Mr. Holt admiring his collie (*Please turn to page* 69)

Suicides That

You will not believe this story—but it is true! The most incredible article ever published in this magazine—an amazing account of history-making suicides, and the unbelievable methods of self-destruction employed. A true story that reads like an Edgar Allan Poe mystery!

By
DAVID FREDERICK McCORD



Illustrated by JOHN ROGERS

LEOPOLD POLLAK, who had grown rich as a beggar in a Czecho-Slovakian city, was dying slowly and painfully of an incurable disease. His only prospect was of a long succession of days, stretching perhaps into years, of suffering. He was convinced that he would be better dead. But he lacked the final spark of nerve a man needs to blow out his brains, swallow poison, or put a noose about his neck and step off a table top into nothing.

Pollak had a friend, Joseph Kallab, a mason. To him, one day, Pollak made a grotesque proposal: that Kallab should execute him for a consideration.

The mason rejected the idea with horror. He sent his crony about his business, but the matter did not end there.

A strange persecution began. Pollak was a tall, gangling fence-rail of a man whose awkward legs and huge misshapen feet carried him at a gait that was half lurch, half shuffle. His greasy black hair straggled down from under a ratty fur cap about his blue and haggard face. Every day, several times a day, this apparition waylaid Kallab to importune his help in suicide. Pollak waited around corners, in alley mouths. He flitted like a ghost out of doorways and recesses in walls.

Kallab had begun with flat refusals. At last, however, he began to argue. Slowly, as Pollak raised the price, he weakened, to give way completely at 800 crowns for his share in this fantastic experiment in homicide.

The friends decided on hanging. They dropped a rope from a rafter in the beggar's garret. But they seem to have had no conception of what the hangman's apparatus should be. Pollak stood on a chair and adjusted the noose. Kallab jerked the chair away. The rope was weak, or rotten. As Pollak fell, it snapped, and he landed on the floor, shaken, but very much alive. Nevertheless, he still wanted to die. They repeated the attempt. They made a third trial. A fourth. Each time the rope broke.

Pollak decided that poison would be better. But by this time Kallab was sick of his bargain and in two supposed poisoning attempts gave harmless drugs, which his "victim" detected and resented.

They went back to hanging. A fifth rope broke before it occurred to them to get a stronger one and have it tested.

A sixth time Pollak tightened the noose about his

own neck. A sixth time Kallab jerked the chair from under him. This time the rope held.

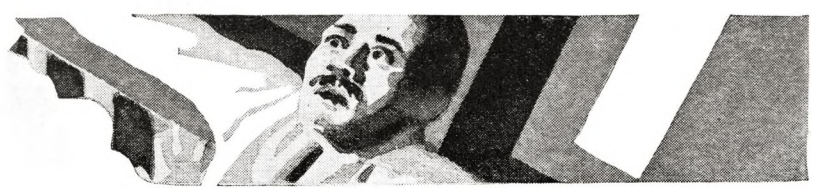
Pollak dangled and twitched like a jumping-jack on a string. His face was twisted, suffused with blood, an angry red turning purple. His eyes started out. His mouth stood stupidly open. He made gasping, gurgling sounds.

Kallab could not stand it. He cut Pollak down and rushed him to a hospital, where, however, the old beggar's perseverance was at last rewarded with death.

Kalab, tried for murder, was acquitted when he told this story.

This case, one of the strangest of recent years, is also one of the best examples of the mystery of self-destruction. For, assuming an unshakable determination, why do people who might choose quick, painless, easy deaths deliberately torture themselves? Why could not Pollak and Kallab at least have tested the first rope? Such riddles are fascinating because there is no chance of finding the final answer.

Made History



NO one wonders why John Ellis killed himself. During twenty-three years as England's hangman, he had put 203 persons to death.

He was a sensitive man. Professional killing had not hardened him. He imagined (or perhaps it was not imagination) that he and his family were shunned because of the horror his trade inspires.

At night he seemed to see about his bed the ghosts of famous murderers who had been his legal victims. Dr. Crippen; Major Armstrong; Smith, who drowned his brides in bathtubs; Mrs. Thompson and her lover, Bywaters, the English Ruth Snyder and Judd Gray. They all came to stare at him in mute accusation.

In 1932 he committed suicide.

Ellis was considered the most expert, efficient and humane of all English hangmen. His executions were quick and probably as painless as hangings can be. It might have been expected that one so familiar with death, so skilful in its accomplishment, would be as merciful with himself as he was with others. Instead, he chose to cut his throat and bleed slowly to death. Why?

The list of these belief-taxing cases is long and, unhappily, ever increasing. Sometimes the mystery of a suicide is even deepened by the morbid precautions taken by the self-destroyer to insure success.

A few years ago, socially prominent Morton C. Nichols of Greenwich, Conn., who was taking no chances, locked himself in a New York hotel suite and took poison, inhaled chloroform and hanged himself. A Brazilian railroad mechanic deliberately chose an even more terrible fate. He crawled into the firebox of a locomotive and burned to death.

Another case of excess ingenuity is that of Otto Weihle of Chicago, who, a few years ago, went to the trouble of wiring a chair and electrocuting himself. He might have profited from the example of an Italian electrician who made a death pact with his sweetheart. He saved himself work by wrapping one end of a long wire around their waists and throwing the other end over a high-voltage transmission line.

The story of Dr. Hugh A. Powell of Denver, who hanged himself from the head-rest of his dental chair—having first placed a mirror so that he might watch his own death—may seem strange. But it becomes commonplace when compared with two other cases of self-torture and destruction.

IN Czarist Russia there was a fanatic religious sect known as the "Old Believers," whose members had the true cult followers' conviction that they were objects of persecution.

To their ears came word that a census of all Russia was to be taken. The object, as a matter of fact, was registration for military service. But to the fanatics the only possible explanation was an approaching massacre. They decided that suicide was preferable and that burial alive was the proper way to die. Theodore Kovaleff, twenty-two-year-old son of a member, was talked into digging a community grave and covering in it any who so desired. (*Please turn to page* 65)

The Tragic Affair at MEERUT

AN EXCERPT:
from one of a collection of the most amazing letters ever written, some of which are here presented by Mr. Pearson for the first time:

"I am fed up with your low, disgusting ways," a husband writes his wife, "for I am sure you don't care a damn what happens to me, so long as you draw your allowance every month. You can go wherever you like, do whatever you like, but don't attempt to come near me, otherwise you will know the consequences immediately.

"Trusting this will find you quite well, as it leaves me the same, with fond love and kisses to yourself, and the rest at home,

"I remain, your affectionate husband,
"H. L. CLARK."

THIS is the story of two men and two women. People with ordinary names; people who looked not so different from your next-door neighbors. But the country where they lived, the background against which they moved, and their own inner natures seemed to set two of them apart from everything human. As we hear about them we feel as if they were creatures in a nightmare.

The place was India. To most of us that is a totally undiscovered country. A country with a thousand different races of men and a hundred religions; with some people living, or trying to live, exactly as their ancestors lived three thousand years ago. In India there are people who follow customs, practise rites and ceremonies which are to them not only good but actually holy, while these same customs seem to us shocking and obscene.

And alongside of these folk, who belong in the year 600 B. C., a few thousands of white Europeans, mostly English, living, so far as the terrible heat allows, exactly as if they were in modern England.

Under a tree sits an almost naked *faquir*, motionless for hours, in religious contemplation. And passing by the tree, two Englishmen in plus-fours, on the way to play golf.

But there is a class of people of whom we, in America, have heard little. They are the Eurasians, the folk of mixed blood, in all shades of color. Mixed marriages in India, as everywhere else, frequently have strange results, and the children of these marriages are sometimes headed toward tragedy.

Of the four people concerned in this terrible story, three were of mixed blood.

HENRY LOVELL WILLIAM CLARK was a Lieutenant in the Medical Service of India—not, however, a commissioned officer of the British Army. He was a big man, brutal in appearance, and brutal in manner. His mixed blood showed itself in a yellowish complexion, and restricted him, for the most part, to a life with other Eurasians. He was as little apt to be on terms of friendship with Indians of high caste as with the English of pure blood.

He was not a skilful nor a kindly medical man. We see him, in his white uniform, with a solar helmet, hanging around the bazaars of various Indian cities, or engaging in sports like cock-fighting, and strange to say, duck-fighting. He had a heavy dark moustache, protruding eyes, and the neck of a bull. A man of repulsive appearance, he carried in his veins the blood of the white and of the brown race, and seemed, in his character, to unite the worst features of both races. His vices were many and obvious; his virtues few and obscure.

His unhappy wife, a meek and humble woman, was also an Eurasian. She had been a nurse in the hospital at Calcutta, when she met Clark. She professed the Christian religion, but had a vague belief in witchcraft, and an Oriental feeling that it is useless to struggle against Fate. When plots were eventually formed against her life, she made no fight. She seemed destined to be murdered: the born "murderee."

At the city of Meerut, in northern India, the Clarks met Mr. and Mrs. Edward Fullam. The meeting was an utter tragedy for every one of these four people. At Meerut, and at Agra, nearly 200 miles to the south, their drama was to be played. Agra, one of the ancient capitals of India, has become known to everybody who goes to the movies, because of its famous marble tomb, the Taj Mahal, the pictures of which are shown so often.

Readers of the Sherlock Holmes story, "The Sign of Four" will remember that it was at Agra that there appeared the merchant Achmet, with the iron chest containing the immense treasure of jewels. In that story somebody says:

"The city of Agra is a great place, swarming with fanatics and fierce devil-worshippers of all sorts."

And although this was written of Agra in the time of the Indian Mutiny, more than seventy years ago, we cannot read about the Clarks and Fullams without thinking that the spirit of the devil-worshippers has been alive in our days.

EDWARD FULLAM was an examiner in the Military Accounts department. He had spent his whole life in India, and was "almost pure English." He was a church member, a Mason, and a Lieutenant of volunteers—an honorable citizen, devoted to his family.

EDMUND PEARSON *presents another of his brilliant accounts of little-known mysteries that have occurred in out-of-the-way places—*

His wife, Augusta, was the one member of the quartet who was entirely of white blood—she had been born in Calcutta, but was "pure English." She was a plump and pleasing woman of thirty-five; she had brown hair, blue eyes and a clear complexion.

"My hubby," she wrote, on one occasion, "says I am a wayward, wilful, head-strong girl."

Her "hubby," had he really known her, could have described her much better with fewer words. In spite of her laughing blue eyes, Augusta Fullam was not a "head-strong girl." She was a hell-cat.

Lieutenant Clark and Mrs. Fullam fell in love, with an overwhelming, devastating passion of the kind which some people think existed only in Italy in the 14th Century. It had no rhyme or reason, and they acted with neither discretion nor decency, nor with regard for the feelings of others, nor for their own safety.

Their solution of their problem was double murder; the destruction of Mr. Fullam and Mrs. Clark. They do not seem to have considered anything else. People of strong character and righteous conduct would have separated, and lived, unhappily perhaps, but in obedience to the marriage service. Many others would have sought relief in divorce, and even at the cost of a scandal, and despite the complications which would arise from the fact that there were children in both families, would have made the love affair legal.

But with Lieutenant Clark and Mrs. Fullam the idea was to kill the wife of one and the husband of the other, and then unite themselves in what they fancied would be "holy" matrimony.

The cause of this, some people would say, was climate; the terrible tropical climate which makes the white man go to pieces, morally. Many stories and moving pictures are based on this idea. But these people were not new-comers to the tropics. They were all born there.

If we seek the cause in their mixed blood, we may observe that Clark, the half-breed, was both brutal and treacherous. But Mrs. Fullam, "pure white," can hardly be claimed as a flower of the white race. She was exactly as wicked as Clark, and added to her crimes a sickening and sanctimonious hypocrisy. She was an out-and-out sentimentalist, addicted to reading mushy novels. She was full of sentimental notions, but lacked ordinary human compassion and pity. She had snobbish ideas about ancestry; talked about Clark as her "pedigreed gentleman," and wrote to him:

"I hope my Lord Lieutenant Henry William Lovell Clark will lead his second wife to the altar under the arched swords of his brother officers, darling."

But before this pretty picture could be realized, of course, it was necessary for my Lord Lieutenant Clark to get rid of his first wife, as well as of Mrs. Fullam's husband.

There is no satisfactory explanation of their conduct, but one

On a night in November, several natives, paid by Mrs. Fullam and Clark, broke into Mrs. Clark's bedroom and killed her with knives.

reason for it seems to be that strange worship of respectability which has often led people to grave crime. They could not endure the scandal of a divorce. They preferred to plunge their hands deep in blood, commit double murder, and take their chances of discovery, of shameful death, and of the loss of their immortal souls.

For a while, in 1910, the intrigue went on, with no talk of murder. Clark had been transferred to Delhi, and Mrs. Fullam began to write him love letters. She was one of the most extraordinary of all letter writers, and her letters, carefully preserved by her lover—against her commands—led him straight to the gallows.

Sir Cecil Walsh, who is deeply learned in the crimes of India, has made a collection of these letters, and from this I will quote a few passages:

"Dear Heart of Mine,

I greet you with loving thoughts and true, and pray that every happiness may be vouchsafed to you.

I am so very glad to know that you will be here in Meerut tomorrow, Harry darling, and once more we shall meet and be happy. Oh! darling, I, too, am counting the hours as they pass, like any school girl. How boyish and youthful you are, my own darling, to act over me just like a young lover over his first love. I know full well that I am not your first love, Harry darling, but I also know and believe that I am the first one you have ever truly fallen in love with. Very late in life has true love met you, darling, and to think that poor I have won your heart, and hold you spell-bound. Why can't you give me up for "Mabelle?" (Their fancy name for Mrs. Clark).

She came first in your affections, my sweetheart. You just wait till I see you tomorrow, darling, and see if I don't talk you into sound common sense, and proper reasoning. But, really, in your presence I seem to melt and become like wax, instead of being strong and making you listen to me. You are just like Harry Middlemore. Do you remember the book?

"Fondest and truest love and kisses, darling. Warmest love and the sweetest of kisses from your own little loving and ever devoted little sweetheart and Bucha.

Gussie."

This had been marked, by Mrs. Fullam, "Tear up," and it would have been well for him if he had obeyed this and similar commands as to later and more dangerous letters. Instead of doing so, Clark, who like many great criminals was also a great fool, merely endorsed it, as if it were a business letter, "Answered, H. L. C. 2-12-10" and filed it away in a box.

The word "Bucha," which recurs in different forms throughout their correspondence, is supposed to be the Hindustani word for "baby."

CLARK replied briefly and clumsily to Mrs. Fullam's almost daily letters. He had no imagination in him, and about as much poetry and tenderness as a buffalo. He sometimes copied parts of Mrs. Fullam's letters and sent them back to her, and at other times employed another man to write his love letters!

The strangeness of this man's character may, to some degree, be explained by his utter lack of any sense of humor. This is not unusual in folk of his kind. His letters to Mrs. Fullam were mostly destroyed by her, but some of his letters to his own family have been found. One of them was written to his own wife from Agra, whither he had been transferred. He was angry, because Mrs. Clark had failed to send him a case of hair-brushes—a gift from Mrs. Fullam:

"If you cannot read and understand English please let me know, for then I can write to you either in Hindu or Bengali, as the case may be . . . If you will take my advice you will either remain in Delhi, or proceed to Meerut, but please do not come here, for the day you place your foot in Agra, you may be quite sure I will promptly resign the service, as I am fed up with your low, disgusting ways, for I am quite sure you don't care a damn what becomes of me, so long as you draw 200 rupees a month. You can go whereever you like, but don't attempt to come near me, otherwise you will know the consequences immediately."

After this "bawling-out," it seems to have occurred to the half-breed that he pretended to be an officer and a gentleman, for he brings his violent letter to an end with these astonishing words:

Illustrations by
HERBERT BOHNERT

The police-inspector opened the box, and found dozens of incriminating letters from Mrs. Fullam.

"Trusting this will find you all quite well, as it leaves me the same, with fond love and kisses to self, and the rest at home, I remain, your affectionate husband,

H. L. Clark."

Lieutenant Clark had a daughter who seems to have inherited some of her father's curious gifts as a correspondent. She took up cudgels for the family and replied to the hairbrush letter in a style rather similar to his:

"My own dearest Father,

Thanks very much for your letter, which was not very pleasant to read, but of course we must excuse you, as you must have been told to write like that. But never mind, God will be good to us. He only knows how we four have been treated in the house by you. I am simply shocked at you writing in such a way to mother, over those brushes that wonderful Mrs. Fullam gave you. They are not worth two *pice* (farthings) to us, and you may rest assured that we all know English and we are not natives as you imagine us to be. Mother is too quiet for you. You require someone to answer you back in the same way . . . As for you imagining that mother does not care a damn for you, I really don't know how you can say that. If she didn't care a button for you or the house, she wouldn't have stood all the kicking and thumping all these years. To my knowledge she is treated very badly, and she has borne it up very patiently.

"With fond love and kisses for dearest self, I am,

Ever your affectionate daughter,

Maud."

To return to the more significant letters of Mrs. Fullam, and to give a sample of her piety, let us look at a few lines from one of her epistles to Clark regarding an illness she was enduring:

What say you, my own darling? So now you can think when you are playing tennis and enjoying yourself of an evening, how your poor little girl is keeping a rough time, feeling so sick and miserably wretched.

" 'Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be;
Lead me by Thine own Hand,
Choose out the path for me.
I dare not choose my lot,
I would not if I might;
Choose Thou for me, my God,
Then shall I walk aright.'

"These lines are just what my poor sentiments now express, Harry darling, my own precious sweetheart, Bucha, and whatever happens, I leave all to God's Almighty will."

A little later, one of her letters indicates that Mr. Fullam had cause for objecting to his wife's friendship for the Lieutenant.

"My Own Dearest Lovie,

"I am enclosing the letter which I wrote you yesterday, but had not the chance of giving you, my own darling boy.

"Sweetheart, darling, my hubby is very angry with me. It appears he was in the verandah this morning at 5 a. m., and saw you talking to me at my bedroom door. He did not see anything beyond our whispering together, but that was enough to make him jealous and angry. He was surprised at me in my nightgown, to be saying the last word to you, my darling. We shall have to be awfully careful now, my own precious Bucha darling. I think perhaps you had better leave for Agra without seeing me any more, Harry, darling, as it only makes things harder for me, darling love."

Mrs. Fullam had the sense of the ridiculous which her lover lacked, and occasionally some of his letters (written by his friend) moved her to smiles:

"My sweetheart, your poem is awfully pretty, but your fairy has rather a substantial form, don't you think? Now, my dear old humbug, you won't make me believe that you composed this poem. It's very beautiful and well written. Agra air must have inspired you to great deeds. Just imagine calling me

'A vision sweet of virgin mould.'

Oh! Harry darling, how *can* you?"

IN the Spring and Summer of 1911, Clark and Mrs. Fullam were trying to murder Mr. Fullam, by slow degrees, by the administration of arsenic. If all the hard-hearted people, men and women, in the history of the world, who have condemned their victims to death by this form of torture, had themselves been killed by the same poison, it would have been exact and satisfactory justice. The (*Please turn to page* 107)

The Sinister Death

WHAT lends particular point to this story and seals its uniqueness, is what since has come to be known—with a little irony and no end of awe—as the singularly sentimental behavior of Mr. Ashel Mayhew, of the Homicide Squad.

Ashel Mayhew as everyone now knows, was the gentleman from Missouri whose singular talents at sleuthing had caused the police commissioner of the City of New York to assign him to the force.

These talents, which startled New York, Ashel had come by naturally, for he had pursued many studies and projects in diverse lands; and although he had succeeded in failing at all of them, he had acquired knowledge to the extent that he had become, as it were, a walking almanac.

Therefore, where others saw nothing, Ashel saw much. He also possessed understanding.

Concerning the Black Room . . .

The crime occurred on the night of April 23rd. It was an early spring night, neither warm nor cold, with a fine rain falling, and in Orthwein's, on upper Fifth Avenue, there was activity.

This was in that famous room below the street level at Orthwein's, known to his elegant customers as the Black Room.

Here it was that M. Orthwein took his customers to show them jewels that were worth a king's ransom or a queen's favors, and very canny he was in doing so, for such was the room that not another object or color was present to detract the slightest from the pure grandeur of his gems.

The walls were hung with rich, black velvet; a canopy of the same material shielded the ceiling; the carpet, flush with the walls, was also black and so deep that one's feet sank into it noiselessly, and in the center of the room, stood a sort of dais draped with black velvet, which was fastened together with snaps.

Therefore, diamonds, on that black dais, took on added mystery and allure; pearls assumed almost animate personalities; rubies seemed as essential as the drops of blood they resembled.

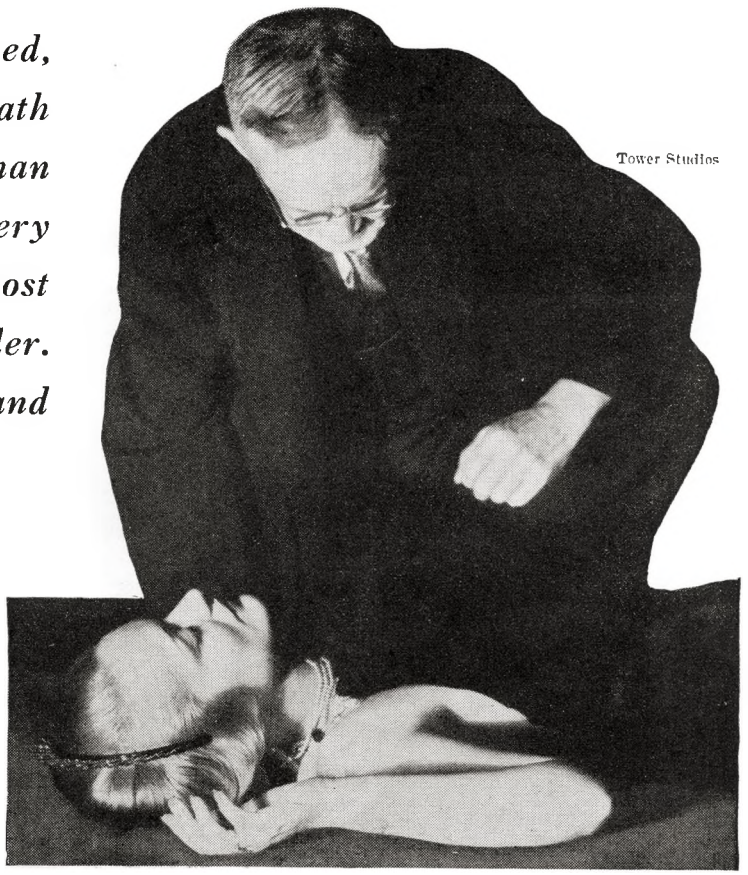
So, when it came to taking pictures of the famous Rolande-Mowbray pearls—pictures to be used in advertising them, for poor Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray had been reduced to selling them and had commissioned M. Orthwein to handle the business—it is natural that M. Orthwein should decree that the photographing should take place in the Black Room.

(As for the pearls—M. Orthwein once had whispered to an Hungarian countess that her offer of a quarter of a million dollars was rather low. . . .)

Therefore, on that fateful night of April 23rd, Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray sat in a black chair against one of the walls of the Black Room, fanning herself vigorously—the room was close—with her handkerchief. She was a woman on the wrong side of fifty, very large, somewhat over-dressed in mourning, with wide, rather vacuous blue eyes, a stubborn mouth and a face that plainly showed the frantic efforts on the part of its owner and many beauty doctors to save it from collapse.

The efforts, it must be said, had not been very successful, for Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray's face had sagged nevertheless, and, due to its constant treatments, wore an unnatural look. As for her exaggerated mourning, that was due to the fact that, a year or so before, her husband, having dropped too many millions in the Wall

Beautiful women deserve to be loved, but here was one who deserved death —and got it! Ashel Mayhew, the man of many failures, adopts some very strange tactics, and solves what almost turned out to be the perfect murder. The episode of the woman in black and the sentimental detective!



Tower Studios

By

HENRY LACOSSITT

in the Black Room

Street deluge, had slaughtered himself inconsiderately. Mr. Rolande-Mowbray, incidentally, had been known as quite a man with the ladies.

Hovering near the widow, very suave and attentive, was M. Orthwein, himself, a man of medium height, immaculate in a dinner jacket, with heavy, black brows, drawn up unusually high in what seemed perpetual irony, sharp, shrewd eyes and an ageless face, in which was set an unmistakably Gallic nose and a small, tight mouth, topped by a black mustache. His hair, dark and curly, was thick and luxuriant.

Directly across from them, which was to say, just a little to the left of the dais and against the opposite wall, Kurt, the photographer, gloomy and dour of visage, was busy with a white screen. He was a small, wiry man, with strange lights in his intense eyes. An excellent photographer, M. Orthwein used him frequently. Kurt was almost ready. At the ceiling, but not yet turned on, was a row of six photo flood lights set in their reflector.

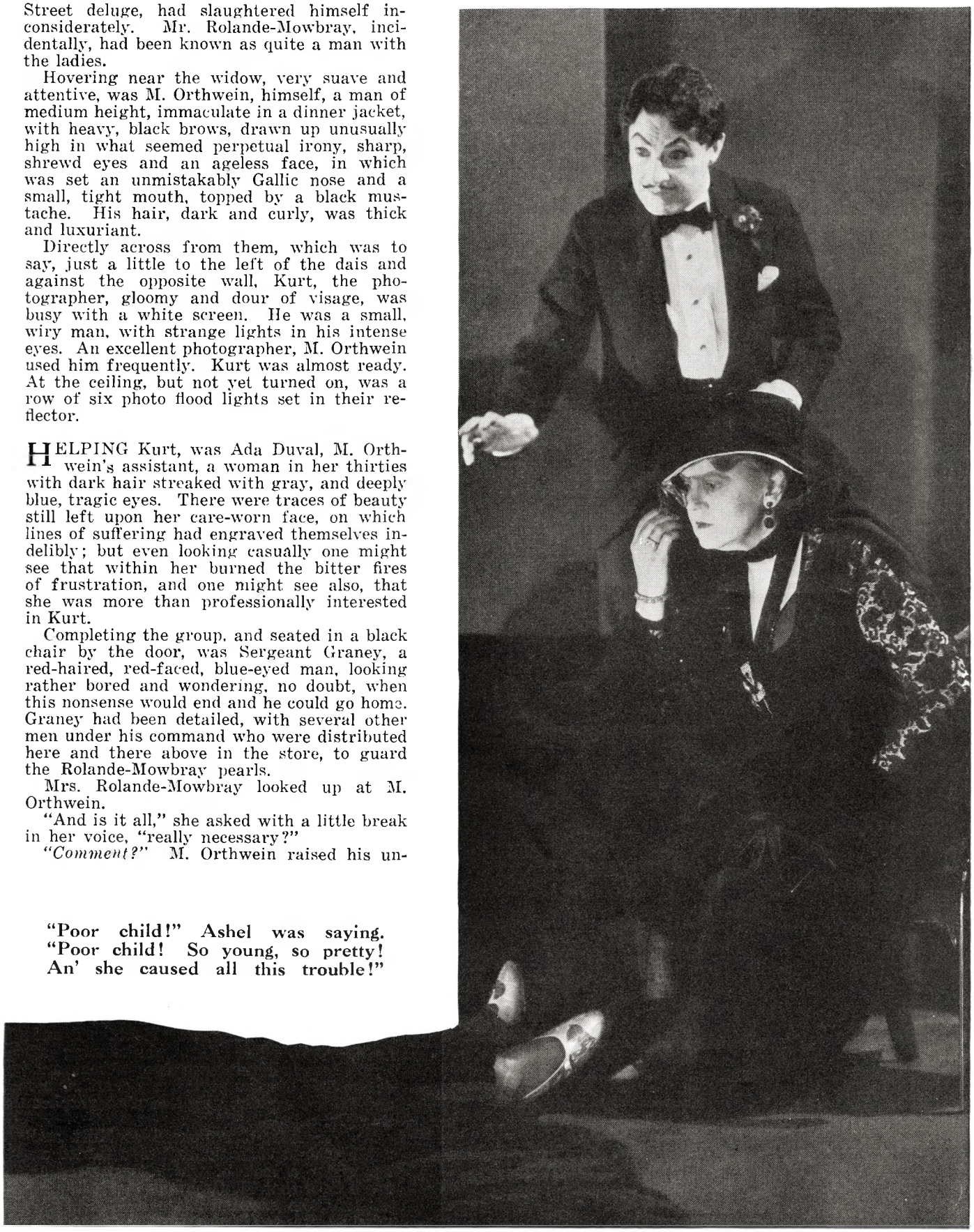
HELPING Kurt, was Ada Duval, M. Orthwein's assistant, a woman in her thirties with dark hair streaked with gray, and deeply blue, tragic eyes. There were traces of beauty still left upon her care-worn face, on which lines of suffering had engraved themselves indelibly; but even looking casually one might see that within her burned the bitter fires of frustration, and one might see also, that she was more than professionally interested in Kurt.

Completing the group, and seated in a black chair by the door, was Sergeant Graney, a red-haired, red-faced, blue-eyed man, looking rather bored and wondering, no doubt, when this nonsense would end and he could go home. Graney had been detailed, with several other men under his command who were distributed here and there above in the store, to guard the Rolande-Mowbray pearls.

Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray looked up at M. Orthwein.

"And is it all," she asked with a little break in her voice, "really necessary?"

"Comment?" M. Orthwein raised his un-



"Poor child!" Ashel was saying. "Poor child! So young, so pretty! An' she caused all this trouble!"

usual brows even higher. "Necessary? But yes, madame, necessary and wise. The model, she is so beautiful, so lovely. She will wear the pearls. We will take that picture and one on the dais and we will go advertising in—" M. Orthwein named a number of periodicals read by people unable to spend their unlimited wealth—"and we shall wait. We shall see."

He patted her shoulder.

"I suppose," said Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray. She sighed. "I suppose. But it is humiliating. Humiliating! To be forced to sell my pearls! Why they are world famous, my pearls!"

M. Orthwein spread his hands. *"Oui, madame.* It is as you say, they are world famous. But it is all the better, that. They shall come marching for the pearls!"

He smiled, smoothed his hair, about which he appeared very vain, with a well-kept hand. Across the room, Kurt rose, glancing here and there for a final inspection. Ada Duval, who had been kneeling beside him, also rose, but her eyes were only for the photographer. They glowed strangely.

Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray, fanning vigorously, said:

"M. Orthwein, if you please. It is so close. I should so much like a glass of water."

"Of a certainty, madame." M. Orthwein bowed, walked noiselessly across the deep carpet, excusing himself as he passed the yawning Graney at the door and vanished. The Black Room became silent. Kurt turned and looked at Ada Duval and for a moment their eyes held. The woman's face colored as she looked away. Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray fidgeted ponderously in her chair.

"Where is that model?" she asked peevishly.

"In a moment, madame. She is dressing."

Ada Duval's voice was flat and weary, yet—what was it?—edged. The photographer glanced at the assistant quickly, frowned and turned to his camera, which stood just to the left of Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray.

M. Orthwein returned with the water and again the room was curiously silent, a silence somehow heavy, and then, as M. Orthwein looked at his watch, a girl appeared in the door.

Graney gasped.

For this girl was tall and statuesque, with vivid, golden hair, incredibly colored skin, immense violet eyes that were very similar to those of Ada Duval, and a small, perfectly shaped crimson mouth. And if there was lack of character in the face, the beauty that lay there could and did shield it from most eyes. She smiled prettily.

"Am I late?"

"A little," said M. Orthwein. "We are waiting."

Sybil Duval crossed the room. She wore a black velvet evening gown and silver slippers. As she crossed, Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray rose suddenly to her feet, her sagging face flushed, her vacuous eyes brilliant.

"You!"

Sybil Duval looked at her in mild astonishment, then turned to M. Orthwein. The jeweler said——

"Madame! Is it that something troubles you?"

Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray passed her hand across her forehead, looked strangely at M. Orthwein.

"No," she said huskily and sat down. "It is nothing. I—I suppose it is because it is so close in here."

"A little air, perhaps, madame? You would like it upstairs?"

"No," said Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray, her eyes again on Sybil Duval. "I shall stay."

M. Orthwein shrugged. He turned and he frowned. For Kurt was staring at Sybil Duval, his intense eyes absent and dream-like, his lips parted, his chest rising and falling rapidly. He had photographed this girl often.

As for Ada, she glanced at Kurt and again colored violently, and then turned on her sister a look in which there was so much hate that M. Orthwein started.

"Zut!" he exclaimed impatiently. "For why do we (*Please turn to page* 83)

If there was lack of character in Sybil's face, the beauty that lay there shielded it from most eyes.

The Strange Disappearance OF Madame De Mordillac

A famous true-life mystery drama—complete on this page! The Episode of the Observing Detective!

The accompanying photograph was posed by a model portraying the character in the story and made in Tower Studios.

FROM her villa in Lyons, the beautiful Madame De Mordillac, wife of a French artist, vanished one Spring night, in 1910. Her bed showed she had slept in it; and her wardrobe showed that in leaving she had not stopped to dress.

Edmond Locard, director of the Laboratory of Police Technique of Lyons, was called in to solve the mystery of her disappearance.

On the floor beside her bed, he found a smear of blood. From the rug he picked up a tiny piece of thin glass. It was of the sort vials are made. He sniffed it, and noted the odor of chloroform. Immediately it was plain to him that Madame had been rendered unconscious and then kidnaped. Instinctively, too, he realized that the vial must have broken while she was being chloroformed and cut the finger of the perpetrator of the crime. In no other way could he account for the smear of blood on the floor.

He commenced an exhaustive check-up of the friends and acquaintances of Madame De Mordillac. His investigation led him to the studio of one Jacques Fenouil, a sculptor. Fenouil's index finger was bandaged. He had cut it with one of his tools while at work in his studio, he informed Locard. The detective asked to examine the studio.

There he found numerous statuettes and one life-size model of a woman. On the floor at the base of it, Locard's keen eyes were attracted to a half-dozen or more dead flies. They aroused his curiosity. He was at loss to understand why they had all dropped dead in the same place.

When Fenouil was not looking he scooped up some of them and dropped them into the pocket of his coat. Then he bade the sculptor good afternoon, returned to his laboratory, and set to work with his test tubes.

When his experiments were completed he knew why the flies had died, and all in the same place. Formaldehyde had killed them. He knew, also, that a sculptor could have no possible legitimate use for embalming fluid.

Late that night, after Fenouil had left his studio, Locard returned to it and forced an entrance. Hastily he crossed the room to where the life-size statue stood. For a moment he stood before it, studying its graceful curves. Then, snatching up the hammer he had brought with him, he struck it in several places. The plaster cracked, broke apart, and fell to the floor. Beneath it stood revealed the embalmed body of the beautiful Madame De Mordillac, and her strange disappearance was solved.

Fenouil had kidnaped her, murdered her, embalmed her, and then set her up as a statue to worship, because he could not have her any other way. But the blood smear, the tiny piece of glass, the dead flies, and Locard's uncanny intuition exposed his heinous crime. He committed suicide before he could be brought to trial.

The exterior walls of the house are of brick, stucco and timbering characteristic of the English style of architecture.

A PLAN THAT HAS WORKED

This small English house was selected as the best of those submitted by readers of Mystery Magazine

THIS compact and charming little house, in Scarsdale, N. Y., a delighful Westchester suburb, was selected from photographs sent in by readers of MYSTERY MAGAZINE of houses that have worked as the most attractively and practically planned little house submitted.

The design of the house is old English and it has the characteristic exterior construction of brick, stucco and timbering, casement windows and flagstone entrance.

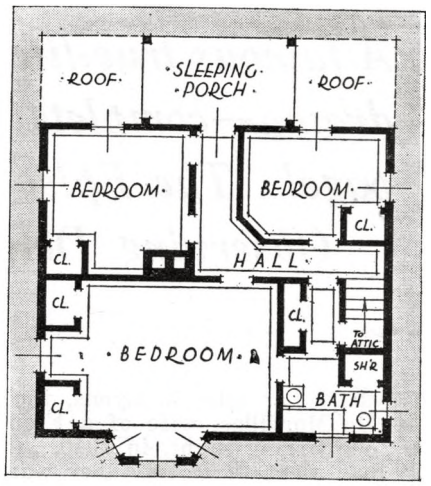
The interior of the house is exceptionally well planned. On the first floor is a small entrance and stair hall, a spacious living room with an open fireplace and an attractive built-in book case, a large dining room with an oriel window, a conveniently arranged and completely equipped kitchen and a maid's room and bath.

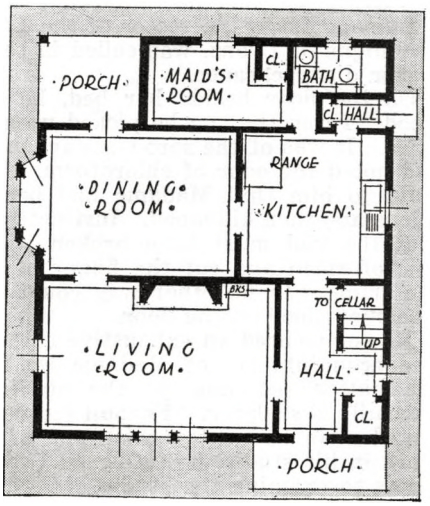
The second floor contains a large master bedroom with an oriel window, two smaller bedrooms, a bath with a built-in, glass enclosed shower and a good-sized sleeping porch.

We considered this little house the most practical of those submitted because it's upkeep is very low and because it's size, style, construction and plan give it an excellent resale value.

HAVE YOU BUILT A HOUSE?

The editors of this magazine are interested in seeing small houses that have actually been built by MYSTERY readers. Would you like to send us a photograph of a house that you yourself have built or supervised the building of? We should like to use the best photograph sent to us in future issues of this magazine. Send photograph, brief description and floor plans of the house to Tower House Editor, care of THE MYSTERY MAGAZINE, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.



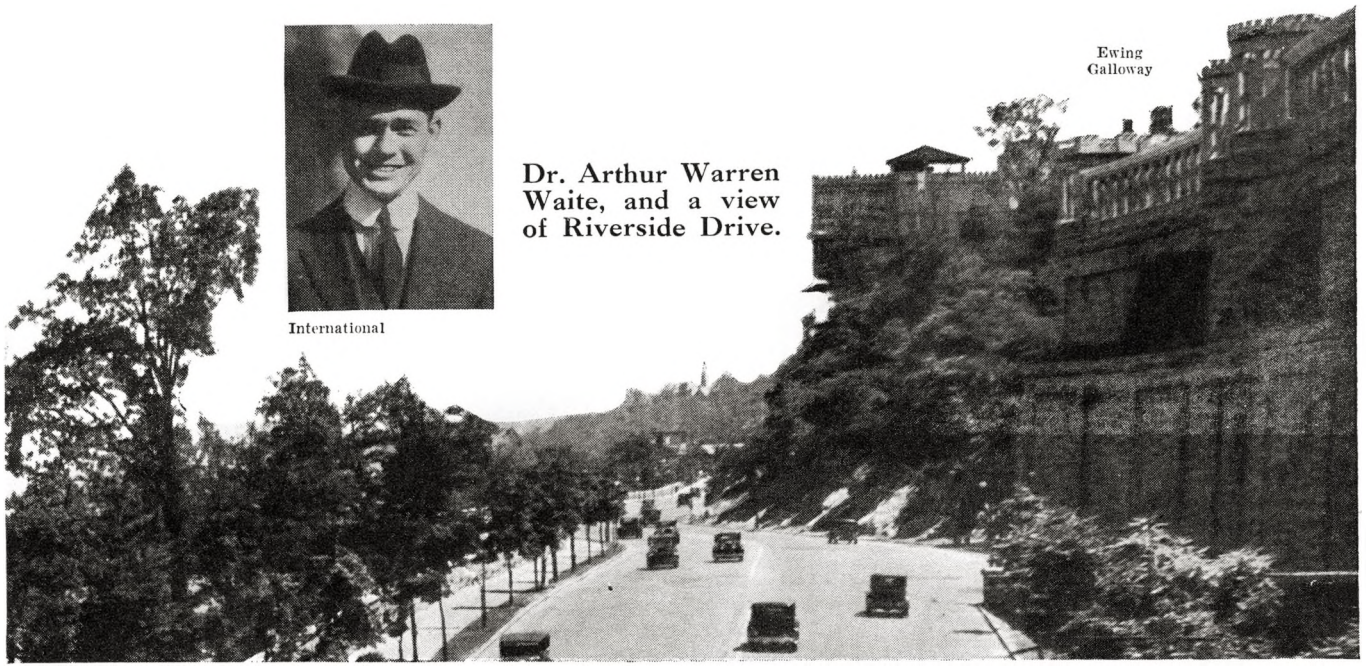


The rooms are spacious and well planned.

FAMILY MURDERER

International

Dr. Arthur Warren Waite, and a view of Riverside Drive.



Ewing Galloway

A famous true-life mystery drama—complete on this page! The Episode of the Mysterious Telegram from Nowhere!

ON Riverside Drive, New York, across the Hudson from the majestic Palisades, death struck twice, early in 1916.

The passing of Mrs. John E. Peck, wife of the retired millionaire druggist of Grand Rapids, while visiting her married daughter, Mrs. Arthur Warren Waite, was sudden, but not wholly unexpected, for she had been a chronic sufferer from Bright's disease.

Likewise, when her husband died six weeks later while on a visit to the Waite home, his death was considered a perfectly natural happening, for he, too, had been in ill health for some time, and bereavement over his wife's sudden demise was thought to have hurried his end.

There was no suspicion whatsoever that an infamous plot to snuff out the lives of the entire Peck family had been successfully launched, yet it had been. Furthermore, so ingenious was this plan of wholesale murder that it undoubtedly would have remained a secret for all time had it not been for a woman's intuition.

Dr. Arthur Warren Waite, dentist and tennis playing husband of the daughter of the deceased couple, took charge of the funeral arrangements, just as he had in the case of his mother-in-law, and the body of the millionaire was shipped to Grand Rapids, with instructions that it be cremated.

Before the instructions could be complied with, however, Fate intervened. From New York, relatives of the dead druggist in Grand Rapids received a mysterious telegram. It was signed, "K. Adams," and read, "Suspicions aroused. Demand autopsy."

Who K. Adams was, the relatives had not the slightest idea. They knew no one of that name, and when it was recalled that the alleged victim of the notorious Roland B. Molineaux poisoning case of nearly a score of years before had been a Mrs. Katherine J. Adams, it was decided that the name which had been signed to the mysterious telegram was really fictitious.

But it made no difference, for the succinct, four-word message had had its intended effect. Suspicions, hitherto dormant, had been aroused. An autopsy was performed and traces of arsenic were found in the body of the dead millionaire.

Then, and only then, was the case called to the attention of the police. Assistant District Attorney Francis X. Mancuso, of New York, personally took charge of the case. An exhaustive investigation was launched. It stretched from New York to Grand Rapids and back again, and with each development the finger of suspicion pointed more firmly toward Dr. Waite as the arch-plotter and poisoner.

Every possible angle of the mystery was checked and rechecked, so zealously and skilfully that one week after the autopsy had been performed, Mancuso had the signed confession of Dr. Waite that he had killed Mrs. Peck with a mixed dose of disease germs, and that he had killed his father-in-law by chloroforming him and smothering him to death after vainly attempting to kill him with arsenical poisons.

Through misrepresentation and fraud he had procured his cultures of typhoid, pneumonia and other virulent bacteria from professional laboratories, and had been able in the same way to stock up with poisons without arousing suspicion.

After murdering his mother-in-law and father-in-law, Waite had planned similarly to poison his wife and all her relatives so that he might come into possession of the Peck fortune. But the mysterious telegram, signed, "K. Adams," upset his fiendish scheme.

It was not until he went on trial for his life, however, that the identity of the sender was revealed. And then, curiously enough it proved to be one who knew Waite and the Pecks only casually—a Miss Elizabeth C. Hardwick of Somerville, N. J. She had had no proof whatsoever of the dentist's guilt. But a short time before Mrs. Peck's death she had seen him paying ardent attention to a strange woman in a New York hotel. That fleeting glimpse of his clandestine love making was recalled to her mind when the second member of the Peck family died. Then, realizing the fortune at stake, she impulsively journeyed to New York and dispatched the mysterious telegram which was to lead Dr. Waite to the electric chair. And so it was that a clueless, fiendish plan of wholesale murder was exposed by a woman's intuition.

It began in 1890

Courtesy of Fifth Avenue Hotel Hair Dressers

Manicuring is as old as Egypt, but modern methods began only forty years ago

By PAMELA PINKERTON

MANICURING is one of the very oldest of all the beautifying arts. Yet it was only about forty years ago that women really took up manicuring in its modern sense.

Four thousand years ago Chinese Mandarins looked on long finger nails as a sign of their rank. They, who did not have to work with their hands, let their nails grow inches long. It was a real calamity to have one of these long, symbolic nails broken. And at night they encased them in jeweled, golden cases to protect them from accident.

Cleopatra and Salome stained their finger tips and nails with henna. In tombs of ancient Egypt and of Babylon we find manicure sets that show the rather elaborate manicuring ritual of those days forty centuries ago.

Lovely ladies through the ages have kept their nails attractive. Sometimes the mode of the moment called for nails clipped straight off across the end of the fingers. Sometimes they were pointed or rounded. And once in a while there was a fad for really long nails. Some of the great portrait painters of the past have been especially fond of painting lovely hands and attractive finger nails, and from them we get the passing fashions in manicures. Van Dyck, who painted the princes and princesses of three hundred years ago, loved beautiful hands, and when he traveled he used to take with him a model whose hands he liked to paint, so that he always had them for a pattern of loveliness.

It was not until modern hand cosmetics were developed that manicuring came into its present prominence. In the gay nineties women became hand conscious. When a girl was going to a party in those days she polished her nails. She didn't just scrub them with a little nail brush as her mother had done, and cut the nails off neatly. She rubbed a little rose-colored nail salve into them and then brought them to a state of beautiful glossiness by rubbing with a chamois buffer.

The luxurious woman of society sometimes had her hands done by a professional manicurist—of whom, before 1900, there were very few in this country really trained to give an expert manicure. Most women used their nail salve and buffers at home. And if anybody saw a man having his nails done by a pretty manicurist —well, that was just too bad.

Then along came a lot of wonderful hand cosmetics that made it an easy matter (*Please turn to page* 99)

The Woman He Had to Kill

(*Continued from page 27*)

heir, subject to certain conditions. Miss Ingleby will herself inform you of them. I shall at once communicate to her the news that we have found you, and she will doubtless get in touch with you in due course."

Ingleby gazed blankly at the lawyer. The interview, it seemed, was finished. An inheritance had been dangled in front of him, but there were conditions and he would hear from his aunt in due course. The lawyer had meanwhile risen and was holding out his hand. But Ingleby could not leave it at that. Decency be blowed . . . He must know more or less where he stood.

It was then that the telephone bell rang—a lucky reprieve, for Ingleby could collect his wits.

Mr. Thoroughgood had put the receiver to his ear and was speaking.

"Yes . . . yes . . . Mr. Thoroughgood speaking. . . .

"Indeed . . . as serious as that . . . yes . . . quite unexpectedly, most fortunate . . . he arrived here not ten minutes ago. . . . Yes, we will come at once . . . yes."

Mr. Thoroughgood replaced the receiver and put a hand to his tie. Ingleby was still wondering which of the many questions he must ask should come first, but Mr. Thoroughgood was coming round the desk toward him and it was the lawyer who spoke.

"Mr. Ingleby," he said, "your arrival here this morning seems almost providential. That was Miss Ingleby's doctor who telephoned. Your aunt has taken a turn for the worse; you must prepare yourself for bad news. Miss Ingleby, I fear, is dying. I am taking you to see her at once."

FIVE minutes later Alfred Ingleby, with Mr. Thoroughgood, was speeding in a taxi toward Parliament Hill as swiftly as the flow of traffic would allow. Ingleby, recovering his presence of mind, was trying to remember as much as he could of Aunt Agatha. He had not seen her for nearly twenty years. She had, while he was still at school, quarrelled royally with his father, and her name had not afterward been mentioned. His father had nevertheless been her favorite brother. Now, it seemed, on her deathbed, she desired to make amends. Anyhow, she was seeking him out as his father's son. He ought, he supposed, to feel grateful to Aunt Agatha. All he did feel, however, was a devouring curiosity as to how much money she was leaving and how soon he might hope to receive it. She must, he surmised, be pretty well off. Parliament Hill was a good neighborhood. Ingleby saw himself suddenly able to walk into old Burstard's office, rap down his twenty-five pounds on the table and tell him to go to the devil. Then he would settle with his other creditors. Prosperity might bloom at last for Cripps Corner.

The taxi stopped with a jerk outside a tall semi-detached house, one of half a hundred that lined the steep road which ended in the Heath. It was a day of wind and rain in early December. Great clouds scudded across the uncertain sky. There was a smell of soot and damp leaves in the air. He followed Mr. Thoroughgood up the whitened steps.

The door was opened by an elderly maid, her face marred with weeping.

"Come in, sir," she said.

Mr. Thoroughgood passed with Ingleby into the dark hall. They were met at the foot of the stairs by a tall thin man in a short black coat and striped trousers.

He introduced himself shortly.

"I am Dr. Thwaites," he announced. "You, I imagine, are Thoroughgood?"

Mr. Thoroughgood nodded.

"I am afraid you have come too late," said the doctor. "Miss Ingleby died twenty minutes ago. She has signed the will, however, and she asked me to give it to you."

He produced from his pocket a folded document and handed it to the lawyer.

"Thank you, doctor," he said, "This, by the way is Mr. Ingleby, her nephew."

The doctor bowed.

"There is nothing more I can do here, I am afraid," he said. "Your aunt, Mr. Ingleby, has suffered from cancer for some years and I am afraid she had rather a bad time during the last fortnight. We did our best, however. Perhaps you would like to go up. Miss Wildshawe is with her. I will leave the death certificate on the hall table, and you can . . . er . . . make the necessary arrangements tomorrow."

"I hope you will act for me, Mr. Thoroughgood," said Ingleby, as they mounted the stairs, "until the contents of the will are known."

"Thank you, thank you," said Mr. Thoroughgood absently.

The doctor quietly took his leave and Mr. Thoroughgood took Ingleby to the first floor. They entered together a large bedroom, filled mostly with a huge mid-Victorian mahogany bed and an enormous wardrobe. The air was close and there was a faint smell of drugs. It was very dark, for the blinds were already pulled down. On the bed, covered to the chin with a sheet, lay a silent figure. Ingleby stepped forward and looked down at the quiet face.

"So that's Aunt Agatha," he said.

There was a moment's silence. The lawyer coughed. There came a short sob from the other side of the bed. Ingleby looked across. A woman had risen and was standing opposite him. He peered at her a little through the gloom. It seemed at first that the woman had no face. Then he saw that it was almost covered in bandages which allowed only the nose, eyes and mouth to appear. The mouth twisted itself into a kind of smile.

"I am Miss Wildshawe," it said.

Ingleby bowed.

"Miss Wildshawe," came the voice of Mr. Thoroughgood from the foot of the bed, "has been with Miss Ingleby for the last ten years."

"I was sorry to hear about your accident, Miss Wildshawe," he continued.

"Thank you," replied the mouth, "the scars are healing well. Dr. Thwaites says that the bandages can come off in a few days and that there will be no permanent disfigurement."

"Miss Wildshawe," explained Mr. Thoroughgood, "had an accident with a kettle some days ago. She scalded herself somewhat severely."

"I am sorry," said Ingleby.

There was an awkward silence. All three stood gazing at the bed.

Mr. Thoroughgood coughed slightly.

"As you are both here," he began, "and as the contents of the will are known to me, I see no reason why we should not settle the formality of reading it immediately. Perhaps when you are ready to do so, you would kindly follow me to the—er—downstairs."

He turned toward the door. Ingleby lingered a moment. So did Miss Wildshawe who had moved now to the bottom of the bed. Two enquiring eyes looked at him from the white mask. She was obviously waiting for Ingleby to speak.

"I—I wish I had come in time," he said at last.

Miss Wildshawe, with a sob, moved toward the door.

IT was more cheerful in the dining-room downstairs. For one thing the blinds were still up and though Miss Wildshawe made an effort to pull them down, she was prevented by the lawyer who said he must have enough light by which to read the will.

They all sat down. Then the lawyer, producing from his pocket the document which the doctor had given him, began to read.

Ingleby, oddly enough, found his attention wandering. Everything was so unexpected. He had suddenly discovered a relative he had not seen for twenty odd years. And she had left him money. Then there was this young woman. She did not look old from her figure. Nothing to write home about, of course. . . . But, really, he must attend.

Mr. Thoroughgood had finished reading the will, but Ingleby hadn't a notion of what it was all about.

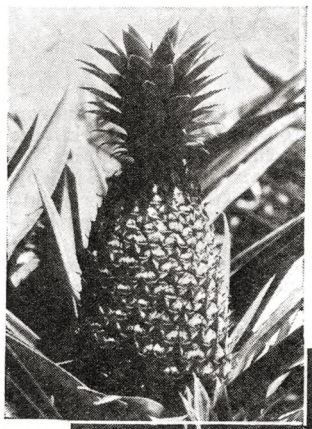
"I'm sorry," said Ingleby, as the lawyer looked up from the paper, "but I'm afraid all this legal wording is rather beyond me."

"It's really quite simple," said Mr. Thoroughgood. "Miss Ingleby leaves her entire property, which I may say in passing is in the neighborhood of some £500 a year, mostly in war loan, to her nephew Alfred Ingleby should he be discovered, on condition," here he paused and looked across the table at Miss Wildshawe whose expression, hidden as it was by the bandages, could not be ascertained, "on condition that he enters into a contract of marriage with Miss Wildshawe. I will read again the relevant passage of the will."

Mr. Thoroughgood cleared his throat and began to read:

"It is my firm desire that Olive Wildshawe, my devoted companion for the past twelve years, should not go unrewarded for all the care and trouble that she has taken with one who has become increasingly a burden with the passage of time. It is equally my firm desire to repair the wrong which I did my brother, William Ingleby, more than twenty years ago. I therefore desire that my property should pass to his son, Alfred Ingleby, if he be still alive at my death. Should he be unmarried, I make it a condition of the bequest that he should offer marriage to Miss Olive Wildshawe. Should she accept the offer and should the marriage take place, then my entire property will pass at once to Alfred Ingleby. Should either party feel unable to follow my wishes in this respect, then I direct that the property be held in trust for Alfred Ingleby, during the lifetime of Olive Wildshawe, who shall receive the full income from it, but that on her death it should pass absolutely to my nephew, Alfred

(*Please turn to page 56*)



Through the Ages

Indians ate pineapples in tropical America thousands of years ago and the banana has been under cultivation since the dawn of history

Galloway

The early cultivation of fruit of the banana family may have made possible the survival of the human race.

WHILE un-traversed waters still divided the old world from the new, pineapples and avocados grew to luscious maturity in tropical America, unknown to inhabitants of Europe, Asia and Africa. At the same time bananas, oranges, peaches and dozens of other delicious fruits were playing an important part in old world bills of fare, unknown to native Americans.

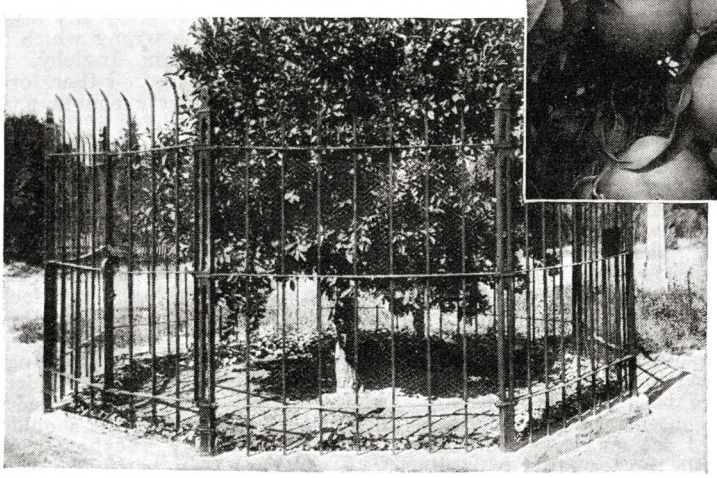
But Columbus changed all that—and one of the first things that explorers and colonists did was to carry new world fruit back to the old world and old world fruit over to the new.

Pineapple originated in tropical America and was introduced into Java, China, India and other countries of Asia soon after the discovery of America—and from thence went to Europe.

Oranges were natives of India and southern China and were introduced by way of Persia to the Roman world by one of the Caesars. They were introduced into Florida and South America at an early date. The seedless or navel orange was sent sixty years ago to Washington from Bahia, Brazil where it is thought to have originated as a sport of a Portuguese type of orange. Two of these trees were sent to California—orphans that were to become the parents of the most important of all orange strains.

These and countless other fruits men and women depended on for nourishment in prehistoric times. And after countless thousands of years, fruit is still one of our most important foods.

By ANN MORTON



Luscious peaches were grown in China three thousand years ago. The fifty-year-old ancestor of our present navel orange still bears fruit at Riverdale, California.

For information concerning this month's food circulars please turn to page 100.

Check up on those jangled nerves today

Yes, a simple little nervous habit such as wringing out your handkerchief is really a sign of jangled nerves.

And jangled nerves may mean lines in your face—They mean that in time you may look years older than you are.

So if you find yourself with any of those little nervous habits, check up on yourself.

Get enough sleep—fresh air—recreation. And watch your smoking.

Remember, you can smoke as many Camels as you want. Their costlier tobaccos never jangle the nerves.

COSTLIER TOBACCOS

Camels are made from finer, MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS than any other popular brand of cigarettes!

TEST YOUR NERVES.. FREE!

Write for illustrated book of 20 nerve tests. See if you have healthy nerves. Have loads of fun testing friends for "jangled nerves." Mail order-blank below with the fronts from 2 packs of Camels. Free book comes postpaid.

CLIP THIS COUPON

R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company
Dept. 118-A, Winston-Salem, N. C.

I enclose fronts from 2 packs of Camels. Send me book of nerve tests postpaid.

*Name*_____
(Print Name)

*Street*_____

*City*_____ *State*_____

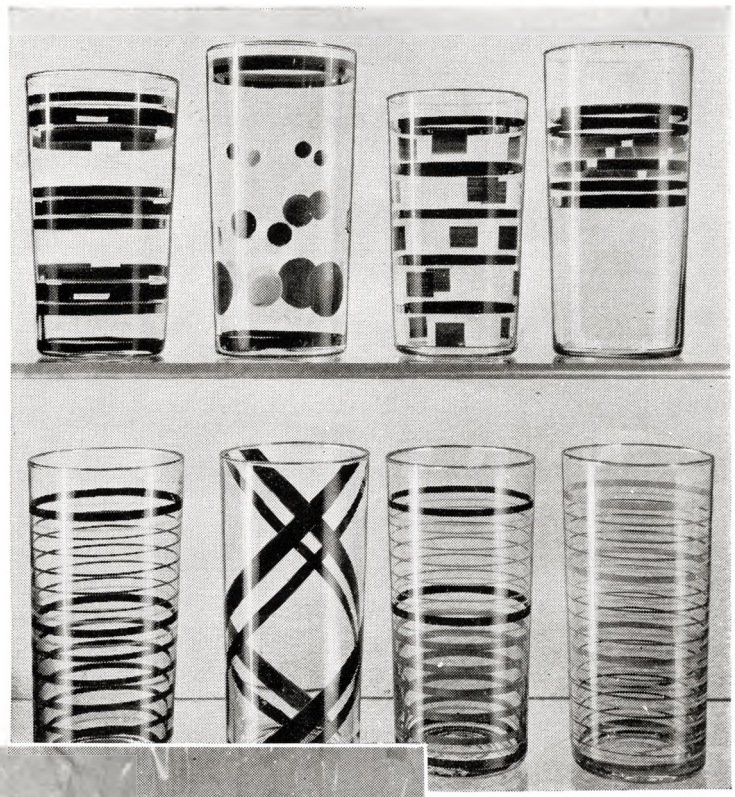
Offer expires December 31, 1934

CAMELS

SMOKE AS MANY AS YOU WANT
...THEY NEVER GET ON YOUR NERVES

The New Deal in GLASS

Quench your summer thirst with beverage-filled glasses decorated in the modern manner



DRINKING merely to quench your thirst or to drown your sorrows calls for no elaborate glassware. An old-fashioned jelly tumbler or a battered tin cup will serve the purpose. But if you have an eye to style and a taste for flavor then the design and color and shape of the glass are of real importance.

The secret of fine glass making was once known only to a few and even within recent times glasses of real distinction could be enjoyed only by a favored few, not only because of their high initial cost but because of their extreme fragility. It is now possible to buy reasonably priced glasses that are not only sturdy enough to survive an amazing amount of hard usage but that are really beautiful in design. Many of the smartest of these glasses come in a variety of useful sizes. There is a five-ounce beverage glass that you can use, among other things, for fruit juice or for tomato juice cocktails, a nine-ounce glass that is the usual choice for water or milk, a ten-ounce glass for lemonade or highballs, a twelve-ounce glass for ice tea, and the larger fourteen-ounce highball glass.

Modern glass makers have taken pains to provide glasses for a wide variety of tastes and dispositions. If you are a conservative sort of person who prefers to take your ice tea or other cooling summer drink without benefit of gay color, choose a simple band design in white, black and platinum. On the other hand if you are blessed with a light and rather frivolous nature you will prefer the new bubble glasses, decorated with an assortment of red, green, yellow, orange and blue dots.

If you are a more practical sort of person, interested more in facts than in fancies —and still like color with your liquid refreshments—choose the tumbler showing five platinum bands combined with blocks of red, orange, yellow, green and blue or one showing colored rectangles in combination with platinum and black bands.

Other glasses that give you an opportunity to satisfy your taste for color show interesting band treatments of red with black, orange with green, yellow with green, green with red, blue with green and black with yellow. But, if with your enjoyment of better business and the new deal you still retain a saving sense of thrift you cannot possibly do better than to stock your pantry shelves with an assortment of the colorful Scotch plaid glasses that may be had in no less than six useful sizes.

A plentiful supply of ice has greatly simplified the question of cold drinks in the home. Perhaps you do not wish to serve beer and other beverages ice cold, but that does not mean you have to have a deep, dark cellar for storage. With a little ingenuity you can duplicate any temperature by regulating the refrigerator or by shifting the beverage bottles.

Stem glasses served a practical purpose to begin with. When it was difficult to chill your drink to a refreshing temperature the stem kept off the heat of the hand. Now well-chilled beer, milk or water can be served in either type of glass.

Courtesy Libbey Glass Mfg. Co.

Platinum bands, colorful bubbles, plaids and spirals give zest to the long, cool drink of 1934.

You don't have to drink Scotch to enjoy your favorite beverages in these Scotch plaid glasses.

Red, green, yellow, orange and blue bubble glasses in highball, ice tea and regulation table size.

WANTED---

Junior Safety Volunteers!

"Oh, dad, here's something I want to do."

WOULD you like to be a Junior Safety Volunteer and have a booklet with pictures in it showing how you can help to prevent accidents? Your booklet will have a place on it for your name.

Of course you are smart enough to take care of yourself on the street, and you surely know how to keep an eye on kids who forget to look where they are going —especially the little ones.

If you save someone from being killed or having his bones broken you will remember it as long as you live. And you will be on the lookout for just such a chance.

More than a thousand children a month are killed by accident in our country and more than a hundred thousand are hurt—many of them seriously—in spite of all that has been done by fathers and mothers, teachers and traffic officers to keep boys and girls from being injured.

The Metropolitan hopes that when Junior Safety Volunteers are on the alert, all over the country, there will be a very different story to tell about accidents next month and the months to follow.

Print your name and address on the coupon and be one of the first Junior Safety Volunteers in your neighborhood. While being careful about yourself you can do a grand job looking after schoolmates, or possibly grown people who will not know so much about accidents as you will after you get your free booklet. Who will be the first to volunteer?

Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., Dept. 634-B
One Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y.

I want to help prevent accidents. Please send my copy of "The Junior Safety Volunteer."

Name _____
(Print plainly)

Address _____

City _____ State _____

METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

FREDERICK H. ECKER, PRESIDENT — ONE MADISON AVE., NEW YORK, N. Y.

The Woman He Had to Kill

(*Continued from page 53*)

Ingleby, or to his lawful heirs."

"I think," said the lawyer, laying the paper down, "that this is very clear. I should perhaps add, Mr. Ingleby, that if the proposed alliance is not contracted, that is to say, if your aunt's property is to be held in trust for yourself and the income paid to Miss Wildshawe during her life, you are to receive £100 free of legacy duty."

There was a long pause. Ingleby looked across the table. He had been getting used to the idea that he was the heir of Aunt Agatha. But now it seemed that he was to be annoyed with preposterous conditions—perhaps defrauded of his rights.

"You are sure this is legal?" he inquired.

"Perfectly legal," replied Mr. Thoroughgood. "The terms are usual. In fact, I may say that my client, the late Miss Ingleby, did not take my advice in the phraseology of the matter, but there can be no question of the validity of the will, and I can tell you at once that any suit brought in the courts on the ground of undue influence would undoubtedly fail."

Mr. Thoroughgood rose.

"I think you both understand the position," he said, "and I shall be grateful to receive your decision as soon as possible. I will see about probate and the death duties. You can rely on me for that."

Already he was moving toward the door and, an instant later, it closed with a click behind him.

Ingleby cleared his throat nervously as a faint slam denoted that the front door had shut upon the departing lawyer. He was not, however, the first to speak. Miss Wildshawe was leaning across the table.

"This is rather a ridiculous situation, is it not, Mr. Ingleby," she was saying. "But I assure you that it is none of my seeking. I had no idea of the terms of your aunt's will. I only knew that your aunt had in some way or other provided for me."

"Well," said Ingleby, "it can't be helped. But it's rather sudden, isn't it?"

"And now you are wondering what to do about it, I suppose," said Miss Wildshawe. "But I am going to tell you straight out that it is no good thinking of marriage."

"You are married, perhaps, already?"

Miss Wildshawe shook her head.

"No, but I am engaged. I have been engaged for five years."

There was a short pause.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" asked Ingleby.

"Not at all," she said mechanically.

"Jacob Broadbent is his name," she continued. "He is an electrician and now with Alister and Hancocks, the big firm in Holborn, and doing quite well. You would not want me to give him up, would you?"

"Er—no, Miss Wildshawe—of course not. I would not dream of it."

"I am so glad you see it like that, Mr. Ingleby," replied Miss Wildshawe. "But I quite realize that for you it is a little—hard."

Ingleby looked at her and suddenly he realized the position.

"Excuse me," he murmured, "but how old are you?"

"Thirty-one," came the answer.

Ingleby gave a short laugh.

"And I," he said, "am thirty-eight. It doesn't look as if there was much chance of the Ingleby war loan coming my way, does it, Miss Wildshawe?"

"But what can I do, Mr. Ingleby? The revenue is left to me, and Jacob is not what you might call exactly rolling."

She was speaking fast now, holding to the table with both hands.

"He's doing well, of course," she continued, "but he has not had a raise yet this year and £500 a year—we could marry at once. . . . I shall have to think it out."

"Not much thinking required," said Ingleby shortly. "You get £500 a year . . . and I get £100 free of legacy duty."

He paused. "I am glad it's free of duty," he added bitterly.

"Please, Mr. Ingleby. Nothing is yet decided."

"Humbug," he said. "You will take that legacy. You would be a fool, if you did not. You never set eyes on me before. I'm nothing to you. And there's Jacob to be considered. You will be bringing him a nice big fat dowry all of a sudden. Funny, isn't it? Damned funny."

He strode round the table. She shrank from his approach.

"A hundred pounds," he said. "And my aunt was worth how much. . . . Put it at a cool ten thousand. And you . . . you."

He stepped back from her and looked round the room, his anger wilting as suddenly as it had grown. There was a large sideboard standing by the wall. He moved quickly toward it and pulled at the door of the cupboard in the lower half of it.

"What do you want?" demanded Miss Wildshawe.

"Damn it," he said shakily. "Isn't there even a drop of whisky in the house?"

MR. BURSTARD looked round the table.

"I think you understand the position, Mr. Ingleby," he said, thrusting forward his big beard, stained with tobacco juice. "The sheriff's officers will wait upon you tomorrow morning, and if we have not had a satisfactory settlement by this day week we shall distrain. We've waited long enough and there is no more to be said."

Ingleby stared at the advertisements for chemical manures and tractors upon the walls of the dining room of The Long Man at Adenham. He said nothing. He wanted to leap over the table, smash his fist into the red face of Mr. Burstard just above the beard, then take little Blatchett, the lawyer, by the scruff of his neck, shake him till his false teeth fell out and fling him through the window. But he only stood breathing heavily. Turning at last, he made for the door. On reaching it he faced about.

"You can go to hell," he said to the assembled company. "I have done my best for you. I've offered you a hundred pounds, which is all I am ever likely to get. Put your damned officers in when you like. It won't take them long to take an inventory of Cripps Corner."

He pushed through the door and slammed it behind him.

Now he was on the road, trudging wearily back to his farm. His brain was swimming a little, for the pre-war whisky was strong, and he had taken little else for the last two days. He had needed it, too. It kept him from brooding over that business of the legacy. . . .

He pulled a letter from his pocket. It was in a large round feminine hand, and he read it again as he walked.

Miss Olive Wildshawe was full of the noblest sentiments. But she was sticking fast to the money. She had gone over the whole business with the lawyers who had assured her that there was nothing to be done. She had only a life interest in the money, and even if she had wished to do so, she could not pay a cent of the capital to him.

> "So you see, Mr. Ingleby, there is nothing I can do. I feel I must take the income. You do not realize, perhaps, what marriage means to me. I have waited five years, and when a woman is past thirty—well I am sure you will understand. I feel this is my only chance, and, after all, you are still young. You have your farm and your work to do."

Ingleby crushed the letter into a ball and made to fling it away. But he thought better of it and stuffed it with shaking fingers into the side pocket of his coat.

To be sure he had his farm and his work to do. . . . And there in fancy he saw old Burstard with his little eyes, his great beard and his thick gaitered legs.

Ingleby stood suddenly still and shook his fist at the sombre trees that almost met above his head.

He was now in the thick part of the forest, moving along the track which led to his farm. It was very dark here, for it was afternoon and the tired December day was drawing to a close. His mind, too, was dark. There seemed to be no ray of hope. Four hundred and fifty pounds he owed and he must find it in a week.

HE sat in the room for two days, rising only to replenish the fire from a great stack of logs that he had cut some weeks before, piled in the scullery outside. During that time he ate three pieces of bread and two pieces of cheese, but he drank two bottles of his father's pre-war whisky. From time to time he was vaguely aware of two little men with pencils behind their ears, who bothered him by taking stock of the contents of the house—a Landseer engraving of the Monarch of the Glen; eight copper sauce-pans in bad repair; one bedspread, torn; and so forth.

It was on the second night that the great idea came to him as he sat before the fire gazing into the glowing depths. Every man for himself now and the devil take the hindmost. It came to him suddenly, a gorgeous plan, a superb plan . . . copper-bottomed. Olive Wildshawe was thirty-one and he was thirty-eight. No use waiting for Olive Wildshawe to die. She might easily live another fifty years.

The idea, of course, must have been growing in some dark corner of his brain for days like a seed in the ground, out of sight and knowledge. Or had it been put there complete and ready? Almost it was as though someone had been whispering in his ear, and now

(*Please turn to page* 58)

To avoid Wrinkles...to Fight Dryness

CHERISH BOTH YOUR SKINS

In UNDER SKIN (right) ward off dreaded wrinkles with deep, penetrating oil-rich cream.

In OUTER SKIN (in center) stop mortifying dryness . . . roughness, with moistening cream.

THE APPLE TELLS HOW WRINKLES COME

1 At its peak, the inner and outer skins are both firm and smooth.

2 A little past its prime, the inner tissue of the apple has shrunken.

3 The outer skin wrinkled to fit the shrunken under skin. This happens in human skin!

FEW WOMEN know they must take proper care of both their skins to present a clear, fresh complexion to the world. Their *outer* skin and their *under* skin. That's not only sound sense—that's accepted scientific knowledge!

The outer skin is wafer-thin. It protects the under skin from weather, climate, exposure. The under skin is many times thicker—and is full of nerves, blood vessels, tiny glands, that supply it with oil.

WRINKLES . . . Long before you're aware of them, insidious wrinkles start way down in your half-starved under skin. Natural beauty oils there keep it young, firm. After "20" these oil glands often fail to function precisely. Pond's Cold Cream penetrates deeply—carries to your under skin the oils it lacks. It keeps mortifying wrinkles at bay. And Pond's Cold Cream has been famous for years as a skin cleanser!

THE ANSWER TO DRYNESS... Your extremely delicate outer skin should always be kept moist. Weather, wind, steam heat, dust . . . all sap natural moisture from your thirsty outer skin. Even young women suffer from skin roughening. Don't use a grease cream for this. You need the wonderful moisture-restoring substance in Pond's Vanishing Cream! It is wonderful for softening chapped, dried-out skins quickly. Smooth it on hands, neck, arms and face.

This is how the arrestingly beautiful Mrs. John Davis Lodge describes her Pond's Two-Skin Treatment.

1. *"My nighttime cleansing* . . . Pond's Cold Cream patted in well . . . removed with Pond's Tissues. Then a second cleansing, for final toning and firming. Again . . . Pond's soft Tissues.

Mrs. John Davis Lodge

(née Francesca Braggiotti) keeps both her Under and Outer skins young . . . fresh . . . with Pond's Two-Skin Treatment. "I really believe these Two Creams are all any woman needs."

2. *"Finally,* Pond's Vanishing Cream, which I leave on overnight. It softens and smooths my skin beautifully.

3. *"Mornings,* and during the day, I cleanse with Pond's Cold Cream. Then Pond's Vanishing Cream. Powder and rouge go on so evenly."

Try the Pond's Two Creams yourself! Send for samples! In no time at all you will see how velvety soft and fresh your skin will be.

● For your *Under Skin*—Pond's Cold Cream. Oily. Or Pond's Liquefying Cream. Melts instantly.

● For your *Outer Skin*—use Pond's Vanishing Cream. It's greaseless!

SEND FOR SAMPLES

Pond's Extract Company, Dept. F
48 Hudson Street, New York City

I enclose 10¢ (to cover postage and packing) for samples of all Pond's Creams and two different shades of Pond's New Face Powder as checked.

I prefer Light Shades ☐
I prefer Dark Shades ☐

Name_____

Street_____

City_____ State_____

The Woman He Had to Kill

(*Continued from page* 56)

at last he heard and understood. His mind had seemed to be blank and then . . . he was aware of the whole thing . . . every difficulty solved. He knew now what he must do and how he must do it.

He rose from the fire and took from the dresser a penny bottle of ink, an old pen and a sheet of paper. Then he sat crouching over the table for two hours composing the letter. That was the first part of the plan. There was only one piece of paper in the house, so he made a rough draft on the kitchen slate, for the letter must be carefully worded. He sighed with satisfaction when at last it was finished, and he read it in the light of the candles.

"My dear Miss Wildshawe:

"I feel that your letter of the 15th calls for some reply, but I have not answered it before because I have been taking steps. I quite realize all you say and your difficulties, especially *re* Mr. Broadbent. I can scarcely blame you for taking your chance. On the other hand, it would be useless for me to pretend that a small capital sum of money would not be very useful to me now. So I have taken the liberty of consulting a young lawyer friend of mine, who was in the army with me, and we have carefully considered the whole position. He has hit upon a plan whereby we can both, I think, mutually benefit from my aunt's will with no unfairness or unpleasantness on either side. I am not too anxious, however, to put the proposal on paper at this stage. I would rather discuss the whole position with you fully and frankly before making any definite proposal. I feel sure you will understand my position in the matter, especially as you tell me that your fiance has some scruples about this legacy. I accordingly suggest that you come down here and see me at your earliest convenience, perhaps Wednesday would suit if you have nothing better to do?

So I shall expect you, my dear Miss Wildshawe, on Wednesday, at Adenham Station. There's a train leaving London (Victoria) at 3:15 p.m. which is due here shortly after 4:30. I shall be at the station to meet you and we can come back to the farm here, meet my friend and discuss his suggestion.

I shall, of course, meet the train, but if by any chance we miss each other you have only got to follow the place I have drawn on the back of this letter and you will find Cripps Corner easily enough. I am,

Yours faithfully,

ALFRED INGLEBY.

P. S.—There is a fast train back from Haywards Heath at 8 p.m. I should wear some galoshes if I were you as the road to the farm is very muddy."

Ingleby sat back with a smile on his lips. It was a clever bit of work—especially that bit about the plan on the back of the letter. For she would naturally bring it with her in case she needed it to find her way. And the postscripts were killing . . . galoshes and a fast train back from Haywards Heath . . . killing!

Ingleby posted the letter that same night, staggering down the main road half a mile to a pillar box to do so. And now he must wait. It rained all next day, and only half a bottle of whisky remained. He held it up to the light.

"I must keep that," he muttered. "I shall probably need it . . . afterward."

At 8 o'clock next morning Ingleby stood at the end of the track leading to his farm where it joined the main road. He waited a quarter of an hour before old Baines showed up. There he was at last, and he waved cheerfully to Ingleby as he got off his bicycle.

"Here's a letter for you, my lad," he said, and stood in the road holding it out.

Ingleby took it eagerly.

The plan was going well. Miss Wildshawe intimated that she would be at Adenham station at 4:30 on the following afternoon. It was some time since she had been in the country and she would much enjoy walking to his farm.

Ingleby smiled.

The next day at 8 o'clock in the morning, Ingleby was once more at the junction of the main road and the track leading to Cripps Corner. He had in the meantime been busy. For this was the second part of the plan. This, in fact, was the masterpiece—as time would show, but it was a pity he was obliged to wait . . . and wait again. Waiting took it out of a man. His hands, pressed against the handle of a stout ash plant, were not as steady as they might be.

He looked, however, with complacency at his right foot. In place of the ordinary heavy boot he was accustomed to wear, it was covered with the remains of a felt slipper and a soiled bandage of large proportions, showing in parts a dull red.

Thus he stood leaning on the stick and gazing eagerly down the road. It was raining, a thin drizzle. The morning was raw. He shivered and pulled his overcoat closer about him. Where was old Baines? Wasn't he going to pass that morning of all mornings? It was essential that old Baines should pass.

There was not a sound except the quiet drip of water from the bare trees. Five or ten minutes passed and Ingleby felt his feet growing numb. He shifted his position slightly. Then, at last, he heard a sound on the wet road, and there was old Baines pedalling along in a clinging black government waterproof with a hood to it, the cape spread well over the handlebars.

"Nothing for you today, lad," he said.

Then his glance traveled to Ingleby's right foot.

"Eh, lad," he added, "what's come to you?"

He bent and inspected the blood-soaked bandage with concern.

"I've had an accident," said Ingleby. "I want you to take a message from me to the station."

"That looks bad to me," said the postman. "You ought to have a doctor."

Ingleby shook his head.

"I've no money for doctors," he said,

(*Please turn to page* 62)

I'm sending the snapshot — did you really mean it when you asked for one?

★ How much a snapshot says to the one who waits for it! No longer is the separation real. This little square of paper brings them face to face. Hearing the whispers that cannot be written in a letter. Feeling the heartbeats . . . Always snapshots have been intimate and expressive, but now they are more so than ever. Kodak Verichrome Film wipes out the old limitations. People look natural, as you want them. Use Verichrome for your next pictures. Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, New York.

Don't just write it—
Picture it—*with snapshots*

GAY SUMMER STYLES

Brighten your summer wardrobe with simply made hats and scarfs

By FRANCES COWLES

Hats and scarfs designed by HELEN SCHAD

Be nonchalant in an off-the-face hat made of seersucker. The scarf will shield your neck from sunburn.

If you would like to obtain hat and scarf patterns and directions please turn to page 99

Tower Studios

This up-to-date brown linen scarf and cap are smart enough for street and simple enough for sports. They are very easily made.

Paris set the style for plaid hats. Why not make one of gingham with a bright ribbon to tie at the back and a pleated scarf?

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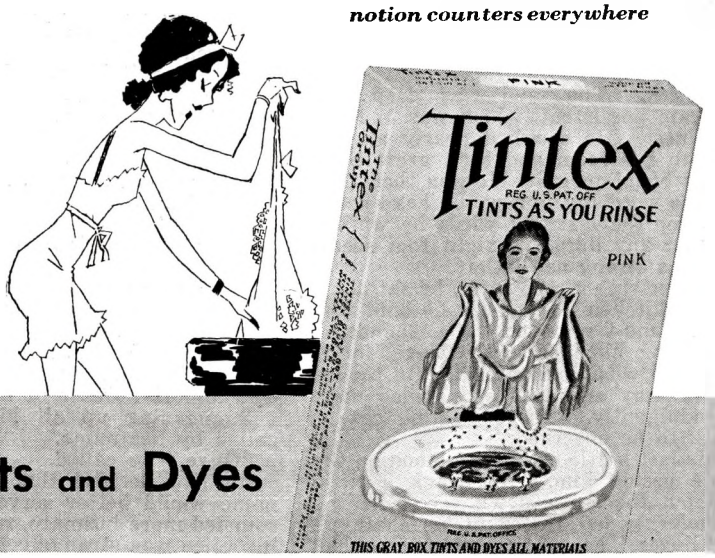

Tintex *World's Largest Selling* **Tints and Dyes**

The Woman He Had to Kill

(*Continued from page 58*)

"and I'm quite able to look after myself. I've found a use at last for the old field dressing. It's a clean cut with the chopper. I hit my foot instead of the billet. But it will be some time before I can walk as far as the station. It's a bit of a job getting to the corner here."

Baines nodded solemnly, and the rain drops fell from the peak of his cap.

"Were you then wanting to go to the station?" he asked.

Ingleby nodded.

"I was to meet a young lady coming to see me on business this afternoon," he replied. "She will arrive by the 4:32. She has never been here before and I intended to meet her. Would you take a message from me to Tibetts, the station master?"

"What will I tell him?" demanded Baines.

"Tell him to look out for a young lady and tell her of my accident."

"What is she like?" asked Baines.

Ingleby hesitated a moment. He had never seen the face of Miss Wildshawe.

"A very ordinary young woman," he said, "name of Wildshawe. I will write it down for you."

He produced from his pocket an envelope and a stump of pencil, wrote down the name in block capitals and handed it to the postman.

"Ask Tibetts to tell her to come straight up. I will be waiting for her at the farm with tea."

"Wouldn't it be best for her to take a cab, or something?" suggested Baines.

Ingleby appeared to consider the suggestion a moment.

"Of course," he said, "if she wants to do so. But I don't suppose she will find one, and she will have to walk the last half mile. You could not get a cab down this filthy ditch of a road."

"Very well, lad," said Baines, preparing to mount his bicycle. "I will see that she gets your message. And you had better look after yourself, lad. Don't get that foot of yours poisoned."

"I shall be all right," said Ingleby.

"And see here, lad"—Baines hesitated a moment—"best go a bit steady on the whisky, if you don't mind my saying so."

"Don't you worry about that," replied Ingleby. "There isn't much more of it left."

INGLEBY, left to himself, turned his back on the main road and began walking down the track leading to Cripps Corner. He leaned heavily on his stick. The mud was deep and the rain persistent, which was bad for the chest. He coughed nearly all the way to the farm and soon grew tired of his hobbling gait. It was then that anyone watching him would have noted that for the last 200 yards he walked without any limp, his right foot seemingly as strong as his left.

On arriving at the farm, he sat down by the kitchen fire. Then he bent forward and removed the bandage, stretching his foot to the blaze, for it was cold with constriction. He turned it this way and that and smiled upon it indulgently. There was no cut or mark to be observed.

His last bottle of whisky stood on the table beside him. He drank a little and put the bottle down.

Suddenly he started in his chair.

"Gloves," he said aloud, for he had contracted the habit of talking to himself in his loneliness. "I must get a pair of gloves."

He got shakily to his feet. Was all his scheme to go awry? He pulled himself together and, standing by the table, did some hard thinking. He could not go into Adenham to buy gloves—not with a wounded foot. Besides, to buy gloves would be dangerous and in any case he hadn't any cash. . . . Nevertheless, gloves were important. Everyone wore gloves.

Suddenly he remembered. A smile stole over his face as he lumbered across the room and up the stairs to the attic. There he opened a ramshackle trunk and began to turn over the pile of musty clothes which it contained. Petticoats, bodices, old serge skirts—these he flung aside. But here it was at last—a small packet done up in faded paper. He tore it open. A pair of white cotton gloves, rather yellow, lay in his hand.

"I thought Ma had kept her wedding gloves," he muttered. "It's lucky she had large hands."

IT was almost dark. The rain had ceased about an hour before, but the clouds were low and it might start again at any moment. The woods dripped monotonously.

Ingleby stood in the shelter of a big bush some 200 yards from the turn leading to Cripps Corner. He had thought very carefuly about his ambush, and had finally decided to wait near the main road. The risk was slightly greater, though at this time of day, five in the afternoon, there was very little traffic. It was, however, better to wait there. Miss Wildshawe might miss the turning. You never could tell with women; they had no sense of locality. And that would not do at all.

Besides it would be better for her to be found not too near the house.

He waited for her perhaps half an hour. The train, he imagined, must be late, but that was nothing new. From time to time he peered out down the road, but soon he could see nothing. The gloom of the December day had fallen upon the land.

Had the woman missed her train? Or was she hiring a cab after all? Ingleby strained his ears. These dripping boughs got upon the nerves . . . drip . . . drip. No, by God, that was a footstep—a light step on the hard road.

Ingleby felt his mouth go dry. He fumbled in his pocket and produced the white cotton gloves. He slipped them on. His hands were trembling.

"Keep cool, you damn fool," he muttered. "Cool . . . cool . . . five hundred a year for life."

The footsteps were coming nearer. Ingleby drew back into the shadow of the holly bush. There at last she was . . . walking upon his side of the road. She was wearing a silk mackintosh and there was the outline of an umbrella over her head. But it was getting very dark. He could scarcely see her. She was almost abreast of him now.

Summoning up all his courage he called by her name.

"Olive," he called.

He had decided that the Christian name would better serve his turn. It sounded more intimate, reassuring. But his voice was strangely thin and weak.

"Olive," he called again.

The figure in the road paused. Then Ingleby heard a little gasp of fear and the quick pattering of footsteps.

"Damn the women . . ." She was running away down the road. Ingleby sprang after her. It was darker every minute. He could scarcely see where he was going. But there—at long last—she was, almost in the ditch. In a flash Ingleby was upon her. Was it anger or the fumes of whisky? It was impossible to tell. An overwhelming passion of rage was shaking him. He had her now. She gave a cry, instantly stifled by his right hand. He felt her teeth close upon his forefinger. Then she kicked out, catching him a sharp blow on the shin as he swung her off her feet. He lurched sideways. There was a crash and crackle of boughs as he stumbled into the thicket. A holly branch scored his face. It was even darker here . . . dark . . . and what he had to do was dark. He shifted his hands to her throat. Her neck was warm under the thin stuff of the cotton gloves. His grip tightened. She had ceased to struggle now. She was lying still enough, limp in his arms. Dare he relax? Carefully he let go. The light body swayed against him and she fell in a heap at his feet. He bent down, feeling desperately till at last he had his hand on her heart. But his own was beating so fiercely that for a moment he could not tell whether she lived or not. With a violent effort he forced himself to be calm. Yes . . . that was better . . . not a movement . . . dead all right . . . dead as a doornail. He had felt men's hearts during the war. He knew what death was like.

"The letter," he muttered to himself, "where is the letter?" He felt about in the darkness. Was there nothing but this damned umbrella? Ingleby put a foot upon the umbrella and heard the ribs crack. He was cold and wet, and drops of moisture fell upon the back of his neck where he stooped. And yet, though shivering, he was on fire. Beads of sweat ran along his forehead and trickled into his eyes.

HAD she not even a handbag? Had she hidden the letter in her clothes? He began to feel again for it when his foot struck something. He fell on one knee and a faint crackle showed that he had broken something. Here was the bag at last. He retrieved it from under him. Then he pulled out the contents but could not see them in the darkness. There was a mirror broken by his knee. He could feel that. There were also a couple of envelopes, a powder puff, some loose money and a note case. He thrust the lot into a side pocket, then took the bag, stuck it into the woman's clothing, picked up the smashed umbrella and the still body, and carried them, grunting with the effort, as far as his strength would take him, into the wood. It was worse than he had anticipated but it would never do for her to be found too close to the road. Fortunately he knew every inch of the way. He could not get lost. So he staggered on until, quite spent, he let the body fall into a thicket beneath a clump of fir trees. There could be no better place. It might lie there for weeks.

Then he threw the umbrella into a

(*Please turn to page 64*)

STRANGE COLORS FOUND IN HUMAN SKIN—

REVOLUTIONIZE FACE POWDERS

Miss Charlotte Young says, "Pond's Rose Cream is wonderful for blondes or fair-skinned brunettes."

NEW DEVICE FINDS

Bright Blue IN BLONDE SKIN

Startling Green IN BRUNETTE

ACTUAL RECORD TAKEN BY DELICATE OPTICAL MACHINE PRODUCES *NEW* POWDER SHADES THAT CORRECT COMPLEXION FAULTS

Mrs. Edward Burns—a typical brunette—uses Pond's Rose Brunette. "No other powder has ever seemed so grand for my skin."

Actually a $3.00 Powder

ONLY 55¢

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BLONDES and Brunettes need no longer *guess* about the face powder they should use.

A new era in powder blending has come about.

Here's the amazing truth . . . In every human skin, there are colors you cannot distinguish with the human eye.

Now, a delicate optical machine has finally been found to detect those colors. By means of this machine, Pond's actually recorded to the smallest degree the bright blue in blonde skin—the startling green in brunette.

Many skins analyzed

Many blonde and brunette skins were analyzed to find exactly *what amount* of blue makes the most beautiful blonde skin, what *green* goes into the loveliest brunette skin.

Then Pond's used these actual records to blend their new powder shades.

Now any girl can be sure that these scientifically analyzed powders will bring back to her just the colors missing in her own skin.

Pond's powder is finer in texture than expensive French powders. And Pond's has the same fragrance as a certain very costly imported powder. A lovely glass jar for only 55¢ contains as much as most $1.00 boxes. And, in the five-and-ten and variety stores—ten and twenty-five cent sizes. Six colors! Natural, Light Cream, Rose Cream, Brunette, Rose Brunette, Dark Brunette.

★ ***Two Special Boxes for 5¢. Send Coupon.*** Send for two special boxes of Pond's powder—two new light shades or two new dark shades—as you prefer. Try them! See what life—beauty—these new colors bring to your skin.

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Dept. F, 92 Hudson Street, New York City
I enclose 5¢ (to cover cost of postage and packing) for TWO Special Boxes of Pond's New Powder as checked.
I prefer Light Shades ☐ I prefer Dark Shades ☐

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Street_____

City_____ State_____

News of the New

BREEZES of fashion shift easily, and while the wind-blown silhouette of last Winter meant one thing, this Summer it apparently means something quite the reverse. Then we were sailing against the wind, with the fullness of skirt centered at the back. Now we are sailing with the wind, with fullness shifted lightly forward.

In the world of fashions, winds may quite easily blow two ways at the same time, so that while the fullness of our skirts appears to be blown forward our hair may be blown smartly off our foreheads and our hats may have a back blown tilt. But of this no one is quite certain. Only a few weeks ago bare foreheads were in order, and now the latest word from Paris indicates the smartness of a short straight bang.

HERE'S something new in constructive beauty culture—lessons in loveliness given to you by experts with your own fair face as the object of your attentions. You take your place in front of a make-up table spread with all sorts of tempting cosmetics. Eight or nine others, who make up the class, are seated at similar make-up tables while an expert gives you instructions and individual guidance in beautifying your skin, your eyes and your lips. She will tell you precisely what shade of rouge you should use and where it should be applied to best advantage, and she will study your face and show you how to bring out all the latent beauty in your eyes and lips.

There are classes in the morning and afternoon for the home-makers and women of leisure, with special evening classes for the busy business woman who realizes that an understanding of beauty culture and the best use of cosmetics may be as useful to her as a brush-up course in French or Spanish.

At one of these new schools of beauty, where classes are strictly limited to ten, arrangements may be made so that you with nine of your friends may have a special hour all your own. One lesson would give you help—two or three would give you the claims to real expertness.

Even those self-sufficient women who think that they know all that there is to know about the use of rouge, powder and other cosmetics will learn dozens of new ways to increase their charms.

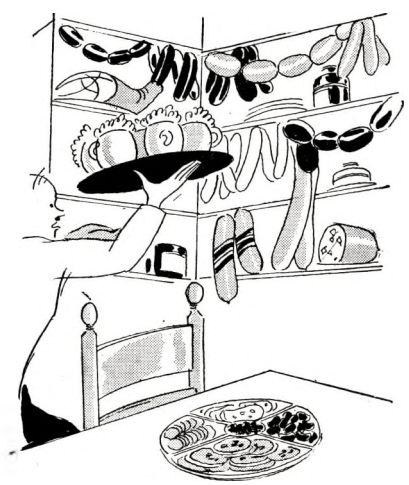
THERE always seems to be something to worry about and, while fifteen or twenty years ago, philanthropists were worrying about the long hours that we working girls had to spend sitting at our desks, standing behind our counters or tending our machines, they are now giving a lot of kindly consideration to the subject of how we will spend our new leisure. Once they were afraid we would ruin our health working too much and now, perhaps, they are afraid we will get into bad habits with not enough to do.

Deans of women's colleges, presidents of large industrial organizations, mayors of cities, personnel directors, plant managers here, there and everywhere have been called upon to give wise advice—but the most helpful and altogether pleasant suggestions have come from certain department stores who have shown us concretely what hobbies we might pursue.

Bagatelle, parcheesi, checkers, lotto and camelot we soon discover are not a bit too childish to focus our adult attention. As Summer comes we may take up Tom Thumb golf or croquet on our own front lawns. There are dozens of musical instruments of a not too intricate sort if we wish to make melody and, if we are conscious of latent artistic talents, we can now dabble in water colors or oils at a most reasonable cost.

CHEESE to the average American housewife a few years ago was just cheese—a yellow sort of nourishment sold in wedge-shape pieces at the corner grocery store, that could be made into welsh rabbits or served with pie. There were also the "smelly" cheeses—limburger, brie, and camembert, appreciated by only a few, until ten or fifteen years ago. Then we all began to wake up to the fact that the world was full of a variety of delicious cheeses that could be used to give welcome variety to the diet and add style and tone to our meals.

Much the same thing is happening now with respect to sausage. To many of us the word still means little more than frankfurter, bologna, salame and the regular sort of fresh pork sausage that can be bought either "loose" or in



links. If you are discriminating in your taste you know, too, that there is a big difference in the flavor of this fresh pork sausage, depending on the grade and freshness of the meat used and the precise blending of spices and other seasonings. That is as much as most of us know about it. The fact is that sausage of one sort or another has been a very important and valuable food for over three thousand years and, to quote that well-known dietitian, Lucy Graves, sausage is known today by almost as many names as it is years old.

The spiced and salted sausages were among the earliest forms of preserved foods and, just as with cheese, each community recorded something of its own taste in food flavors by the type of sausage it chose to produce.

Now there seems to be starting what might be called a newer knowledge of sausage, not only of its food value and convenience, but of its interesting flavors and style value. While the busy housewife felt a sense of apology at sending the children to the corner store for fifteen cents worth of bologna for their midday meal, she now realizes that pure high-grade sausage gives commendable variety and nourishment to children's diet, and the style conscious hostess feels that she is showing her sophistication when she offers a plate of assorted sausage as an *hors d'oeuvre* at luncheon or as the *pièce de résistance* at a late supper.

The Woman He Had to Kill

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bush nearby and turning, made his way back to the farm.

INGLEBY looked round the kitchen. It was just as he had left it hardly two hours ago. But why should it be otherwise? Nothing much had happened. He had merely done what he had set out to do. He did not feel essentially different himself. He had committed a murder, but murderers were probably, a good many of them, much as other men. There were more of them than was ever suspected. Himself, for example. No one would ever know that he had murdered Olive Wildshawe. At least he felt that they wouldn't.

But there was still a good deal to be done—the most important thing of all, in fact, remained—the great idea which had sprung from the shadows and made all the rest of the plan feasible. He had asked himself before ever he had started whether he would have the nerve to do it. But that, of course, was evident. He had done worse things than that in the wood an hour ago.

He rose and walked to the corner of the room. There stood the chopper, a fair-sized chopper. The blade was clean and sharp. It gleamed at him reassuringly.

He picked it up and balanced it a moment in his hand.

Then, with sudden resolution, he put his foot upon the chopping block and struck himself a hard blow. The chopper cut through the flesh to the bone. The blood spurted and the pain for a moment was sickening. He found himself propped against the wall.

"Mustn't faint," he muttered.

The pain passed after a little, to be succeeded by dull throbbing. He felt very sick, but he staggered and hopped to the table where the bandages lay all ready. In great pain and difficulty he cut away the boot and the sock and wrapped the bandages round his foot. He would have preferred to have cut his foot with the boot off, but that might have given him away.

Then he wiped the chopper clean and threw it back into the corner. He drew off the cotton gloves and flung them into the blaze.

HE was safe now, safe as a house. They could suspect what they liked but they could never prove it. Old Baines would testify. Old Baines had seen him with his foot in that identical bandage at 8 o'clock in the morning. Old Baines was to be trusted. This was the perfect murder. Five hundred a year for life. No more farming for him after this. He would go traveling somewhere in the warm South where there were sun and palm trees and no licensing hours. He would rest and enjoy some much-needed comfort.

But still there were things to do, things which might connect him with the murder, things sufficiently damning to throw doubt upon his alibi. There was that letter for example, with the bit about his lawyer friend and all those clever instructions which had lured the woman to her death. The police, with that letter in their hands, would soon put two and two together and have the rope round his throat in a brace of shakes.

He fumbled in his pocket. Something soft met his fingers—a powder puff. Then came a mirror. He threw the puff into the fire. It blazed up and was reduced to ashes in a second. He would get rid of the mirror later. And now here, at last, was the letter. There were, in fact, two letters. Ingleby in his eagerness almost flung them into the fire. But his hand stopped short on the way to the flames and he found himself staring at the envelopes. He sat very still gaping at them for some time. Then he pressed a hand to his forehead. It was damp and his hand was shaking. He steadied himself as best he could.

Neither of the envelopes was the one he had addressed to Olive Wildshawe. Had she, after all, left the letter at home? And what was she doing with letters addressed to another woman? Who, in any case, was Mrs. Beacher, 110 Elm Grove, Haywards Heath?

WITH fingers that shook and trembled he opened the envelopes. They both contained bills . . . bills. . . . He knew a bill when he saw it—one from Messrs. Thursby, grocers, and the other from . . . yes, it was from old Burstard.

Ingleby sat by the fire. He could not think very clearly. Something had gone wrong. There was a letter somewhere and it was a letter that might hang him yet if he were not very careful. . . . Miss Wildshawe was dead, as he had every reason to know . . . and there was not even a drop of whisky in the house. Nothing stirred in the room except the logs on the hearth which were blazing fitfully. The little cracked mirror on the table beside Ingleby twinkled back at the flames, but Ingleby had completely forgotten the little mirror.

A knock sounded abruptly on the door. The shock pulled Ingleby together. He flung the two letters into the fire and watched them burn. Again there was a knock, and then another louder knock. A hand was fumbling at the latch.

Old Baines stood in the doorway.

"There you are," said the old man smiling. "I have brought you a telegram. It will likely be from your young lady. She was not at the station."

Ingleby took the telegram and stared so straight and so long in front of him that old Baines was quite obviously alarmed.

"Aren't you going to read it, lad?" he asked.

"Of course," said Ingleby.

But his hands were trembling so much that he could not manage the orange-colored envelope.

"Here," offered Baines, "let me open it for you."

"There you are," said Baines handing him the flimsy paper.

"Read it, read it," said Ingleby nervously.

Old Baines bent down so that the light of the fire shone on the telegram. His beard as he leaned forward brushed the little mirror from the edge of the table. It fell with a light crash to the floor. Baines stooped to retrieve it.

"Leave that," said Ingleby harshly, and in a sudden passion he snatched the telegram from the hands of the old man.

"Sorry," he read, "caught touch of 'flu'. Will come some day next week if convenient. Wildshawe."

Suicides That Made History

(*Continued from page* 41)

Twenty-five chose death and were buried by Theodore. When he was through he tried to bury himself, but failed. Possibly he was too tired.

A tale even stranger is that of Mathieu Lovat the Venetian, whose depraved cunning probably surpasses anything else on record.

Lovat, having decided to end his life, hit upon one of the most horrible deaths conceivable. Whether crucifixion is greater torture than burning is hard to say, and no one is likely to try to find out.

Electing to be nailed to a cross, Lovat also decided that the cross must hang in mid-air, so that his death agony would be public. Obviously no one would help him. He had the seemingly impossible task of crucifying himself.

Building the cross was easy. He set it up before an open window, so that a sudden, convulsive movement would topple it out. He attached it by ropes to rings in the ceiling so that after the fall it would be suspended like a sign before the house. He bored holes where the nails were to go in the arms and upright, drove a nail into its place in the right arm. After this he bound himself to the structure with rope.

Here began the active horror. Lovat nailed his feet to the upright. The pain was excruciating, but by sheer force of perversity he refused to let it overcome him. Instead, he held his hammer in his left hand and made a hole through the right by pounding it down on a nail fastened point up in the window sill.

Blood streamed from his wounds. He was weak, giddy, sick. The powerful instinct of self-preservation urged him to stop. But a crazy, uncontrollable impulse drove him on. Lovat the maniac did not faint. He seemed to draw strength from his mania. He shifted the hammer to his right hand and drove the nail through the left, fastening which to the cross was now comparatively simple. Next he forced the nail already driven into the right arm of the cross through the hole in his right hand.

Finally, with a twist and jerk of his body, Lovat sent the cross and himself plunging out of the window to dangle in the air. Taken down and rushed to a hospital, he lived long enough to tell with pride how clever he had been.

IN many of these strange cases, horror strikes us head-on with the brutal, crushing force of an express train. The Del Rio suicide two years ago is no less horrible and mysterious, but its effects are subtler. It is a weird drama of anonymous threats, of ghostly howls at dead of night, strange rattlings in dark hallways, scurrying of unseen feet. Its mystery is the mystery of mob hysteria.

Carlos Serafino Del Rio, a native of Buenos Aires, but engaged in the lingerie business in Brooklyn, had expected to inherit outright his mother's $2,000,000 estate. But when she died and her will favored another relative, her son brought suit in the Argentine courts. He was unsuccessful, and seems to have relieved his feelings by sending messages to many of his highly

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Suicides That Made History

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placed fellow countrymen, denouncing them for failure to help him.

Nothing happened at first. Then one day a note appeared under the front door of the Del Rio apartment in Brooklyn:

"Leave that will alone. Otherwise you will lose your life. Absolutely."

A second and similar message was found, and Senora Mathilde, the wife, learned of them, and brooded over the menace until superstition and nerves produced a hysteria which communicated itself to her daughters—Mathilde, Vicenta, Josefine, and Guadelupe.

The five women became a prey to obsession and delusion. They heard mysterious noises, inexplicable scrapings, rattlings, moans, howls. They were sick, sleepless, melancholy.

Just as it seemed that matters could grow no worse, they did. Senora Del Rio died of pneumonia. Her husband, who had held up so long, and the four girls broke completely. For a while they tried futilely to retain a grip on themselves. But at last Carlos Del Rio, Mathilde, Vicenta, Josefine, and Guadelupe wrote farewell notes, donned mourning, spread out family photographs, opened gas jets, and awaited the end. It was one of the largest suicide pacts in New York history.

ANOTHER mystery of suicide is that the urge to destroy one's self is often accompanied by the urge to destroy others.

Dr. Frederick C. Low, a sixty-four-year-old physician of High Bridge, N. J., reputedly beset by worries both physical and financial, tried to do away with his entire family along with himself. Making an elaborate pretense that he was giving them anti-typhoid inoculations, he administered lethal doses of a dangerous drug to his wife, his son, and his daughter, before ending his own life in the same way. Only the boy, whose injection was inadequate, recovered.

But as an example of the blind, maniacal desire to go out of this world, leaving behind as wide and bloody a trail of destruction as possible, there are few cases to compare with that of Andrew Kehoe, the madman of Bath.

Bath is a tiny village in Michigan. Kehoe was a farmer of the community—an obscure man who, by one crazy act, drew the fascinated and shocked attention of the whole civilized world.

Kehoe was what is known in rural sections as a dynamite farmer. That is, if there were a stump or stone to be removed from his land he would blast rather than grub. Naturally, he was always well supplied with explosives. He was an expert electrician.

He suffered, however, from a mania on the subject of taxes, school taxes in particular, which he claimed were ruining him. Strangely enough, he was also a member of the school-board, and he seemed to take it very hard that, in spite of his official position, he could do nothing about his pet resentment.

Kehoe brooded and grumbled about the tax situation until his smouldering sense of grievance burst out in one devastating sweep of action. But his was no sudden, unpremeditated running amuck. What happened on May 18, 1927, was the result of careful, crafty planning.

Suicides That Made History

It is supposed that Kehoe's preparations began in November, 1926. At that time his fellow school-board members hired him to repair the school lighting system. Thus he had ample chance to plant dynamite in the basement. It was later shown that there was a charge under every room. The mines in this series were wired together so that they could be set off electrically from a distance. At this time or later Kehoe laid wires from the basement across the yard to the curb. Then he sat back for the Winter—to grumble about taxes.

May came; and about the 11th of the month a mortgage on his farm fell due. He could not pay. This was the last straw. Kehoe spent a week presumably lashing himself into an adequate fury. On the morning of the 18th he started his career of annihilation.

He began by killing his wife. Next he demolished his house and barn, probably with dynamite. A large supply of undischarged explosive was found later on the premises.

Kehoe then drove to Bath in a car whose back seat was filled with dynamite. He arrived in front of the school-house (near his wires) soon after nine o'clock. School had just begun. From the lower grade rooms he could hear childish voices singing as the younger pupils marched to the tinkling music of a piano. Perhaps he sat in his car for a while to enjoy the pleasures of anticipation. At 9:40 o'clock, presumably using a coil, he exploded the dynamite under the building.

The voices of the singing children, the piano's tune, were blotted out in a dull roar. The school-house was pushed violently upward from beneath. The air was full of smoke . . . and flying masonry . . . and broken, twisted, dismembered bodies . . .

The upheaval subsided. Through the smoky, dust-filled air came a child's scream . . . and another . . . and another . . .

Only one thing made the havoc a little less fearful. Kehoe's wiring short-circuited. Five hundred pounds of dynamite remained undischarged. Only one wing of the building was wrecked.

In the undestroyed wings terror reigned, and what would have been panic, but for the cool heroism of the teachers who led their little charges to safety.

Twenty minutes later, when Bath had rallied to the task of removing dead and wounded from the ruins, Kehoe's presence was noted. His responsibility for the tragedy, of course, was not even suspected. Emory E. Huyck, superintendent of schools, aiding the relief work, saw Kehoe standing by his car and stopped to speak to him. Nearby were Glenn Smith, the postmaster, and his father-in-law, Nelson McFarren.

Kehoe, talking with Huyck, suddenly paused in his conversation, snatched a rifle from the front seat of his car, and fired into the dynamite-filled back seat.

There was another roar. Kehoe and Huyck were blown to bits. McFarren was killed instantly. Smith died of his injuries soon after.

Kehoe, in order that he might have what he considered a fitting suicide, murdered forty-four persons, including thirty-seven children.

The MAKE-UP BOX

FRAGRANT sachets of crushed herbs and flower petals to lay on tired eyes . . . gold-flecked green eye-shadow for evening glamour . . . and an automatic tweezer for smoothly arched brows! All these products came to our desk this month so is it any wonder that everyone in the beauty department has been rushing about with sparkling eyes and sweeping lashes?

WE simply can't get the words on paper fast enough to tell you about this new eye kit which is making its debut in the smart shops. A well-known beauty specialist recognizes the necessity of daily care of the eyes to combat irritations of sun, wind, dust or strain, and offers a kit containing these four essential preparations. An eye bath to soothe and strengthen; rich eye cream to keep tissues about the eyes free from lines and wrinkles; herb and flower-petal packs whose healing essences are released when

dipped in hot water and pressed gently over closed lids; and an astringent to tone the skin around the eyes and invigorate strained muscles. So whether your eyes are roguish, serene, sophisticated, dreamy or quizzical, be sure they are always radiant with the rested look this care gives.

ONE of our favorite brands of mascara has just come out in a new scarlet and gold vanity case but at no increase in price. The modern and attractive case contains mascara in black, brown or blue. It is delightfully soft and natural on the lashes and gives them a silky, lustrous look. What can be more appealing when dancing than to have beautifully accented lashes demurely sweeping your cheek?

EYE-SHADOW in blue, brown, gray, green, mauve, and, for the sophisticated in evening make-up, gold-flecked or silver-flecked! You'll like the assortment of shades and the smooth quality of the shadow in its handy little container. Eye-shadow creates a fascinating brilliance and lends depth and allure to eyes which are only moderately attractive. Remember, too, that shiny eyelids are very smart this season, so leave just a little oil or eye cream on your upper lids to make them glisten.

BELOW are pictured twin gadgets for eye beauty. Although these are sold separately you'll surely want both. An automatic tweezer which has a peculiar mechanical fascination . . . a knob is pushed, then tiny jaws open and are poised over the hair, another knob is touched and presto! Use of this tweezer insures a clean accurate eyebrow line.

Its twin is an eyelash curler which does for straight lashes what a permanent wave does for straight hair. The instrument fits the curve of the eye allowing the lashes to slip between tiny rubber-covered bows. A gentle squeeze on the handles and the lashes are curled upward, giving that starry-eyed look.

If you would like further information about the articles described and other beauty news, write to the Beauty Editor, Make-up Box, Tower Magazines, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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and gently whistling the universal tune of "The Big Bad Wolf."

She was looking for Mr. Neville, but he was not to be seen. Finally she asked someone, and was told that she might be able to find the president in the offices which were located down the runway and beneath the tiers of seats.

She found a door marked "office." Voices came from within, but there was no answer to her gentle knock. She pushed the door open, and saw a tableau which she was never to forget.

A whisky bottle lay smashed and reeking in the middle of the floor. Beyond it two men were confronting each other, their faces almost touching. One was the quiet, mild-mannered Henry Neville, and the other she recognized as the colonel-ish man whom he had called McGrath.

"You can mind your bloody business," the latter was saying, in a voice that was like breaking sticks. "I'll do what I please."

"You'll make an effort to act like a gentleman," said Neville. "I've made all the allowances for you that I'm going to make. I don't care who you are, you'll conform to the rules of the Club . . . "

Miss Withers, as yet unnoticed, began to withdraw. But she still had time to see the larger man extend a mighty palm and press it full against the face of Mr. Henry Neville. He shoved—and the president of the Knickerbocker Kennel Club, dignity and all, went over backwards.

McGrath turned, and came out of the office, his face strangely contorted. He pushed past Miss Withers without seeing her, and she heard him utter—"Damn all dogs and all fools who breed 'em . . . !"

Miss Withers saw that this was not the time for her to have a chat with the pleasant Mr. Neville. She tiptoed softly back toward the amphitheater.

SHE spent the rest of the evening patrolling the avenues between the dog cages, keeping a sharp lookout for any signs of the mysterious marauder. The crowds were thick, and extremely innocent-seeming. She met several other owners, and was inevitably introduced to their precious exhibits. Every time she passed the cage wherein her own Dempsey was confined, the dog forgot all the manners that had been impressed upon him in three weeks of rigorous training, and bounced up and down in eagerness to get out.

Closing time arrived, and she saw the odd little Mr. Holt saying goodnight to his collie, who evinced no interest in his master. The crowd thinned out, and Miss Withers, glad that nothing had happened, moved toward the doors. She was intercepted by Henry Neville, whose face was very red, and whose lips were gray.

"Won't you come back to my office?" he invited. "Things seem to be going along quietly, except for a little trouble we're having with one of our judges. All the same, I'd like your ideas on the other situation."

He led the way back to the little office, which had been straightened since

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Miss Withers saw it last. The broken whisky bottle was gone.

Miss Withers plunged at once into her own suggestion for safeguarding the situation, which was to have plate-glass installed instead of wire netting in all the cages. Neville seemed only half listening to her, but he shook his head. "Think of the cost," he said. "Besides, the public would object, and the owners be unduly alarmed at the necessity for the scheme."

The talk dwindled. Miss Withers looked at him, playing a wild hunch. "I wonder," she said, "if you'd tell me just what is the trouble in regard to Mr. Judge McGrath?"

Neville looked at her sharply. "Trouble? Nothing at all, really. The man is an excellent judge of dogs. His wife and he used to have a big kennel themselves, and he is the last word on disputed points. But he's taken to drinking himself to death, and it's bad for the Club. I wish we'd never hired the gentleman for this job. . . . There're plenty others who'd do anything to get in his shoes."

Neville shrugged his shoulders. "He'll probably be all right tomorrow, though. The judging starts at nine o'clock, and terriers come first."

"I know that," said Miss Withers. "I was just wondering. Am I not likely to show that I know nothing of handling a dog when the time comes to lead Dempsey up to the stand? I'd like to take him myself, but still——"

"Simple enough," said Neville cheerily. He reached for a telephone on his desk. "The dogs have been fed and exercised by now, and I'll get one of the kennel men to bring your pooch in here, and demonstrate how you should act." He rattled the receiver, and got no answer. "Must be that the boys are gone for the night," he observed. "Wait here, I'll fetch him myself."

In something over ten minutes he was back, with a wriggling Dempsey under his arm. "It's almost pitch-dark in there," he announced. "I had trouble getting the key to the box-lock. Somebody must have turned out the wrong lights."

He searched in his desk for a light whip-leash and loose collar, and the next half hour was spent in technicalities. Miss Withers learned facts which had already been well impressed upon her pet by the trainer in Westchester who had labored with him for weeks. Finally, Neville said that she would pass muster.

They went back into the arena, dimly lit by a cluster of tiny bulbs high in the ceiling. Far ahead of them exit lights gleamed dully, like evil red eyes in the gloom. As their eyes became accustomed to the darkness, they managed to make their way between the high-ranked cages, with Dempsey growling at every sleeping occupant. Finally they came to the last alley-way . . .

Suddenly Dempsey wriggled out of his mistress' arms, and dropped to the sawdust. He plunged forward as if hot on the scent of something, and then stopped short, his legs braced wide and a salvo of barks issuing from his mouth. The noise died away to a nervous, unsteady whining. The hair on his back was bristling . . .

"Who's there?" cried Neville.

Nobody answered. Dempsey huddled against his mistress' stocking.

Miss Withers produced a tiny affair of polished nickel from the depths of her handbag, and cast its beam ahead of them. The alley-way was empty. They went softly forward.

"Something is wrong here," Miss Withers decided suddenly. She sniffed, and found that there was an odd, sweetish-bitterish odor above the smells of dog.

Something was very wrong. The two humans realized at last what Dempsey had known from the beginning—those eight cages contained the bodies of seven dogs. Some of them appeared to be sleeping, but it was the long sleep that knows no waking.

Neville was shouting for the night-watchman. "Clyde! Where are you?"

There was no answer. Neville pressed against the wire-netting which screened the nearest cage. "Dead—all of them, in torments! It's happened while we were wasting our time in the office. What insane devil out of hell could do a thing like this?"

Miss Withers did not think that his question required an answer. She was staring at Devonshire Lad, the big bored collie of which little Mr. Holt had been so proud. Devonshire Lad was only a tumbled pile of fur now.

Neville was still shouting for "Clyde." Finally there came an answering hail from the distance. But Miss Withers paid no attention to the breathless and perspiring night-watchman when he trotted into the scene. She was watching Dempsey, who was walking stealthily forward, his nose pointed into the shadows beneath the cage of Devonshire Lad.

He was sniffing, and seemed to be stalking something. Miss Withers sent her flash ahead, and saw what it was. The circle of yellow light fell upon the gaunt face of Andrew McGrath, reputed to be America's best judge of terriers. He was dead, quite dead. Clutched firmly in his right hand was a large bottle more than half full. Through the loose cork came the tell-tale odor of bitter almonds . . .

Neville was demanding to know where Clyde had been. "Didn't I tell you to keep your eyes open?"

"You told me to see to the doors, and that's what I was doing," said the old man belligerently.

"But the lights! They're supposed to be on all night. Who turned them out?"

"So help me," said the watchman Clyde, "I thought you did!"

Miss Withers, not without a qualm, put Dempsey back into his cage and snapped the lock. "Where's the nearest telephone?" she then demanded.

IT was four o'clock in the morning when Miss Withers finally left the Garden. The Inspector's myrmidons had descended upon the place with flashlight powders, cameras, and fingerprint apparatus, but their general opinion was that they were wasting their time on a snipe-hunt.

Medical Examiner Bloom himself condescended to put in a brief appearance in full evening dress, and the wagon from the Department of Justice finally carried away the body of the dead man and the bodies of the seven dead dogs.

The Inspector led Miss Withers to

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a little all-night lunch counter on Eighth Avenue, and ordered ham and eggs and coffee for two.

"Don't take it so hard," he said. "You did all you could. But you were looking for an outsider, and not a judge of the dog show himself."

"Oh, that!" she said. Then—"Oscar, in spite of what Dr. Bloom says, do you believe that McGrath was the dog poisoner, and that he killed himself in remorse?"

"I'd like to know how you could give any other explanation," Piper retorted. "He had that bottle of prussic acid gripped in his hands, tight as a vise. No one could have put it there. Besides, with his wife dying a few months ago from blood poisoning that she got through the bite of a dog she was buying, he had reason enough to hate the whole canine tribe. Neville told me the whole story. Says that McGrath has been queer ever since the tragedy. Tonight he must have had one last orgy and then finished off himself." The Inspector looked pleased with such a facile explanation.

Then Miss Withers stuck a pin in his balloon. "You think that McGrath took a sip from the poison bottle, carefully recorked it, and then died?"

"By George!" The Inspector wagged his head. "Cyanide of potassium, especially in liquid form as prussic acid, is the strongest and quickest known poison. He wouldn't have had time to recork it—a few drops on his tongue would have knocked him out." Piper stopped. "Yet, look here. Bloom swears that he doesn't need an autopsy to know that McGrath died from the stuff in that bottle."

"When you answer my first question," Miss Withers cruelly went on, "I wish you'd tell me how the poisoner got the dogs to come up to the wire netting and take a sip from his bottle, in the first place. He had no meat, nothing to dope with the acid . . . "

Piper shook his head. "Then it wasn't suicide. And we're right back where we started." He looked at the school teacher for guidance, which was unlike him.

MISS WITHERS was grim. "The dog show must go on tomorrow as usual," she insisted. "I'm going to have another try. I believe that a madman was loose in the Garden tonight—and with nearly a thousand dogs gathered there, he won't be able to keep away. I think I'm beginning to see something, but I'm going ahead as planned. Do me a favor, and have the newspapers hush up this 'suicide' as much as you can."

He nodded, and went to the wall-telephone. He gave some instructions to his office, and then called another number. He listened for some time, and then came back. "Bloom and three assistants are almost finished with the autopsy on the stiff," he told the school teacher. "He says it's prussic acid all right. Each of the dogs had a trace of it around the mouth, but none in the stomach. The man must have choked to death on the stuff, for there's a good bit of poison in the nasal passages. Bloom says he never ran across that before. He still holds out for simple suicide."

"'Things are seldom what they

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seem,'" quoted Miss Withers wearily. "I'm for home and bed. Tomorrow I've got to play a lone hand, and outbluff this murderer."

She was not so confident when, shortly before nine o'clock the next morning, she was back at the Garden, after a few hours of fitful slumber filled with dreams of the little dog Dempsey in which he wore a silk hat and drank prussic acid from a silver flask.

Yet he was safe and sound when she came to his lonely cage among the seven empty boxes. Indeed, he was carrying on a long-range verbal battle with a terrier somewhere in the next row—a dignified, nettled terrier whose deep growls befitted an aristocrat named Champion Million-dollar Highboy.

THERE were not many spectators at this early hour, Miss Withers noticed. What people there were had been firmly ushered to the front tiers of seats nearest the platform, from which they could overlook the judging. A goodly crowd of owners and experts stood in a semi-circle around the platform, evidently waiting for things to begin.

She had a look around for poor little Mr. Holt, seeking to commiserate with him for the loss of Devonshire Lad, but the man was not to be seen. Mr. Neville she noticed in the center of a circle of indignant dog-owners, and she heard him wearily explaining that the club had taken out insurance against just such a tragedy as had occurred last night, and that they would be reimbursed for the loss of their pets. She tried without success to catch his eye.

The work of judging terriers was beginning, with a brisk, self-satisfied young man—somebody said his name was Kearling—as the substitute for the great McGrath. He looked extremely pleased with himself. "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," she observed.

A trainer brought Dempsey to her, and the little dog looked the part of "Surefire Scout," for he had been well brushed, dusted with chalk, and otherwise prepared for the supreme test. Miss Withers took the leash, and wondered if, after all, she was really fooling anybody as to her real mission here. One after another she saw magnificent specimens of dogdom circle around the sawdust, mount the "bench," and come under the sharp eye and exploring hands of Judge Kearling.

Some he quickly motioned away, to be grouped forever among the goats. Others went into a smaller grouping, while Champion Million-dollar Highboy stood alone, sure of his blue ribbons and looking like a painted, calendar dog.

Her turn came, and in full view of the crowd Miss Withers led a sober and sedate Dempsey around a bit, and then to the bench. He was almost, but not quite, wagging his tail.

Kearling bent down, dictating swift, nervous sentences to an aide who kept score. He patted Dempsey's rump. "Stern, ten points," he said. "Hind legs eight. Barrel and shoulders nine. Ears——"

His practised hands felt of the cocked ears, and Dempsey immediately forgot all that had been so patiently drilled into him. This was a very nice man, thought Dempsey, a man who smelled charmingly of dog. Rising swiftly on his hind legs, he licked Kearling across the face. The crowd gasped. It was as if a debutante being presented at Court had kissed the King!

Kearling jerked erect, and frowned. He raised his hand, and started to say the word "Disqualif—" But for some reason he thought better of it. He knelt again, avoiding Dempsey's friendly red tongue, and completed his examination. "Ears—zero, because surgically dropped. Skull, two points, because of overwidth. Jaw . . ."

It was soon over. Dempsey went, as Miss Withers had feared, among the goats. Not even superb preparation and conditioning would conceal the fact that his skull differed tremendously from the narrow brain-pans of the over-bred elect. Surprisingly enough, the little dog seemed to realize the slight, and when the blue ribbon went to the bored and beautiful Champion Million-dollar Highboy he growled deep in his throat.

As required by rule, the judge passed cheerfully among the disgruntled owners, explaining his findings. When he came to Miss Withers he stroked Dempsey kindly. "I'd rather own him than the Champ," he comforted her. "But show dogs are being bred for narrow skulls, because they don't need brains."

"Do judges?" Miss Withers almost said aloud. She glared suspiciously at the brisk young man. Was his soft-soaping her an evidence of some feeling on his part that she was a person to be placated? Did he guess her real mission here? She remembered that Neville had said that there were those who would do anything to get in McGrath's shoes.

Miss Withers led a subdued little dog back toward his cage, as a procession of Aberdeens trotted forward to face the judge. She noticed that the Garden management, no doubt taking advantage of the smallness of the crowd at this hour, had set two singularly inept looking carpenters to work repairing a slightly damaged step leading to the tiers of seats.

As she entered the alley-way, she stopped short and very nearly disgraced herself by screaming. For one horrible moment she thought that her mind had given way and that she was seeing things—witnessing a ghastly repetition of the tragedy of the previous evening.

For Henry Neville was leaning down beneath the empty cage that was Dempsey's, and dragging something forth from the shadows, just as the body of McGrath had been dragged only a few hours ago. Yet this was, at any rate, not a corpse.

It was Peter A. Holt, and the little manufacturer was spluttering and bubbling with wrath. "Take your hands off me! Let me go!"

Neville's glasses were slipping from his nose, but he was tightly holding on. Dempsey, who loved a fight of any kind, barked encouragingly and fought to get out of Miss Withers' arms. The two men stopped struggling, as they looked up and saw the spinster approaching.

The president of the Knickerbocker

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Kennel Club was rosy with triumph. "Got him!" he announced ungrammatically. "Here's the little rat who was lurking underneath your dog's cage—no doubt waiting for a chance to poison him, and complete last night's work."

Miss Withers frowned. There was more in this than met the eye. "Lucky you happened to be here," she said. "By the way, just how *did* you happen to be here?"

Neville flushed, but he still kept a grip on Holt. "Why shouldn't I be here? I was keeping an eye on the cages, just to make sure that nothing more went wrong. And I saw a movement under the cage."

Mr. Holt still clung to his ear-trumpet. "He's mad, mad as a hatter," he confided to Miss Withers when he got a chance to speak. "Or else crazy drunk. And he has the colossal nerve to say that *I* was lurching!"

"Not lurching—lurking," repeated Neville angrily.

"He thinks you're the dog-poisoner," Miss Withers shouted into the ear-trumpet. Holt's round little face lightened.

"He thinks I'd kill my own prize collie?" The man laughed ruefully. "Then he *is* mad! Why, I came down here this morning and hid myself under the cage hoping to catch the person who was responsible for what happened last night. I thought he might come around again, and I'd nab him."

Miss Withers looked thoughtful, but Neville laughed jeeringly. "Yeah? Well, we'll just have in the police, and see what they find on you, mister."

Holt looked worried, for the first time. "If you cause me any unpleasant publicity," he promised, "I'll see that you have a lawsuit on your hands inside twenty-four hours. But if searching me is all you want, go to it here and now."

He held his arms away from his body. Neville searched him, wrathfully, and found nothing. There was no trace of anything that could have caused death to a dog or a human being.

Miss Withers remarked casually that something might have been dropped beneath the dog-cage. But Neville only drew another blank. There was no use going further.

He drew himself up stiffly. "Mr. Holt, I apologize most sincerely. But if you knew how the events of last night had worried and upset me. . . ."

Holt took it well. He offered to shake hands. "I know," he said. "I felt the same way. Our intentions were both of the best."

NEVILLE, still feeling embarrassed, rushed away to his proper place beside the judging stand, and Miss Withers drew a little nearer to the ruffled little manufacturer. He stroked Dempsey with a hand that trembled. "Nice fellow," he said. Dempsey seemed still subdued by the ill fortune that had attended his efforts at passing as a showdog. He drew away.

Miss Withers murmured proper condolences to the man who had lost his own pet. "I'll get the one who did it," promised Holt tensely, "if it takes the rest of my life. McGrath was no dog-poisoner, and he did not commit suicide. I know—he has been in the Middle West judging shows for a month or so, and he could not have been responsible for the poisonings in the metro-

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politan area here. We must look closer to home."

Miss Withers spoke the word "Exactly" into his ear-trumpet.

"I was just thinking," said Holt. "Neville and McGrath have been at cats and dogs lately . . . and they had a fight yesterday, so I hear. I wonder——"

So was Miss Withers wondering. She put Dempsey back into his cage, and carefully snapped the lock into place. According to her orders, a close wire screen had been tacked up inside the wide wire netting, and she knew that he was safer there than anywhere else in the building. Yet, somehow, she felt that she was doing the wrong thing.

She turned to Holt. "Going to keep on with the sleuthing?"

He nodded. "But not here. I've got a hunch—a real clue." He drew closer to her. "Is it true that you've got some connection with the police?"

"Er—yes, and again no," she answered.

But Holt went on. "I know you have." He looked quickly around. "We may be watched. Meet me in Neville's office in five minutes, and unless I miss my guess I'll be able to show you something that will surprise you!" The little man was quite evidently under the strain of intense excitement. "I see it!" he cried. "I see it all—will you help me?"

"I'd like to know what it's all about," said Miss Withers.

"I'll show you," he promised. "I'll convince you, sure enough."

"Very well," she spoke into the trumpet. "I'll meet you." The little man darted away, in the direction of the judging stand, and she watched through narrowed eyes while he engaged Kearling in close conversation.

Then Miss Withers walked slowly down the runway which led under the stairs toward Neville's office. The door was unlocked, but she did not enter. She stood thoughtfully outside for a moment, and then on a wild impulse turned around and hurried back whence she had come.

The thought had just occurred to her that perhaps, even behind the barrier of fine screen, Dempsey was not as safe as she had thought him. He had been trained never to take food from an unknown hand—but the little dog was most over-friendly with all humankind. . . . And suppose poisoned food was not the means used by the poisoner?

Miss Withers came scurrying past the rows of kennels, noticing as she came that not even a kennel boy or a handler was about. In the ring they were judging Alsatians, and everyone was clustered close to see the beautiful big tawny police dogs, with their wolf-like heads.

"Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf——" Miss Withers found the silly tune running through her head. As she turned the corner leading to the alley-way in which Dempsey was confined, she stopped short, knowing the truth.

The whole puzzle arranged itself swiftly in her mind—even before she saw the little figure of Holt leaning against Dempsey's cage. His ear-trumpet was in his hand, and he was gaily whistling the little tune, as she had heard him whistle it before.

Terror gripped her as Holt looked up, with a wide smile on his face.

"Get tired of waiting?" he asked. "Something delayed me. I was just having a look around."

Miss Withers tried to control her face, and could not. She stared at the wire, and saw that Dempsey stood watching her, wagging his tail. It had not happened—yet. Then she noticed that a tiny hole had been torn in the wire which protected the little dog.

Holt saw her glance turn in that direction, and he stopped whistling. "You noticed that, eh?" He came closer to her. "Too bad."

Miss Withers tried to scream, but as in a nightmare her voice failed her. Only Dempsey heard the gasp, and leaped frantically against his cage in an effort to come forth to the rescue.

Holt walked toward Miss Withers, who moved falteringly backward. She was out of the alley-way, crossing the main avenue of kennels. Here and there a dog, disturbed by currents which he could sense and not understand, whined a little.

She still moved away from that smiling face, from the hand that was sliding within the ear-trumpet. Then she found her back against a barrier.

Peter A. Holt, manufacturer of colors and dyes, drew a fat hypodermic needle from its place of concealment within the ear-trumpet. "If you want to know who killed McGrath, go and ask him in hell," said the madman.

And still nobody came. . . .

Miss Withers gasped, and knew that he had been waiting just for that. He thrust the needle within a foot of her face, and his thumb touched the plunger. . . .

She waited for the thin, stinging stream of prussic acid to strike her face.

HIGH on the steps leading to the rows of vacant seats above, a white-clad carpenter snatched from his tool kit a pair of powerful binoculars. He handled them more cleverly than he had been using his saw and hammer.

"My God," he cried. "What are you waiting for?"

His companion sighted along the barrel of a blue-black police target pistol, and pulled the trigger with a soft and loving squeeze.

A leaden bullet mushroomed against the madman's chest, and he was thrown back. He staggered, but did not fall. Nor did he lower the hypodermic needle, though his hand trembled.

He rammed the plunger home, with a wild shriek. But the delay had given Miss Withers time to regain her paralyzed senses, and to turn. She felt a thin spattering of liquid against her hair at the back of her neck. At the time she thought nothing of it, but as long as she lived she was to wear a bald spot there, as large as a dime.

The two erstwhile carpenters were racing over the sawdust, and they arrived on the scene to find both parties to this fantastic finale lying stretched out on the ground. Miss Withers regained control almost at once, to find Inspector Oscar Piper bending over her.

"I'm afraid I wasn't much of a success at playing a lone hand, this time," she confessed weakly. "Oh, Oscar, why didn't you tell me that you were planning to double-cross me?"

The Inspector was surveying what

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was left of Holt, crumpled on the sawdust floor.

"Rotten shot," he said, accusingly, to Detective-Sergeant Georgie Swarthout. "I told you to wing him, didn't I?"

"I aimed for the wing and got the wish-bone," said the young marksman cheerfully. "And I saved the State several thousands of dollars, incidentally. Shall I ring up the boys at HQ?"

"OF course," said Miss Withers later in Neville's office, "I didn't have the wit to see that all the killings must have been done in some such manner. Only from a hypodermic needle could poison have been sprayed on all those dogs who have been killed during the past month or so. Remember how it happened in the theater—and yet nobody saw anything? Prussic acid is the only poison that can cause death that way when it touches the tongue or the nasal passages."

"The needle's been used by racketeers recently to spray acid through keyholes and thus to ruin clothes in rival tailor shops," Piper told her.

But she was proceeding. "Who but a maker of colors and dyes would have had access to unlimited amounts of prussic acid, which is the main ingredient of Prussian blue, as every schoolboy knows? Holt had such success with his poisonings in the streets that he got the idea of entering the dog-show as an owner, and bought his collie to carry out the illusion."

"How could he, if he hated dogs, as you say?"

"Well, he killed his own dog first. Psychologists call such men canophobiacs, Oscar. McGrath must have come along and caught Holt in the act. They struggled, and McGrath got hold of the poison bottle from which the madman had been refilling his syringe. Holt saw he was getting the worst of it, so he pulled out his needle and sprayed cyanide in the other man's face. McGrath naturally gasped—and that did for him."

"That might explain the poison in McGrath's nostrils that puzzled Doc Bloom so much," agreed Piper.

"Of course. I should have guessed at the truth from the way Holt's dog ignored him. The beast was neither friendly nor afraid—he simply had never got acquainted with his master. Probably just purchased, before the show."

The Inspector was puzzled. "But why should Holt endanger himself by trying to continue today what he started last night?"

"He was mad, Oscar. Last night Neville and I came into the place talking, and our voices warned Holt away before he had time to do more than tumble the body of McGrath out of sight. He ran off and forgot his bottle of poison, so all he had was whatever was left in his syringe. He may have come back here looking for the bottle this morning. At any rate, he could not resist sending me on a fool's errand when he saw that I was interested in the case, and it must have appealed to a madman's sense of humor to think that while I waited for him in the office here, he was putting the finishing touches to my own dog. That would make his crimes dramatically complete in his warped mind."

Henry Neville knocked on the door of his own office, and entered, with a

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glass of water for Miss Withers. She drank it gratefully.

"And all the time," that lady concluded, "there was a fine, fair clue staring us in the face. Holt carried an ear-trumpet, but it was only to conceal the needle. He wasn't deaf, not very. For I heard him whistling, Oscar."

"Whistling?" Neville looked surprised. "I don't see——"

"Neither did I until it was too late," Miss Withers admitted. "But did you ever see a blind man using tobacco?"

The Inspector nodded. He guessed what she meant.

"They seldom do, because they can't see the curling smoke. Same reason—a deaf man *couldn't* hear himself whistle. All through this affair, something has been bothering me, and it was that. I made a mess of things, and you only saved my life by playing Sherlock Holmes and double-crossing me, Oscar."

Piper grinned. But Henry Neville looked very weary. The Inspector turned to him. "Well, you may rest easy now, my friend."

"Only because the show is over," confessed Neville. "There was no hushing up this second killing, even if it was to save a life. I've had to call off the last day of the show, and let the owners take their animals home. It's just as well. I'm going to take my own setters and go down to Maryland for a week's shooting. Anyway, the poisoning scare is nipped in the bud."

"In the flower, rather," said Miss Withers. The Inspector led the way toward the kennels, where at last there was a scene of bustling activity. They collected Dempsey, and crowded toward the doors amid a throng of dog fanciers, each with one or more precious bluebloods at the end of a leash.

"Poor old Dempsey was out of his class," Miss Withers remarked. It was not exactly true. At that moment the pugnacious little terrier jerked his leash from the hand of his mistress and threw himself upon the nearby champion Million-dollar Highboy, whom he set about whittling down to size.

They were dragged apart almost instantly, but Dempsey took his punishment without sadness, and capered cheerily homeward. He had bitten off about two thousand dollars worth of blue-ribbon dog flesh, and regained his self-respect.

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"Just a vagrant thought," said Ellery mildly. "You said, 'And then—', Jenny. And then what?"

There was an awkward silence. Barker and Heiman looked puzzled, but the two old seamen and Jenny turned pale.

"What's the matter?" shrilled Heiman, rolling his eyes.

"Well," muttered Cap'n Hosey, "I s'pose it's all foolishness an' sech, but that cabin ain't been th' same since—since that night, ye see."

"SAY," chuckled Barker, "I have to sleep in that cabin tonight, Cap'n. What d'ye mean—not the same?"

Jenny said uneasily: "Oh, it's ridiculous, as father says, but the most extraordinary things have been happening there, Mr. Queen, since that night in July. J-Just as if a—a ghost were prowling around."

"Ghost!" Heiman went white and shrank back, visibly affected.

"Now, now," said Ellery with a smile. "Surely that's overheated imagination, Jenny. I thought ghosts belonged only to old English castles."

"I'm a God-fearin' man, Mr. Queen, an' I ain't skeered o' th' toughest spook as ever walked a midnight sea. But—well, it's mighty queer." Captain Hosey shook his head as a gust of wind rattled down the chimney and stirred the ashes in the fireplace. "Mighty queer," he repeated slowly. "Had that cabin occupied a couple o' times since that night, an' everybody tells me they hear funny sounds there."

Barker guffawed. "G'on! You're kidding, Cap'n!"

"Ain't doin' no sech thing. You tell 'em, Jenny."

"I—I tried it one night myself," said Jenny in a low voice. "I think I'm reasonably intelligent, Mr. Queen. They're two-room cabins, and the complaints had said the sounds came from the—the living room while they were trying to sleep in the bedroom. The night I stayed in that cabin I—well, I heard it, too."

"Sounds?" frowned Ellery. "What kind of sounds?"

"Oh," she hesitated, shrugging helplessly, "cries, moans, mutters, whimpers, slithery noises, patters, scrapings—I can't really describe them, but they"—she shivered, "they didn't sound—human. There was such a variety of them! As—as if it were a congress of ghosts!" She smiled at Ellery's cynical eyebrows. "I suppose you think I'm a fool. But I tell you—hearing those muffled, stealthy, inhuman sounds . . . Well, they get you, Mr. Queen."

"Did you investigate the—ah—scenes of the visitation while these sounds were being produced?" asked Ellery dryly.

She gulped. "I took one peep. It was dark, though, and I couldn't see a thing. The sounds stopped the minute I opened the door."

"And did they continue afterward?"

"I didn't wait to see, Mr. Queen," she said with a tremulous grin. "I ducked out of the bedroom window and ran for dear life."

"Hmm," said Barker, narrowing his shrewd eyes. "I always did say this part of the country produced more imagination to the square inch than a trunkful of fiction. Well, no goldarned sounds are going to keep me up. And if they happen, I'll find out what made 'em or know the reason why!"

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"I'll exchange cabins with you, Mr. Barker," murmured Ellery. "I've always felt the most poignant fear of—and the most insatiable curiosity about—ghosts. Never met one, I suppose. What say? Shall we trade?"

"Hell, no," chuckled Barker. "You see, I'm prob'ly the world's greatest disbeliever in spirits, Mr. Queen. I've got a sweet little .32 Colt"—he grinned in a mirthless way—"I'm in hardware, you see—and I never heard of a spook yet that liked the taste of bullets. I'm goin' to bed."

"Well," sighed Ellery, "if you insist. Too bad. I'd love to have met a wraith—all clanky with chains and dripping foul seaweed. . . . Think I'll turn in myself. By the way, this cabin which has been occupied by Gillette is the only one in which your ghost has walked, Cap'n Hosey?"

"Only one, yep," said the innkeeper gloomily.

"And have the sounds been heard while the cabin's been unoccupied?"

"Nope. We watched a couple o' nights, too, but nothin' ever happened then."

"Curious." Ellery sucked a finger nail thoughtfully for a moment. "Well! If Miss Jenny and these gentlemen will excuse me?"

"Here," said Heiman hurriedly, bouncing out of the chair. "I'm not goin' to cross that backyard alone. . . . W-wait for baby!"

THE rear of the inn was a desolate place. As they emerged from the backstairs leading from the taproom, its cold desolation struck them like a physical blow. Ellery could hear Heiman breathing hoarsely, as if he had run far and fast. There was a cold moon, and it lit up his companions' faces: Heiman's was drawn, fearful; Barker's amused and a trifle wary. The cabins were for the most part black and silent; it was late.

They walked shoulder to shoulder across the sandy terrain, instinctively keeping together. The wind kept up an incessent angry hissing through the dark trees beyond the cabins.

"Night," muttered Heiman suddenly and darted across to one of the cabins. They heard him scuttle inside and lock the door. Then the rattles of windows came to their ears as the chubby salesman closed them hastily; and a square of yellow brilliance sprang up as he flooded his quarters with ghost-dispelling light.

"I guess it's got Heiman, all right," laughed Barker, shrugging his bony shoulders. "Well, Mr. Queen, here's where the spook hangs out. D'ye ever hear anything so nutty? These old sailors are all the same—superstitious as hell. I'm surprised at Jenny, though; she's an educated girl."

"Are you sure you shouldn't like me to——" began Ellery.

"Naw. I'll be all right. I've got a quart of rye in one of my sample trunks that's the best little ghost-chaser y'ever saw." Barker chuckled deep in his throat. "Well, nighty-night, Mr. Queen. Sleep tight and don't let the spooks bite!" He sauntered to his cabin, squared his shoulders, whistled a rather dreary tune, and disappeared. A moment later the light flashed on, and his thin, long figure appeared at the front window and pulled down the shade.

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"Whistling," thought Ellery grimly, "in the dark. At that, the man has intestines." He shrugged and flicked his cigarette away. It was no concern of his; some natural phenomenon, no doubt—wind sobbing down a chimney shaft, the scratchings of a mouse, the rattle of a loose window-pane; and there was a ghost. Tomorrow he would be well out of it, headed for Newport and the home of his friend. . . . He flattened against the door of his cabin.

Someone was standing in the shadow of the inn's back door, watching.

Ellery crouched and slipped along the walls of the cabins toward the inn —crept like a cat upon the motionless watcher before he realized how ridiculous his stealth was. When he caught himself up, swearing, it was too late. The watcher had spied him. It was Isaac, the man-of-all-work.

"Out for a breath of air?" asked Ellery lightly, fumbling for another cigarette. The man did not reply. Ellery said: "Uh—by the way, Isaac, if I may use the familiar—when a cabin is unoccupied, are the windows kept closed?"

The broad bowed shoulders twitched contemptuously. "Yep."

"Locked?"

"Nope." The man answered in a heavy rumble, like aged thunder. He stepped out of the shadow and gripped Ellery's arm so tightly that the cigarette fell out of his hand. "I harkened to yer scoffin' an' sneerin' in th' taproom. An' I says to ye: Scoff not an' sin not. There're more things in hev'n 'n' earth, Horaysheeo, th'n 're drempt of in yer philos'phy. Amen!" And Isaac turned and vanished.

Ellery stared at the empty shadows with puzzled, angry eyes. An innkeeper's daughter who had studied Greek; a shambling countryman who quoted Shakespeare! What the deuce was going on here, anyway? Then he cursed himself for a meddling, imaginative fool and strode back to his cabin. And yet, despite himself, he shivered at the slash of the wind, and his scalp prickled at a perfectly natural night-sound from the silent woods.

SOMETHING cried out in the distance—faintly, desperately, a lost soul. It cried again. And again. And again.

Mr. Ellery Queen found himself sitting up in bed, covered with perspiration, listening with all the power of his ears. The cabin bedroom, the black world outside, were profoundly quiet. Had it been a dream?

He sat listening for minutes that were hours. Then, in the dark, he fumbled for his watch. The luminous dial glowed at 1:25.

Something in the very silence made him get out of bed, slip into his clothes, and go to the door of the cabin. The clearing was a pit of darkness; the moon had long since set. The wind had died somewhere in the lost hours and the air, while cold, was still. Cries. . . . A conviction grew within him that they had come from Barker's cabin.

His shoes crunched loudly on the stiff earth as he went to Barker's front door and knocked. There was no answer.

He knocked again.

A man's deep, curiously strained voice said behind him: "So ye heard it, too, Mr. Queen?" He whirled to find old Cap'n Hosey, in pants and brass-buttoned coat, at his shoulder.

"Then it wasn't my imagination?" muttered Ellery. He knocked again, and there was still no answer. Trying the door, he found it locked. He looked at Cap'n Hosey, and Cap'n Hosey looked at him. Then, without speaking, the old man led the way around the cabin to the back, facing the woods. The rear window to Barker's living-room stood open, although the shade was down. Cap'n Hosey poked it aside and directed a flashlight into the thick blackness of the room. They caught their breaths, sharply.

The lank figure of Barker, dressed in pajamas and bathrobe, slippers on his skinny naked feet, lay on the rug in the center of the room—contorted like an open jackknife in the ghastly, unmistakable attitude of violent death.

HOW the others knew, no one thought of asking. Death wings its way swiftly into human consciousness. When Ellery rose from his knees beside the dead man he found Jenny, Isaac, and Captain Hosey crowded in the doorway; Cap'n Hosey had opened the door. Behind them peered the vulturous face of Captain Rye.

"Dead only a few minutes," murmured Ellery, looking down at the sprawled body. "Those cries we heard must have been his death-cries." He lit a cigarette and went to the window and leaned against the sill and stood there, drooping and watchful as he smoked. No one said anything, and no one moved. Barker was dead. A matter of hours before he had been alive, laughing and breathing and joking. And now he was dead. It was a curious thing.

It was a curious thing, too, that except for a very small area on the rug, with the dead man as its nucleus, nothing in the room had been disturbed. In one corner stood two big trunks, both open, with various heavy drawers; they contained samples of Barker's wares. The furniture stood neatly and sedately about. Only the rug around Barker's body was scuffed and wrinkled, as if there had been a struggle at precisely that spot. One bit of wreckage not native to the room lay a few feet away—a flashlight, its glass and bulb shattered.

The dead man lay partly on his back. His eyes were wide open and staring with an unearthly intensity of horror and fear. His fingers clutched the loose collar of his pajama-coat, quite as if someone had been strangling him. But he had not been strangled; he had bled to death. For his throat, fully revealed by the painful backward stretching of his head, had been ripped and slashed raggedly, grotesquely, at the jugular vein, and his hands and coat and the rug were smeared with his still liquid blood.

"Good God," choked Heiman; he covered his face with his hands and began to sob. Captain Rye pulled him roughly outside, growling something at him; then they heard the chubby man stumble off to his cabin.

Ellery flipped his cigarette out the window past the shade, which they had raised on climbing into the room, and

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went to Barker's sample trunks. He pulled out all the drawers. But nothing was there that should not have been there, and the hammers and saw and chisels and electrical supplies and samples of cement and lime and plaster were ranged in neat, unviolated rows. Finding no evidence of disturbance in either trunk, he went quietly into the bedroom. He returned soon enough, looking thoughtful.

"What—what d'ye do in a case like this?" croaked Cap'n Hosey. His weather-beaten face was the color of wet ashes.

"And what do you think about your ghost now, Mr. Queen?" giggled Jenny; her face was convulsed with horror. "G-ghosts. . . . Oh, my God!"

"Now, now, pull yourself together," murmured Ellery. "Why, notify the local authorities, naturally, Captain. In fact, I advise very prompt action. The murder occurred only a matter of minutes ago. The murderer must still be in the vicinity——"

"Oh, he is, is he?" growled Captain Rye, stepping crookedly into the room on his pegleg. "Well, Hosey, what in time ye waitin' fer?"

"I——" The old man shook his head in a daze.

"The murderer got out through the back window," said Ellery softly. "Probably hard on my first knock at the front door. He took the weapon with him, dripping blood. There are a few bloodstains on the sill here pointing to that." There was the most curious note in his voice: a compound of mockery and uncertainty.

Cap'n Hosey departed, heavily. Captain Rye hesitated and then stumped off after his friend. Isaac stood dumbly staring at the corpse. But there was a freshet of color in Jenny's young cheeks and her eyes reflected a returning sanity.

"What sort of weapon, Mr. Queen," she demanded in a small but steady voice, "do you think capable of inflicting such a f-frightful wound?"

Ellery started. "Eh?" Then he smiled. "There," he said, dryly, "is a question indeed. Sharp and yet jagged. A vicious, lethal instrument. It suggests certain *outré* possibilities." Her eyes went wide, and he shrugged. "This is a curious case. I'm half-disposed to believe——"

"But you know nothing whatever about Mr. Barker!"

"Knowledge, my dear," he remarked gravely, "is the antidote to fear, as Emerson has pointed out." He paused. "Miss Jenny, this isn't going to be pleasant. Why don't you return to your own quarters. Isaac can stay and help me."

"You're going to——?" Terror glittered in her eyes again.

"There's something I must see. Please go." She sighed rather strangely and turned and went away. Isaac, a motionless hulk, still stared at the corpse. "Now, Isaac," said Ellery briskly, "stop gaping and help me with him. I want him moved out of the way."

The man stirred. "I told ye——" he began harshly, and then clamped his lips shut. He looked almost surly as he shambled forward. They raised the fast-chilling body without words and carried it into the bedroom. When they returned, Isaac pulled out a lump of stiff brown stuff and bit off a piece. He chewed slowly, without enjoyment.

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"Nothing missing, nothing stolen, so far as I can tell," muttered Ellery, half to himself. "That's a good sign. A very good sign, indeed." Isaac stared at him without expression. Ellery shook his head and went to the middle of the room. He got to his knees and examined the rug in the area on which Barker's body had rested. There was a fairly smooth piece where the body had lain, surrounded like an island by the ripples of the disturbed rug. His eyes narrowed. Was it possible? . . . He bent forward in some excitement, studying the rug fiercely. By God, it was!

"Isaac!" The countryman lumbered over. "What the devil caused this?" Ellery pointed. The nap of the rug where the corpse had sprawled was quite worn away. On examination it had a curiously scratched appearance, as if it had been subjected to a long and persistent scraping process. It was the only part of the rug, as he could see plainly enough which was rubbed in that manner.

"Dunno," said Isaac phlegmatically.

"Who cleans these cabins?" snapped Ellery.

"Me."

"Have you ever noticed that spot before—that worn spot?"

"Cal'late."

"When, man, when? When'd you first begin to notice it?"

"Wall—round 'bout th' middle o' Summer, I guess."

Ellery sprang to his feet. "Banzai! Better than my fondest hopes. That clinches it!" Isaac stared at him as if Ellery had suddenly gone mad. "The others," mumbled Ellery, "were mere speculations, stabs in the dark. This"—he smacked his lips together—"Look here, man. Is there a weapon on the premises somewhere? Revolver? Shotgun? Anything?"

Isaac grunted: "Wall, Cap'n Hosey's got an ol' shooter some'eres."

"Get it. See that it's oiled, loaded, ready for business. For God's sake, man, hurry! And—oh, yes, Isaac. Tell everybody to keep away from here. Keep away! No noise. No disturbance. Except the police. Do you understand?"

"I cal'late," muttered Isaac, and was gone.

FOR the first time something like fear leaped into Ellery's eyes. He twisted toward the window, took a step, stopped, shook his head, and hurried to the fireplace. There he found a heavy iron poker. Gripping it nervously, he ran into the bedroom and half closed the door. He remained completely quiet until he heard Isaac's heavy step outside. Then he dashed through the living-room, snatched a big, old-fashioned revolver from the man's hand, sent him packing, made sure the weapon was loaded and cocked, and returned to the living-room. But now he acted with more assurance. He knelt by the tell-tale spot on the rug, placed the revolver near his foot, and swiftly hauled up the rug until the bare wooden floor was revealed. He scanned this closely for some time. Then he replaced the rug and took up the revolver again.

He met them at the door fifteen minutes later with his finger at his lips. They were three husky, hatchet-faced New Englanders with drawn revolvers. Curious heads were poking out of lighted cabins all about.

"Oh, the idiots!" groaned Ellery. "Reassure those people, blast 'em. You're the law here?" he whispered to the leading stranger.

"Yep. Benson's my name," growled the man. "I met your daddy once——"

"Never mind that now. Make those people put out their lights and keep absolutely quiet; d'ye understand?" One of the officers darted away. "Now come inside, and for the love of heaven don't make any noise."

"But where's the body of this drummer?" demanded the New Bedford man.

"In the bedroom. He'll keep," rasped Ellery. "Come on, man, for God's sake." He herded them into the living-room, shut the door with caution, got them into an alcove, snapped off the light. . . . The room blinked out, vanished.

"Have your weapons ready," whispered Ellery. "How much do you know about this business?"

"Well, Cap'n Hosey told me over the 'phone about Barker, and those damn funny noises——" muttered Benson.

"Good." Ellery crouched a little, his eyes fixed on the exact center of the room, although he could see nothing. "In a few moments, if my deductions are correct, you'll meet—the murderer of Barker."

The two men drew in their breaths. "By God," breathed Benson, "I don't see —how——"

"Quiet, man!"

They waited for an eternity. There were no sounds whatever. Then Ellery felt one of the officers behind him stir uneasily and mutter something beneath his breath. After that the silence was ear-splitting. He realized suddenly that the palm of his hand around the butt of the big revolver was wet; he wiped it off noiselessly against his thigh. His eyes did not waver from the invisible center of the black room.

How long they huddled there none of them could say. But after æons they became conscious of . . . something in the room. They had not actually heard a physical sound. A negation of sound, and yet it was louder than thunder. Something, someone, in the center of the room. . . .

They almost gasped. A weird, snivelling, moaning cry, barely audible, accompanied by mysterious scratchy sounds like the scraping of ice, came to their ears.

The nervous officer behind Ellery lost control of himself. He uttered a fearful squall.

"You damned fool!" shouted Ellery, and instantly fired. He fired again, and again, trying to trace the intruder's invisible career in the room. The place became sulphurous with stink; they coughed in the smoke. . . . Then there was one long gurgling shriek like nothing human. Ellery darted like lightning to the switch and snapped it on.

The room was empty. But a trail of fresh copious blood led raggedly to the open window, and the shade was still flapping. Benson cursed and vaulted through, followed by his man.

Simultaneously the door clattered open and staring eyes glared in. Cap'n Hosey, Jenny, Isaac . . . "Come in, come in," said Ellery wearily. "There's a badly wounded murderer in the woods now, and it's only a ques-

tion of time. He can't get away." He sank into the nearest chair and fumbled for a cigarette, his eyes shadowed with strain.

"But who—what——"

Ellery waved a listless hand. "It was simple enough. But queer; damned queer. I don't recall a queerer case."

"You know who——" began Jenny in a breathless voice.

"Certainly. And what I don't know I can piece together. But there's something to be done before I . . ." He rose. "Jenny, do you think you can withstand another shock?"

She blanched. "What do you mean, Mr. Queen?"

"I dare say you can. Cap'n Hosey, lend a hand, please." He went to one of Barker's sample trunks and extracted a couple of chisels and an ax. Cap'n Hosey glared at the unknown. "Come on, Captain, there's no danger now. Jerk that rug away. I'm going to show you something." Ellery handed him a chisel when the old man had complied. "Pry up the nails holding these floorboards together. Might's well do a neat job; there's no sense in ruining your floor utterly." He went to work with the second chisel at the opposite end of the board. They labored in silence for some time with chisels and ax, and finally loosened the boards.

"Stand back," said Ellery quietly, and he stooped and began to remove them one by one. . . . Jenny uttered an involuntary shriek and buried her face against her father's broad chest.

Beneath the floor, on the stony earth supporting the cabin, lay a horrible, shapeless, vaguely human mass, whitish in hue. Bones protruded here and there.

"You see lying here," croaked Ellery, "the remains of John Gillette, the jewel thief."

"G-Gillette!" stuttered Cap'n Hosey, glaring into the hole.

"Murdered," sighed Ellery, "by your friend Barker three months ago."

HE took a long scarf from one of the tables and flung it over the gap in the floor. "You see," he murmured in the stupefied silence, "when Gillette came here that night in July and asked for a cabin, while you all thought he looked vaguely familiar Barker actually recognized him from having seen his photograph in the papers, no doubt. Barker himself was occupying a cabin that night. He knew Gillette had the Cormorant diamond. When everything was quiet he managed to get into this place and murdered Gillette. Since he carried all the hardware his heart could desire, plus quicklime, he pried up the boards under this rug, deposited Gillette's body there, poured the lime over it to destroy the flesh quickly and prevent the discovery of the body from an odor of putrefaction, nailed down the boards again. . . . There's more to it, of course. It all fitted nicely, once I had deduced the identity of the murderer. It had to be."

"But," gulped Cap'n Hosey in a sick voice, "how'd ye know, Mr. Queen? An' who——"

"There were several pointers. Then I found something which clinched my vaguely glimpsed theory. I'll start from the clincher to make it more easily digestible." Ellery reached for the back-flung rug and pulled it out

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so that the curiously worn area was visible. "You see that? Nowhere on the rug except at this precise spot does such a strangely worn area appear. And mark, too, that it was on this precise spot that Barker was attacked and killed, since nowhere except closely about this spot was the rug wrinkled and scuffed; indicating that this must have been the vortex of a short struggle. . . . Any idea what might have caused such a peculiar wearing-away of your rug, Captain?"

"Well," mumbled the old man, "it looks kinda scratchy, like as if——"

Benson's voice came from beyond the open window. It held a note of supreme disbelief. "We got him, Mr. Queen. He died out in the woods."

They flocked to the window. Below, on the cold earth, revealed in the harsh glare of Benson's flash, lay a huge male police dog. His coat was rough and dirty and matted with burrs, and on his head was the scar of a terrible wound, as if he had long before been struck violently over the head. His body was punctured in two places by fresh bullet-holes from Ellery's revolver; but the blood on the snarling muzzle was already dry.

"YOU see," said Ellery wearily, a little later, "it struck me at once that the worn spot looked scratchy—that is, as if it had been scratched at and thus rubbed away. The scratchy nature of the erosion suggested an animal, probably a dog, for of all domesticated animals the dog is the most inveterate scratcher. In other words, a dog had visited this room at various times during the summer nights and scratched away on the rug at this spot."

"But how could you be sure?" protested Jenny.

"Not by that alone. But there were confirmations. The sounds, for example, of your 'ghost'. From the way you described them they might easily have been canine sounds; in fact, you yourself said they were 'inhuman'. I believe you said 'moans, mutters, whimpers, slithery noises, patters, scrapings'. Moans and mutters and whimpers—surely a dog in pain or grief, if you're on the track of a dog already? Slithery noises, patters—a dog prowling about. Scrapings—a dog scratching . . . in this case, at the rug. I felt it was significant." He sighed. "Then there was the matter of the occasions your ghost selected for his visitations to the cabin. As far as anyone could tell, he never came when the cabin was unoccupied. And yet that is when you would expect a marauder to come. Why did he come only when someone was in the cabin? Well, Isaac told me that in empty cabins the windows are kept closed—not locked, merely closed. But a human marauder wouldn't be stopped by a closed window; wouldn't be stopped, when it comes to that, even by a locked window. Again the suggestion of an animal, you see. He was able to get in only when one of the windows was open; he could get in, therefore, only at such times that the cabin was occupied and its occupants left the living-room window open."

"By Godfrey!" muttered Cap'n Hosey.

"There were other confirmations, too. There had been evidence of one police dog in this case, a female. It had come here with Gillette. Yet when the Chicago detectives burst into the cabin and found Gillette apparently gone (which was what Barker relied on), they found indirect evidence—had they realized it—not of one dog but of two. For there was the heavy double chain. Why a double chain? Wouldn't one heavy chain be enough for even the most powerful dog? So there was another confirmation of an extra dog, a live dog—confirmation that Gillette really had had two all the time, although no one knew of the existence of the second; that when Miss Jenny tried to peer into Gillette's car in the garage, there was still another dog behind the one that tried to bite her hand; that Gillette, fearing the dogs would betray him, then took them both into his cabin and chained them there. They were helpless while Barker murdered the thief. He must have battered the heads of the two dogs—perhaps with this very iron poker—thinking he was killing them both. Any barks or growls they may have uttered were quite swallowed up in the noise of the rain and thunder that night, as were the sounds of Barker's hammering down the boards afterward. Barker then must have dragged the two dogs' bodies out into the woods, reasoning that it would be assumed Gillette had killed them. But the male was not dead, only badly stunned—you saw the terrible scar on his head, which is what permitted me to reconstruct Barker's activity against the animals. The male recovered and slunk off. You see, the double chain, the storm that night, the wound—they tell a remarkably clear story."

"But why——" began Heiman, who had crept into the cabin a moment before.

Ellery shrugged. "There are lots of ways. Incidentally, the wound itself on Barker's throat confirmed my theory of a dog—a ragged slashing above the jugular. That's a dog's method of killing. But why, I asked myself, had the dog remained invisibly in the neighborhood, as he must have—prowling the woods, wild, wolfish, existing on small game or refuse? Why had he persisted in returning to this cabin and scratching on the rug—of all things? There could be only one answer. Something he loved was below that rug, at that exact spot. Not the female dog, probably his mate—she was dead and had been taken away by the searching officers. Then his master. But his master was Gillette. Was it possible, then, that Gillette had not made his escape, but was under the floor? It was the only answer; and if he was under the floor he was dead. After that it was easy. Barker wanted this cabin tonight badly. He went to the rug, stooped over to lift it. The dog was watching, sprang through the window . . . "

"You mean to say," gasped Cap'n Hosey, "he reco'nized Barker?"

Ellery smiled wanly. "Who knows? I don't give dogs credit for human intelligence, although they do startling enough things at times. If he did, then he must have lain paralyzed from Barker's blow on the night of Gillette's murder, but still conscious enough to witness Barker's burial of the body under the floor of the cabin. Either

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that, or it was merely that an alien hand was desecrating his master's grave. In any event, I knew that Barker must have murdered Gillette; the juxtaposition of his sample trunks with their contents and the use of quicklime on the body was too significant."

"But why did Barker come back, Mr. Queen?" whispered Jenny. "That was stupid—ghoulish." She shivered.

"The answer to that, I fancy," murmured Ellery, "is simplicity itself. I have a notion——" They were in the alcove. He went out into the living-room where Benson and his men were squatting over a hole in the floor, raking in the mess below with hammers and chisels. "Well, Benson?"

"Got it, by Christopher!" roared Benson, leaping to his feet and dropping a hammer. "You were dead right, Mr. Queen!" In his hand there was an enormous raw diamond.

"I thought so," murmured Ellery. "If Barker deliberately came back, it could only have been for one reason, since the body was well buried and Gillette was considered to be alive. That was—the loot. But he must have taken what he thought to be the loot when he murdered Gillette. Therefore he had been fooled: Gillette, the lapidary, had cleverly made a paste replica of the diamond before he skipped, and it was the replica that Barker had stolen. When he discovered his error after leaving here in July it was too late. So he had to wait until his next sales trip to New Bedford and dig back under the floor. That was why he was crouched over that spot on the rug when the dog jumped him."

There was a little silence. Then Jenny said softly: "I think y—it's perfectly wonderful, Mr. Queen." She patted her hair.

Ellery shuffled to the door. "Wonderful? There's only one wonderful thing about this case, aside from the unorthodox identity of the murderer, my dear. Some day I shall write a monograph on the phenomenon of coincidence."

"What's that?" demanded Jenny.

He opened the door and sniffed the crisp morning air, its invigorating fillip of salt, with grateful nostrils. The first streaks of dawn were visible in the cold, black sky. "The name," he chuckled, "of the inn."

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hesitate? Is it that something fastens us?" He walked to the dais, opened a blue velvet case that lay there.

"Ah!" he sighed. He looked in fascination. And even Graney, now on his feet, could see. Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray also stood, looking with a strange, passionate expression at the contents of that case. And for the moment the intense eyes of Kurt left the figure of Sybil Duval as he gazed, as did the sisters Duval.

For within the case lay the Rolande-Mowbray pearls. Perfect, they were, immaculately matched, symmetrically matched, their nuances of size imperceptible, yet inevitable.

"Thirty-five!" purred M. Orthwein. "Thirty-five! And each *une larme de le Christ!* Each! *Attend!*"

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Reverently, he lifted the strand, clasped it about the lovely throat of Sybil Duval. The girl's violet eyes sparkled with unholy light as she looked at the necklace, and there was something strangely ugly about her mouth.

And Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray might have been seen to tremble violently; Ada Duval might have been seen to dig her nails into her palms; Kurt had clenched his fists so tightly that his arms quivered. Even Graney, who was standing, now, was open mouthed, and on the face of M. Orthwein was an expression like that of a man who looks upon his beloved. Suddenly, however, the jeweler became crisp, active.

"*Voilà,*" he snapped at Kurt. "Let us begin! Is it that you would consume the night? Place yourself, Sybil ——So!" She moved to stand before the screen, clasped her hands professionally in front of her, raised her eyes to the ceiling.

Ada Duval stepped away. Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray, silent, sat and watched narrowly. Kurt moved to the light switch.

"*Bien!*" said M. Orthwein. He smiled expectantly, patting his luxuriant hair complacently. "The lights, Kurt."

There was the metallic twang of the switch.

And from above, in the reflector, there was a brilliant, blinding flash, accompanied by a sharp, puffing sound, and then deep darkness, with an acrid odor pervading the room.

Then silence. Black silence.

"THE fuse!" cried Kurt.

"*Vache!*" snapped M. Orthwein. "Did you not attend them?"

"I did. I do not understand."

Silence again.

"Heavens!" It was Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray. "What a situation for——"

She had no need to finish. Sybil Duval gasped painfully. Ada Duval said in her flat voice:

"Sybil! Don't be a fool!" And then to Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray: "Madame, everyone here is above suspicion."

But Graney said:

"Lady, nobody in this world's above suspicion! Get some lights in here! Get 'em quick!" It was obvious that his breathing was troubling him. His voice was strained. "Quick, I said! Good God! With a quarter million or so in——"

"Has he been heard?" demanded M. Orthwein somewhere in the darkness. "Or is it that you have a deafness, Kurt?"

Kurt muttered. Graney felt him pass.

"Where's he goin'?" snarled the sergeant.

"To the fuses," said M. Orthwein.

Graney shouted to his men upstairs: "Watch the doors an' wndows!"

"But that is ridiculous," said the jeweler. "What could——"

He never finished. For it was at that moment that the floor lamps in the room came on suddenly. And as they came on, Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray screamed.

For she, as well as the others, looked at the body of Sybil Duval that lay on the floor. It lay twisted, on its back, where it had fallen noiselessly on the deep carpet, and not one in the Black Room but knew, from the mask of terror on the face, from the horribly strained tendons in the once lovely throat, and from the dreadful, staring eyes, that she was dead.

Not one.

But nothing about her seemed disturbed. Her gown was as immaculate as ever and, most strange of all, the Rolande-Mowbray pearls lay quietly on her creamy chest.

M. Orthwein, his brows higher than ever, cried out hoarsely, as his fingers clutched his beautiful hair.

Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray's wailing shriek filled the Black Room as she fainted on the deep carpet and as Graney's stentorian roar shouted orders to the men upstairs.

Then Graney had a busy few minutes, for Kurt, returning from the fuse box, and seeing the body of Sybil Duval, uttered a weird cry and made straight for Ada Duval, who stood glaring at the body of her sister strangely, and grasped her by the throat.

"Damn you!" screamed Kurt. "*You* did it!"

With the aid of the police, Graney pulled him off, thrust him roughly into a chair.

The sergeant looked at them angrily, his blue eyes glittering, his ruddy face more flushed than ever. He stooped, glanced over the body of Sybil Duval and frowned. For he saw nothing to indicate the terrible expression on the girl's face. No mark marred her beauty; no rent appeared in her dress; no blood spread on M. Orthwein's carpet.

Graney stood up belligerently, as M. Orthwein helped a revived Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray to a chair, but the puzzlement was still in his face, and still the four who sat about the room regarded him stonily.

"Listen!" snapped Graney. "This doesn't make sense. She's dead—but how? Some o' you know somethin'. Speak up!"

But they remained silent.

"By God, I *will* make you talk!" He noted with satisfaction the uneasiness they expressed at that. "I'll——"

He broke off, turned angrily, then paused, a sullen expression on his face. For a moment he considered. Then he said:

"Call my father-in-law!"

WHEN Ashel arrived at the Black Room in less than half an hour, he found Graney, perspiring, admonishing Kurt, whose face was savage, to be quiet; he saw that Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray sat weakly against the wall, while the excited M. Orthwein fluttered over her, comforting her; he saw that Ada Duval, her eyes red with weeping, sat near Kurt, stroking her throat, where the photographer's wiry fingers had left red welts.

"The Heinie," began Graney, but Ashel interrupted him.

"Mistuh Graney"—it was characteristic for him to address his son-in-law formally—"am I to take it over?"

He looked quizzically at Graney, for, ever since the famous "Death on Wheels" case, there had been rivalry between them. Graney, as a matter of fact, outranked his father-in-law. But Graney was bewildered now. He said sullenly:

"Yeah."

Ashel grinned. "You was sayin' somethin' about Heinie?"

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"*The* Heinie!" snapped Graney. "The Heinie over there!" He indicated the dour photographer.

"I was sayin' he was about to give the gloomy dame"—he nodded at Ada Duval—"the works a minute ago by chokin' her. Kept yellin' she'd killed the kid. They were sisters."

Graney stopped, for M. Orthwein was crying shrilly:

"Out of thin air—it comes! Thin air! *Zut!* Like that. The death that is upon poor Sybil!"

M. Orthwein threw up his hands. Ashel donned his steel-rimmed spectacles and looked over them at the jeweler. Before that odd gesture, M. Orthwein became singularly calm. Perhaps he was astonished. At any rate, he subsided. Ashel, a tall man, gaunt and wrinkled, with mild, blue eyes, sheriff-like mustache and bushy brows, was, in fact, a rather unusual spectacle. Many climes and experiences had left curious impressions.

HE strode across the room and looked over his spectacles at the corpse. He shook his head, blew his long nose honkingly.

"Poor child," he murmured. "Poor child. Tell me about it, Mistuh Orthwein."

Such directness surprised the jeweler, although he said:

"But yes," and glanced anxiously at Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray, who nodded. But the widow, her old face pitifully drawn, leaned back against the wall and closed her eyes. "We are gathered," continued M. Orthwein, "to photograph the Rolande-Mowbray pearls. You know them, *mon detective?*" Ashel nodded. "Very well, we are gathered. We have the model, the lovely Sybil. We will give the pictures to the magazines, the—uh—that is, the proper magazines. You comprehend?"

"Uh huh," said Ashel. "The proper magazines."

"Just so. We place the model—like this." M. Orthwein crossed to the screen where Sybil Duval last had been seen alive. "I tell Kurt"—he indicated the photographer—"to turn on the lights, the photo-floods. He does, when *poof!*—the lights, they explode. The fuse, it has gone. And then"—M. Orthwein drew a deep breath—"when the lights are turned on, it is that Sybil is dead. She does not cry out; she says nothing; she is dead! And why?" He glanced at the body. "It is a riddle, this. The pearls—but there they are! On her throat they are!"

"The pearls are insured, aren't they?"

The question astonished them. Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray's eyes flew open. M. Orthwein raised his brows.

"But yes," said M. Orthwein, "everything in my store is insured."

"And you, Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray?"

"Of course I had them insured."

"But the policies are separate?"

"That is correct," said M. Orthwein. "By what you call the blanket, they are insured. But"—the jeweler's black eyes were snapping again—"is it that you are the idiot, *mon detective?* Is it that the insurance is important? By a look at the papers, you could discover it. But a girl, she is dead. Is it that you do not care how? It is not the pearls, we think of, *now.* It is of Sybil. And my store, the great Orth-

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wein's, it is disgraced. Does that not disturb you? Why, even it is, you have not examined poor Sybil!"

M. Orthwein stopped for breath. Ashel looked at him over the steel spectacles.

"Just gettin' placed, Mistuh Orthwein." He turned suddenly to the elderly owner of the pearls. "Did you know this girl, ma'am?" he asked.

With the question, the woman against the wall started so violently that she dropped her pocketbook.

"Why," she asked in an unnatural voice, "do you ask that?"

"Just gettin' placed," said Ashel. "Seems to me, though, I remember this girl. Seems——"

"What is that to me?" demanded the widow. "I never saw her in my life."

But it was at that moment that Graney entered the situation.

"You sure acted like it, then, moddom," he said bluntly. "How was it you jumped up when she came in an' said——"

"What'd she say, Mistuh Graney?" snapped Ashel.

"Why, she said——" Graney hesitated, then like an actor who must impress with an important line, he imitated Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray:

"'You!' she said, just like that. 'You!' Seems to me——"

But Ashel had turned again to Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray. The widow, who had been sitting rigidly in her chair, suddenly relaxed, looked very old.

"You know, I see," she said brokenly. 'Yes, I knew her."

"Hm-m-mm," said Ashel. "Thought so. You see, ma'am, I read the papers a lot an' I got a fair to middlin' memory, an' it seems to me I remember that your husband——"

"She was his mistress," said Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray. She was looking at the black wall at the end of the room absently. "I'll tell you. It was a scandal, of course." She talked as if she were in a dream. "He was mad about her. He squandered money on her. And before he died"—she hesitated, struggling with her voice—"he gave her a large sum of money. If it were not for that, I would not have to—to—sell my pearls. Why, he even thought of giving her the pearls!"

"How do you know that, ma'am?" Ashel was gentle.

"How do I know?" The woman's voice became suddenly vibrant. "For thirty years I lived with Elliot Mowbray. Thirty years! And I loved him! God, how I loved him! That is how I know. When one loves, one divines. And then she——" The vacuous eyes suddenly took on purpose, became charged with hatred—"she came along. I tried! I spent thousands of dollars"—her hands soothed her sagging face—"on my looks. I dressed. I overdressed! But I tried! Dear God, how I tried! But she took him away from me. Took him away with her stupid beauty!" She hesitated, and when she spoke again, her voice was little above a whisper: "And I hated her! Hated her! The——" Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray used a very ugly word.

As she did, the photographer, Kurt, leaped to his feet. Tears stood out in his intense eyes and he cried:

"Shut up, you! Shut up! You cannot call her that!" Almost, he sobbed. "Your husband, he took her! He ruined her! He took her from *me,* who loved her, do you hear? He taught her to be flippant, to be——"

The photographer paused. A mad light, typical of fools and idealists, shone in his eyes. "And you——" He started toward Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray who stared at him in surprised fear, and M. Orthwein, gasping, would have stepped to intercept him, had not Ashel's hand grasped the jeweler's arm—"*You* dare call her that!"

AGAIN, Kurt paused, but his emotion surged on. Trembling, he whirled suddenly on Ada Duval, and when next he spoke, his accent had become heavy, as if he were about to revert to his native language.

"And you!" He menaced Ada Duval. "You, I say, you killed her! Killed her because——"

He lunged at the jeweler's assistant, but Ashel caught him, and although Kurt struggled, he submitted, surprisingly to the detective's grip.

"Yes," prompted Ashel, "because—"

But it was Ada Duval who answered.

"Because," she said, in her flat voice, "I am in love with him and was jealous of my sister, I suppose he means to say." She looked steadily at Ashel. "That is true. I *am* in love with him. I have been for so long. But I am not beautiful. And Sybil——" Ada Duval's voice caught—"she *was* beautiful. Ah yes, very beautiful." The woman's strange eyes suddenly blazed. "And why not? Haven't I worked for her? Worked like a dog? Haven't I given her everything, protected her, been a mother to her? And then she must take the only man who cared for me away from me! With that beauty of hers! Beauty I moulded and nurtured! Well—" Ada Duval held every person in the Black Room tense and fascinated—"I *could* have killed her at times! God help me, I thought of it. But I did not kill her! I swear it!"

M. Orthwein said breathlessly:

"But it is fantastic, utterly fantastic."

"You think so?" Again Ada Duval was furious. "You wanted her, too. Why didn't you do it? It was you Kurt was jealous of, after Mowbray. You tried to bribe her. You——"

M. Orthwein pursed his lips.

"But what of that?" he interrupted. "She is beautiful. I—" he raised his odd brows, drew his fingers through his hair proudly—"I am quite susceptible, me. *Comment?* As you say, why not? I would have had her if I could."

"*Schwein!*" It was Kurt. "You tried! I believe——"

"But," said M. Orthwein calmly, "I did not succeed. A little more time and then, perhaps. . . . But what does all this lead to?" he asked of no one in general; then, receiving no answer, shrugged and turned to Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray: "One thousand pardons, madame. I am sorry."

But Mrs. Rowlande-Mowbray was calm herself, now. Even she was icily superior. She was glaring at Ashel.

"That is unnecessary, M. Orthwein," she said. "I am more interested in the astute officer here. Now that he has dragged our dirty linen into full view, I wonder what he will do."

Ashel scratched his head, peered over his spectacles at the widow.

"Sorry, ma'am," he said. "We gotta do these things."

"Indeed?"

"Indeed!"

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Ashel walked to the body and, with the eyes of the suddenly and tensely silent room upon him, knelt. He did not touch the dead girl for a moment, but peered closely. Then, abruptly, he put his face down close to the torso. And he seemed to be sniffing. For a moment he engaged himself in this manner, while the room looked on in astonishment, and when he raised his eyes, they were oddly bright.

"I gotta ask you all to excuse me," he said matter-of-factly, "but I gotta take this girl's dress down."

Then, before they could answer, he slipped Sybil Duval's gown from her shoulders, pulled it down about her waist. Only for an instant did he pause as he gazed upon the lovely shoulders, the smooth chest, and then he peered closely again at the dead girl's bare skin. And presently he paused, with a little start. For just below the left breast was a tiny wound, from which no blood at all had escaped, and which was so small as to be almost invisible. He leaned more closely, and again he sniffed. And in his nostrils was a curious pungency, a bitter-sweet odor, like that of sweet almonds. Then he drew Sybil Duval's dress back over her shoulders and straightened to his knees.

M. ORTHWEIN was still staring with his incredible brows raised high; Kurt was muttering; Ada Duval was weeping at the sight of her dead sister's loveliness; Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray held her handkerchief to her face. Then M. Orthwein said:

"But it is incredible, this. The pearls, they are there. Yet poor Sybil, she is dead." And immediately afterward, Ashel committed his famous act.

He had paid no attention to M. Orthwein and the others. Now he took out his handkerchief and again blew his great nose honkingly. And he said:

"Poor child!" And again: "Poor child! So young, so pretty. An' she caused all this trouble."

And then, as if completely overcome with the sight beneath him and his feelings, he leaned over, and to those in the room, it seemed as if he had kissed the chest of Sybil Duval, where the pearls lay so dazzlingly.

Which is known now as the singularly sentimental behavior of Ashel Mayhew.

M. Orthwein started violently and made as if to stop him; Kurt leaped across the intervening space and was about to grab the man from Missouri, when Graney, although gaping with astonishment like the rest, intercepted him. In the short struggle, he pinioned the German.

Ashel raised his head.

"Kurt!" His voice was no longer mild. It crackled electrically and Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray dropped her handkerchief to look. Ada Duval stared in fascination, as did M. Orthwein, and even the angry photographer looked at the detective respectfully.

"What'd you do with the blown-out fuse, Kurt?" asked Ashel.

"I threw it in the waste-basket."

"Get it! Go with him, Graney!"

He rose, dusted his knees.

"But this is strange," said M. Orthwein. "It is weird, this. I am at a loss to explain your touching sentiment, *mon detective.*" And when Ashel made

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no comment: "Allow me. I shall take the pearls to the safe again."

"Not now, Mistuh Orthwein," said Ashel. "We gotta wait a minute. This isn't over, you see."

"But is it necessary that they remain on a dead woman's body? Those precious pearls!" M. Orthwein looked at the strand fondly. "It is sacrilege! I must insist——"

"Not now!"

Again Ashel's mild eyes glittered. M. Orthwein looked at him in rage for a moment, then turned away.

Graney and the photographer returned.

"Here it is, Pop," said the sergeant. He thrust out a blackened object that Ashel took.

He examined it a moment, then, with his pocket-knife, pried off the cap. The interior, he examined thoroughly. His eyes narrowed, as he looked, and then, as if finished with it, he thrust it into his pocket. He looked absently at those in the room and then let his eyes come to rest on the dais.

THE dais, to the others in the room, suddenly seemed a sinister thing, an evil thing, beneath the keen gaze of the man from Missouri. M. Orthwein said in a strained voice:

"It is where I display, that. It is excellent!"

Ashel was at the dais now, running his hands over the rumpled velvet that covered it. He sighed and smiled sadly, then glanced at the dead girl.

"Poor child," he said again, then stooped, unsnapped the necklace and dropped the pearls in the velvet case on the dais.

"Yeah," he said, answering M. Orthwein. "Excellent."

Mrs. Rowlande-Mowbray stood up.

"I've had enough of this," she said. "Do you need me?"

Ashel looked at her in mild surprise, before he said:

"Oh yes, ma'am, I do."

"Then am I to take it that I am under suspicion?"

"Ma'am," said Ashel softly, echoing Graney's earlier words, "nobody in this world's above suspicion, let alone in this room."

Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray's great eyes flickered angrily for an instant, then she sat down again. Ashel turned to the others.

"Now, if you'll just sit down, Mistuh Orthwein, an' you, Miss Duval, an' you, Kurt, I got somethin' to say."

The three he had addressed hesitated a moment, then took seats—M. Orthwein beside Mrs. Rowlande-Mowbray, Kurt and Ada next to each other where they had been before.

"Kurt," asked Ashel, "when did you look at the fuses?"

"When I came on tonight."

"When was that?"

"About seven o'clock."

"An' the fuse box is where?"

"By the ladies' room," said Graney.

"I have the room for ladies—" M. Orthwein cleared his throat—"for those who come here for the display."

"An' did you—" Ashel looked at Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray—"go to the ladies' room when you came, ma'am?"

The widow flushed, but she said:

"I did."

"An' the fuse let go—when?"

"At eight-fifteen," said Graney.

"Hm-m-m," said Ashel. "Then practically everybody here, even—" he glanced at the body on the floor—"poor Sybil, could 'a' balled it up, 'cause it was balled up, you see."

He drew from his pocket the exploded fuse.

"The ord'nary fuses for a house or office buildin' 're ten to fifteen amperes, you see, an' as everybody knows, the different slots 're marked for the rooms they feed. Now this fuse I got in my hand here is *only two amps!*" He paused, looked about the room, but they only stared. "Therefore, somebody, o' course, tampered with the box, 'cause those lights up there 're sure to go with this fuse feedin' 'em. 'S a matter of fact, an ord'nary high watt light might do it, but with those photo-floods . . ." He shook his head.

"So," he continued, "somebody fixed it so's it'd be dark in here an' therefore easy to kill Sybil."

"You'll pardon me, Mr. Detective," said Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray, "but you've not yet shown that she *was* killed. There was no shot; obviously, she was not stabbed or injured, unless you, by what I might call your singularly sentimental behavior discovered something."

Ashel grinned.

"I was comin' to that, ma'am," he said, "but I might's well show you all now." He moved to the dais, unsnapped the velvet and threw it back.

And everyone in M. Orthwein's famous Black Room leaned forward, staring. For on the bare wood of the naked dais, rested a curiously evil looking object.

"Mother of God!" exclaimed M. Orthwein. "Is that what, that?"

"It's a kind o' hypodermic needle," said Ashel.

"It wasn't there earlier," said Ada Duval. "I arranged the velvet myself."

"But I suppose somebody was alone in here one time or 'nother?"

"Why as to that," said M. Orthwein, "each of us."

"Uh, huh," said Ashel. "Thought so. You see, the fuse is the first thing—this the second."

"What does it contain?" asked Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray.

"I'm comin' to that, ma'am," said Ashel. He held up the syringe for them to see. "Now this thing's a complicated business. You see here"—he showed them a glass cylinder inserted in the barrel of the syringe—"is where the stuff for the needle's put. The top o' the cylinder's stopped with cork, but the bottom's closed with rubber. Now, when the plunger's pressed down, it forces the cylinder down, the rubber's pierced by the hollow needle here, an' the needle, o' course, in this case, was in that poor child, there. But when the plunger's pulled back, it pulls the cylinder back an' the rubber, bein' what it is, closes up again an' stops the flow, an' a good thing, too, or you all might 'a' been killed."

"*Seigneur Dieu!*" exclaimed M. Orthwein. "And what is in it?"

"The worst poison," said Ashel, "known—hydrocyanic acid, which'd account for the gasp Ada says she heard. This stuff"—he looked at them keenly—"kills so quick you got hardly a chance to draw a breath. So she didn't yell. Why, if you cut your finger an' get some o' this on it, you're dead as a door nail 'fore you can raise your hand. An' if you smell it, it's the same.

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"But there's an odor it leaves after action which, though bad, isn't dangerous. An' I smelled it when I was sniffin' around that poor child. It's like sweet almonds, an' you can't miss it."

He paused, observing them further, and where before they had regarded him with a certain contempt, there was only respect in their expressions now. By the door, the police looked at the man from Missouri with wide eyes.

Ashel laid the needle on the dais.

"Now," he continued, "when I figure out about the fuse an' the hydrocyanic acid, I got two steps along the way, but I come up to the third.

"Who did it? An' why? The pearls 're here, so I say to myself, it can't be Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray, unless she lost control an' killed Sybil for personal reasons, 'cause she would 'a' had a motive in stealin' her own pearls, keepin' 'em an' collectin' the insurance, too.

"The same goes for Mistuh Orthwein.

"So—" he turned to Kurt and Ada Duval, who watched him tensely—"I come down to Ada Duval, sister o' the deceased, an' Kurt. Now they both might 'a' had a motive with the pearls, but they both got personal reasons that're strong. Kurt——"

"You lie!" screamed the photographer. "I loved her!"

"Kurt," continued Ashel, "as I was sayin', seems to 'a' been a mighty unhappy young man, an' Ada's fed up with doin' for her sister an's mighty jealous. Pretty strong. But still. . . ."

He sighed, shook his head.

"It's queer, this thing. The motive was robbery, after all."

AGAIN, the man from Missouri caused them to gasp. And not one in the room but started.

"But the pearls are there!" cried Kurt.

"No," said Ashel quietly. "These—" he picked up the strand in the velvet case—"are not the Rolande-Mowbray pearls!"

Before they could speak, he raised the strand to his mouth, drew the pearls across his teeth. And M. Orthwein and his assistant Ada were seen to react very strongly to that.

"It is the test!" gasped M. Orthwein. "The infallible test!"

"O' course," said Ashel, "an' when I leaned down there an' "—he smiled at Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray, who was staring blankly at him now—"committed what the young lady calls 'singularly sentimental behavior,' I was givin' the test.

" 'Cause when you pull a real pearl across your teeth, it grips a little, 'cause it's barbed, so to speak, bein' formed by layers an' such, but an artificial pearl's smooth, bein' nothin' but solidified liquid composition. An' these pearls here don't grip. They're phony.

"So—" he drew a deep breath—"here's what we got.

"Somebody tampers with the fuses, so the lights 'll go out. When they go out, this person pulls the syringe from somewhere, kills that poor girl, takes the real pearls from her neck an' slips the phony ones inside her dress. Then he shoves the needle under the velvet, thereby rubbin' out all fingerprints on it.

"Now this person prob'ly figures to

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get away with it 'cause nobody'll think of the pearls, with a necklace around Sybil's neck.

"An' it was pretty near got away with at that, 'cause if Mistuh Orthwein'd taken 'em upstairs an' put 'em in the safe, where'd we be now?"

He hesitated, before he said:

"Now who do you suppose o' those that're here could 'a' figured out such a scheme? O' course, we're goin' to search everybody, but still——"

He hesitated again. Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray rose angrily.

"In that case," she said coldly, "it shall be done by a police matron—not, certainly, by a—a boorish——"

"She is right!" exclaimed M. Orthwein. "Madame is of a delicacy, *mon detective.*"

Ashel inclined his head languidly in agreement.

"O. K., he said, "an' I guess that goes for Ada, too, but I guess we c'n give you an' Kurt a goin' over, huh?"

Mr. Orthwein's brows rose again. He patted his hair nervously.

"It is a low thing this," he said. But he shrugged and held out his arms.

Kurt rose sullenly, and took his place beside the jeweler.

Graney, with another policeman, ran their hands over the bodies of the two men, then accompanied them out of the room.

THE minutes ticked slowly by. Ashel, glancing at the body, walked over and very tenderly closed the sightless eyes. For several seconds he knelt there, then looked at Ada Duval and Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray. They, however, only stared at him blankly.

For a space longer they waited, and then Graney and the policeman returned with Mr. Orthwein and Kurt.

"Nothin', Pop," said Graney, again baffled. "Nothin' at all."

Kurt took his seat again. M. Orthwein was straightening his tie. Now, he smoothed his hair affectionately.

"You have the satisfaction now, eh, *mon detective?*"

But Ashel only eyed him reflectively. Then Ashel walked across and confronted the jeweler.

"M. Orthwein," he said, and something in his voice was oddly tense, "you're mighty interested in gettin' the pearls back, aren't you?"

M. Orthwein was astonished.

"*Comment?*" he asked. "But yes. Is it that you think I am the fool?"

"No," said Ashel. "Hardly."

And then, before the startled eyes of the room, Ashel reached out and pulled M. Orthwein's beautiful hair.

The jeweler gasped, clutched Ashel's wrists, but Ashel tugged. And as he tugged, the beautiful hair came away in his hand. All of it, revealing M. Orthwein's baldness that had always been protected by wigs. A few straggling hairs grew about the bare cranium in a sort of fringe.

And as for the odd brows, they were not nearly so high, now.

But what froze them and what now caused them each to exclaim shrilly was the strand of lovely pearls that lay coiled on Mr. Orthwein's naked pate like a beautiful white serpent.

The jeweler stood foolishly for a moment, staring horribly at Ashel, who stood quietly with the beautiful wig in his hand. And then M. Orthwein reached up, clutched the pearls.

"No, no!" he screamed. "You shall not! Oh, my beauties!"

He looked wildly at the pearls, but Kurt's guttural growl attracted him. The photographer was rising, his eyes fixed with ferocity on the jeweler.

"No!" screamed M. Orthwein again, his eyes bulging with terror, as Kurt, mouthing meaningless words in English and German, sprang at him. Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray, sitting in her chair rigidly, opened her mouth, but from it no sound came. Ada Duval, however, screamed piercingly, and Ashel and the police rushed forward.

But they were not in time. Neither, for the matter of that, was the insanely enraged Kurt.

For M. Orthwein, murderer and thief, his eyes staring in wild terror, had grabbed the needle from the dais. Now, he thrust it into his throat, pressed the plunger.

The others remained as they were, as if changed to stone.

M. Orthwein, internationally famous jeweler, gasped once, shuddered in horrible convulsion, and fell.

For perhaps a full minute, the silence was terrible. Then Ashel said:

"That stuff sure works prompt," and then continued: "I guess everything's evened up, almost, at that. . . . You see, his face was bad in an unfamiliar wig. He wore one all the time, o' course, but this one's special. Therefore it pulled his brows up funny an' the lines in his face were unnatural. That wig's an old thief's trick."

Ashel took the pearls from M. Orthwein's lax hand, placed them in the velvet case, flinging the imitations aside. He handed the case to Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray.

In the corner Kurt held the weeping Ada in his arms, comforting her softly in German.

Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray suddenly found her voice:

"Mr. Detective," she said, "I owe you an apology. Everything you did was necessary and splendid." Ashel, however, only grinned, and she continued:

"And I want to reward you."

But Ashel said:

"Nope. Thanks just the same." He glanced at Kurt and Ada. "But you might give whatever you had in mind to them. I think everything'll prob'ly be all right, now. . . ." and before Mrs. Rolande-Mowbray could reply: "I'll have one o' the men see you home, ma'am, so you won't have to worry 'bout the pearls."

He gave an order or two. And it was on the way home that he said:

"Mistuh Graney, I'm glad I never amounted to much."

Sergt. Graney, surprised, asked:

"What you mean, Pop?"

"I mean," said Ashel musingly, "that I'm glad I never was real han'some or real rich or real powerful, Mistuh Graney."

Graney snorted.

"You're nuts, Pop!" he said.

And Ashel, remembering the beauty of Sybil Duval that had looked so pitiful in death; remembering the passionate jealousy of the sister, of the photographer, of the widow; remembering, too, the vision of the dazzling pearls and thinking on the enormous wealth and power they represented, looked sadly at his son-in-law, and said:

"You're very dense, Mistuh Graney."

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also—but Sam had not the slightest inclination to accept this hint. Cooping oneself up at barely eight o'clock, with nothing more entertaining to watch than the glare of an overhead light into an upper berth, was definitely *not* a part of Sam's adventurous ideas of travel. He glanced down the car, possibly in the foolish hope that the door of Drawing Room A might have been left invitingly ajar. It had not, of course—as anyone more experienced than Sam in the technique of honeymoons would have expected. There were, however, plenty of vacant places in the car. Toward one of these Sam was making his rather doubtful way when he was surprised, flustered, and pleased to see that a pleasant looking, middle-aged woman beckoned him to a place beside her.

"Don't you want to sit here a while?" she moved over sociably and made room for him.

"I—why—delighted, I'm sure," Sam responded with enthusiasm to the friendly smile. Now this was more like his idea of what fellow-travelers should be. He settled himself to relax and expand in the delights of pleasant, if not brilliant, conversation. And when it developed, a very few minutes later, that the nice lady had had an ulterior motive in striking up the acquaintance, Sam was not in the least disillusioned. He was, on the contrary, definitely flattered that she should have selected him of whom to ask a favor.

"The point *is*," the lady explained, "that I have a dog on the train. In the baggage car, of course. And I'm worried sick about him. Are you fond of dogs, Mr. ——?" She fixed him with a bright look.

"Holt," said Sam. "Oh yes—very fond indeed."

"You probably have a dog yourself, Mr. Holt?"

"Well—no," Sam shook his head apologetically, "not for some time. Boarding houses, you see," he paused. Impossible to say that he had never been able to pluck up sufficient courage to broach the subject of a dog to a landlady. "I have never felt," said Sam with dignity, "that a boarding house would be fair to a dog."

"Oh, I quite agree, Mr. Holt. I'm sure you understand how I feel about George——"

"*George——?*" Sam was a little startled.

"Yes—my dog. That's his name, George."

"To be sure," Sam nodded hastily. "George." It had never occurred to him to think of dogs named anything but Toto or Spud or Rusty—but he rather liked that. "George," he said again.

"So I wonder if you *would* be an angel and go up to the baggage car with me? I don't really quite like to go along with all sorts of expressmen and things up there——" She paused with a small, vague gesture—very arch indeed.

No one had to ask Sam Holt twice if he would be an angel. He rose at once with a gallant bow, and prepared to escort the lady—feeling quite chivalrous enough to defend her against dozens of dangerous expressmen, or any other perils they might

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encounter along the devious way.

It was not, after all, a very hazardous errand. The baggage car was next ahead of them, and they found George, a somewhat fringy airedale, quite contented, in the care of one mild and silent baggage-man. But the trip served to cement the friendship between Sam and George's owner, and they continued to converse, chiefly about George, long after their return from the errand of mercy.

They were, in fact, the last two persons in the car to retire. And even after George's mama had retreated into her lower berth, she thrust out her head to ask one final question of Sam.

"*Do* you remember," she demanded in an anxious whisper, "whether there was plenty of water in George's bowl?"

Sam, already in pajamas and dressing gown (new), and on the very point of climbing the ladder into his upper berth, rose to the supreme height of gallantry.

"Would you like me," he whispered back, "to go see?"

"Oh, *could* you?"

"Certainly."

"It would be *such* a relief. George will be certain to get thirsty, and you *are* an angel."

"Not at all." Sam made his way promptly through the aisle of swaying green curtains. It was worth a little trouble, after all, to have made such a very nice acquaintance, and to be twice called an angel, *and* to have one's dressing gown seen and obviously appreciated.

So it happened that little Sam Holt was the one to give the alarm.

FOR when he opened the heavy door into the baggage car, Sam discovered something far more disturbing than the condition of George's water bowl. The baggage master lay sprawled upon the floor, his limp body jiggling and bumping weirdly with every motion of the hurtling train. A tight bandage covered the unconscious man's eyes, and a second cloth was bound across his mouth.

Considering his total inexperience in dealing with emergencies of any sort, Sam acted with notable presence of mind. He stood quite still and took one long, careful look about the car, and noted just two things: that the wide sliding door was open possibly six inches, admitting a blast of chill air from the night outside—and that George, every hair on his back standing upright, faced that open door with lowered head, straining against his fastened leash and uttering growl after terrier growl.

Having seen these things, Sam moved quickly to the prostrate baggageman's side. Kneeling to remove the two cloths which bound the victim's face, Sam made a third observation. The thick white gag was damp, and from it rose a heavy, sickish odor—an odor which reminded Sam of a doctor's office long ago. *Chloroform.*

In vain Sam shook the man—shouted at him above the deafening roar and rattle of the train. He was, for the time at least, hopelessly beyond consciousness. Sam lowered the limp head gently to the floor once more, and, with the two bandages stowed carefully in his dressing-gown pocket, he made his way from the swaying baggage car back into the Pullman.

He knew that he must find the Conductor. Sam had read enough about trains to be aware of that—but not enough to be quite certain where to look for the Conductor. Rather vaguely, he walked the dimly lit length of the car, found himself facing Drawing Room A—and a moment later was confronted by a second shocking sight.

The drawing room was not tightly shut, and with each lurch and sway of the train the door swung loosely on its hinges. Just as Sam approached, a jolt of extra violence sent the door sharply inward, to disclose a man's sprawled figure on the floor of the brightly lighted compartment. It was the bridegroom, gagged and blindfolded, exactly as the other had been.

Sam stared in horror for an instant, then another lurch of the train snapped the door shut again. Good heavens—Sam swung around wildly—he must find the conductor. Perhaps if he stood quite still and shouted——

At that moment there was a commotion in the passageway beyond him. Sam turned quickly and saw, with infinite relief, the great bulky form of the Conductor heave itself about the corner toward the door of Drawing Room A. Sam seized the blue uniformed arm.

"Th—there's a man"—he pointed shakily at the flapping door—"he's in trouble—he's——"

Without a word the Conductor brushed Sam aside and pushed open the door. At the same time a second person appeared from the passageway. Sam turned sharply. It was the bride, looking very distressed but very lovely in a negligee of coral satin. She clutched briefly at Sam's arm.

"Oh, I'm *so* glad you're here," she gasped, "you *will* help?"

"C—certainly—I——" Sam could not complete a gallant answer before she hurried past him into the drawing room where the Conductor was bending over her husband's prone figure.

"Is he badly hurt do you think?" With feverish anxiety the young woman knelt beside the victim's head and worked in desperate haste to remove the tight gag and blindfold. "Oh, I *knew* something like this would happen if we stayed in this place—but, Tom—Tom darling, speak to me, *please*——" her voice was rising toward hysteria.

"Take it easy there, take it easy," the Conductor's tone was soothing. "It don't look to me as if he's hurt a bit but what the hell could have happened I don't see—— Here you"—he turned to Sam—"give me a hand here."

Sam stepped forward quickly. At the Conductor's direction he seized the limp shoulders and—with a strength inspired by the occasion—assisted in hoisting the unconscious man into the lower berth.

"There now—to get these things off—" the Conductor reached for the blindfold.

"Here—let me—" Sam's fingers worked with trembling haste. The two knots gave way readily—so readily, in fact, that a certain curious fact was borne in upon Sam's confused mind. The person who had blindfolded and gagged this young man was *not the same one* who had tied the difficult, efficient knots at the back of the bag-

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gage-man's head! And yet—the bandages were identical and the gag which Sam lifted from the young man's mouth was dampened with the same sickly sweet chloroform.

Some minutes passed before Sam could communicate his several discoveries. Minutes during which the Conductor and Sam united in an effort to quiet the hysterical young bride—to assure her that her Tom was probably suffering from nothing more than a mysteriously administered anæsthetic. When at last she seemed convinced—and somewhat calmed—Sam faced the Conductor.

"I—there—this isn't all that happened—" he began.

"Whatd'ya mean it isn't all?" the big man turned abruptly.

Sam's usual difficulty in speaking coherently was not noticeably lessened by the confusion and excitement of recent events, but he plunged valiantly into an account of what he had found in the baggage car. As evidence, he drew the two cloths from his pocket.

"Good God—what is all this?" The Conductor, his heavy face now registering a frantic mixture of bewilderment and alarm, grasped the two sets of bandages and frowned at them. "The same," he said heavily, "but what the hell it can all be about—"

"Yes," said Sam earnestly, "but they aren't quite the same—that is, the knots—the same person *couldn't* have tied them, you see . . ." he paused—with the anxious hope that he had made himself clear. It was plain, however, from the Conductor's expression, that he had not.

"No, I don't see," the big man wiped his forehead. "But say—" he leaned back suddenly, arms akimbo, to study Sam with what was evidently a new and enlightening idea. "Just how does it happen," the Conductor demanded, "that *you* know so much about all this?"

"Well—I—"

"What, for instance," the Conductor's chin was thrust forward as his suspicions grew on him, "were you doing in the baggage car at this time of night?"

"Well, you see—I—" Sam gestured weakly. "It was because of George."

"George who?"

"Just—George. An airedale."

"An *airedale?*"

"Yes. You see the lady asked me to be sure that George had enough water for the night, and I—"

"What lady asked you?"

"I—don't know. That is, I don't know her name. But she's in lower B. I'd been in the baggage car with her earlier looking after George, and so she asked me to see about filling George's water bowl, and I—"

"Yeah, I got that part," the Conductor nodded impatiently. "And you found the baggage-man knocked out with chloroform—"

"And then I came through the car looking for you," Sam hurried on. "When the drawing room door swung open and I saw this young man—"

"Tied up the same way by the same person."

"No," said Sam with patient firmness, "*not* by the same person. That's my point. The knots were different—"

"Oh, *please,*" it was the voice of the young woman which cut in suddenly,

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"can't you *do* something instead of just arguing? Can't you find out what all this dreadful business *means?*"

The Conductor faced her with a look of dark disapproval.

"I'm trying to find out, Madam," he said, "just as quick as I can. But there ain't any use rushing into things—" He paused for a long, ponderously reflective moment, then: "I got this much," his tone was deliberate. "Somebody's up to some kind of monkey-business—and that somebody is in this car—*now*. I know that because I've been sitting all evening in the compartment at the end of the car, and if anybody had gone by the open door in the last hour I'd have seen 'em. Now the thing we've got to do is to rout out everybody in the car—and when the two men wake up they can tell us which one of the people done the gagging—and *why*."

"That sounds sensible," Sam nodded briskly. "Very sensible."

The Conductor favored him with a withering look.

"I'm so glad you think so," he said with crushing irony. "Now, you two," indicating Sam and the young woman, "stay right here while I go to see to Pete in the baggage car, and then get the other passengers up."

Obediently they waited, Sam offering what words of comfort and reassurance he could summon to the girl who continued, with pathetic anxiety, to bend over her unconscious husband.

"You see," said Sam, as the young man stirred slightly, "he's beginning to come around already."

"Oh, darling Tom," the bride crooned her relief close to the sleeping ear, "who *could* have done such a dreadful thing to you?"

Sam sighed. A long and profound but silent sigh.

Meanwhile, in the car outside, the Conductor had snapped on a flood of lights, and was proceeding with the business of rousing passengers. Gradually there rose a hum of excited and anxious conversation—each new voice adding to the chorus of questions. Above the clack and roar of the train's noisy progress through the night, Sam could hear the sudden babble of disconnected words.

"Look here, what *is* this?"

"An accident——"

"Are you all right, Maude?"

"Is it a *wreck?*"

"The Conductor said——"

"See here, Conductor, what is the meaning of——"

"Are we wrecked?"

"Someone's been hurt?"

"Perhaps we're being held up."

"Where's Alice?"

Then, quite without warning, all the questions, all the activity in the milling car was halted—frozen into horrified silence by a single, long-drawn scream.

"What's the matter there, Madam?" It was the Conductor's voice of heavy authority. "There's no danger—take it easy."

"*That woman,*" a feminine voice was raised, shrill and hysterical, "*that woman doesn't move!*"

Instantly the babble began again, pitched this time in an even higher key of frantic confusion.

It was too much for Sam. Forgetting even his duty as chivalrous protector of the harassed bride, he was drawn by an irresistible curiosity to join the clamoring, half-clad passengers who crowded forward in the car. Gradually Sam pressed through the mass of shoulders until he could see the large blue form of the Conductor leaning forward between the parted curtains of a lower berth—a certain lower berth. With a chill of horror Sam realized that it was *his* section before which a woman, now completely hysterical, stood with shaking finger pointed while the Conductor made his seemingly endless investigation.

Then it must be, Sam thought wildly, the elderly woman who was—was what? Dead? *Murdered?* The while confused scene seemed more and more like a nightmare.

THE Conductor withdrew himself slowly from the berth, and turned to face the car. In that moment a silence fell, and every eye was fastened upon the Conductor's grave, set face.

"This woman," he said heavily, "is dead. As near as I can make out she was killed by a blow on the head. Probably fractured her skull. And it must have been done by someone in this car." Slowly his narrowed eyes traveled about the circle of frightened faces. "In a case like this we telegraph ahead to the next town for police to board the train—and until they get on, I'm in charge. I'll ask all of you to line up for questioning, and everyone will have to be searched." At the burst of hysterical protest which followed his words, the Conductor raised his voice to a boom of authority. "*Quiet,*" he roared, "everybody quiet. I'm sorry for the trouble to all of you who don't know anything about what happened—but this is the law, just as much as if the police was already here. And until we find out who gagged and chloroformed two men and murdered this woman—every last one of you has got to do what I say."

"You're quite right, Conductor." From the circle of subdued passengers a tall, gray-haired man spoke suddenly. "I'm sure we'll all cooperate with you the best we can, won't we?" A very few faint nods answered his sweeping glance. "I happen to be a Judge," the tall man went on. "Sherman is my name. If I can be of any help at all I'll be most willing——"

After one long, hard look the Conductor appeared to decide in favor of the Judge.

"Thank you," he spoke with obvious relief, "that's very good of you. Now if it's O.K. with the other folks, I'll ask you to look after things while I go up ahead and see about telegraphing from the next stop."

"Certainly," said the Judge, "if there is no objection—?" Once more his glance passed about the circle. There was no demur. "Meantime," he said, "we might begin the searching. A most unpleasant formality—but necessary, I'm afraid. I presume, Conductor, that you wish only a search of baggage—since, in our very much undressed condition, there could be little question of concealing anything upon our persons."

Rather vaguely, the Conductor nodded.

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"You do just what you think is right, Judge," he said.

"But, Judge—" a youngish woman stepped forward, "what *are* we to be searched for?"

The tall man eyed her levelly.

"For one thing," he said, "the weapon with which this poor woman's skull was fractured. I take it, Conductor, that there is no sign of any such weapon in the berth there?"

"No sign of anything," the Conductor nodded again. "Nor nothing disturbed that I can see. Take a look for yourself."

"And for another thing," the Judge finished his sentence before obeying the direction, "we'll search for a bottle of chloroform."

BY the time the Conductor had returned to the car with the information that the police would board the train at Boise, still more than an hour distant, the Judge, assisted by his quietly efficient wife, had the search fairly well under way. He had also heard the various testimonies of Sam, the bride in Drawing Room A, and the owner of George—and had, with certain observations of his own, pieced together a plausible account of what had happened in the car.

"The time element," said the Judge, "can be settled quite accurately. Since these two persons," indicating Sam and George's mama, "were the last to retire, nothing could have been done until they went into the dressing-rooms at the opposite ends of the car to prepare for bed. And since Mr. Holt went to the baggage car immediately upon his return from the dressing-room, and there discovered the baggage-man already gagged and unconscious, we must assume that the three attacks were made during those few minutes while Mr. Holt and Miss Davis (owner of George) were preparing to retire. It would seem that the murderer, taking that opportunity when there was no one in the car, went first to the berth where this woman was sleeping, delivered the fatal blow upon her head, then moved quickly to the baggage car, where he chloroformed his second victim, and then returned to the drawing room for his final assault upon the young man who was at that moment alone. The statement of Mrs. Briggs (the bride) tallies with that theory—for she tells me that she went to the dressing-room to fetch a cigarette case which she had earlier left there, and that when she returned to the drawing room her husband had been attacked in the very few minutes required for her errand."

"Just a moment, Judge." The Conductor, obviously impressed by the efficiency of this rapid recital, put in one puzzled question. "How can you be sure that these three attacks were made in the order you say?"

"I'm coming to that," said Judge Sherman calmly. "You see, it depends on the motive which lay behind all this dreadful brutality."

"My God"—the Conductor's respect was increasing by leaps and bounds—"you don't mean to tell me you've got at the reason for it *this* quick?"

"Unless I'm very much mistaken, I have. The motive was robbery."

The Conductor's eyes bulged.

"But how could it of been, Judge?"

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he protested, "when there wasn't anything disturbed in the berth? The lady's baggage is put away and her purse is lying there beside her——"

"You told me once before, Conductor, that nothing was disturbed," the Judge spoke quietly. "But I think you overlooked one thing. This poor woman, you may have noticed, had her hair done up on metal curlers. And you may *not* have noticed that one of those curlers was removed—removed so hastily that a small tuft of hair was torn off with it. Do you see what I mean?" Judge Sherman thrust out his hand to display a small metal object. As he held it up to view, those passengers who stood near him could plainly see the strands of gray hair which supplied his gruesome evidence.

Little Sam Holt, at the Judge's elbow, shuddered violently.

"But I still don't see"—the Conductor's violent efforts to think were concentrated in one great frown—"I *still* don't see how that means robbery. How the murderer could've got anything out of a *curler*——"

"That," said the Judge, "is just the point. It must have been a very small object and very precious. Small enough to be wrapped inside a strand of hair on the curler—and precious enough so that the owner took pains to conceal it with such extreme care, and the thief was willing to commit murder for it!"

"A—a jewel, perhaps?" It was Sam who spoke.

The two men turned to stare at him—the Couductor with evident disfavor, the Judge impartially thoughtful.

"Possibly" — the Judge shrugged slightly — "but I'm inclined to think not. This woman, you see, was hardly the—jewel type. From this little I gathered by examining the contents of her purse, I should rather size her up as a scientist of some sort. There's no actual identification, which, by the way, is an odd fact—but various memoranda and papers indicate a profession of some kind. I should rather guess that she might have been a physician. Not a likely person, of course, to be carrying jewels of any spectacular value. That's what makes it puzzling—" He frowned for a moment, then continued briskly: "But to get on. Granting that we're right in assigning robbery as the motive, it seems fairly clear that the attacks must have been made in the order I mentioned. First the murder was committed—then the object—whatever it may have been—was taken from its very ingenious hiding place; *then*, for some reason which we cannot yet see, the thief made his way into the baggage car and executed his curious attack upon the second victim."

Once more Sam Holt spoke suddenly.

"Mightn't that mean," he asked, "that the person disposed of the—the thing he had stolen somewhere in the baggage car?"

The Judge appeared to focus rather more attention on this second suggestion.

"I think, perhaps"—he turned to look at Sam as if really observing him for the first time—"you may be right. Of course that leaves the final assault on young Briggs completely without motive, unless——" He checked himself abruptly. "At any rate, it's worth a look. Suppose you remain in charge here, Conductor, while this gentleman and I make a brief inspection of the baggage car."

As the Conductor, plainly more and more willing to leave all initiative in the Judge's hands, nodded his assent, Sam Holt was conscious of a new and somewhat terrifying feeling of importance.

"I—that's quite all right with me, Judge——" he began. But his words were lost in a sudden interruption from Mrs. Sherman.

"The young man in the drawing room, Edward," she laid her hand upon the Judge's arm and spoke quickly, "is conscious now. I've talked to him."

"What does he say?"

"Absolutely nothing," the woman shook her head, "except that someone entered the compartment almost immediately after his wife had left him alone, caught him from behind and held him down until the chloroform had taken effect."

"Briggs didn't *see* the person?"

"He says not. But it must have been a man, of course—and very strong, I should think, to hold down anything as husky as young Briggs himself."

The Judge's sharp eyes narrowed suddenly.

"I see"—he stroked his chin with a meditative air—"or rather—I *don't* see—yet. Anything else, Mary?"

"Nothing yet," his extraordinarily competent wife answered promptly, "but I'll go on searching luggage. I'm pretty well through the car now, and not a thing has turned up. But I thought you'd want to know about young Briggs."

"Quite right, my dear." The Judge patted her hand approvingly.

IT seemed at first to Sam that their trip to the baggage car was to be quite useless. The Judge was very much inclined to stand and stare, scarcely appearing to hear Sam's careful explanations of just how he had found everything when he had entered earlier. Neither the condition of the still heavily sleeping baggage-man—now attended by a frightened and sleepy Pullman porter—nor Sam's efforts to point out the possible significance of the slightly opened side door of the car, seemed to interest the Judge noticeably. It appeared, in fact, that he had quite abandoned the idea of searching the car with any pretense of thoroughness, as he continued to stand near the door, his gaze wandering vaguely and absently about the boxes, crates and luggage which filled the car.

And it was thus that Sam, left to his own rather crestfallen devices, fell to poking about in a half-hearted attempt at a search—and made the discovery which established him as the hero of that harrowing and mysterious night. Not that Sam had any conscious intention of being brilliant. He was simply interested in pigeons—and when, in his rather aimless effort at searching, he came upon a small crate containing three pigeons, it was not unnatural for him to pause and look at the birds more closely. It was not, indeed, until he had examined the

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pigeons for some moments that Sam's great idea began to dawn. And it was George who supplied the first clue.

For at the instant when he knelt down beside the crate for a better view of the birds, Sam was startled by a low, whining growl. He turned to see George straining at the leash, with terrier eyes fastened hopefully upon the small door of the crate. Something clicked in Sam's brain. The position of the dog—head lowered, hackles rising—was precisely the same as it had been some forty-five minutes earlier when Sam had entered the car to find the baggage-man unconscious and George growling. Only *this* time the terrier's attention was directed toward the crated birds, whereas in that earlier scene the dog had been staring at the slightly opened side door of the car.

In a burst of excited activity, the mind of Sam Holt embarked upon the most original and daring idea of its prosaic career. Feverishly his brain pursued the thought, as, with trembling fingers, Sam fumbled at cardboard tag which identified the crate of birds. Bending down, he read the neatly typed address: "To R. A. Leeming, R. F. D. No. 3, Boise, Idaho." And underneath was scrawled an official notation: "Four pigeons—insured value $100." That was all—but Sam sank back upon his heels, dazed with the unbelievable brilliance of his discovery.

Four pigeons. *Four.* And once more he leaned forward to make quite sure. There were *three* birds now huddled in the crate. Sam turned to face the Judge.

And the Judge, quite oblivious of Sam's activity, had that very moment concluded that there was nothing to be gained by an examination of the baggage car.

"I don't see the slightest possibility here"—he spoke with a weary shrug—"unless this chap can tell us something when he comes around"—indicating the baggage-man. "Until then—we might as well get back——"

"But, sir, I—just a minute—I think I've found something—" In the stress of his discovery Sam's voice rose to a sort of gasping squeak. Desperately, he cleared his throat, and in another moment the story was tumbling forth. The crate of pigeons—the open door of the car—George's growling—the label on the crate—*the one bird missing.*

"You see, Judge—*carrier pigeons.* Mightn't that be the answer? The thing that was stolen—if it was small enough to hide in a metal curler, it could be carried by a bird——"

In an instant the Judge was kneeling beside Sam, peering into the crate and at the printed tag.

"By Jove, man"—he delivered a thwack of admiration upon Sam's quaking shoulders which very nearly sent the small man sprawling—"by Jove, I think you've hit it!"

And the rest was simple.

For when Sam and the Judge returned to the Pullman they were greeted by Mrs. Sherman with two new discoveries.

"This woman, Edward," she addressed the Judge excitedly, "has confessed——"

"No, Judge—I *didn't* confess any-

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thing——" From behind the determined shoulder of Mrs. Sherman came an hysterical protest. "Make her let me *go!*"

At the sound of that voice, Sam pressed forward anxiously—and saw that it was Miss Davis, the plump and pleasant owner of George, whose wrist was firmly held by the Judge's spouse.

"Now then—quiet please, Miss Davis." The Judge spoke soothingly. "Suppose you tell me just what you've told my wife."

"It was only that I—I saw the woman when she put her hair in curlers—but *I* didn't do anything; honestly, Judge, I——" Miss Davis was verging dangerously near tears.

"Nobody says you did do anything," the crisp tones of Mrs. Sherman cut in impatiently. "The point is, Edward, that someone else was in the dressing-room when the murdered woman slipped that *something*—whatever it was—into the metal curler. And Miss Davis knows——"

"Who was it, Miss Davis?" With quiet intensity the Judge's question was leveled at the whimpering witness. "Who was that other person?"

"It was—oh dear, it was the bride." The voice of Miss Davis rose in a wail of fluttering sobs.

And in another moment Sam Holt knew the truth. For he saw the Judge's single look of question, and the nod from Mrs. Sherman which answered him.

"I was pretty sure of it," said Mrs. Sherman, "when I went through their luggage—and then when this woman told me——"

In spite of himself, Sam Holt uttered one final protest in the name of Romance.

"Oh, *not* the bride and groom," he said, "surely not——"

But the call of chivalry was lost upon the Judge's wife.

"Bride and groom, my foot," she said flatly. "That was just part of their game, and so was the fake attack on the young man, and all the hocus-pocus about the written warning on their ticket. Every bit of it was planned to divert suspicion and create a lot of silly, sentimental sympathy. The young fools seemed to think they wouldn't even be searched—judging from the amount of empty baggage they carried. And they probably *wouldn't* have been searched if some people had been in charge. " A withering glance for Sam and his sentiment.

"Well," said the Judge, "at least *you* were never deceived by romance, Mary." He sighed. Rather a long sigh. "We might as well finish the business. Where are they?"

"In the drawing room. The Conductor's watching until you get there."

JUDGE SHERMAN entered the small compartment quietly. Sam, peering with reluctant fascination over his shoulder, saw the young couple seated in the midst of their opened, and guiltily empty, luggage—and saw, with a last sinking of heart, the hopeless look with which they faced the Judge.

"The jig is up," Judge Sherman said slowly. "We know that you murdered a woman, stole something from her, carried that object into the baggage car and attached it to a carrier pigeon which, being released from the car, transported the stolen item to your confederates somewhere miles away. We also know, Mr. Briggs, that you staged the attack upon yourself with a very small dose of chloroform—witness the fact that your real victim, the baggage-man, has not yet wakened—and that your pose as bride and groom was faked to avoid suspicion. And a very convincing fake it was." Once more Sam heard a small sigh from the Judge—a sigh which was eloquently echoed in his own disillusioned soul.

"I suppose," said the Judge, "you admit everything?"

Silence.

"The details of your crime, and the identities of your confederates, I shall leave to the discovery of the police, who will board the train very shortly. But one thing I would like to know. What could that woman have carried which was so valuable that you deliberately followed her on this trip in order to steal it?"

THE answer was long in coming. Then, at last, the young man started to speak.

"It's no use," he said dully, "you might as well know. That woman was a scientist—a very famous one. And she was carrying a bit of radium—a small, gray, uninteresting little hunk of stuff—but worth, I don't need to tell you, a very great deal of money. Just about two hundred thousand dollars, I was told. I think," the pleasant young voice paused, "that answers your question, Judge."

"Oh, quite," said the Judge, "quite sufficiently."

After a moment he closed the door and turned to Sam.

"Nice youngsters," he said, "very nice. We seldom get them quite that way." Then, briskly, "Well, my boy, you did an excellent piece of work. If you hadn't found the pigeons, we probably should never have had the answer. The crate with the other three birds would have been put off the train at Boise—and the police could have hunted until they were blue in the face and never had a clue of where the good lady's priceless radium had been disposed of. I shall see that you are properly rewarded—you and my good wife who is not deceived by romance. Remember, my boy, it doesn't pay to be deceived by romance—when you're as old as I am you'll probably begin to believe it."

"I—yes, sir—I'll remember." Sam watched the Judge walk slowly down the car, shaking his head.

When, some twenty minutes later, the express pulled into Boise, the car was once more quiet. Everyone had retired behind discreet green curtains. But Sam Holt, in his upper berth, was wide awake. And he wondered if, perhaps, in a lower berth farther down the car, Judge Sherman might not be watching from a window.

Sam fell asleep, some time later, still wondering — wondering whether, in the morning, he would have the courage to ask the Judge whether the bride had still worn her bouquet of gardenias when the police led her from the train.

It Began in 1890

(*Continued from page 52*)

to manicure the nails at home. The beauty shops had better trained girls do them if you preferred their help. Rather suddenly, along about 1910, it became very much the thing to have the nails always well manicured.

Something besides the usability and satisfactory work of hand cosmetics helped put manicuring where it is today. There was a great awakening of interest in the subject of hygiene. Doctors decreed that neglected nails were good germ carriers. Nail hygiene, like mouth hygiene, was taken up in the schools. The doctors got behind the beauty specialists in recommending well-cared-for nails.

So we all became hand conscious. We knew that we could get our nails manicured or could do them ourselves without spending much time or money. We felt mildly virtuous, as well as better looking, because doctors, boards of health and school teachers had talked so much to us about the value of clean hands and well-kept nails that would not harbor germs. And we certainly felt better pleased with our looks when our hands were always beautiful.

For the hand that is well taken care of is beautiful. Smooth skin—the result of lotions, creams, and a good soap and water cleansing; nicely shaped nails—the result of careful trimming and filing, with attention to the little fold of cuticle that must constantly be worked away from the base of the nail; flexibility and grace of movement—the result of hand exercise and massage; and softly shining nails—the result of one of the many good methods of polishing that are so easy to use—these things make the hands beautiful with a beauty that is really worth while.

GAY SUMMER STYLES

With the aid of our New Method Circulars you can easily make the season's smartest hats and scarfs.

Ju307—Linen hat made from three pieces of material, with end of material tied amusingly at the top of the crown.

Ju308—Linen scarf to match. This is made from a single piece faced with matching or contrasting material.

Ju309—A new floppy brimmed hat of seersucker with a bright ribbon trimming at the front.

Ju310—Matching seersucker scarf made with a straight center piece and gathered ends of the same material.

Ju311—The new plaid gingham hat with ribbons at the back of the head that tie at the back over the hair.

Ju312—Matching plaid gingham scarf made of a single piece of material with matching lining.

Write to Miss Frances Cowles, care of this magazine, enclosing 4 cents for one circular, 10 cents for three circulars, or 15 cents for all six. Be sure to indicate which circulars you want by the numbers given in the accompanying descriptions.

Little Book of Strange Crimes

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supposed to have nothing left but her memories. Maybe it was thinking of all this that led Georgette Winkler into an unsuccessful suicide attempt after Gus's bumping off.

Anyway, it all makes Lottie look comparatively bright.

CONVICTS in the prison shops in Western Penitentiary, Pittsburgh, have had working hours cut to conform with NRA rules. Sentences remain the same.

HALL OF FAME

JOHN DILLINGER. After he broke out of the Crown Point jail, they began calling him the worst since Jesse James. Nerts. Since last July he has been accused of only eight bank robberies (proceeds, $140,300), one murder, and two jail breaks. Small time stuff when you put it beside a record like Gerald Chapman's—that famous bandit of yesterday.

Dillinger should either abandon his evil ways and go back to the farm—or try vaudeville. He is a natural comedian. Sample: "I guess my only bad habit is robbing banks. I smoke very little and I don't drink much." He might team up with his lawyer, who explained that the reason for his escape is that he has a dread of being confined in a small place. Claustrophobia, if you want to be really technical.

Charles (50% in 45 days) Ponzi. Here is his balance sheet after nearly twelve years in a Massachusetts prison for blowing one of the gaudiest bubbles in our financial history—

Lost—Swagger, flippant and careless manner.

Gained—Forty pounds, subdued, repentant attitude, knowledge of law.

Unchanged—Smile, laugh, wit, ability to make friends.

SCOTLAND YARD worked on twenty-one murder mysteries in 1933, and succeeded in solving twenty.

In the unsolved case of Dr. Angelos Zemenides, detectives were thwarted by too many clues and suspects and not by too few of them.

A SWEETHEART IN ONE PORT TOO MANY

EIGHT years ago in seething Shanghai, that melting pot where West mingles with East, a French sailor named Claude Cheval seduced and abandoned an exotic Chinese girl. She pleaded with him, begged him on her knees to return to her—and was met with a scornful laugh. The night before he sailed for another port he gave her a final answer. He knocked her down in the street, and passed on to a night of debauchery. The girl watched him as he disappeared, sent after him a bitter curse, made her vow to be revenged, somehow, sometime.

Cheval got drunk. He went back to his ship in a quarrelsome mood. An officer rebuked him. With a curse Cheval sprang upon him like a wild animal, inflicting serious injuries. His next voyage was to Devil's Island.

Six years of hell. Disease, heat, hunger, brutality, despair. At last, escape in a boat made from a hollow log. He made Trinidad. He shipped on a German vessel for Hamburg, there transferred to another bound for Shanghai, where all his trouble had started.

Soon after making the Chinese port he swung gaily ashore for an evening in the dance halls he had missed so long. He did not notice a Chinese woman crouching in the shadows. Nor the consuming hatred that flared in her eyes as she saw him. Nor that she followed him silently and relentlessly wherever he went, until he returned to the ship.

Retribution was overtaking him. The mysterious Chinese woman was the girl he had mistreated so long ago. She had been watching and waiting, and her curse was finally working out.

Presently, detectives, summoned by her, appeared. Cheval's next voyage was back to Devil's Island.

THIS is a Chicago dive's latest wow. A large round table with fifty holes around the edge. A mouse is released in the center. If it runs into the hole you are backing, you take everything on the table. If it picks an unbacked hole the house takes all.

DELICIOUS FRUIT DISHES

This month's food circulars are devoted to the various kinds of fruit most popular in this country. They give recipes for making delicious desserts, salads, appetizers and other dishes, as well as suggestions for using the fruits, and important facts to remember about them. Here are the circulars:

1. Oranges.
2. Pineapples.
3. Bananas.
4. Apples and other core fruit.
5. Peaches, plums and other stone fruit.
6. Berries.
7. Melons.
8. Grapes.

If you would like copies of these circulars, send ten cents to Food Editor, care of this magazine, 55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. Remember they are printed on loose leaves, so that you can keep them in a loose-leaf binder.

I Go Sleuthing

(*Continued from page* 13)

followed to their conclusion by Federal as well as local and state police, no light was ever shed on the mysterious disappearance. After fifteen years, Banker Rutherford became no more than a topic of conversation.

LAST year Alan Rutherford, Jr., and I spent our honeymoon in Paris. We came back from the American Express one morning with our mail and sat down to look it over at the cafe outside our hotel. Mother had sent on the Marston *Item,* containing the account of our wedding. I glanced at it hastily, then put it aside to read later.

However when we reached our room, I found I had forgotten it. Without bothering Alan, I ran downstairs myself to inquire for it.

Just as I arrived at the door of the hotel, I saw a tall gray-haired man rise from the table where we had sat, and watched him nonchalantly stuff *my paper* into his pocket. Before I could reach him, he was walking rapidly away.

"Who is he?" I inquired rather idiotically of the waiter. "He has my newspaper."

"That one?" the waiter indicated the retreating back. *"C'est l'homme des sardines."*

Some subconscious suggestion registered in my brain. I glanced at my wrist watch. Eleven-fifteen.

"Mr. Rutherford, Mr. Rutherford," I shouted, hurrying after him. He turned once, his brown eyes so like my husband's I was shocked. I had made no mistake. Then he ran, and suddenly disappeared in some hidden alley.

Back at the cafe, the voluble waiter was delighted to talk.

"A queer one, that. Foreigner. One time he live at thees 'otel, but his wife, that Riet, she ran away with all hees money and a younger man, too. No one knows how he earns the living now. Everyday just this identical time, he comes for sardines on toast and milk, he always drinks. He never miss one day for five year. Tomorrow he will return."

But I knew he would never come back.

As I went upstairs I wondered what I should tell Alan. For years he had tried to live down his father's disgrace, and Anna Dell long ago had re-married. Hastily I smoothed my hair and trusted to luck my face would not betray me.

"I was looking for the paper, honey," I replied to Alan's question, "but I reckon somebody must have picked it up."

Write Your Own Mystery

Do you know any actual events that have happened either to yourself or to your friends that you think constitute a real mystery problem? If so, try to solve it. MYSTERY MAGAZINE *will pay $100 apiece for the best true "unwritten mystery stories" and their solutions submitted each month. All manuscripts should be no more than 1,500 words in length, no less than 500 words, preferably typewritten, double-spaced, on one side of the paper only. Each month* MYSTERY MAGAZINE *will print one or more real mystery problems, told by* MYSTERY *readers, and their solutions. And remember—it will pay $100 for each of the best contributions published! Address your manuscript to the "I Go Sleuthing" Editor,* MYSTERY MAGAZINE, *55 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.*

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(*Continued from page* 35)

clear-cut features were cleanly shaven, although the lower part of his face was dark with the roots of an insistent beard. His eyes were dark and piercing and seemed to be lost beneath heavy black brows; and in spite of the fact that his hands were soft and white, there was steel in the restrained grip.

I did not need the somewhat confused introduction that Paul was endeavoring, to tell me that this was Ben Klein, the Overlord of the Eastern Booze District.

"This is a pleasure, Mrs. Randal," said Klein. "I hardly expected to find you here."

"Oh, I drop in to see Paul occasionally," I said. "He really needs someone to keep an eye on him."

Klein smiled and turned to Paul with a knowing wink. All the men enjoyed a hearty laugh and my husband then introduced both Mark and my brother.

Although it was rather early in the evening Klein suggested that we drive uptown to the Hotel —— for dinner. In that way, he claimed, we could combine business with pleasure. I agreed, but I think it was the eager look that came into Roy's eyes at the mention of the fashionable hotel that made me accede to the suggestion.

Throughout the meal Ben Klein proved himself a brilliant conversationalist and I was astonished at his knowledge of current events. It seemed that the man kept his finger on the pulse of the public and was well informed on all questions of the day. His manners were perfect and he undoubtedly possessed a magnetic personality. At the conclusion of the dinner Paul explained in detail the various claims that Mark had made.

"Do you really mean to say that you can remove all the poison from government alcohol?" asked Klein turning to Mark Handt.

"Absolutely," said Mark. "I know I can."

"You'll have to show me," laughed Klein. "If you can do that you've got something that I'm willing to pay a lot of money for."

"I'll be glad to prove it to you," said Mark. "In fact I could do it tonight."

"Say, this man likes quick action," laughed Klein. "And that suits me perfectly."

"If he can convince you that what he says is so," I hurriedly put in, "what sort of a proposition would you make him?"

"I can't say definitely just now," replied Klein. "But I assure you I will make it worth his while."

"And what does Paul get out of it?" I asked.

"What do you think he should get?" asked Klein.

"I certainly think he is entitled to a commission," I said.

Paul protested that he was merely doing it as a favor but I could see no reason why he should not get his share, inasmuch as both Klein and Mark Handt expected to profit by the deal.

Throughout the conversation my brother Roy had been an interested listener, but just at this time he happened to discover a group of college friends seated at a table on the far side of the grill. Boy-like, he asked to be excused and hurried over to join them. The incident would have been dismissed immediately had not Ben Klein caught sight of four men seated at a table near that at which Roy had joined his friends.

"I hope that youngster has sense enough to keep his mouth shut about what he has just heard," said Klein.

"Why?" asked Paul.

"Those four men at the table next to him are Jack Franklin's men," answered Klein. "I wouldn't want them to hear about this formula of Mark's."

"Oh, I know Roy has sense enough not to say too much," I said. "But to get back to business, what do you think would be a fair commission for Paul?"

"How would five per cent suit you?" asked Klein.

"I don't think it is enough," I laughed, "but we'll take it."

"Say, Vera," said Paul, "I thought I was the man in our family. Haven't I anything to say about this?"

"Yes," I laughed. "You can agree with me."

"I think your wife has done a good night's work," smiled Klein. "And now we'll see if Mark can live up to his promises. If it is agreeable to you, Paul, suppose we go up to your apartment and let him do a little experimenting. I'll send one of my boys for a gallon of medicated alcohol and Handt can get to work."

"What shall we do about Roy, Vera?" asked Paul. "He seems to be having a good time; shall I tell him to stay with his friends and come home later?"

"Yes, do that," I agreed.

While Paul crossed the floor to Roy, Ben Klein turned and spoke to one of three men who were sitting at a table near ours. I had noticed that these men had entered the grill just behind us and seemed to be keeping a watchful eye upon our group. While Paul was holding my coat for me I quietly asked who they were. He told me they were Klein's bodyguards, and suddenly the very air in the grill seemed cold. It was as though an icy breeze had swept through the room. Realization came to me that as we had been laughing and talking, these three men had been watching over us with ready guns. It was not until that moment that I became really aware of the deadly game I had allowed my husband to become engaged in.

ON the drive to the apartment I was not myself at all. I was nervous and frightened and, to me, my conversation seemed strained and unnatural. It was as though another woman was talking while I sat back and wondered—wondered whether I should allow my husband to have anything more to do with a man who was constantly surrounded by bodyguards. Those killers were there for a reason; Ben Klein was in fear of his life. And I did not want Paul ever to be placed in a position so that men with guns should have to watch over him.

But Ben Klein did not seem to be worried. In fact, I do not know that I have ever seen a man with quite so much confidence and self-assurance. He spoke of judges as though they were his intimates. He related many little incidents that occurred in the homes of prominent statesmen, that to me, with a woman's instinct, meant

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that he was accepted on terms of equality in the finest social gatherings —the kind of social life that every woman craves.

When we reached the apartment, Mark Handt busied himself in the kitchen, and not one of the group that waited in the living room was any more anxious than I. I knew that if Mark was successful, Paul's five per cent would net us a nice income. Not alone that, but through Klein, Paul would undoubtedly come in contact with a great many of Ben's prominent friends. And I knew that with my cooperation it would be an easy matter for my husband to achieve success.

"Come in, come in all of you," came Mark's voice from the kitchen, interrupting my thoughts.

We hurried in and the sight that met our eyes was a tribute to Mark's ingenuity. From the spout of my large kettle a long length of rubber tubing led into the open door of the refrigerator. In the space used for making ice cubes, the tubing was twisted into a number of coils and from the end tiny drops of transparent liquid fell steadily into a small pot on the floor.

The kitchen table was littered with mixing bowls and it seemed as though Mark had used every pan in the closet. The room reeked of chemicals and the pungent odor of alcohol was heavy on the air.

"There you are, Klein," cried Mark, pointing to the liquid that was dripping into the pot. "That is pure alcohol—not a drop of poison in it. I will prove it to you in a moment by a chemical analysis but first I'll give you a better proof."

Pouring off a small quantity he diluted it with water from the tap and lifting it to his lips, drained the glass.

Klein changed in that moment from an entertaining guest into a coldly practical business man. He dipped his finger into the alcohol and touched it to his lips. Next he ran an appraising eye over the bowls of chemicals.

"How many distillations?" he asked sharply.

"Aha," laughed Mark. "Now you believe me, eh? Well, when I tell you how simple this formula is, you will be surprised."

"Just a minute," I interrupted. "Don't you think it would be a good idea to talk price first, Mr. Klein?"

"You're right, Mrs. Randal," said Klein. "But I have changed my mind about buying this formula."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Simply this. I need a man like Mark Handt to work with me. I'll take him in on a percentage basis and show him what real money looks like. As for Paul, that five percent is going to be the best investment he ever made."

"That's fine," said Mark with his usual enthusiasm. "And I tell you, Klein, if you will fix up a little laboratory for me I'll also teach you something about blending flavors that will open your eyes."

"I thought so," laughed Ben as he turned and laid his hand on my husband's arm. "We've got a gold mine in this fellow, Paul. I want you to bring him down to my office tomorrow morning and we will get him started on the road to big money."

Mark seemed inclined to talk more about this formula, but I managed to stop him before he had said too much. Promises were all very well but I wanted both Paul and Mark to get something in writing before Mark Handt told everything he knew. Klein seemed to guess what was in my mind for he left shortly and as he bade me good-night there was a cynical but approving smile on his face.

THE doorbell rang soon after this and thinking it was my brother, I stepped to the door and opened it. Standing in the hall were four men. At first glance I realized I had seen them somewhere before.

As calmly as though they were members of my household, they brushed past me and stepped into the living room. An involuntary scream rose to my lips but it was choked in my throat when I saw that each man carried an ugly automatic.

Paul raised his arms above his head and as I watched I saw the color drain slowly from his face. Mark, like myself, seemed to be stunned. He stood awkwardly watching the intruders, nervously lacing and interlacing the fingers of his hands.

"Which one of you guys is the chemist?" asked the leader of the gunmen.

For a moment there was a deathly silence. I remember how distinctly little, insignificant things seemed to obtrude themselves upon that ghastly period of quiet. I heard the drip of water in the sink. The barely audible throb of the motor in the refrigerator hummed in my ears like a swarm of hornets. My eyes, held with a horrid fascination by the ready guns, fell momentarily upon the polished surface of the table and I saw that it needed dusting.

"Come on, speak up," the intruder snapped, "we only want the chemist."

With the curtly spoken words, a wave of relief, almost of gladness surged through me. Not that I did not care for Mark, but would I have been a woman had I felt otherwise? Paul was my husband—and he was safe. Or at least, they were not interested in him, it was Mark they wanted. Immediately I became a different woman.

"What do you want of him?" I asked. "What are you going to do?"

"Keep your mouth out of this," snarled the man who had spoken before. "We want the chemist and we don't want no fooling around."

"Why do you want me?" asked the terrified Mark. "I have done nothing to you."

"All right, boys, that's the guy," said the gunman. "Take him and let's get out of here."

"Why—what are—who——" stammered Mark.

"Now don't get nervous, sonny," said the gunman. "We're just going to take you to see Santa Claus. Come on, get going and if you want to keep healthy, do as you are told and don't talk."

I doubt if poor Mark even realized that he was being led from the apartment. I know it was not until the door closed behind them that the full realization of what had happened came to me.

"Phone the police," I cried to Paul who was still standing just as he had been throughout the entire tableau.

"The police?" he cried. "Here—give me that phone."

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He quickly dialed a number and I waited in a tense silence until the connection was completed.

"Hello, hello—this is Randal speaking. Put Ben on the line, make it fast." There was a slight pause. "Ben—Ben, they got Mark Handt. No, they didn't kill him. They put the snatch on him right here in the apartment. There were four of them. You know who they were, don't you? Yeah, that's right, they'll probably take him upstate to Acra."

Without another word, Paul replaced the receiver on the hook. He stared at me through narrowed lids and for the first time in our married life, there was bitterness and reproach in his voice.

"It was that damn kid brother of yours," he sneered. "The young fool must have repeated everything he heard and those guys at the next table took it all in."

"But I don't see the connection?" I protested.

"Oh, you don't, eh? Well, those were four of Jack Franklin's men, and if he doesn't get the formula out of Mark before morning, then I am very much mistaken. There is one chance in a thousand that Ben's boys can pick them up on the road. If they don't, you *may* see Mark Handt again, but if you do, he won't have anything to sell—Franklin will take care of that."

"Oh, Paul, this is horrible," I gasped. "Why did you ever start in this awful business? I told you from the very beginning that it meant trouble."

"Why did *I* start? Well I'll be—"

He was interrupted by the doorbell as it again rang an insistent summons.

This time it was my brother Roy. I thought at first that Paul would fly into a rage, but much to my surprise, he adopted a very different attitude. He asked Roy if he had enjoyed himself and when the youngster had finished telling of his wonderful evening, Paul seated himself beside the boy and explained in detail the terrible consequences of Roy's foolish remarks. My heart ached for the boy as I saw the fright and anguish that Paul's story caused him. All this sort of thing was new to Roy as, in fact, it was to me.

We were left in doubt for the remainder of the night as to Mark's fate. It was not until early the following morning that the phone rang and Ben Klein's deep voice hummed over the wire. The flash of relief that sprang to my husband's face was payment in full for my night of terror.

"Ben got him," he said as he turned from the phone. "He didn't give me any of the details but he has Mark at his apartment and everything is all right."

Mark was safe. And so was his precious secret. It seemed that daylight had driven away all the horrid happenings of the night and when Paul left for the garage he was once more his old self again. There was no reproach in his voice as he said good-bye and I looked forward to a happy day, showing my brother the sights of New York.

But Roy was not destined to do much sight-seeing that day. We left the apartment, intending to take a taxi at the corner. But as I glanced indolently at one of the papers on a newsstand that we happened to pass, the flaring headlines sent me cowering back to my home.

Across the top of the sheet, large black letters screamed the heading, "GANG WAR BLAZES IN NEW YORK." Below, in smaller type, "GANG GUNS WIPE OUT FOUR MEN." "Jack Franklin lost four of his killers at an early hour this morning—"

So that was the price Ben Klein was willing to pay for Mark's formula. The lives of four men had meant nothing to him. True, they were not his men, but they were human beings nevertheless and Klein had ordered their execution. Less than twelve hours ago I had seen these men alive, heard one of them speak, laugh, and jest. Now they were dead.

It seemed incredible. It could not possibly be true. These were not the same men. Over and over I tried to convince myself that there was a mistake. But it was useless. Inside, deep down in my mind I knew that the four who had died were the same who had taken Mark from my home. And with this thought came the knowledge that my husband had signed their death warrant when he had lifted the phone to tell Ben Klein.

Paul made no mention of the killing when he came home that night. And when I handed him the newspaper, he tossed it aside with no comment. I asked if he had seen Mark. He merely nodded his head and said, "He's not hurt."

The supper was a nightmare and later I sent Roy out to the movies so that I could talk to Paul alone. I told him that I was frightened and begged him to have nothing more to do with Klein. If there was no other way for us to get out of this terrible deal, I suggested that he sell the garage and cabs and we would move to another state. I wanted to run away—to put all this out of my mind and to start anew somewhere.

At first Paul seemed hardly to hear me. Then he told me that what I asked was impossible. At length he said he would try to do as I wished but it would be contingent upon Ben Klein's wishes.

"When do you expect to see him?" I asked.

"He's coming here to the apartment tonight."

"Oh, Paul, don't let him come here," I pleaded. "I never want to see that man again. Can't you phone him and say that you are no longer interested in the deal?"

"I'm afraid not, Vera. Klein isn't used to that sort of treatment and he probably would resent it. And in addition to that, it will not be quite so easy to break off my negotiations with him."

IT took all the courage I possessed to smile when I shook hands with Ben Klein later that evening.

I was horribly nervous and my voice seemed weak and unreal to me. But Klein appeared not to notice anything out of the ordinary and his manner was as suave and confident as always. We talked of commonplaces for a while and at last Klein mentioned the subject of his visit.

"That garage of yours, Paul," he said. "I'm afraid it is taking up too

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much of your valuable time."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I mean that Paul is too smart to be wasting his time around a taxi garage."

"Oh, I don't know," said Paul. "I rather like the business. In fact, I was about to ask you to count me out of this deal you are making with Mark Handt. I don't want to get in too deep in this liquor racket; it's not my game."

"Yes," I added, "Paul and I want to get out in the country and open a little place on one of the state roads."

"Oh, you do, eh?" said Klein. "Well forget it."

"Why, Ben?" asked Paul. "What's wrong with that?"

"What's wrong with it? I'll tell you in damn few words. You know too much for an outsider."

"Paul doesn't know anything about what happened last night," I interrupted childishly, "and neither do I."

"Now look here, Mrs. Randal," said Klein. "I'm going to tell you something for your own good and also for the good of your husband. In the first place, you know very well what happened to Franklin's men and you know why. You know whose fault it was, too, And what's more, Paul has been making quite a bit of money lately. That money was paid to him by me for operating a drop. That's what that garage is—a drop—in other words a transfer point for my liquor trucks. Now if you think I am going to let you two run out on me and do a lot of talking, you're very much mistaken. Your brother talked too much last night and four men died. Think it over."

For the moment I was stunned. But I did not intend to let my husband get any further into this vile business if I could prevent it.

"You know we would keep our mouths shut," I snapped. "Paul doesn't want any more of your money and neither do I. Neither of us is used to this sort of thing and the sooner we get out of it the better I will like it. I know you can instruct those killers of yours to murder us but I'm not afraid. I'd sooner be dead than have Paul branded as a murderer."

"Just a minute, Mrs. Randal," laughed Klein. "I'm afraid you are looking at this thing from the wrong angle. You don't seem to realize that Paul is an extremely clever young man. He has helped me out a number of times and his advice has always been perfect. Not only that, he is a good mixer and a man with his personality would go a long way in this business. It would be a crime to bury him in some little out-of-town garage. Why, inside of a year, Paul can be a big man in this country. I'll introduce him to the right people, and with you to help him there is no limit to his opportunities. As a matter of fact I was talking to my friend Senator Conston about your husband just the other day. The Senator is having a reception at his country place and I asked him to include both you and Paul in his invitations."

"That's all very well," I said. "But these killings are terrible and I don't want Paul in any business of that sort."

"Oh, so that's what is worrying you?" said Klein. He turned and exchanged an amused wink with Paul before he continued. "You must realize, Mrs. Randal, that this business is in reality no different from any other. Let us take the large oil companies, for instance. It is common knowledge that they finance and promote revolutions in small countries merely for the purpose of securing concessions in the oil fields. They have no scruples whatsoever against employing thugs in their fights against the trade unions. And if you really knew the inside operations of some of our great banking concerns, I am sure you would be astonished. Merely as a hint, may I ask who you suppose it is that finances my large and expensive liquor importations?"

"I have no idea," I answered.

"Well, they run into millions of dollars and there is only one group of men from whom you can get that much money."

"I suppose you mean the bankers?" I said.

"Absolutely. And if the bankers' wives don't object to their husbands being in the liquor business, why should you have any foolish scruples? Let Paul come in with me and make some real money. Don't ruin his chances of being a success."

"What is it that you want me to do?" asked Paul, breaking his silence for the first time in many moments.

"Well, Paul," said Klein, "that affair last night means that Jack Franklin is through. I'm going to run him out of his upstate territory and I am going to put you in to handle it. I'll find a man to run your garage for you and you can devote your entire time to organizing and developing that new territory."

"Does that mean that Paul will have to order any killings?" I asked nervously.

"Not at all," laughed Klein. "Paul is far too valuable a man to bother with things like that. He is my new upstate business manager and I expect great things of him in the very near future, too."

The conversation continued far into the night and before Ben Klein went home I was convinced that the liquor business was Paul's big opportunity. Surely if he could meet such men as the senator that Ben mentioned, he would be far better off than he could ever be in the garage business. As for the money, Ben Klein's present mode of living was ample proof that there were millions to be made in his business.

DURING the next six months I realized that Ben Klein's statements had not been exaggerated. We moved from our small apartment and leased a duplex on Riverside Drive. It seemed that there were never enough evenings in the week, for I was invited to more social affairs than I could possibly attend. My new-found friends were all wealthy and I stepped into the new life with amazing ease. My mornings were usually taken up with lectures; and between bridge parties and matinees, I never had an idle afternoon. But for all this I was not happy.

Paul was as ever a devoted and generous husband, but our home life was a thing of the past. All thoughts of children and a home in the country

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had been put out of our minds in this mad scramble for money. And gradually I realized that I was losing my husband. Not to any other woman, but to his work. Bit by bit he was drawing into himself, and although he occasionally asked my advice on various matters. I missed the old intimacies of the past. I tried to compensate for this by plunging into a mad whirl of social activities.

The first time Paul was forced to stay away from home for over a week I thought I would go mad with anxiety. The next time I did not worry quite so much. Soon it grew to be commonplace and it was seldom that we spent more than one evening a week in each other's company.

It was on one of these rare occasions that my brother Roy paid us another visit. The boy had watched Paul's success eagerly and was anxious to follow in his footsteps; but the last thing in the world I wanted was to have Roy come in contact with the liquor business. Paul and I were older and knew how to take care of ourselves. Roy, in my estimation, was still a baby. But he pleaded so earnestly with Paul for a chance to show what he could do that it was practically impossible to refuse him.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Roy," said Paul at length, "I'll put you in as assistant manager of our upstate factory. We make the containers for the alcohol there but that outfit is in no way connected with the rest of the trade. It is a good, solid, legitimate concern and it will be splendid training for you."

Roy was so delighted, that against my better judgment I at last consented.

Roy seemed to fit into the routine of the factory like a cog in a well-oiled machine. Hardly a month went by but that Paul had some word of praise for the boy. I was therefore somewhat surprised when Paul came home one evening and said that Roy had failed to get out an important delivery. He stepped to the phone and called the factory, although it was past six in the evening.

"Hello, is this you, Roy?" asked Paul when the connection was made. "Why didn't you get that load of five-gallon containers over to the Jersey place? There's hell to pay over there and the foreman says he must have them tonight. What's that—I don't care if the truckmen have gone for the night—get on a truck and rush them over there yourself."

He slammed the receiver on the hook and turned to me. "That kid has got to learn to take orders," he snapped. "Things are bad enough in this business these days without him laying down on the job."

"What is the trouble, Paul?" I asked.

"Hi-jackers," he snapped. "We've lost eight trucks to some mob that is cracking in on our Jersey territory and we can't put our fingers on who is doing it. They needed those containers at the plant to fill a rush order because the last truckload of stuff we sent out was lifted."

"Do you think it was wise to let Roy go out on a truck all alone when terrible things like that are happening?"

"Don't be ridiculous," snapped Paul. "No one will bother him with a load of empty tin cans."

I realized that Paul was right but, nevertheless, I was uneasy throughout the evening meal. I wished that Paul had told Roy to call us when the delivery was completed, and when the phone rang I was sure it was my brother calling to say that everything was all right.

Paul lifted the receiver and said, "Randal speaking."

I waited patiently while a low voice came over the wire, expecting Paul to hand the receiver to me that I might talk to the boy. Instead he replaced it on the hook with an unsteady hand and turned a haggard, ghastly face toward me.

"Vera, they—they——"

"What is it, Paul?" I cried.

"Roy," he muttered. "Roy—they got the kid——"

"What are you saying?" I screamed. "Paul, for God's sake tell me what you mean?"

"They must have thought it was a load of alcohol, and they grabbed the truck. They used a machine gun—Roy is dead."

Roy dead! No—it could not be. There must be a mistake. I clutched frantically at the phone, screaming the number of the Jersey plant into the transmitter. Paul took the instrument from my hand and tried to quiet me. God was merciful and I immediately fainted.

When I regained consciousness I was lying on the divan and Paul was crouching beside me.

"They'll pay for it, the rats," he muttered. "I'll wipe them out, every mother's son of them—I'll blast them out of the country. Vera, they'll pay for it, I promise you."

Pay for it! Oh, the pity of it. Pay for the life of my brother. What price could be exacted to compensate for the boy I loved? Other men's lives—two—four—forty—what did that mean to me? It could not bring Roy back to life. Roy was gone and it was my fault—when I let him take that job I had killed him as surely as though I had pulled the trigger of the fatal gun. And now all that Paul could do was promise me that other men should die as payment.

The ghastly horror of the whole sordid business was more than ever made clear to me. This money I had been spending was not good money. Men had died for it. My brother had been murdered for it. Again I begged Paul to get out of the racket, to quit, to run away, anything, so long as we might leave all this terrible life far behind us.

But the man I pleaded with was no longer the Paul that I had married. He cut me short at my first words and paced back and forth across the room, raging like a demon.

"I'll find out who pulled that job," he cried. "I think I know but I'll make sure. If it is that rat Franklin, there won't be a hole small enough for him to crawl into. He and the rest of his mangy crew are as good as dead this minute. Their number is up, Vera. They'll pay—and how they'll pay."

They paid. But when they did, all hell broke loose.

(*To be concluded next month*)

The Tragic Affair of Meerut

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victim sometimes dies in a day, or even less, but has often lingered for several weeks, suffering continuous extreme agony.

We can gather what kind of creatures Clark and Mrs. Fullam were, with their squashy sentimental letters, and, on the part of the woman, the quotation of hymns, when we read of Mr. Fullam, at home or in the hospital, suffering slow torment.

Clark sent the powders to Mrs. Fullam by mail, under an assumed name, and they called the stuff "tonic." Here is one of her reports:

"I am sorry I was utterly unable darling, to send you even a few lines on Saturday and Sunday, as I explained to you, Bucha dearest, that I would have no chance my hubby being at home. You are anxious to know about the 'tonic'. Well, sweetheart, darling, I have given it regularly since I last saw you."

Clark had carefully read a book about poisons, and he began his campaign by administering very small doses. This made Mrs. Fullam impatient:

"I must say I don't approve of your powders at all, darling; how many hundreds of years will they take? Meanwhile, we are constantly running fearful risks, my own darling. However, if it please you, then I am happy."

They decided to try something, quicker, something which would bring about a death which could be attributed to "heat-stroke."

"Harry, lovie, please let me know by return of post if in the heat-stroke treatment, the face will become perfectly black, and distorted and convulsions set in? Will you please let me know if it will be a very painful death, or will unconsciousness soon intervene? Also, my darling, please let me know if I can administer the liquid at dinner time, or tea time? Which do you think will be the best, darling."

It was about this time that Mrs. Fullam wrote details of her husband's illness to Clark and announced:

"So the only thing is to poison the soup."

She wrote a long letter, acknowledging the receipt of the "heat-stroke liquid" and expressing her pride that the sealing-wax, on the box, bore Clark's "family seal and crest." She said she was going to put the poison in the soup; adding:

"Today is an exceptionally hot day, Harry darling, just the exact weather for heat-stroke."

And she ended this precious letter with these words:

"Fondest, warmest, truest and never-changing love, and many millions of sweetest loving kisses, from your own true, constant loving, best-beloved and most devoted, little sweetheart and Buchee darling.

Gussie.

Till death, no matter what happens."

The wretched Mr. Fullam was finally carried to the hospital—raving. Here under care of the doctors, and freed from the attentions of the two fiends who beset him, he slowly came back to life. His health was ruined, however, and the Government offered to retire him, on pension, and to provide transportation for him and his family to England.

This was not at all in the plans of the two lovers, and loud were Mrs. Fullam's protests, in her letters to Clark. Surely, she said, the God to whom she had prayed had deserted her. She felt very bitter toward all the world, she added. She was suffering from what some of the psychologists call "frustrations." They do not always recognize that some people need to suffer exactly so.

Before his retirement to England was arranged, Mr. Fullam made the tragic mistake of moving, with his family, to Agra, the city which the man in Conan Doyle's story said was full of "fierce devil-worshippers." Whether these were present or not, the devil had an active local representative there in the person of Lieutenant Henry Lovell William Clark.

On the night of October 10, 1911, Clark, acting under pretense of being physician and friend, murdered Fullam by injection of an alkaloid poison called gelsemine. Fullam's little daughter, Kathleen, ten years old, was a witness of the murder. She saw Clark prepare the syringe and use it.

Her father was already suffering from poison which Mrs. Fullam had put in his food at dinner. The dying man spoke to his daughter:

"I am going, Kathleen, dear. Be a good girl, and God will bless you. Give my love to your brother and tell him not to fret."

He added:

"Where's mother?"

The girl said:

"In the dining room. Shall I go and call her?"

"No, dear. I do not want her."

He knew, at last, who was the cause of his death.

The murder of Mrs. Clark, for one reason or another, was delayed for more than a year. It only remained for the lovers to bring about her death and then they could realize their vision of walking out of church together "under the arched swords" of the bridegroom's brother officers. Swords were to come into the story, but in another way. Clark had tried poison; he endeavored to bribe a native servant to put arsenic in Mrs. Clark's tea. The servant, however, failed him.

On a night in November, 1912, while Clark kept away from his bungalow, four or five natives, paid by Mrs. Fullam and by Clark, broke into Mrs. Clark's bedroom and killed her with knives. Her daughter, in the same room, was not harmed. The natives who had been hired to do this, were loafers and petty criminals from the bazaar. In India, such men are called *budmashes*—perhaps our nearest equivalent for the world would be *yeggs*.

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The Tragic Affair of Meerut

(*Continued from page* 107)

Clark's alibi was clumsy, and he was arrested the next day. As his relations with Mrs. Fullam were notorious, her bungalow was searched, with no result. Just as the police-inspector left, however, his foot chanced to strike against a tin box under the bed. He asked about it, and was told by Mrs. Fullam that it was the Lieutenant's dispatch box.

The officer opened it, and found dozens of letters from Mrs. Fullam, all neatly docketed and tied up in packets. There was evidence in them sufficient to hang a dozen people. And the poison plot was further proved by the exhumation of Mr. Fullam's body and the subsequent autopsy.

The pair could offer little defense at their trials. They made some slight pretense, as other poisoners have done, that their intentions as to Mr. Fullam were merely to make him so sick that he would have to be retired and sent away.

One decent act, and one alone, stands to the credit of Clark. He strongly asserted in court that he was wholly to blame, and that Mrs. Fullam acted under his orders. He did his best to assume entire responsibility.

Mrs. Fullam, as if to prove the truth of the assertion that the female of the species is deadlier than the male, continued base and hypocritical to the end. She wrote to the Judge from jail that she felt that it was her duty "in the sight of God" to turn King's Evidence. In other words, to desert her fellow criminal, and save her own neck.

She did not need to worry. She was about to have a baby—Clark's child—and so her death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. A little over a year later, and after her baby had been born, she died in prison; died actually of heat-stroke, the death which she had pretended was threatening her husband.

Three of the murderous *budmashes* went to the gallows. And on a day in March, 1913, about eighteen months after he put his friend Fullam to death, Lieutenant Clark expiated the crime. The dismal procession formed in the jail yard, while his children waited outside, in order to conduct his funeral, after the hangman should have finished. Clark had taken his fun where he found it, and had drunk and danced and made merry with the selfish egotism of the born murderer. He was now learning the grim lesson:

"It is sweet to dance to violins
When Love and Life are fair;
To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes
Is delicate and rare;
But it is not sweet with nimble feet
To dance upon the air!"

Off the Record

(*Continued from page* 23)

Senor Don Joaquin Martinez Saenz, new Secretary of the Treasury in Cuba, for instance, made one of these courtesy calls recently upon Assistant Secretary of State Sumner Welles, and thereby got tangled up in diplomacy. His visit lasted an hour and a half, but he still insisted it was a mere courtesy call. Welles, who wasn't notified of Saenz's announcement, announced that the visit concerned commercial credit negotiations for Cuba. The diplomats were embarrassed no end.

Big Bad Johnson

THE scene was the vast auditorium of Constitution Hall, where 3,500 business leaders, representing every great industry in America, were waiting for General Hugh S. (Blue Eagle) Johnson to make an historic address.

Secretary of Commerce Daniel C. Roper had finished his speech ahead of time. There was a four-minute wait until 10:30 P.M., when Johnson would speak to the nation by radio. It was announced that the red-coated Marine band would while away the interval with musical selections. The leader pounded with his baton, and the band went into a spirited rendition of "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf."

Johnson glared. The nation's premier business executives roared with laughter. The flustered band leader shushed his men and started them quickly on "Marching Along Together," which has come to be regarded as the Blue Eagle theme song. Thus was a crisis averted. Four full minutes of "Big Bad Wolf" at that particular time might have changed the country's future history.

The critics of the Blue Eagle, invited to Washington by the doughty General, tried to wring that valiant bird's neck, meantime, and pluck its tail feathers.

One of the critics was Charles P. Bloom, who denounced the NRA so whole-heartedly that he set himself on fire.

He told how his bank had closed and paid twenty per cent. He said he put the twenty per cent in another bank which closed and paid ten per cent. That he put in a third bank which closed, he said, and paid nothing.

"It is terrible," he said, "and I—ow!—I'm on fire."

From his trousers curled smoke. Frantically, Bloom danced. Cautiously he inserted his hand into his hip pocket. Quickly he drew forth the ruins of a smoldering cigar.

"I must have forgot it was lit," he explained.

All About the Big Robbery

THIEVES broke into the United States Treasury Department and filched therefrom some gold coins and some imitation gold bricks—thereby perpetrating the first robbery in history of the nation's most carefully guarded building.

The fake gold bricks and the real gold coins were in a glass case on the first floor corridor, to satisfy the tourist trade. Visitors always wanted to see the Treasury's gold, and so the department obliges with some chunks of iron plated with the precious metal.

The thieves smashed open the case, took the $75 worth of coins and the valueless bricks and disappeared into the night. They did not get any of the $20,000,000 in real gold stored in the Treasury's cellar.

What makes the Treasury Department mad is the fact that the scene

Off the Record

of the crime is just around the hall from the office of its ace sleuth, William H. Moran, chief of the Secret Service. It was a disrespectful gesture on the part of the thieves.

The Treasury, however, is pretty sure that no robbers will get its real gold, hidden in catacombs which would make a perfect setting for the inquisitions of ancient Spain. There the government is building the world's greatest strong-box.

It is a $400,000 vault of chilled pressed iron, two stories tall, enclosed in reinforced concrete three-feet thick and set over tunnels through which guards will patrol constantly. In case of grave danger the tunnels could be flooded and poison gas could be loosed.

The lower level of this vast safe, still painted orange-color inside, like a new bridge, is commodious enough to hold all the gold in the world. The upper level is arranged to hold currency by the billion dollar case if necessary. Visitors aren't allowed. And for that matter, the Treasury isn't going to fix up any more fake gold bricks for them, either, unless they promise to be good

Gas Masks

A SKUNK, a policeman and the latter's gun on the Capitol plaza conspired to make Congress' life miserable for many days this Spring. The skunk strolled, with tail high, toward the House of Representatives. Bluecoat John Ashley, unthinking of consequences, took aim and fired. The skunk died instantly and the body was removed—but the memory lingered on. Gas masks, unfortunately, were not available. Congress suffered silently.

Boys Will Be Boys

CONNECTING the Capitol with the two office buildings of the House of Representatives is a Y-shaped tunnel, brilliantly lighted and air-conditioned, so that Congressmen won't get their feet wet going back and forth.

Every twenty-five feet in this tunnel is a cuspidor of brass on a rubber pad, for the convenience of those Representatives who like their plug tobacco.

For a week the Negro whose duty it is to keep these cuspidors shiny found each of them kicked over every morning when he went to work. He appealed to the chief of Capitol police. The latter set one of his blue coats to skulking in the tunnel during the wee morning hours. Finally he reported to the chief:

"I found who has been kicking over those gobboons."

"Why in the blankety-blank-blank didn't you arrest him?" demanded the chief.

"There were two of them," responded the sleuth. "One was Congressman —— of Illinois and the other was Congressman —— of New York."

"Oh," said the chief.

Congressmen cannot be arrested for kicking over cuspidors, or for any other crime short of murder.

THE members of the House continue to be a little hurt over the favoritism shown the Senators in their tunnel, which similarly connects the Capitol with the Senate office building.

In the Senate tunnel whiz twelve hours a day two electric kiddie cars, so that Senators won't wear themselves out going from office to chamber and back. The cars run on a single rail each, with a hefty kind of trolley arrangement to keep them from tipping over. They are said to be the only such cars in operation anywhere in the world.

Some Representatives can't quite see why their tunnel doesn't have toy street cars, too. The official explanation is that there are too many Representatives, more than four hundred, while there are only ninety-six Senators. It looks as if the poor, mistreated Representatives will have to continue to hoof it.

The Line Up

(*Continued from page* 17)

adults of today don't believe in fables of long ago. We want something with a kick in it. (And can I take it?) Give us more stories like the "Night of the 13th" or "Three Lame Men."

"Going to St. Ives" got me thinking. The Judy and Jerry stories were grand. Also Madame Storey, and Riley Dillon. What has happened to them?

Best wishes for the continued success.

Mrs. Ann M. Budds

Hey! Hey!

COLUMBUS, OHIO.—I have several complaints to lodge against you.

Recently I found an April edition of MYSTERY lying around loose and decided to peek under the cover to see the cause of all the excitement on the lady's face.

I started nonchalantly enough, but before I was halfway through with your magazine, I discovered every finger nail had mysteriously disappeared!

As if that was not enough, after I had read that never-to-be-forgotten masterpiece by Golding, "The Man in the Mirror" I got a perfectly grand case of the jitters. Ever since I've read that strange and startling story I've powdered my nose and peered under the bed two and three times before retiring.

Besides that, I'm nervous and restless waiting for the May MYSTERY to appear, and I know I've become a hopeless addict.

I hope you realize just how serious this can be for you, but I know you'll be glad to hear that I'll drop the case if you'll hurry and publish the next edition of your ten cent wonder and promise to have more stories by Golding.

Leenan Fisher

High Standard Mysteries

BUTLER, NEW JERSEY.—I am ashamed to say that I never cared

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The Line-Up

(*Continued from page* 109)

for mystery stories in the magazines that I read; they were too complicated, so many dry facts, that I grew tired of trying to remember them before the story was half finished. One day I was attracted by the cover of a magazine, and without thinking that it spelled MYSTERY across the top I bought it. Carelessly I turned its pages, and I became interested in the appearance of its departments and before I realized it I was reading a story. I became so lost in the story that I nearly passed my station before I sensed that I should get off the train.

Since that time I have been a reader of MYSTERY and I never fail to take one with me on the train, but I am wary now, and try to keep in mind where my home town is and not be carried past it.

"The Fatal Broadcast" was the story I liked best and Vincent Starrett is a wonderful writer. Give us more of him, he will help keep up the present high standard of your stories.

Mary Belle Walley.

Hooray!

HARLEM, GA.—Here's an old minister, editor, lecturer, at seventy-odd enthralled by your paper, MYSTERY! And led to it by his married son, a school teacher and lay-reader. Because it is, as you constantly hear, the best buy obtainable.

What are to my mind its worthwhile, conquering points with an exacting public?

Its comprehensiveness. People like variety and scope, they want facts and fiction, gravity and levity, shadows and sunlight.

As an editor I would say you have the best really edited mystery paper we get. Your staff seems to have no thought for anything but getting out a big value for little pay. Can you keep up such a menu at its present low cost?

As to comparative worth of stories, in April the "Black King" is best written; "The Riddle of the Yellow Canary" most ingenious; while the book-length story is in itself so fine and big as to be worth the year's cost of the magazine. "I Go Sleuthing" is a unique, splendid feature.

August Davidson.

We Bow

CHICAGO, ILL.—Selecting a magazine is like choosing a friend: One wants to be sure of congeniality, sincerity, sound advice in case of need, and honesty. Appearance also counts.

The other day I browsed in one of the large stores here for a silent companion during my leisure hours, and for the first time bought MYSTERY. A superficial survey of it showed me at once that it is something out of the ordinary. The cover attracted me; its appearance, the distribution of the reading matter interspersed with beautiful advertisements is apparently devised to make finding the continuation of stories easier and at the same time to give the eye a treat; and best of all, the stories are complete, and the annoying "Watch for next issue" is eliminated. That I would term "publisher's honesty."

But my delight becomes complete at home. There is "Black Tulip" a delightfully condensed narrative; there are departments for women; forum for readers; and stories far above the general run of so-called "crime mysteries." "Justice Hogtied" is enlightening food for thought.

Best of all I liked "The Phantom Flute Player" and "Riddle of the Yellow Canary." The first is superb in its suspense and the subtle touch of humor.

"Going to St. Ives" makes your magazine almost a library of entertainment.

So I've found a new friend for my quiet hours in MYSTERY MAGAZINE. And if I may add a not very bright pun, the greatest mystery of it is the price.

This new friend shall from now on be "my steady" for evermore!

Karl Koffman.

The Missing Shotgun

SHERIFF R. S. RAMSEY of Washington Court House, Ohio, was routed out of a warm bed before dawn on December 23, 1926, to learn from a sleepy telephone operator that a double murder had been committed at the farm of Charles Halterman, twenty miles out of town.

It was still dark when the Sheriff and his deputies arrived there. Near the chicken house they found the bullet-riddled body of Halterman. He had been shot in the side and from the rear with a shotgun. A gaping wound in his temple indicated that the slayer, after the first shot, had stepped closer and fired again. A dozen paces away lay the body of his wife, Carrie. Her skull had been crushed.

Leo Halterman, the slain man's brother, said that about four o'clock he had been awakened by hearing his sister-in-law scream, "Leo, wake up! They're killing Charles."

In the dim light of the kitchen, Leo, an exceedingly small man, standing only four feet ten inches in height, made a fantastic appearance as he told his story. He was clad in an old-fashioned nightshirt and boots which were several sizes too large for him.

He had heard two shots, he told the Sheriff, before he could get downstairs. Then, when he ran from the house he had stumbled upon the body of Mrs. Halterman. She was unconscious, but still breathing. He advanced the theory that chicken thieves, with whom his brother had had considerable trouble, were responsible for the crime.

While Ramsey waited for daybreak he made an examination of the house. He discovered that the murdered man's double-barrelled shotgun was missing from its accustomed place in the kitchen, and that all of the kerosene oil lamps in the house, with the exception of the one in the kitchen, were dry of oil. This latter discovery puzzled him, for he knew that Mrs. Halterman habitually filled the lamps, trimmed the wicks and washed the chimneys each night after supper. Only if they had been used until well into the night could he explain their being dry, and Leo informed him that the family had retired early.

When it was light Ramsey began his search for clues outside the house. In the barnyard he found three empty shells, and on the rim of an ice-covered pool in an adjoining field, he found two more. On each of the shells there was a tiny mark, indicating that the firing pin of the gun from which they had been fired was slightly off center.

It was a clue, but by itself it availed little. But the Sheriff was not one to give up easily. He determined to go over the ground again and see if he could not uncover something more incriminating—to make a fine-tooth-comb job of it. Twice more he did so. The first search was unsuccessful, and the second one appeared to be so until Ramsey had a hunch.

He was standing by the ice-covered pool, where he had found the two empty shells, when it occurred to him to find out if anything lay hidden beneath the ice. Until now he had not thought of the pool.

He broke the ice. Lying in the cold shallow water was the lock of a shotgun. Instantly, he noticed that the firing pin was off center. Instantly, too, he realized that the double murder could not have been committed at the time it was supposed to have been.

Back at the farmhouse he began another careful search. Hidden in a loft over the kitchen, he found a pair of small-sized boots. There were blood stains on them.

"All we need now is to find the other parts of the shotgun and our case is complete," he announced.

The stock and barrel of the gun were found in an abandoned well. It was Charles Halterman's gun.

"I thought as much," declared Ramsey. "He was killed with his own gun."

"Leo killed him," the Sheriff went on. "Killed Carrie, too. I saw it all when I discovered the gun lock in the pool. You see, that ice couldn't possibly have formed after four o'clock, the time Leo said the two murders occurred. It meant that he was lying. It explained, too, why he was wearing those ridiculously large boots, and why the lamps were dry. He got blood on his own boots. Perhaps, too, he thought we'd find footprints and wouldn't be able to connect him with them if he wore the larger boots. And as for the dry lamps—why, he stayed up half the night getting things in order before he reported the murders."

Leo Halterman paid the death penalty, but first, because of his size, the electric chair in the Ohio State Penitentiary had to be rebuilt. He was the smallest man ever to die in it.

THE *Imperfect* TWINS

A NEW BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL
COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

By

CARL MATTISON
CHAPIN

The Imperfect Twins

CHAPTER I

IT struck me at the time, I recall, as a strange coincidence that Cobbden Claine should have been included in that tragic list of guests. Criminology was rather a hobby of his. He had won some distinction for his part in the solution of several murder cases. And so it was the most natural thing in the world that I should take the puzzling parcel straight to him. Besides, he also belonged to the Bakers clan; he might have received one, himself.

He had returned, that day, from an absence of several weeks. I had a vague idea that he had been South. Our intimacy rarely extended to matters, like that, in which we were not both involved. I laid the small, wooden box before him on his study desk.

"Did you get one of these?" I asked.

He looked up with the wry grin which expressed his normal frame of mind toward me and my affairs. "Hah!" he said. "So Cousin Daniel designs to take you, also, for a ride. Yes, I have one."

He produced it from a drawer and laid it on the desk. The two boxes appeared to be identical. Claine drew back the sliding cover of mine. A folded letter and a bit of map lay on top. Beneath them, nested in cotton, was a small blue .32-calibre revolver. Claine broke the weapon. It was empty and he laid it aside. "So far, exactly the same," he commented. "Let's see what your letter says."

It was typewritten on a sheet of plain bond paper and dated at Boston, two days earlier. It had come by first-class mail. Claine read in a low voice, as though subconsciously:

> "You are a great-great-great-grandson of Zera Bakers who built the Mountain Tavern on the stage route above Larrett, Vermont, about 1806. By the death, last October, of Benjamin X. Bakers, proprietorship of Mountain Tavern has lapsed. There are matters of vital interest to certain members of the family of whom you may be one.
>
> A meeting of those presumptively interested will be held at the Tavern on Friday, January 13th, and succeeding days. You are invited to attend. Drive to Worthington, Vermont. From there, follow the route to the Tavern marked in red on the enclosed map. Absolute secrecy is essential to the success of the meeting.
>
> You must be prepared for mud, ice, snow and extreme cold in the mountains. I enclose a revolver for your reassurance while driving through the forests.
>
> This letter constitutes adequate notice of the meeting and releases the undersigned from responsibility for any results that may accrue through failure to attend.
>
> Yours in the Clan,
> DANIEL BAKERS."

The signature was in red lead pencil. It was wavering and uncertain. "Presumably the left-handed signature of a right-handed man," Claine said. "I think the letters are, word for word, the same—except for the routes."

"Who is Daniel Bakers?"

Claine leaned back in his chair and laughed, in a sort of despairing manner. "Angels and ministers of grace, Dink! Am I supposed to keep track of all the Bakerses even unto the third and fourth generations. Apparently this Zera person is the common ancestor who gives you and me our infinitesimal but precious kinship. I should say Daniel might be just another cousin, considerably removed. This map of yours is not like mine."

We both bent forward to examine it. It was a square cut from a standard road-map of the state. The route from Worthington to the Tavern was traced in the same red lead as the signature of the letter. At junction points of the remote mountain roads, conspicuous landmarks had been indicated. Claine took his map from the box and laid it beside mine.

"You see," he went on, "our cousin sends me around through New Hampshire and across the mountains from the east. Your route goes straight up along the west side—but, look, the old stage road runs up the mountain from Larrett to the Tavern, direct. He is sending you on up the valley to Worthington and back along the summit—a fifty mile detour—and tough going on those mountain roads, I betcha."

"The stage road may not be passable," I suggested.

"Likely to be as passable as that route of yours, this time of year. Secrecy, my son. Splitting up the party and sending us by devious back routes. Taking extraordinary precautions to keep the natives from getting wind of the affair. A right thorough chap, this cousin Daniel. Pique the old curiosity, does it?"

"I don't know," I said, doubtfully. "What do you make of it?"

"What do *you* make of it?" Claine retorted. "It may be a hoax—but why? He must have put considerable time and money into these guns, for instance. They are identical but they were not bought at the same store; probably not in the same city. The serial numbers are wide apart. If he is arming a party of any size he must have done considerable travelling to avoid leaving an impression of wholesale buying anywhere. That would be needless trouble if he were merely planning a practical joke."

"I don't see why he should do it," I said. I presume it sounded peevish. I dislike to be puzzled. I am an instructor in mathematics. I am accustomed to dealing with plain facts. Claine had been a Professor of Psychology when I came to the University, five years earlier. No doubt that explained his fondness for imaginative speculation. It did nothing to explain our friendship, if it could be called friendship. At times I thoroughly detested his hateful view of things. I said: "Why send revolvers by first-class mail? Anyone can get them. I should say somebody was having us on."

POSSIBLE, of course," Claine conceded, "but who? So far as I know, our mutual calling-list contains no practical joker of the first magnitude. You have an overly literal mind, my son. When you find yourself unable to reduce a thing to a formula you are prone to go spunky and spill milk on the rug. Life, you know, is not logical like your friend, Euclid, and the justly venerated multiplication table. People do the most incomprehensible things. Were it otherwise, the race would long since have become extinct through the natural workings of boredom.

"Let's be charitable to Cousin Daniel. Maybe he was just naturally feeling contrary and illogical at the moment. I've known even mathematics teachers to get that way. Maybe he felt himself out of tune with the textbooks. Or he may be suffering from a delusion that he knows his own business best. He may consider it advisable not to project his own personality too conspicuously into the proceedings, whatever they are to be. For some purpose as yet unrevealed to your acute omniscience, he may wish to have his guests uniformly equipped with indistinguishable weapons. Anyhow, he's offering you a week-

The Imperfect Twins

end away from the dull monotony of two-times-two. Don't be an ingrate."

"You mean you are taking this thing seriously?"

"Quite. I'm a good bit excited about it."

"You are going?"

"But yes. I wouldn't miss it for worlds. Something tells me it is going to be right in my line. You know my methods, Watson."

It was true I had played Watson to his Holmes through three quite messy murder cases. I never could understand why I did it. Violence is obnoxious to me; particularly murder. I am not at all acute in such matters. I rarely understood anything Claine was doing until he explained in words of one syllable. It was excessively dull, I thought. Yet I followed him through all manner of wearisome and unpleasant episodes; even into actual danger. It had once seemed necessary for him to kill a man in my presence. He was entirely cold-blooded about it; practically elated. But I can assure you it made me extraordinarily ill.

Claine's whole philosophy of conduct, as a matter of fact, was cynically unmoral. As to murder—the phrase, "justifiable homicide," was, he would say, grossly tautological. Homicide of any kind was not merely justifiable but meritorious. It was his professed conviction that all human beings are, by instinct, criminals; that the law-abiding citizen is an abnormality, an artificial product of self-repression or compulsion or cowardice. Of course he could not propound such a doctrine as that to his classes. So he had retired, to devote himself to study of the pathological and criminal as the true keys to human conduct. He ridiculed my protests—he was always laughing at me. He would say:

"You are twenty-eight; I'm past fifty. I suppose there was a time when I had your simple faith in our fellowmen. If I ever did, I'm jolly well over it. I suspect you never will get over it. But, my son, if you really believe your natural impulses are not what the world calls "criminal," it is simply because you haven't the intelligence or the courage to stand off and analyze them objectively. I know mine are, and I sometimes wonder if it is worth the effort to keep them repressed."

When he talked that way I was absolutely sure I disliked him. Yet I could never be quite certain he was not making game of me. It was incredible that anyone could be so horrid. He was sitting there with his massive shoulders hunched forward, his great hands clasped and stretched out before him on the desk. His face always had suggested to me the first rough modeling of a sculptor's clay. It was twisted now in his characteristic grin—satirical, devilish, alluring. Suddenly I knew I was going with him. Apparently he had known it, right along. He said:

"All right, then; advise your boss on the consecrated campus that you've got to bury your grandmother. Then go buy you a couple of red-flannel union suits. It can be cold in those Green Mountains."

I proffered a last gesture of resistance: "The thirteenth is only day-after-tomorrow. Isn't that pretty short notice?"

"Too short to give the invited guests a chance to check up on Cousin Daniel. You will note that the boy is good. He knows his stuff. Nothing effusive about his agenda; no golden promises; just a fillip for the imagination; just enough mystery to stir the sporting blood of the Bakers Clan—you'd be surprised what a lot of sporting blood is circulating furtively in the arteries of the stolid citizenry. Only a fundamentally criminal mind like my own would read anything sinister in this thing. Only a stuffy academic mind like yours would disdain it. Pack your arctic togs and I'll pick you up at nine, tomorrow morning. I'm sure Cousin Daniel won't mind if we go together."

I did not want to go. My whole soft, sedentary being revolted against the hardships of a long winter drive over mountain roads, the nights in a deserted backwoods tavern, the heaven-knew-what nameless things that might happen there.

"Oh, all right," I said gloomily—and, in spite of everything, I look back upon those words as the most fortunate I ever uttered.

CHAPTER II

THERE were broad patches of ice on the road, but Claine drove like Jehu. He always drove that way, though I had never before ridden with him on icy roads. When I cringed, his face wrinkled in that saturnine grin of his. But the cringing was purely instinctive, subconscious. I had, as always, perfect confidence in his ability to master any contingency.

I think his power never impressed me so strongly as when I sat beside him and watched the easy, flexible mastery of his hands upon a steering wheel, the impassive strength of his craggy profile and the solid poise of his head upon his neck. It may have been my weakness paying tribute to his strength. Possibly it was hero-worship of a sort. His psychological mind, no doubt, could have supplied a technical term for it.

As usual, he drove an open car without curtains—a huge, long, gray thing, half engine, with a roomy driving-seat and a foreshortened tonneau, behind. It was characteristic of him never to parade his extraordinary virility as a virtue. He did not thump his chest and proclaim his superiority to the weaknesses of other men. He said closed cars were stuffy, and let it go at that.

IT was dark when we reached the hotel at Albany. In spite of heavy clothing and furs, I was chilled to the point where I could scarcely stand. Claine seemed to be suffering merely from normal driving rigor. He hunched his shoulders, flexed his knees and was as good as new.

At breakfast next morning he looked at me mischievously over his newspaper. He said:

"Blizzard in Chicago last night; beginning to snow in Buffalo; 18 below zero at Bismarck; 32 at Winnipeg. My private forecast for Vermont is, 'Heavy snow followed by clearing and much colder; cold wave.' What was it Cousin Daniel said—be prepared for snow and extreme cold in the mountains? He knows his stuff, that lad."

"He also said, mud," I retorted, unhappily.

"A week earlier or a week later, he might have been right. This mountain weather is vagarious. The point is, he was sure to be right, whatever happened. A far-seeing chap. I have a hunch we won't catch Cousin Daniel napping, very often."

"I don't like it," I insisted.

"Tut, tut! Of course you'll like it. You're always disliking things in advance but you eat 'em alive when you come to them. Why not give yourself a break, once in a while?"

There was a haze of cloud and a feel of snow in the air as we drove away. Three hours later we were rolling through the hamlet of Larrett, on a paved main route. At our right, the mountain range loomed bulkily like a rampart. Claine waved a hand at it.

"The stage road probably follows that notch. Half an hour and we'd be at the Tavern. And here we go on a fifty-mile detour—and it's beginning to snow. Not considerate of Cousin Daniel."

"Oh, damn Cousin Daniel!" I said, devoutly. "Let's go the shortest way."

"And have all Larrett, pop-eyed, pursuing the rakish gray murder car with New York license, right up the mountain to the secret rendezvous? There are moments, Dink, when I lose hope of making even an adequate Watson out of you."

I shall never forget those thirty-five miles of mountain roads, after we left the pavement at Worthington. Snow blurred the view ahead. It masked the ruts and holes, the hummocks and rocks and thank-ye-ma'ams beneath the wheels. The experience would have been a disturbing one, at best. With Claine's driving it was plain terrifying.

"How much more of this?" I asked, glumly, after an hour or so. Claine grinned.

"They don't call this rough, in Vermont. Wait till we strike a real back road, in a minute—ah, here we are!"

He wrenched the car around a corner that had leaped at us out of the swirling snow. When I had swallowed my heart, I asked, "Do you know where we are?"

"I know where we are on the map, if it's telling the truth."

"But there were supposed to be landmarks at the corners."

"But certainly," he said. "Didn't you see them?"

I hadn't. I was completely lost, though I had studied the map with some care. He had scarcely glanced at it but he seemed to know the route perfectly. I said, mournfully, "I don't see how you do it."

"It's a gift," he explained. "Every seventh son of a seventh son has it?"

The car pitched over a hogback and went yawing down the declivity.

"Hell!" Claine exploded. He jerked home the emergency brake. On locked wheels the car slewed twice its length. It turned completely around, rolled head-on into the ditch

and came to rest with its nose in the bank. Claine calmly threw out the clutch and freed the gears. He leaned out over the door.

"Fool of a woman," he roared, "is it essential that you make a Juggernaut out of my car?"

"Fool of a man"—The first sound of that voice in the storm gave me the strangest sensation I have ever experienced. It seemed to ripple and tinkle and laugh. It made the flesh creep—or crinkle—along my backbone, the way it does when I look down from very high places.

"Fool of a man," it retorted, "is it essential that you do seventy on a one-way road in the fog?"

"Or, in other words, fifteen," Claine said, severely. "Not an adequate excuse for scaring my car to death. And your fog, you know, is clouds; you're on a mountain."

BY this time I had swallowed my heart again and focussed my eyes, and I could see her, a slender figure standing squarely in the middle of the road, indistinct in the murk of the afternoon storm. She came forward.

"Your nerves are frightfully jumpy, aren't they?" she remarked. "I was all set to hop out of the way, if I had to. I merely wanted to make sure you stopped."

"You got your wish," Claine said, grimly. "Would it be impertinent to ask why?"

"Not at all—we're wrecked."

"Oh, I'm sorry," Claine exclaimed. He switched off the spark and swung out of the car. I descended on my side and we advanced to meet her.

On the instant that I saw her clearly I thought she was the most wonderful thing that had ever come into my life. After all, that may not be saying much. What with my work and a certain unconquerable shyness, my life had been singularly free from contact with women. I doubt if I had ever spoken familiarly with half a dozen of them. The eruption of this one into my existence quite dazed me. I was aware only that her eyes laughed and that her cheeks were pink from the cold. It made my flesh creep in that peculiar way, just to look at her.

"Anyone hurt?" Claine asked.

"Marmaduke is rather mashed up—he's our Ford, you know; or he was our Ford. But my sister and I are quite all right and there isn't anybody else. She's sitting on a rock, back there, being glum about things. You see, I happened to be driving when we cracked up. It's a perfect godsend to her."

By now I was becoming aware that her nose tilted upward a little. Her mouth was very small and her lips very red. She had on a tight helmet of heavy cloth, buckled under her chin, and a heavy sheepskin jacket. She wore riding breeches and moccasin hunting boots with red-topped lumberman's socks. Her right hand was bare. She held it pressed against her side. The long driving-mitten projected oddly from it. I was wondering about that mitten when it suddenly fell to the ground. It had been concealing the barrel of a revolver which pointed straight at Claine's midriff.

"One has to be careful," she explained. Claine studied the weapon with interest. He extended his hand. He said:

"Let me see that gun, please."

"As you were!" she retorted. "I am quite capable of managing this gun without help."

"The good old Bakers spunk," Claine commented. "But I assure you my intentions were of the most honorable. You see, we have guns like that and quaint letters from Cousin Daniel. Does that make sense to you?"

"It confirms my suspicions. Only folks crazy enough to fall for that letter would be crazy enough to be up here in this weather."

"Are we to infer that you question Cousin Daniel's good faith?"

"Well, I'm not quite ready to say that—I don't want to judge him hastily. It's merely that I'm not handing the family jewels over to him, just yet."

"But you're here—why?" Claine demanded.

"My sense of family responsibility, if it is of interest to you. The kid sister was bound to come—the Lord knows why. I figured I might as well come with her as stay home and worry myself to death. She's tolerably helpless."

"It apparently doesn't run in the family," Claine said.

"If you mean me, I'm rated fairly rough in the neck. But Frieda just curls up and dies on the slightest provocation. She wouldn't touch this gun to save her life. So I came along to tote it for her. And I can assure you that I am a conscientious worker."

"Fate has heaped the blessing of your presence upon our undeserving heads," Claine said. "I trust we shall not prove unappreciative. Now, if you will so kindly transfer that premonition of sudden death from my gastric area to your coat pocket—I thank you. I'll see if the car has sufficiently recovered from its fright to emerge from hiding."

He persuaded the car to emerge, with considerable fuss and scuffling of tires, for the ditch was difficult and the snow, by now, several inches deep. We drove slowly along until the ruins of the lamented Marmaduke hove in sight, very forlorn in the ditch with a crushed wheel and other ailments. Skis and snowshoes projected from the rumble.

"Anticipating winter sports, I note," Claine said.

"If nothing worse," the girl answered, shortly. Then she called: "Yoohoo, Sister Ann; come on for a buggy ride."

The figure seated on a rock surveyed us in silence. Presently it arose, shook off its mantle of snow and advanced. I was startled. In features and in garb it was an exact duplicate of the girl in the car, except that it wore a scarlet toque.

"Ah, twins," Claine observed.

"So I hear—every few minutes," the girl rejoined, tartly. I was beginning to suspect that she was seriously put out about something. I was quite sure that her eyes wanted to twinkle and her lips wanted to laugh, but she would not let them. Now I noted, also, that the lips of the other girl were a thin, hard line and that her eyes were dull with a look of pain. She did not make my flesh creep. It struck me, suddenly, that her face had in it something of the cynical bitterness and disillusionment that I so lamented in Claine. They were staring at each other. Some clashing message seemed to be passing between them, as between hostile souls that have a common ground of understanding. Plainly it irritated the girl in the car.

"Suppose we get acquainted," she said shortly. "This is Frieda and I am Syd-For-Short."

"Eh?" Claine said, a bit blankly. "Oh yes, Frieda and Syd-For-Short. Is the rest of it, by any chance Bakers?"

"It is not," she retorted. "We have to be a bit careful about telling our right name—so many people recognize it."

"Quite so. Incog, and that sort of thing. We shall respect your reticence. I am none other than Cobbden Claine, in person."

He spoke with an air of mock impressiveness. I knew he was merely being nutty, the way he often does. But the girl seemed really puzzled. She said:

"Am I supposed to register amazement and fall on my knees? Are you somebody terribly important that I ought to know? Or are you guying me?"

Claine grinned at her. He said, "You'd be surprised. The meek and blameless personality in the tonneau," he went on, "is Dink, better known to the police and the telephone book as Professor Artemas Laurence Randall."

"I'm only an instructor, really," I explained.

"It doesn't matter," she said, in a quite kindly way. "It's a ripping name; I like it. That other one is perfectly terrible. It sounds like Hollywood. Can't anything be done about it?"

It was the first time she had spoken to me, or looked at me, really. It made me glow, sort of. Claine retorted, "It gets my mail to me." His grin had grown broader. He actually enjoyed that sort of thing. Of course I knew it was merely one of his ways of getting information without seeming to. But I was afraid it might be prejudicing the girl against him.

"Well," he said, in a different tone, "let's transship cargo and proceed."

CHAPTER III

I SAT with Frieda in the tonneau. She had not yet spoken. I found her rather terrifying, but it seemed as though courtesy demanded something of me. I said:

"Do you know anything about this—er—party?"

She turned a cold, impassive stare upon me. "No," she said, "do you?"

Her voice had the same timbre as Syd's but there was an unpleasant difference. It was clear she did not expect an answer. She turned away and resumed her fixed stare at Claine's shoulders. I was quite content. I needed nothing more than Syd's round little head in the front seat. I was becoming quite convinced that, under the tight helmet,

there would be golden hair with a glint of copper in the sun.

We had not much farther to go which was as well, for the snow was falling faster and the road becoming more difficult. We emerged from a forest of spruces into a broad clearing of meadow lawn, on a knoll. There stood the Tavern. There was nothing sylvan in its appearance. It had the look of a broad, forthright village inn. Across the front was a double gallery. The upper deck sagged drunkenly as though it might plunge headlong at a touch. There was a deep L at the rear. The windows were small-paned and some of them were stuffed with rags. Here and there a blind was missing; others swung by a single hinge. In the shelter of the galleries traces of white paint remained but the exposed walls were weathered black. Mountain Tavern was not yet a ghost but it bore the even more ghastly aspect of a ruined strength upon which death has set its mark. From the three chimneys white columns of wood smoke rose in the still air.

"Someone has beaten us to it," Claine said. He sounded disappointed. Syd shivered elaborately.

"Oooh, grisly!" she groaned in a whimsical tone. "I wish I hadn't come."

CLAINE'S manner had changed. He was more serious than he was accustomed to be, even in serious times. There were three cars on the lawn, at some distance from the Tavern. Claine drove off the road and parked near them. The Tavern leered at us obscenely, through staring windows. At one of them I caught a glimpse of a face but it drew back before I could see it clearly.

"Wait here," Claine said to the girls.

"We'll go with you," Frieda retorted, in her sullen voice. Claine turned to stare at her. Again their eyes seemed to clash in a sort of hostile understanding, as they had back there beside the road. He shrugged his shoulders and started toward the side door in the L, close to the gable-end of the main structure. He glanced back at the girls and whispered to me:

"Where's your gun?"

"In my coat pocket," I said, "but—but I've never fired one."

His mouth twisted a little. "You probably won't have to fire it, but keep a hand on it. Anyhow, don't start shooting until you're sure I can't swing it alone."

That alarmed me. Claine had never before deemed it essential for me to have a gun. I felt inadequate to be of any assistance, whatever. He swung the door open rather violently, I thought, and stood tense, staring in. Then he laughed, shortly, and stepped forward to the threshold. We were looking into a deep, narrow entry. It was gloomy but still not dark. Over our heads was a stairway to the second floor; at our right, under the stairs, a closed door leading to the L—to the kitchen, I presently discovered. A latch clicked softly and the door moved open a crack.

With his right hand in his pocket, Claine stepped forward and thrust the door sharply inward with his foot. Something blocked it. There was a guttural grunt of pain. Claine kicked the door again and it swung wide, revealing a squat figure of a man in a dingy white apron. He was clutching one hand over an eye. I suspected, at once, that he had been spying on us through the crack in the door. Claine snatched the hand away.

"Who are you," he snapped, "the cook?"

The man's face wore an ugly look. He was a powerful man with enormous shoulders and a swarthy skin. His black hair was long and unkempt. He looked like a foreigner and spoke in a sort of broken English. His eyes glared at us hostilely but his manner was deliberately subservient.

"Yes, sair," he said.

"Are there other servants?"

"No, sair."

"Is your master here?"

The man lifted his shoulders in an eloquent shrug. "I do not know. There are three gentlemen there." He pointed across the entry to another room. It led to the front corner room—the one from which I had seen the face peering. Claine did not turn. He kept his eyes on the man.

"What do you mean—you don't know your master? Who hired you?"

"I do not know. It was in ze lettaire—sev'n-eight days. It say, get food, come here yesterday, cook for maybe eight-ten-twelve. That is what I know."

"Who wrote the letter?"

"Daneel Bakaire—I do not know heem."

"Cousin Daniel, to be sure," Claine remarked. "He sent you money? A check?"

The man had rubbed the sting out of his bruised face. There was no softening of his hostile expression but his tongue was loosening up.

"No check—t'ree bills—t'ree hunder' dollar. He say, buy food; keep change for wages. I buy meat—vegetables—aigs—plenty food for long time." He gestured vaguely toward the regions behind the kitchen. "I t'ink mebbe he brudder Old Zave Bakaire—mebbe son."

"Zave?" Claine said, doubtfully. "Oh, that would be Benjamin X.-for-Xavier—that's a funny name to go with Benjamin and Bakers. You knew old Zave?"

"Yes, sair. I know Old Zave since I was boy. I leev down road—eight-twelve mile. Cook for Old Zave, here, t'ree-four year. He die las' fall—vair' old. Second cook, now, for beeg summaire hotel in valley. I come yesterday—build fires, sweep, make beds—fill lamps——"

"Plenty of beds?" Claire queried.

"Plentee bed—plentee clean sheet—plentee blanket." For the first time his face lightened into something resembling a smile. "Steenk," he said, "damn steenk. Mot' balls. Vair' good beds but floor, she vair' dirtee. Plastair all over—spider web. Vair' dirtee. I sweep 'em vair' clean. sair."

It occurred to me, suddenly, that all this might be anything but reassuring to the young ladies. I looked over my shoulder. Frieda stood outside with her back turned. tracing figures in the snow with her boot. She appeared entirely uninterested. But Syd was close behind us with her head thrust forward, not to miss a word. Her eyes were bright but they revealed no anxiety.

"Where do you sleep?" Claine asked the man.

"Here." He jerked his head, sidewise. "I bring down camp bed for sleep by kitchen stove. Upstair' she too col'—no stove upstair.' Bimeby come beeg col'—after bleezard come beeg col'. I sleep by stove."

For some time it had struck me as strange that no one came from the front regions of the house to investigate our arrival. Nor had I been able to detect a sound from behind the closed door. I was becoming nervous about it. I plucked at Claine's sleeve and whispered to him.

"Don't you think we ought to go in and see who these others are?"

"In a minute," he replied, under his breath. "I like to mop up as I go along. Not always safe to leave a loose end lurking in your rear." He turned back to his questioning.

"You say you don't know any of these men in there?"

"No sair—nevair."

"What are they like?"

"One vair' beeg man; black beard; vair' dirtee; vair' drunk. He say is doctor. One leetle roun' man wit' glasses—not w'ite, like dees"—he thrust a stubby finger close to my eyes—"brown. Vair' nice man—vair' pleasant. One beeg, tall boy; vair' onhappee; nevair speak; sit all time in chair an' look at floor; all time smoke cigarette."

"Sounds like a congenial gathering," Claine commented. "And what do folks call you?" His voice was the quintessence of casual friendliness.

"Little Zave——"

The man broke off, sharply, with a whistling intake of his breath. He struck Claine viciously in the stomach with his fist.

"Dammmitt!" he screamed, shrilly. "Damn your soul!"

He leaped backward through the door; slammed it in our faces. I heard a bolt shoot home with a metallic clash.

CHAPTER IV

IN that turbulent sixty seconds two things amazed me. The first was the cook's unprovoked attack on Cobbden Claine. The second was Claine bent double over his folded arms, gasping for breath. I had never before seen him when he was not master of himself. I cannot describe my feelings. One might feel the same way if he saw his favorite cinema actress with her false teeth out. It was shocking, indecent.

But he regained his poise quickly. He straightened up and drew several deep, labored breaths. Then he smiled, in his crooked way.

"A man is no stronger than his *solar plexus*," he said.

"What was the matter?" I asked. I felt bewildered.

"Something annoyed him. At a guess, I should say he hadn't planned to tell his name. He's handy with his

fists—he hit me exactly where it would do the most good."

It was then that I first had the feeling of something really sinister surrounding us. This venomous cook was a tangible thing, a mysterious thing to be feared. The revelation of Claine's vulnerability left me with a feeling of helplessness. I had always depended on him so utterly.

I expected him to force his way into the kitchen and settle that matter at once. Instead he suddenly turned and thrust open the door that led to the living quarters of the Tavern. Once more, the opening door encountered an obstacle and a grunt of surprise and pain. I saw a small, rotund, elderly man wearing dark glasses. He was rubbing his shoulder. He made an effort to smile.

"You opened it so suddenly," he said. His voice was apologetic, ingratiating, with a note of unctuous insincerity. Claine's tone was elaborately suave. He said:

"So sorry. I seem to be extraordinarily clumsy about doors. Hope I didn't hurt you much."

The little man's smile became more unctuous. He rubbed his hands, as though washing them.

"Not at all," he said. "I should have been more careful. I thought I heard someone cry out—and there was quite a draft, you know."

HE looked meaningly at the outer door which had remained open, with the snow drifting in. Claine herded us into the room and closed both doors behind us. This, apparently, had been the office, or bar, of the Tavern, The building faced south toward the road and the living rooms stretched along that side.

The bar was at the southeast corner. It had a chimney and fireplace set out from the wall, with an old-fashioned, built-in bar behind them in an alcove. Across the alcove stood a wooden sink with tin wash-basins, a pail of water and towels on a roller above it.

"Do we have to wash there?" Frieda asked, sullenly.

"Yes, ma'am," the little man said, washing his hands in pantomime. "There is no plumbing in Mountain Tavern. Wash bowls and pitchers in the bedrooms—and an axe to break the ice." He cackled in enjoyment of his wit. "We shall have to bring water from a spring in the back yard. Splendid water—splendid."

His voice trailed off as though the mechanism had run down. Claine and I were warming ourselves at the great, woodchunk stove which stood before the empty fireplace. I sensed the sudden tautening of faculties which always signalled the awakening of his interest. But he gave no sign. He turned slowly and introduced us.

"The young ladies are not quite ready to reveal their identities. But I suppose we are cousins of a sort and may call each other by our first names."

The little man cackled enormously. "Cousins!" he panted. "Cousins! That is good—splendid—splendid." His voice ran down, again, but he reanimated it. "Oh, of course—I am Cousin Charles—Charles Bakers. Welcome, cousins, to the family castle. It is a trifle run down but perhaps we shall find a way to refurbish it—a way to refurbish it."

His laughter forced him to pause. I should have said the place was more than a trifle run down. The paper had peeled from the walls. In places even the plaster was gone. Mr. Bakers was mastering his emotions.

"The—uh—parlor, if I may say so, is more comfortable," he said, washing his hands energetically. "Cousin Dick and—uh—the Doctor are in there. Shall we join them?"

We followed him into the adjoining room. It was somewhat larger than the bar and heated, likewise, by a chunk stove.

"The dining room," said Mr. Bakers, waving an arm in the prideful manner of a cicerone displaying the ruins of a glorious past. "There was famous food here, in its day—famous food."

Again I felt that tensing of Claine's interest but he said nothing. The room contained an extension dining table of black walnut and a heterogeneous collection of wooden chairs in various stages of dilapidation. At the rear was a broad service window, closed by a sliding panel. It led to a service pantry in the L, off the kitchen. The room was less forbidding than the bar, but bleak enough.

Mr. Bakers opened another door, leading into a small, white-painted entry. The front outer door was at our left; steep stairs at our right. I became aware that a wind had arisen. Curiously enough it came from the South. The snow was falling more thickly and whirling in clouds and eddies. An icy breeze circled about our ankles from beneath the weathered door.

"The—uh—'Ladies' Entrance,'" Mr. Bakers explained, with a smirk and a cackle. "The parlor is more comfortable—much more comfortable I am sure."

We crossed the entry and passed into the final room of the series, at the southwest corner. Here, at last, were signs of human occupancy. The room was carpeted. Small oval rugs were scattered here and there. The wall paper appeared to have been put on within the memory of living men. The windows had winter casements, outside. There was a large kerosene lamp, with a reading shade, on an old, round mahogany table. The stove was of the base-burner coal variety though it now was burning wood. In a corner was a white iron cot, without mattress. The chairs, though worn, were comfortable. Compared to the rest of the place the room had a warm, homelike atmosphere.

A young man sat by a front window, smoking a cigarette gloomily and staring out into the storm. I knew that he was the one I had seen at the window of the bar, as we approached. He gave no sign that he was conscious of our entrance but I saw Frieda stiffen at sight of him. Syd looked at her curiously; but that was all.

Slouched in a rocking chair, with his feet on the stove, was the only other occupant of the room. He seemed as tall as Claine, and bulkier, but he was fat where Claire was lean and hard. He was, as the cook had described him, "Vair' dirtee," but it was an air of general unkemptness rather than anything specific. His black hair was long and disordered. His face was bearded to the eyes. Yet, behind the mask of slovenliness, one could discern that intangible something that marks the physician. He made a gesture of drowsy welcome with the glass of colorless liquid which he held slackly in his hand. It did not need the half-empty bottle on the floor to tell us what he was drinking. The close air was redolent of bath-tub gin. Mr. Bakers presented the pair, in his diffuse, cackling way:

"This stalwart young man is Cousin Dick—Cousin Richard Delchester—pronounced 'Delster'—am I correct, Cousin Dick?"

The boy—he might have been twenty—turned toward us without interest. He stared dully at Frieda. She returned his look. In a moment he resumed his moody staring from the window. He was a lean, fit-looking youngster, with a clean-cut face and yellow hair that waved a little.

"And this," our guide resumed, "is Doctor Bakers—uh—Doctor, I don't believe you have told me your first name—we're going to call each other by our first names, you know."

The Doctor's scalp moved, perceptibly, as though he were knitting his brows beneath their thatch. He appeared to be giving the matter his serious attention. He considered his glass with solemn concentration. He took a sip from it, hiccoughed gently and shook his head in a discouraged way.

"Doc," he asserted solemnly, admonishing the stove with his glass of gin-and-water. "Doc—Doc—just Doc." He took another sip and relaxed.

"'Doc,'" Claine assured him, "is an honored name. Many men have borne it.—And, now, if we might have a glimpse into that room, yonder——"

"Yes, yes, to be sure," Mr. Bakers chirped. He tripped across and opened a door in the rear wall. We crowded forward. Of all the forlorn things we had seen, this was the most forlorn. It was a long, quite narrow room, dark and full of an odorous, mouldering chill which defies description. Fallen plaster powdered the floor, in a litter of rubbish and disintegrated furniture. Incongruous amid the wreckage, stood one, undamaged wooden chair. Some of the windows were broken. One was closed completely by a sheet of wall-board.

"This used to be the dining-room annex," Mr. Peters was explaining. "It connects at the end, there—those folding doors. It hasn't been used for years."

I was peering over Syd's shoulder, lightly touching it. Suddenly a quiver ran through her and she drew back against me.

"For heaven's sake, come out and shut the door," she wailed, in that whimsical way of hers; but, this time it was not wholly whimsical. "Oh-o-oh, what an unutterably gorgeous place for a murder!"

CHAPTER V

YOU could have heard a pin drop. It was rather ghastly. Mr. Bakers' mouth had dropped open. I felt sure there was fear behind those dark glasses. Syd seemed a little bewildered by the effect of her words. Frieda and Claine were regarding her intently, with expressionless faces.

The Imperfect Twins

By chance, I looked at the Doctor. He was peering at us and I had a fair view of his eyes. They were keen, alert; sharply at variance with the half-tipsy somnolence of his manner. As they met mine he dropped the lids over them, again, and sipped from his glass. Frieda spoke. In the circumstances her drawling words were really quite sinister:

"Well, Cousin Claine, what is your opinion of the chances of a first-class murder? And who is going to murder whom? It would be helpful to know."

The look in Claine's eyes puzzled me. Frieda could not meet it. As she turned away he laughed, shortly. He said:

"Your guess is as good as mine. Dink and I will fetch your togs from the car."

OUTSIDE, the wind was blowing guns, in howling gusts. Along the foundation of the Tavern it had swept the ground clean. Claine seemed interested in this. The path extended across the front and around to the rear, beneath the windows of that eerie, ruined annex-room. "Curious," Claine said. We returned to the side door and resumed our journey to the cars. The snow was drifted, knee-deep, but it was light as feathers in the dry cold of the mountain air. Claine shouted:

"A blizzard, right enough. 'After bleezzard come beeg col'.' The family conclave bids fair to last some days."

He opened the door of a car and pushed me in. "Let's size up the relatives. Has it struck you that most of them seem to have something on their minds? A bit confusing, isn't it? Little Zave, now, and his quaint adventure in dialect." He chuckled, grimly. "It improved as he went along but he ought to have rehearsed in advance."

"He looks like a foreigner," I objected.

"Not foreign enough to talk that way. A strain of French Canuck—maybe a bit of Indian; the cheek-bones might indicate that. Still, I've got high cheek-bones myself. His name might indicate a connection with Old Zave. Is he one of us? If so, why has Cousin Daniel stuck him into the kitchen? At any rate, we can be fairly certain he isn't Cousin Daniel."

"You said Cousin Daniel wouldn't be here."

"I merely said he probably wouldn't make himself conspicuous. But you may be sure he'll be here—if he isn't, already. It might be the Doctor. But he's such a clumsy actor. He isn't putting a bit of imagination into it. I feel sure Cousin Daniel would get more out of that role. At any rate he would have wit enough to discipline those eyes, or keep them covered, as Mr. Bakers does."

"Mr. Bakers might be Cousin Daniel," I ventured.

"If any of the three is Cousin Daniel, he's the one," Claine conceded. "He seems to have assumed the role of host. He appears to know something about the Tavern. Did it strike you that he was a bit frank about that? Logically Cousin Daniel would conceal such things, wouldn't he? Unless it were a deliberate part of his game.

"The young folks must have been brought here for some purpose. It's difficult to connect them with the others. They may have speaking parts. They may be merely atmosphere or plot complications. Dick and the Frieda girl seem to be nourishing grouches or soul-tragedies of some sort. Their reasons for lugging them way up here remain to be revealed.

"Syd—she has me guessing. She says she came to guard her sister. But she's canny and she's subtle—she's cynical—she may be sinister——"

"But, Cobb," I protested, "it's Frieda that's cynical. Syd is just—well, she's just simple and straightforward——"

Claine patted me on the shoulder in a soothing manner. His eyes twinkled. He said:

"Yeah, I sort of like her, myself. Just the same, she is the strong one. Frieda is delicious but she's undisciplined—she's all flesh and emotions. She's the simple one. Syd is complex. Actually I rate her a very sweet and hard-boiled and desirable young person. But she has the brains and the subtlety and the nerve to play this Cousin Daniel role as well as the best of us. That leaves only you and me to be accounted for."

"But we know ourselves, don't we?" He had thrown me into one of my disliking moods. His attitude toward women was disgusting.

"Do we, Dink? I sometimes wonder. In any case, the others don't. They may be quite as curious about us as we are about them. After all, we're rearing a rather ponderous structure of doubt. It may prove to be nothing more than a novel week-end stunt. Let's hope Little Zave knows his way around among the skillets."

As we stepped down from the car we heard a muffled shout from up the road, "Ahoy-y-y the Ta-a-a-avern!"

"Ha! A belated guest," Claine said. "Possibly Cousin Daniel in proper person. Ahoy-y-y!" he shouted through cupped hands.

"Yo-ho-ho and a bottle of gin. What ship is that and where the hell are you?"

Claine chuckled. "Presumably not Cousin Daniel, unless he, too, is play-acting. Couple points off your starboard bow," he roared.

"Heave to; I'm coming aboard," replied the voice, a somewhat husky baritone, drawing slowly nearer. "Where *is* the damn Tavern, anyway—or isn't there any?"

I don't know just what I had expected to emerge from the storm on the tail of this nautical melange. What arrived was a short, round gentleman in a raccoon coat and a bowler hat. He wore thin gloves and oxford shoes without rubbers. He carried a well-worn kit-bag adorned with the labels of foreign travel. His moonlike face bore plain signs of over-eating, over-drinking, late hours and elaborate grooming. He dropped the bag with a gusty "whoof!" that was as redolent as one of the Doctor's exhalations. He said:

"Not meaning to cast aspersions on your personalities. you're a hell of a disappointment. I expected to find a Tavern, complete with bar, and all I get is a couple of other fellows. Got anything to drink? I had the locker stocked for a ten-day cruise but it went down with the good ship, a couple miles back. Here I am, high and dry—what I mean, dry. Got anything to drink?"

"The Tavern is at hand," Claine said, consolingly. "We shall take pleasure in leading you to it."

"Please consider the insults withdrawn, sirs. Are you members of the tribal week-end? I'm Gladstone Conlord—William E. Gladstone Conlord, if you want to be snooty about it. When you're feeling Rotarian, call me 'Gladdy.'"

Claine introduced us. "Chawmed, I'm sure," said Conlord. "Now, if you're quite rested, what say we shove off for the moaning bar. The air cools so rapidly up here, after the sun goes down."

During our absence, Little Zave had set the dining room table. It looked, really, quite attractive with its white cloth and two shaded lamps. The parlor, in the soft light of the big lamp seemed positively homelike. At sight of the Doctor and his glass, Gladdy uttered a delighted, "Ah!" and clapped his hands. The bearded one regarded his approach with trepidation.

"From this moment you are marked and set apart as my favorite relative," the newcomer assured. "No, no; I insist upon it."

He skilfully transferred the half-filled glass from the Doctor's hand to his own lips. When he lowered it, it was empty. He sighed, "A-ah!" and smacked his lips. "Sir and favorite relative, you have saved my veritable life." He extended the glass. "Fill 'em up again and I shall drink the health of my benefactor."

The Doctor surveyed him reproachfully. With one hand he snatched the now almost-empty bottle from the floor. From the shadow beyond his chair he lifted, with some difficulty, an oblong black bag. It was somewhat larger than a physician's bag and, manifestly, heavy. It and the bottle he clasped to him with protective arms. Gladdy stared at the bag with rapt eyes.

"If I'm dreaming this, for Gawd's sake don't wake me up," he implored. "Ah, sir, you and I shall sing duets."

"No," the Doctor responded, in a slow, protesting voice. "No—No—No—No, no, no, no——"

The door opened and the sharp, sullen voice of Little Zave announced:

"Suppair, she iss readee."

CHAPTER VI

WHEN we straggled into the dining room, Little Zave was setting the food out on the broad shelf of the service window. "You sairve yourselfs," he rasped, and thrust the slide shut.

The Doctor glanced from the slide to the door of the bar. He chose a seat on the far side of the table, facing both these means of access from the kitchen. Mr. Bakers performed the same routine and sat down beside him. Claine, with a glance of whimsical significance at me, took the third seat on that side.

To the others, position apparently meant nothing. Frieda dropped into the nearest chair, at the end of the table, with Syd next her. Gladdy made a movement to the chair beside

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Syd, but I was too quick for him. He had to content himself with the place on the other side of me. Beyond him was Dick, at the end of the table, with his back to the slide. Facing each other, he and Frieda indulged in a contest of long-range glowering.

I have never eaten a more toothsome meal. How Little Zave accomplished it, alone, on a small wood stove I do not pretend to explain. There were tender steaks, baked potatoes and other vegetables; raised biscuit, glazed and crisp on the outside and light as air within; jellies and a relish; milk in pitchers and drip-coffee in three-storied pots. Even Dick attacked the food as though he had no state of mind, whatever. Frieda, alone, seemed superior to gastronomic temptation.

As we were finishing, the service slide squeaked loudly. The right hands of the three men opposite me went down into the pockets of their coats as though they were executing a drill. We looked. The slide was open an inch or two. As we watched, a bit breathlessly, a hand appeared in the opening and pushed the slide back.

"Deesairt—you are raidee?" Little Zave asked, with that puzzling mixture of subservience and ugly defiance in his voice. He sat two pies on the shelf and closed the slide. The three right hands reappeared above the table. There was a quite audible drawing of breath. I rose and fetched the pies. They were of sliced apple, brown, crisp and piping hot. Claine sampled his wedge with an "Ah" of satisfaction. Then he said:

"Well, Cousin Daniel, isn't it time you emerged from anonymity? Your guests would like to express appreciation of such hospitality."

There was a mighty roving of eyes but, so far as I could see, no sign of guilt in any of them. It was, finally, Mr. Bakers who spoke. "There is no Daniel Bakers, Cousin—uh—Cobb—at least, not in the branch of the family to which—uh—I suppose we all belong."

"No Daniel?" Claine exclaimed, with innocent amazement. "But who wrote the letters—I assume you all received those curious letters; and the guns?"

There was no answer. Every face, except the Doctor's and Frieda's, revealed keen interest. Even Dick had come alive. Mr. Bakers bent forward to peer at Claine, across the Doctor.

"Ah," he said, "who wrote the letters? It would be interesting to know—heh-heh—yes, indeed, interesting to know who wrote the letters."

"You seem to know all about the family," Claine suggested.

"Oh, no, no; not all; really not much," Mr. Bakers protested. "We all come down from Zera Bakers, I suppose. Cousin Richard and Cousin Dink—heh-heh—Dick and Dink—that's good, isn't it—Dick and Dink—the Delchesters and the Randalls trace back to Aaron Bakers. He was Zera's son. They would not be connected with the Tavern. That came down through another son, Benjamin—all Benjamins in that line, right down to Benjamin X. But the young ladies now—you haven't told us your last name——"

"Sh-h; let sleeping skeletons lie," Syd broke in. "If it's of interest, my mother's great-grandmother was Zera Bakers' daughter. That takes us quite a way from the Bakers family and the Tavern, doesn't it?"

"Yes, yes; quite a way. Let me see, that would be Hepsibah Bakers, wouldn't it? And, Cousin Gladstone, the Conlords trace back to Hepsibah, don't they? Yes, yes; I'm quite sure they trace back to Hepsibah."

NOT knowing, can't say," Gladdy replied. "Bakers in the family somewhere, way back, that's all I know. Never got much excited about it till this baby took charge of my blood-pressure." He leaned across my lap toward Syd. "Just close enough to be nice and not close enough to come between us, eh, Cousin Syd?"

He suddenly dragged her head down and kissed her, clumsily, right under my chin. I don't know what happened to me. I have never experienced such a terrible feeling. It was fortunate his position deprived me of full use of my arms. I tried to free them and, in doing so, struck him rather violently on the throat with my elbow. It threw him back into his chair and almost upset him. He clung to the edge of the table. He was gasping quite alarmingly. His face was positively purple. As soon as he could speak he turned on me. He was fearfully angry.

"What the hell you trying to do, Randall?" he shouted.

"I was trying to get my arm free to hit you," I was entirely frank about it. I could scarcely control my voice. I still wanted to hit him. Claine laughed aloud. He rarely did that. He said:

"Attaboy, Dink! You tell 'em. Hearken, Cousin Gladdy; you see what he does when he's warming up. Don't make him show his stuff. These professors are poison when you annoy them."

"You mind your own damn business," Conlord shouted at me, again.

"I propose to," I told him. Syd squeezed my arm. It made my flesh creep, sort of. My face burned. I did not dare look at her. It was a great relief when the Doctor spoke.

"Bet you don't know who I am," he said, thickly. He had thrust his face close to Mr. Bakers'. That one seemed fascinated, almost frightened. His cheeks went very white. He simply stared. "Bet you, nobody knows who I am."

Mr. Bakers continued to stare at him. He was breathing rapidly. When he spoke, his voice was not quite steady. He said:

"Oh, no. No, indeed. I haven't the remotest idea who you are, Doctor. Zera Bakers had two younger sons—possibly you and Mr. Claine trace back to them."

THE Doctor settled back in his chair. "Told you," he growled, in tipsy defiance. Claine was watching him with a faint, speculative smile. "Told you. Nobody knows who I am." He fumbled on the floor for his bottle and emptied it into his glass. He filled this with water from Claine's. "Told you," he repeated, and resumed his sipping. Mr. Bakers drew a deep breath and relaxed. Claine said to him:

"Does your genealogical knowledge give you any clue as to why we have been brought here? Do you know anything about this inn-keeper with the halfbreed name—this Benjamin Xavier Bakers—I assume the X. is for Xavier?"

Mr. Bakers seemed to be acutely uncomfortable. His fulsome artificiality had dropped away. He glanced at the Doctor, covertly. Finally he said, hesitating as though he doubted the wisdom of it:

"Yes, he was my uncle. My father was his half-brother; his older brother. Grandfather married a French-Canadian girl for his second wife—I think she had Indian blood, too—a great many of them lived around here while they were logging these woods. Benjamin Xavier was their son. That accounts for the name—they compromised on it. My father felt that Uncle Benjamin tricked him out of the Tavern and the money—Grandfather had quite a good deal of money. I was born here in the Tavern—but we moved West when I was a baby," he added, hastily, with a quick glance toward the Doctor. "I really know only by hearsay."

"Your grandfather's first wife—your grandmother—was white—was Yankee?" Claine asked.

"Most certainly!" Mr. Bakers declared with astonishing explosiveness. "There never was alien blood in the Bakers family until Grandfather married that woman. None of us had anything to do with Benjamin or his family."

He broke off sharply as though he had said more than he intended. Claine demanded:

"What family did he have?"

"I could only speak vaguely of that—I am not sure I ought to mention it, at all, before—uh—young ladies. Uncle Benjamin was not a nice man—a halfbreed, you see."

"The facts of life are no secret to us," Syd observed. Mr. Bakers seemed but little reassured. It was, palpably, something deeper than embarrassment that bothered him.

"Well—uh—of course this is all hearsay, you understand, entirely hearsay. I know nothing, myself; I was not here at the time——"

"We understand. Get on!" Claine broke in, irritably.

"Well—uh—Uncle Benjamin—we never called him that; we always spoke of him as Old Zave—he had—uh—an affair with a halfbreed girl—a French-Canadian-Indian—at least that's the story I've heard. She was a young girl; sixteen or seventeen, perhaps——"

"How old were you, then?" Claine asked. His voice, now, was disarmingly smooth and matter-of-fact.

"I?" Mr. Bakers seemed a little startled. "Why—uh—let me see—I suppose—yes, I must have been about eighteen or so, myself. But of course I was—uh—living out West. This is all hearsay, you understand."

"Of course," Claine agreed. "I was merely trying to date the period. It has no bearing."

Just then I happened to glance at the Doctor. He was watching the speakers covertly but very keenly out of the corners of his eyes.

"Please go on with your interesting story," Claine said.

"Oh, yes—well—uh—let me see—oh, yes, there was a child; a boy, I think. As I recall the story, the mother took him and ran away."

"What made her run away; do you know?"

"No-o, I don't think I ever heard the reason—disgrace, shame, something like that, I should say."

"Do you know what the boy's name was?"

"Why—uh—now, of course, he must have had a name—yes, yes, he must have had a name. You see, they disappeared and I don't know that anyone has heard of them since. In our family the boy was always referred to as the—uh"—he looked apprehensively at the twins, swallowed twice and continued—"as—uh—'The Unfortunate.' You see, there had never been a—uh—never been an illegitimate child in the family so the name was—uh—quite—uh—distinctive—yes, yes, quite distinctive."

"The story is that, later, Old Zave had another—uh—affair with the girl's younger sister. There was—uh—another child—another boy. She named him after his father—just Zave—they called him 'Little Zave'——"

I must have made some audible sound, for Mr. Bakers stopped, abruptly, and everyone looked at me. It alarmed me. I was terribly afraid I might have upset Claine's plans. So I said, "Awfully sorry; cramp in my leg."

It was a great relief to see a smile appear on Claine's face. He said: "Perspicacious fella! Get up and walk it off."

"It's all right, now," I said. "Go on, Mr. Bakers."

I felt Syd's hand on my arm and her soft breath in my ear. She whispered, "Perspicacious fella!"

"Well," Mr. Bakers resumed, "Old Zave finally married—a real Yankee woman. They had one son and I think they named him Benjamin, after his father. The mother died and the boy either ran away or Old Zave drove him out. I think that's all the children he had."

"Amply sufficient, I should say," Claine observed. "Let's see if we've got this cosmopolitan family-tree straight. Our Benjamin X. Bakers—Old Zave, as you call him—was one quarter Indian. He had three sons by three different mothers. The oldest, 'The Unfortunate,' and the second, Little Zave, were sons of half-Indian sisters. They must have been about as much red as white. Both were illegitimate. The youngest, Benjamin, was born of a Yankee mother in lawful wedlock. He was the only legitimate offspring. All three disappeared without trace in infancy or boyhood."

"No," Mr. Bakers corrected. "I've always understood Little Zave lived here with his father after his mother died. Seems to me I've heard that Benjamin came back for a spell, too—must have been twenty, twenty-five years ago. I think there was some sort of a scandal—I can't just remember—something about a girl; somebody Old Zave had here or she may have been one of the guests—I've forgotten, exactly. Seems to me Little Zave tried——"

He clipped off the sentence with significant abruptness. His breath was rapid. He said, in a tone of forced lightness and with the trace of a quaver in his voice:

"Let's not go into that—not a pleasant thing to talk about on a night like this."

"Not pleasant," Claine said, with crisp incisiveness, "but possibly important to know. Go on—Go on!"

Mr. Bakers looked uneasily about. His manner suggested an animal seeking a way of escape from a corner.

"Go on!" Claine insisted. "Tell us the rest of it!"

"Well—uh—I'm not sure—uh—really, I have no knowledge of this, you know. Quite possibly it didn't happen, at all—just a story. I think I heard, once, that Little Zave tried to kill Benjamin—stabbed him in the shoulder. Then the girl committed suicide and the two boys ran away—they must have been eighteen or twenty, then. That's all I ever heard about it." He seemed immensely relieved to be through with it. He hurried on. "After that I think Old Zave lived here, more or less alone, until he died. The place must have been falling down around his head. He had plenty of money—but he liked it up here, alone. He was wild—a savage."

Mr. Bakers settled back and drew a deep breath. Syd was first to speak. "A right spiffy yarn for us Paleface Bakerses—but it doesn't solve the dark mystery of who wrote those letters and why."

"It may offer a starting point," Claine said. He turned, suddenly, on Mr. Bakers. "Of course Benjamin, as the only legitimate son, inherits the Tavern and the money—does he?"

The look of anguish returned to the little man's face. He seemed, again, to be seeking a way of escape. But he could not evade Claine's eyes.

"Why—uh"—he began, unhappily, "I—uh—really I don't know. Seems to me I heard that Old Zave left a will. I can't remember—I can't be sure—but seems to me he cut Benjamin off and left everything to 'The Unfortunate.' If 'The Unfortunate' died without heirs, Little Zave was to inherit."

"Disinheriting his legitimate son, entirely?" Claine demanded. "Why should he do that?"

"Well—uh—I don't know, of course. But I've always understood that first girl—'The Unfortunate's mother—was the one he really loved——"

The door from the bar opened, suddenly, and Little Zave tramped in. "You go in parlair!" he squealed. "Damn, mebbe you t'ink I been sit up, all night."

Half amused, half startled, we thrust back our chairs. Claine, as he rose, drawled, "Cheerio, little—uh-h—one; you can sleep late in the morning."

For a moment, I had thought Claine was going to speak his name. I realized that he had done that deliberately, to tease the man. I realized, too, that, during our long discussion of Little Zave, Claine had not revealed his knowledge of the cook's identity. I wondered why.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE parlor, we took up the matter of sleeping quarters. Claine said:

"I suppose the rest of you are all fixed. Dink, we ought to have scouted the upper regions before dark."

"I must apologize," Mr. Bakers said. "I have taken the best bedroom—over the bar. It is the warmest—the big chimney, you see. Ancient bones and joints, you know—heh-heh—I'm sure you will pardon an old man's selfishness. The Doctor, I think, has the second-best, over this room. It has the other chimney. Not the corner—you've taken the little corner room, haven't you, Cousin Dick?

"No doubt Cousin Cobb and Cousin Dink are going to sleep together. It has its advantages, this weather. The temperature is falling very rapidly. I'm afraid we are in for a very severe cold-snap. Perhaps you would care for the room between the Doctor's and mine—at the head of the front stairs—unless, by chance, the young ladies have taken that?"

"We are sleeping at the extreme end of the L," Syd began, crisply.

"Ha!" Gladdy burst in. "What is the number of your room, please?"

I wanted to hit him. My nature turned topsy-turvy whenever he directed his leering eye and his suggestive tongue at Syd. However, she appeared to require no aid from me. She produced that blue revolver from the hip-pocket of her breeches—produced it so suddenly that the rest of us gasped and Cousin Gladstone drew back quite hastily. Holding it by the barrel, upside down, she extended the butt. He reached forward, somewhat doubtfully, as though to take it. With her forefinger in the trigger guard, she snapped the butt smartly back into her hand. The muzzle pointed straight at Gladdy's stomach. He instinctively thrust out his hands.

"Don't!" he protested. Claine snapped at her, "Never do that movie stunt with a loaded gun! Put it down!"

"It isn't a movie stunt, Great-Gran'ther," she said, calmly. "I learned things from a practical gun-toter on a dude ranch, last Summer. They called me 'Six-Gun Syd' and," she fixed Gladdy with a glittering eye, "no man offered to get fresh with me."

Without warning, she turned and opened fire on a white spot in the wall. She fired deliberately, with no appearance of concentration. Fascinated, we watched three black spots appear in the white, one below the other; then three more in a parallel column. It was a veritable six-spot of spades. She lowered the gun and turned to Gladdy.

"Our room is the northeast corner of the L. You don't suppose there is any danger of your mistaking our door for yours?"

"Not the least in the world," he assured her. "I am moving my lodgings one room farther from yours, in case you start dealing faro on the wall in your sleep."

The girls went out and the others straggled after—the Doctor last. Mr. Bakers lingered, as though he rather hated to go. He said, "The bedroom lamps are on a shelf in the kitchen. Listen to that wind! This is a genuine mountain blizzard." The cackling, hand-washing manner had dropped from him. I found him no more appealing than before but there could be no question that his new seriousness was sincere. "I wish you a good night," he said, "but I doubt if any of us will have one."

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When he had gone, Claine dropped into a chair with a "whoof!" of relaxation.

"Let's talk a minute—where's your gun?"

"Gosh," I said, in some dismay, "it's in the bar—in my overcoat—I forgot it."

He spread his arms in a characteristic gesture of disgust. "Well, get it! And keep it on you!"

I crossed the entry and opened the door of the dining room. I had taken, I think, one step inside before I saw Little Zave. He stood at the far end of the table, facing me, with his back toward the closed service window. He was poised, tense. His right arm was extended, a little backward, in a throwing attitude. A hunting knife lay in the palm of his hand.

The slide behind him creaked sharply and opened an inch. He spun 'round with a low cry, guttural, like a beast in anger or in fear. There was a flash and a roar. Little Zave staggered backward toward me, wavered an instant and then folded down on the floor into a small shapeless heap.

CHAPTER VIII

MY MIND seems to be poorly attuned to emergencies. According to Claine I quite instinctively do the wrong thing. So, now, I rushed to the slide. The handle was on the other side. I could get no finger-hold. I was clawing at the thing when Claine burst into the room. He said, "Dink!" There was a peculiar quality in his voice. "Did you shoot him?"

"No," I said. "Somebody did it through this window. I think he was preparing to throw a knife at me."

"At you!"

"In my general direction."

"Humph," he grunted. He stooped and felt for Little Zave's heart. "Dead—as the justly-celebrated doornail. And the world not noticeably poorer, I suspect." That sort of recalled my attention to immediate events. Actually, I had been participating in a murder. I hadn't realized it. I was astonished. Claine was looking at me with a funny speculative expression. He said:

"Just exactly what were you planning to do when you got that slide open?"

I thought that was a silly question. "How should I know—I didn't get it open, did I?"

He broke out with one of those rare, low, gurgling laughs of his. He only does that when he's really amused. He said: "Your psychology just doesn't make sense. Weren't you scared?"

"Of course I was scared," I retorted—with some heat, I fear. I don't like to be laughed at. "I wouldn't have bothered, at all, if I hadn't been scared, would I?"

He laughed again. "A proper poltroon, and no mistake!" His manner changed, sharply. "Not a laughing matter, Dink. Get that gun of yours."

He stepped past me and threw open the door of the bar. "All right," he said, when he had examined the room. I got the revolver from my overcoat pocket and followed him back to the parlor. He lowered the wick of the lamp and we sat down in the shadows of the corner behind the stove. With our backs safely to the inner wall we could command every entrance—at our left, the door from the entry; at our right, that from the deserted annex-room; in front, the windows in the two outer walls.

It was extraordinarily unpleasant. The wind, now, was hurling itself against the Tavern, like the onslaught of a screaming beast. The structure trembled, at times seemed actually to reel under the attack. It creaked, and rattled and slammed. When the wind-beast paused to gather strength, the drawing of nails, from the frost, sounded like the snap and crackle of burning wood.

"I suspect our Syd-For-Short would call this a gorgeous night for a murder," Claine said, grimly. "Well, we've had one.—Dink, six people left this room within two minutes of that shot. Logically the last one out is the initial suspect—Mr. Bakers—though that is merely tentative. Some of the others certainly heard it—perhaps all of them. Not one has given a sign—"

In a lull of the gale we heard the crash and tinkle of breaking glass. It seemed to come from the room above us. We sat tense; straining our ears. Then the wind came roaring and shrieking back.

"Well," Claine began—

There was a sudden, heavy tramping of feet, over our heads. A door slammed. The steps came hurriedly along the corridor and down the front stairs. Claine drew his revolver and I imitated him. "I doubt we need them," he said. "He has something urgent and unpremeditated on his mind. The Herr Doktor, at a guess."

The door opened and the Doctor peered in, holding a lamp above his head. He carried his right hand pressed to his chest. It was bundled in a towel.

"Anyone here?" I never should have recognized his voice.

"Only Cousin Dink and me, holding hands in the gloaming."

"Ah, Claine, I hoped I should find you; have you got a first-aid kit? I tripped and stuck my hand through the window—clumsy."

We pocketed our revolvers and rose. "I have one," Claine said. "You mean to tell me you haven't! It's in my bag, in the bar. Let's go out there—no use messing up our living room," he added, as the Doctor seemed to hesitate.

Unostentatiously, Claine herded him on ahead. He passed the body of Little Zave without looking at it but, suddenly, he turned his head and looked back at it. He stopped dead.

"Good God!" he gasped, "Who's that?" He stared at Claine; then at the body, again. It was not quite convincing.

"That, on the face of it, is our paragon of a cook," Claine replied. "Heaven help us, we shall have to eat our own cooking, now."

"But—but who shot him?"

"Was he shot?" Claine asked, blandly. "There's a knife beside him. Press forward, Doc. You have more need of medical attention than he has."

The stove in the bar had burned low. The damp chill was beginning to reclaim the room. Claine threw in the last chunks of fire-wood from the floor. He observed, gloomily, "We'll have to rustle our own wood, too. Most extraordinary poor judgment, killing the cook and houseman at this stage of the game. Let's see the damage, Doc."

It was a mean but not really nasty cut, across the back of the hand, close to the knuckles. Claine mixed an ice-cold lysol solution in a basin and unceremoniously soused the wounded member in it. "Do you insist on formal hocus-pocus, or will a gob of goo and a rag suffice?" he inquired not too solicitously.

"Anything to keep dirt out," the Doctor said, crossly.

Claine smeared the cut with ointment, bandaged it deftly and trimmed the job with adhesive tape. "If it doesn't develop appendicitis or pyorrhea, you may pull through. Drop in again, in a couple of days—if you're still alive." His manner changed. "Come into the parlor, Doc. I'd like your views on this thing." The Doctor shook his head.

"It's your funeral, not mine," he grated.

"Meaning just exactly what?"

"Merely that you were down here and I wasn't."

"Oh, my mistake," Claine said. "I hope it won't give you bad dreams."

There was an ugly gleam in the Doctor's eyes. I noted that he did not again look at the body of Little Zave. As we reached the entry there was a rush of footsteps in the corridor above. It faded out in the direction of the L. The Doctor swore in his beard and started hurriedly up the stairs. Claine gazed after him with a puzzled look. Then he relaxed and grinned at me.

"So-ho, Cousin Gladstone has finally accomplished his purpose on the Doctor's private stock. Wonder if he got it all."

HE led the way into the parlor. We could hear the Doctor tramping back and forth above us. "Checking up his losses," Claine chuckled, "and barricading that broken window against the wintry gale."

Presently the footsteps ceased. Claine waited some time. He drew an electric torch from his pocket and tiptoed to one of the front windows. He held the light against the upper sash and pressed his face against the glass below it, shading his eyes with his hand. He manipulated the light; shifting his own position. Finally he snapped off the beam and came softly back. There was a rather grim smile on his face.

"Low visibility," he said. "Wait here." He was gone five minutes or more. When he returned his clothes and his bare hands were covered with snow. He carried a revolver with snow still clinging to it. "Boy," he grunted, "it's cold out there. Must be under zero."

I looked at him dumbly. "Out in the drift; under Doc's window," he explained. "Smell of it."

I sniffed cautiously at the muzzle. The smell of freshly-burned powder was very distinct.

The Imperfect Twins

CHAPTER IX

WE returned to our seats in the shadowy corner behind the stove. Claine said:

"What do you make of that? Is the Doctor man plain dumb or is he playing some game we can't fathom?"

"You think that's his gun?"

"Of course it's his gun; who else's could it be? The question is, why was he so desperate to get rid of it, all of a sudden? If that had been part of his plan he would have found a less dangerous way. Something must have happened after he fired the shot—on the way to his room. At a guess, I should say he met someone—probably Mr. Bakers—in the kitchen or on the stairs or in the corridor, upstairs. Someone who might connect him with the shooting.

"He probably worked himself into a panic. No doubt he expected Mr. Bakers to burst in on him with a *posse comitatus.* Silly, of course. But his nerves are pickled in gin. It wouldn't take much to start them jittering. He had to dispose of that incriminating gun, immediately. Presumably he couldn't get the window open so he smashed a pane with the butt. It's not easy to throw a revolver through a nine-by-seven hole and make it carry across a six-foot piazza. No wonder he cut his hand."

"Why did he come down?" I said. "He didn't act panicky."

"There may have been method in that," Claine rejoined. "Pain, a shock clears up panic, sometimes. He had a broken window and a cut hand to alibi. Excellent strategy to come right down and alibi them, on his own initiative. Perfectly bland about it, you see. Just a little accident; never had the remotest idea there was anything to conceal. Rather takes the wind out of our sails, in advance. Also, you know, he pins the accusation on us before we can pin it on him—hands us the defensive. His mind seems to be dumb and keen in streaks. Our problem will be to determine which is which."

"But why should he shoot the man?"

"It would look as though our plot was beginning to unfold, wouldn't it? Suppose we accept the main features of Mr. Bakers' story. Old Zave had three sons—'The Unfortunate,' Little Zave and Benjamin. 'The Unfortunate is heir under the will. That lets him out; no need for him to remove anybody. Little Zave was the alternative heir. Benjamin was disinherited but, presumably, the property would go to him if both his brothers should die without direct heirs. That gives him a strong motive for eliminating them. He has eliminated Little Zave. Now he will shoot 'The Unfortunate' and collect the inheritance. Delightfully simple. Too simple to require all this stage-setting.

"For another thing, where is 'The Unfortunate'? If he's here, he hasn't revealed himself. You four youngsters are definitely out—you're too young. That leaves Mr. Bakers, the Doctor, Conlord and me as possibilities. Mr. Bakers, I should say, is too old. More likely he is what he says he is—a cousin; a son of Old Zave's older brother. Furthermore, what earthly reason could 'The Unfortunate' have for attending this party? The letters hinted vaguely at matters of interest concerning the Tavern. But the Tavern is his, under the will. All he has to do is sit tight. Why should he come up here and let his unsympathetic relatives heckle him—or worse? And how come Cousin Daniel to be throwing a family party in 'The Unfortunate's' Tavern? And why were you four young people invited? You don't seem to fit into the picture Mr. Bakers painted—and that's the only picture we've got, so far. I suggest we leave our minds wide open, for the time being."

Well, positively, here I was in an atmosphere of wholesale murder, and taking it quite as a matter of course. I am, by instinct, timid and aloof. I abhor violence. The mere thought of such things turns me cold; makes me quite sick, really. And here I was, taking it as a matter of course. It was simply astounding. I don't know, even yet, whether my faculties had become numbed or whether I had subconsciously adjusted myself to the environment. After a time, Claine said:

"You know, Mr. Bakers is not wholly without motive. He told us, you remember, that his father felt Old Zave had tricked him out of the Tavern and the money. They might revert to him if the three brothers were eliminated. It strikes me the Doctor missed a bet, there. If he had kept his head and held his tongue, I think suspicion would have turned naturally to our loquacious cousin. He was the last to start upstairs. Theoretically, he was in the best position to fire the shot. I can think of only one person in a better position."

"Who."

"Who, indeed, but the young gentleman at whom Little Zave was in the act of hurling a knife when the lamentable event occurred?"

"You mean me?"

"But yes. Who are you—in this neck of the woods—that you should be above suspicion? Who is to corroborate the testimony of a desperate and terrified homicide that the shot came mysteriously from behind the window slide?"

I had not thought of that. We had always been part of the police machinery. Our position had been assured. I had not realized the difference in our status here. It turned me quite cold.

"And our Cousin Syd," he went on, quite cynically, "how do we know she hadn't ambushed herself to defend your guileless innocence? Believe it or not, the mother-heart of that lady is inclining in your direction. Certainly no one in the party has revealed anything remotely approximating her skill with lethal weapons."

"But, Cobb," I protested, "that's nonsense about Syd. She wouldn't hide in that pantry to protect me."

"Let your literal old heart be lifted up," he said. "Nobody is going to suspect your Syd. I don't believe anyone would even suspect you. I should hate the job of convincing a jury that you had committed homicide. What I'm getting at is that I am the only one in the house who couldn't have done it. But nobody knows that except you and me. Incidentally, I have a hunch Little Zave intended that knife for me, not you."

"Why?"

"Probably for the same reason that he outraged my *solar plexus* instead of yours—whatever that reason may have been. Well, he's dead; that's one problem off our minds, thanks to the Doctor."

"What are we going to do about him?" I asked. "He may be planning to shoot someone else."

"We might arrest him," Claine said, with deceptive seriousness. "Under the authority of my reputation—if any—as an amateur criminologist. Or he might arrest us on the ground that we were, as he intimated, in the most favorable position to commit the deed. Also we are, at the moment, in possession of the weapon with which it appears to have been committed."

"Well," I said, uncertainly, "I think we ought to watch him, or something."

Claine pondered that. "Might be a good idea. We'll consider it. I think he'll be safe enough for tonight—"

CHAPTER X

THAT night vigil was a nightmare. The wind increased in violence until it seemed impossible the Tavern could stand against it. In spite of double windows and the roaring stove, the air of the parlor grew steadily colder. On our journeys for wood, we found the dining room and the bar all but uninhabitable, the kitchen frigid, the woodshed arctic. Sometimes we made these journeys together; sometimes alone.

I wondered how those above stairs could endure to sleep in the intolerable dank cold of the ruined chambers. I learned, later, that they did not sleep. They endured the evils above lest they flee to worse below. We sat, for the most part, in silence. It must have been about two o'clock when Claine said:

"It occurs to me that Little Zave, in his present estate, adds practically nothing to the cheeriness of our refectory. Suggest we use him to start a mortuary in the woodshed."

It was a most unpleasant task. Claine covered him with a sheet from the cot the man had prepared for himself in the kitchen. The thermometer outside the window of the bar marked two below zero. The parlor, for a time, seemed warm and cozy. Presently the lamp began to burn low. We searched the woodshed for oil but found only a small can of it. There were traces of kerosene where a larger can had been.

"It would be enlightening to know just who took that oil out and hid it in the snow," Claine said. "Not reassuring, what? I shall guard my flashlight very carefully."

"I haven't got one," I said, unhappily.

"For their own sakes, I hope the others have," Claine rejoined.

To conserve oil we extinguished the other lamps, downstairs. There were lamps burning in the corridors above but we decided against going up. "Some of those folks might be over-quick on the trigger. Not worth the risk," Claine explained.

At the first sign of daylight we kindled a fire in the

kitchen and started water heating for coffee. We had just filled the drippers—or whatever you call them—when Syd and Frieda came down. Their faces were drawn and white. There were circles under their staring eyes. They were shivering and, positively, their teeth chattered. Claine burst out:

"Good Lord! You poor kids! Give them some coffee, Dink; quick!"

I offered a cup to Frieda. She could not hold it. Claine took it. He put his arm around her shoulders and sat down beside her on the edge of the cot. She leaned against him and sipped from the cup he held. I had a strong desire to do the same thing for Syd. But I couldn't, quite. I brought her a chair and knelt beside her, holding the cup. Her hair, after all, had turned out not to be golden. It was brown. But it was beautiful. It was wonderful. It was incredibly soft—sort of mousy. Once her head dropped against my shoulder, just for an instant. Her hair brushed my face. It was like being stroked with spun silk. My heart jumped and my blood pounded in my ears. But she straightened right up, again. Claine said:

"You children didn't undress and try to sleep between those damp sheets?"

He looked from one to the other until Syd nodded, sullenly. Claine wagged his head. His voice was gentle, paternal:

"I meant to warn you—but events were a bit thick. Dry stockings, you know, and sleeping boots—if you've got them. And all your clothes. Roll yourselves up in the blankets. And keep the windows open. Sleep warm, that way, in any temperature. We'll have the blankets downstairs and dry them out."

Syd was leaning against me, a little. I wished she would lean harder. I wished I dared put my arm around her. But it was quite wonderful, just as it was. The top of her head fascinated me. I had all I could do not to kiss it. It was tremendously disturbing. Then she broke the spell by rising, suddenly. Frieda lay in the crook of Claine's arm with her cheek against his shoulder. Her eyes were closed. She seemed to be asleep. But the wonderful thing was her face. All the strain and sadness, the bitter lines had been smoothed out of it. She looked peaceful, contented. She looked exactly like Syd.

"I'll take her," Syd said, quite snappishly. But, when Claine stirred, Frieda opened her eyes. She seemed dazed, puzzled. She watched Claine as he crossed the room. Then, as he turned helplessly to the stove, the corners of her mouth drooped again and the old expression returned to her face.

One by one, the others straggled down. The Doctor and Gladdy were plainly suffering from too much gin. The former was morose and silent. He made no attempt to explain his bandaged hand though it was attracting undesirable attention. Gladdy was plain ugly. His face, in its bloated slackness, was positively repulsive. Syd looked at him once and turned away. Dick's appearance suggested that he, also, had sought refuge in strong drink. He continued to maintain his unbroken silence.

SO FAR, no one had hinted at untoward events, the night before. There was not even mention of the absence of the cook. It made me feel creepy—this avoidance of the topic that must have been uppermost in everyone's mind. Mr. Bakers came last of all. His eyes, of course, were concealed by his dark glasses. But his face was ghastly—a pasty gray. The flesh on his jawbones sagged loosely under a film of gray beard-stubble. It was the face of a weary and a frightened old man. He could not endure the strain of the silence.

"What—what happened—uh—last night?" he faltered. Claine grinned; not pleasantly.

"Our *Cordon Bleu* departed this life with untoward abruptness," he said. "Someone shot him on the wing from behind the service slide—ah, no; do not weep for him. He was in the act of pitching a knife at Cousin Dink. Our grief must be for the cooking, not for the cook."

Mr. Bakers was washing his hands—the motion, now, seemed rather one of wringing them.

"I did not expect this," he muttered. "I did not expect this."

"What did you expect?" Claine's voice was elaborately suave.

"Eh—what—oh, you mean me? What was it I said?"

"You were saying you did not expect this."

"Oh—yes, yes." Mr. Bakers tried to smile. It was rather ghastly. "I must have been talking to myself. I sometimes do. I am an old man, you see—yes, yes; an old man. Who did you say shot him?"

"I didn't say. There may be conflict of opinion as to that. What would your guess be?"

"Mine? Oh, I have none—of course, I know nothing about it. I was in my room when I heard the—uh—when I heard a noise—"

"Oh," Claine said. "I see. I thought, perhaps, you might have been on the stairs—might have seen—"

"No, no," Mr. Bakers broke in, hurriedly. "I saw nothing—I saw nothing. I was in my room, I tell you. I saw nothing—absolutely nothing."

He glanced stealthily at the Doctor and drew an unsteady hand across his brow. Claine said:

"I see. Well, suppose we eat."

CHAPTER XI

BREAKFAST was a farce, of course—quite ghastly—everyone for himself and not much to eat. As I finished mine, such as it was, Syd beckoned from the door, and went out. It was so confidential—so sort of clandestine, like—it thrilled me. I followed her to the parlor. She put her hands on my arms, firmly; almost clutching them. She looked intently into my eyes. She said:

"Cousin Dink, if I can't trust you I can't trust anyone."

It struck me all aback—the suddenness of it—the wonder of it. I wanted to say something adequate; I could only stammer, "But—but of course you can trust me, Syd."

I patted her elbow softly; it was very near my hand. I did not dare move very much for fear I might dislodge her hands from my arms. It was quite wonderful to feel them there.

"I don't know what to do," she said. "It is so terrible—I'm afraid. What is it all about? What are they going to do?"

"What is who going to do, and what is what about?" I said to her. I suspect it sounded quite inane.

"I don't know, Dink; that's what makes me afraid. They know something—Mr. Claine and Mr. Bakers and the Doctor. The way they look at each other—the way they talk to each other. They all know something that the rest of us don't—perhaps you *do* know—do you, Dink?" She drew back. The confidence had gone from her eyes. "How close are you and Mr. Claine? How long have you known him? Why did that cook want to stab you?"

She was so like a frightened little girl—it was astonishingly easy to put my arm around her shoulders. I never expected to do that. She did not seem to resent it. I thought she relaxed a little and regained confidence in me. It was really inspiring, the revelation of girlishness behind that mask of sophisticated capability. It made me happy. I told her all about Claine. I explained that this was merely his way of getting at the facts. I told her Claine thought the knife had been meant for him, not for me.

"There, you see," she insisted, in a weary voice. "That cook was in it, too. He knew something—who shot him?"

"The Doctor." I thought it was better for her to know. "But don't tell anyone. I don't think Claine is ready to tell anyone, yet."

"I don't trust him, Dink. I don't know why, but I don't. I don't like the way he looks at Frieda. There's something wrong with her—she was like this when I came home, last Summer, but she won't tell me. There's never been anything before that she wouldn't tell me. She's been worse up here. And that Delchester! He looks at her. He hasn't said a word to anyone. Don't you know what it is, Dink?"

"I think, mostly, it's because you're tired and all upset by this—uh—thing. We're all like that, Syd. But I know Claine will get to the bottom of it. He's wonderful, Syd. Anyhow, there isn't any danger for you and Frieda—not the slightest."

I honestly think I comforted her. She actually snuggled against me, just for an instant. Then she drew away and pinched my arm and smiled.

"You're a thoroughly staunch fella, Cousin Dink," she said, "and a great comfort to little Syd." She was like her old self, again. "I only hope I shan't have to shoot that bald-headed Conlord ape."

"You needn't worry about him. Cobb and I are going to take turns watching, tonight."

"Oh, be careful, Dink!"

"There's no danger," I began; but the others came.

The snow was still falling, though not so heavily. The wind had broken up into gusts. "Blowing itself out,"

Claine assured us. "It ought to clear before night. If you go outside, be careful. You could easily come to grief in those drifted gullies. Cousin Dink and I are going to try for a nap. Call us if anything further—uh—transpires."

I had nudged him, but it was too late. I hurried to Syd. I whispered:

"Don't mind what he says. Nothing is going to happen—would you feel easier if I stayed down here?"

She comforted me and disconcerted me by laughing—a sort of half-laugh.

"You're so reassuring, Dink—'No danger; shall I stay and guard you?' Run along. Nothing can happen with the crowd around. I'd like to sleep, myself, but the bolt has been taken off our door——"

"Taken off!"

"Someone has taken it off quite recently, by the looks."

That was alarming. She needed sleep. I cudgelled my brains, quite helplessly. She caught me at it. She said:

"It can't be done, Dink. I won't have you sitting outside our door. You'd fall asleep, anyhow. We can't take you inside to nap with us; the bed's too narrow for three, and it would cause gossip in the family. Run along and get your sleep—you old folks need it."

It depressed me to have her say that. I'm only twenty-eight, really. I didn't think she should consider that old.

While our blankets were warming, downstairs, Claine and I explored the upper regions. As I have said, the back stairs came up along the side and across the end of the kitchen entry. The main upper corridor ran the entire length of the building, along the rear wall. All the bedrooms were on the left, or front side of it. At the head of the stairs was the door of Mr. Bakers' room, over the bar. Almost opposite, on our right, was the foot of the stairs to the third floor. Just beyond these the corridor of the L branched off. The door of our own room, next to Mr. Bakers, was almost opposite the L corridor.

Beyond our room was a branch corridor running to the front of the building. The front stairs came up into this. On the far side of it was the Doctor's room and, beyond that, the corner room which Delchester occupied. Both of these were over the parlor. They projected a little over the closed-off annex-room which lay behind the parlor.

There were four bedrooms on each side of the L corridor. On the right, or east, the first and third rooms were empty. Conlord occupied the second and the two girls the fourth, on the far corner. We found the four doors on the opposite side nailed shut. The heads of the nails had not had time to rust. Claine shrugged but said nothing.

We climbed to the third floor, a quite astonishing place. It was a wide-open, T-shaped room, extending the full length of the main building and of the L. The ceiling was vaulted but most of the plaster had fallen and lay in powder on the floor. A wooden bench ran along the walls and there was a strange, pulpit-like platform.

"The fiddlers' stand," Claine explained. "This was the ball-room, you know. All these old taverns had them. It accounts for the ancient fiddlers that bob up, every so often, to astonish the naïve gentlemen of the metropolitan press. A gay place in its day. Dance-floor enough for fifty speakeasies."

There were broad windows at the three ends. The sashes were gone and the wind swept through, eerie and biting. At the western end, snow lay deep on the floor—"helping to explain the failing health of the old shebang," as Claine expressed it.

"A hell of a place to spend a blizzard," I complained, as we clumped down stairs. I felt morose. I was worried about Syd. My weakness angered me, that I could not forego sleep. I am not tough like Claine. He could have foregone sleep, to stand guard, but he did not offer to. That, also, angered me.

"Syd will be all right," he said, answering my thoughts, as he often did. "No one will take liberties with that gun-hand of hers—except Gladdy when he's drunk. And he won't be drunk as long as the Doctor retains health and strength to guard the gin supply."

I think I was sound asleep five minutes after we tucked those warm blankets about our heads.

CHAPTER XII

IT WAS sundown when I awoke. Incredibly, I had slept the day through. Claine was gone. As I poked my head out of the blankets, the air from the open windows took hold of my throat like sharp fingers. The snow had ceased. The wind had fallen. Through a front window the sun was casting a last, backward glance before he plunged off the mountain.

Still clinging to the blankets, I wriggled into my boots and went to a window. It was beauty indescribable—the tall hemlocks in their capes of snow; the billowing drifts that glittered like diamond carpets where the sun touched them. For a moment I forgot cold, murder, Syd and all the other tangled elements of this confused melange.

The sun pitched out of sight. Swift gloom began to gather. I completed the complicated lacing of my boots and stepped into the corridor. As I passed the attic stairs, a slow, rhythmic, shuffling sound from above brought me up short. My silly heart began to race. It was uncanny. I could not identify it. It was like the rubbing of sandpaper, perhaps—long, dragging strokes and short dragging strokes, irregular yet seeming, somehow, to conform to a measured beat.

I had no idea where to find Claine. Yet, manifestly, the matter must be looked into at once. I thought of animals—but what? Heaven preserve my simple soul, I thought of one of our sinister guests preparing an infernal machine. Back and forth—round and round—slow, measured, nerve-tearing—s-s-shuf-f-f, s-s-shuff-f-f, s-s-shuf-f-f!

WELL, there was nothing to be done but do something about it. I took out my revolver. Dumbly I wondered how hard one had to pull the trigger to make the hammer work. I distrusted my ability to do it quickly enough. I tried to cock the thing. The hammer almost escaped my thumb. I managed to lower it safely but my forehead was moist and cold. I clubbed the miserable implement and tiptoed up the stairs, the sounds becoming more and more hideous. The loose stairtreads creaked. I tried to synchronize my steps with the noises above.

I was at the turn of the stairs when the shuffling abruptly ceased. Claine's voice said:

"We're making too much noise. Someone might come upstairs."

Light footsteps approached. I was terrified. If I moved, the creaking steps would betray me. But they stopped to lean upon the window-sill, looking out into the gathering dark. It was Claine and Frieda.

"Cobb," she said, with a sort of breathless ecstasy, "heaven must be like that."

"Don't be silly." Claine's voice was rasping. I knew that mood of his. But what were these two doing here, together, talking like that. It bewildered me. Also I was stricken with shame and fear at my eavesdropping. But I dared not stir foot on those eloquent stairs.

"Cobb"—her voice was miserable, pleading, now—"I can't—I can't—I'm mad about you. I'll go crazy."

"Now listen, my dear; we had our understanding at the start. There was to be nothing of this sort. We were to have our little adventure and go our ways. I thought you were strong enough, tough enough to live up to it. No matter how much I might care for you, I value my independence more. I do not propose to hang any woman around my neck."

"I don't ask you to marry me," she burst out, passionately. "I don't care whether you marry me or not. I want *you*—"

It was pitiful. I thrust my fingers into my ears. But I could not keep them there. That dumb-show of grief and passion was too ghastly—stripped of the words that belonged with it, it was too grimly ludicrous to be endured. I took my fingers out of my ears.

"Besides," Claine was saying. He spoke sternly, like an exasperated parent. "I am old enough to be your father. It is absurd to say you feel like that toward a man past fifty. You are dramatizing yourself. It is pure self-deception. It's neurotic. I wouldn't have believed you were such putty."

Frieda leaned on her elbows, staring out. I could see the movement of her shoulders, but she made no sound. Suddenly she straightened and seized Claine's arm. There was a tensity of restrained fury in her poise and in her husky voice.

"Dance!"

"Damn it, Frieda, they'll hear us."

She laughed. It was quite a horrid laugh.

"If you don't," she snarled, "I'll yell."

He took hold of her roughly and they began, again, that hideous, slow, measured shuff-shuff-shuff upon the plaster-powdered floor. I wanted to run, but the sight of them held me there. I could never have imagined anything like it. They seemed to have melted into one body. They did not really dance; they vibrated, with shuffling feet. In the

closing darkness they seemed, almost, to writhe. It was primordial. It was—it was orgiastic. It was horrible. It was fascinating. Suddenly I recalled that Claine had said of Frieda, "all flesh and emotions." He bent over her and pressed his mouth to hers. I rushed blindly down the stairs —and on down to the floor below.

CHAPTER XIII

I FOUND the cheery house-party as widely distributed as the accommodations would permit. I gathered there had been controversy over the fetching of fuel from the woodshed. It grew out of the discovery of Little Zave's tenancy. Mr. Bakers had pleaded his age—with justice, I thought. He was, indubitably, an old and a sick man. The Doctor seemed to have no qualms aside from an invincible aversion to physical effort. As a measure of self-preservation he was keeping the home fire alight in the parlor. Dick was obeying similar impulses in the dining room.

Gladdy was quite plainly affected by the ghostly presence in the shed. He huddled by the stove in the bar. Almost on my heels, Syd entered, staggering under an armful of chunks. I did not like the way Gladdy looked at her and moistened his lips. I did not like to see him loafing while she worked. I was in a thoroughly vicious frame of mind. I went out and set a lamp in a sheltered corner of the woodshed. I came back and told him to start fetching wood and keep fetching wood until the three stoves were supplied for the night. He said, "Go to hell!"

It gave me a feeling of deep gratification. I walked over to him and took hold of the slack of his waistcoat and pulled. He came out of his chair with such ease that I felt silly. I was amazed to discover how weak he was. It had never occurred to me there might be men in the world to whom I could do such things. First I stared him down. Then I pushed him to the wall and beat him against it. I had seen Claine do that with satisfactory results. I said:

"You fetch wood until I tell you to stop. You don't eat until it's done."

He began immediately. It was astonishing how it had relaxed the tensity of my feelings. Syd approached me. She was smiling in a disquieting way. I felt she was about to make fun of me. She took hold of my chin. She said, "Let me see them!"

"See what?" I said.

"Those hypnotic eyes. Man, you must be very careful how you use that power."

I asked her, "What power?" I was afraid she was spoofing me.

"The power to bend strong men to your will. It's a terrible responsibility."

I knew then that she really was spoofing me. I said, "Oh, he's terribly weak, really."

"He's no Samson," she said, "but I've seen weaker men. —Have you seen Frieda?"

I said, "No; isn't she in her room?" It made me feel queer, inside, every time I thought of that dance. Syd shook her head. I must have been improving; apparently my face did not tell her I was lying. She no longer smiled. Her face was worried, harassed. She said:

"Where is Mr. Claine?"

"I don't know." That was technically true. "Perhaps he's outdoors. He's rather fiendish on fresh air."

Almost immediately he came down the stairs and went out. Apparently he tramped up and down in the path which the wind had swept along the house. Once he stopped to read the thermometer by the light of his electric torch. I crossed to the window. The mercury stood at 28 below zero. Claine was muffled to the eyes in the collar of his fur coat. I beckoned to him, but he shook his head. I felt more than a bit relieved. I was not yet clear in my mind what to say to him or what to leave unsaid. I knew I could not face him naturally without saying something.

He did not come in until we were picking up our dismal evening meal, in the kitchen. He ate a little, made some commonplace remarks and went upstairs. Syd carried eggs, toast and tea up to Frieda. She returned in time to compel us all to wash our dishes. She made even the Doctor wash his. Then she went upstairs again.

Mostly I had the bar to myself. I sat with my back to the inner wall, behind the stove, and wished I knew more about the habits of a revolver. I had the thought of asking Syd to instruct me, but it seemed likely to provoke invidious comment. I missed Claine's strength. The violence of my feelings had worn off, somewhat. But I still dreaded the meeting with him. I had decided not to say anything.

About nine o'clock, it must have been, I was standing at an east window. I had scraped the crusted frost from the pane. I was watching a great, orange moon climb the spruce trees. Absorbed in the wonder of it I had lost thought of perils behind my back. I sprang around as a door-latch clicked. It was Syd. She came and stood beside me, looking out. Our faces were quite close together. She slipped her arm beneath mine and pressed it, lightly. I could feel her swift breathing. She said:

"I wish I could walk straight out there to it."

I said, "So do I."

Presently, without speaking or looking at me, she marched out of the room.

I was still at the window when Claine came down. I think all the others had gone upstairs. He stood beside me. He, too, put his hand through my arm. There was something affectionate, protective in his touch that always softened me and drew me to him. Tonight, there was something more; something of appeal as though he needed strength and help from me. Still, I did not dare try to meet his eyes or speak to him.

The gentle closing of the outside door made us both jump. We peered out through the window. "Syd, by the helmet of her," Claine said. In the glory of the moonlight there could be no mistaking that helmet. She crossed the windswept path and plunged into the drifted snow. It was above her waist, already; deeper ahead. "That snow's light as feathers," Claine commented.

She was fighting her way through the drifts, straight east, toward the moon. I recalled what she had said about it and I was uneasy. She fought onward, step by step. She seemed, almost, to be swimming—leaning forward, swinging her arms. The snow was at her shoulders but she gave no sign of stopping. I said:

"Do you suppose she could get lost, out there?"

"If she goes far enough," Claine replied, absently. "Out yonder it's drifted over the tops of the cars. Syd—it doesn't make sense. If it were Frieda, now—she's in a state of mind."

He was stirring, uneasily, and biting his lower lip. It always alarmed me when Claine showed signs of doubt. I said:

"Perhaps I ought to go after her."

"A good idea." He seemed relieved. "She wouldn't welcome me, I'm afraid. Bundle yourself up. It's cold beyond anything dreamed of in your steam-heated philosophy." As I buckled the helmet strap under my chin, he said, quizzically: "Your Syd has walked into a swale or something. She's in over her head. I think that black spot is the top of it. Lay your course by it, anyhow. Want me to go with you?"

"Oh no," I said, a bit too briskly, perhaps.

"Stout fella. Go on then!"

As soon as I stepped through the side door I knew that Claine had not exaggerated the state of the atmosphere. I opened my mouth to call Syd's name. The cold laid hold of my throat and I could not make a sound. I pressed my hand over my mouth and nose. Otherwise I could not have breathed. From the doorstone I could see the black spot which, Claine had suggested, might be the top of Syd's head. I started toward it.

THE path she had broken was of very little help. The snow was, presently, almost to my shoulders. I am not much taller than Syd and my wind is not very good for outdoor effort. I found myself panting heavily into the mitten I held against my face. My breath poured forth like steam. It flooded into my eyes. It began to fog my glasses. Presently I could not see a thing.

I tried to rub the fog from the lenses but it was frozen upon them. They were completely opaque. I was, for all useful purposes, blind. My helmet bound my glasses on; I could not remove them.

I attempted to proceed by dead reckoning but quickly found myself off the path. I called Syd's name through the mitten. She did not answer. I filled my lungs and, removing the mitten, for an instant, from my mouth, called her name twice. She answered, in a muffled voice, "Who is it?"

"It's Dink," I told her. "My glasses are fogged; I can't see."

"Stand still; you're headed for the spring."

I could hear her slow, swishing progress through the snow. Presently her hand touched me. I could see nothing except the front of my coat and a bit of snow, beneath my glasses. She began to guide me toward the Tavern. We had covered, perhaps, half the distance when she stopped. We were both panting. The snow still was shoulder-high.

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Tilting my head back I managed a vague glimpse of her chin and mouth from under my glasses. I don't know what possessed me. It was not in the least like me. Possibly events had been working a change in me—or it may have been the moon. It was done entirely without premeditation, almost without consciousness. I put my arms around her and drew her to me and kissed her mouth.

At first she tried to draw away. Then she relaxed. Her mouth was warm and soft and wonderful. Of course, I had never done this before. I had no experience by which to measure my sensations. It was thrilling and wonderful, to be sure, but it was not at all what I should have expected it to be. I was stirred and my flesh did creep, a little, but it was hardly worth mentioning. I have to confess that I was disappointed.

Suddenly she drew away with a sharp little, "Oh!" It sounded like repugnance and I did not like it. I tried to draw her back to me. She held me off with her hands.

From the doorstone of the Tavern came a reddish flash and the report of a pistol-shot. A hot, stinging pain seared across my chin. I pressed my hand to it. The Tavern door slammed. Syd gasped—a strangled sound. I heard her go swishing off through the snow. The door slammed again. I was alone in the snow and the bitter cold—blind, bewildered, helpless—and wondering just what had happened to my smarting chin.

CHAPTER XIV

MY mind, I think, has never been more active, or more muddled, than in those few seconds when I stood there, up to my neck in snow, blind from the ice on my glasses, shaken and angry from the smarting bullet-crease across my chin. The wound, of course, was nothing. But who had fired the shot? Why had it been fired at me? Bitterest of all, why had Syd run away and left me helpless there? It was not like her.

The door-latch clashed. Claine's voice called: "Dink! What's the matter?" It sounded choked, excited; not at all his usual imperturbable manner. I raised the mitten from my mouth. "I can't see anything," I said. I'm afraid I spoke petulantly. I was thoroughly put out. Claine's hobnails screeched on the doorstone. Then he was beside me, with his arm around my shoulders. He was panting.

"Are you hurt? Where?"

"It's the damn ice on my glasses," I told him.

He said, "Oh!" in a tone of great relief. He put his arm around my waist and half-carried me into the bar.

"Unbuckle this damn helmet," I said. I got those glasses off, finally, and thawed them out and put them on, again. I said:

"Now, who in hell was shooting at me?"

I saw, now, that he had run out, bareheaded, without coat or gloves. His hands were blue from cold. But I had no mind to think of him. He said:

"Your language, son, is getting rather terrible. You must try to fight it. Now, any time your mind begins to function again, I'd value a little information—the quicker, the better. Where did that shot come from? I was in the parlor; I wish I'd stayed here."

"It came from the door," I said. "That general direction. I couldn't see."

"Where did he go?"

"Inside, I suppose—the door slammed."

"Was Syd with you?"

"Yes." There must have been something about the way I said it.

"Ah-h," Claine drawled. "And what did she do?"

"She ran into the house—she left me there."

"So that's what's griping you!"

"It is not—it's the whole damn thing. Do you think it's any damn fun to stand out there, blind, and get shot at?"

"No-o-o," Claine said, judicially, "on the whole, possibly not. But hardly sufficient, in itself, to account for all the damns and such. Women, yes; but bullets, no, no, no! By the way, has it occurred to you that Syd may have been pursuing the assassin?"

I hadn't thought of that. It thrilled me. Then it frightened me. I jumped up and started for the door. Claine pulled me back. He said:

"If she caught him it's just his bad luck. Don't waste worry on that young lady. She's rather more than a match for anyone around the place—including you. But, Dink," his manner turned serious, "this thing doesn't fit into the picture—not anywhere. Tell me exactly what happened."

I told him part of it.

"How were you and Syd standing—close together?"

"About arm's-length apart. She had her hands against my chest."

"Ah, I see. Repulsing your advances. Now, son, no dignified reticences—come clean. Had you, by any chance, keen kissing her—or otherwise paying her marked attentions?"

"Certainly not," I snapped.

"Spoken like a gentleman. Now, tell me the truth. You see, it is important that we find out who is flipping bullets at you. There is no apparent reason why the Red Bakerses should be shooting at the White ones. If the Palefaces are sniping each other it seems desirable to find out who and why before the marksmanship improves. God forbid that I should pry into the tender secrets of your soul but —you were kissing Syd just before the shot was fired—I'm not asking you; I'm telling you."

I glared at him. There were times when he was insufferable. He quite ignored my evident feelings.

"Anyone coming out the door might have seen you in the clinch and fired just as you broke? I mean, you might have stepped out of range just as he fired—the timing of events would permit that?"

"I suppose so." No doubt I did growl at him. The whole affair was dust and ashes in my mouth. The disappointment of that kiss; the shock of the shooting; Syd's desertion, and, now, Claine's vulgar way of tearing it all to pieces as though it were something commonplace—something that might be happening to anybody, any day! I cannot describe the feeling of terrible emptiness, of disillusion, of weary goneness. One moment, there was Syd, a vibrant glory in my life, making me thrill and tingle at the very thought of her. I had kissed her—and, suddenly, it all had crashed. I wanted to walk right out of the filthy Tavern and keep on walking and never see anyone or speak to anyone, again. Life seemed frightfully useless. I discovered that Claine was shaking me.

"Listen to me, will you! For heaven's sake where have you been? Listen, now—nobody else has shown marked interest in the Syd person, except our merry playboy, Conlord. It isn't clear that his prepossession has yet developed homicidal tendencies. But, also, you applied a mean elbow to his Adam's apple, last night. That, though you may not know it, is a rather unforgettable experience—for a day or two."

I got up to feed the fire. The pile of chunks reminded me of something. I said, with a sort of glum satisfaction, "I gave him something besides his Adam's apple to think about."

Claine straightened up. "A little more detail, please."

"I made him lug in wood for the night."

"Ah-h, I caught him at it. It struck me, at the time, as a bit out of character. Just what means did you employ in the working of this serviceable miracle?"

"I banged his damn head on the wall."

"Another 'damn'!" Claine said. "But what an extraordinary rambunctious fella! What a veritable rough guy! I quite approve. But still, Dink, it doesn't jell—it simply doesn't jell. This Conlord jellyfish isn't shooting anybody unless he's lit up with bootleg fortitude. Nobody else around here would shoot you for kissing your own girl.

"WAIT—a—minute," he said, in a different tone. I disliked the expression of his face. Whenever he looked at me, that way, I knew he was going to say something low. He went on: "I've had a happy thought. Let's shoot at it and see what happens. You gave me the impression it was the lady who terminated the kiss. Was it your notion that she did it merely because she was out of breath or because she found it actively distasteful?"

I got up and started toward the door. Claine said, "Come back here and sit down."

"I'm sick and tired of your vulgarity," I told him.

"Vulgarity?" he retorted. "That? Man, you ain't seen anything. Some day I'll show you. Now, come out of the clouds and answer my questions. They are not wholly inane. When you kissed the lady, did she respond—did she kiss you?"

"How could I kiss her without her kissing me, you poor fool?" I said. I was thoroughly disgusted. That sort of thing, of course, is not discussed.

"Durable simpleton, have you ever kissed a woman, before?"

"Certainly not."

"Venus An-a-dy-om-en-e! Lamp this guy! And he claims to be twenty-eight years of age. Now, son, this may hurt a little but I'll be as gentle as I can. While you

were kissing the lady was your whole being flooded with ecstasy—what I mean, did you thrill and quiver in every fibre? Did the blood rush to your head? Did you feel dizzy, blind, deaf? Did you seem to be floating away from solid earth? Did every other thought vanish—"

"No!!" I snapped. I think I actually barked at him. It was disgusting.

"Ah-h," he said, in a tone of great satisfaction. "It left you entirely cold?"

"No-o-o," I confessed. If he was really asking these revolting questions in good faith, I would try to be honest with him. "It did make my flesh creep, a little."

"It did *what?*"

"Made my flesh creep—but only a little."

He was silent such a long time that I looked up at him. He was pinching his nose between thumb and forefinger and pressing his hand over his mouth. His face was quite red. He seemed to be struggling against an impulse to sneeze. Presently he sneezed, or snorted, quite violently. He cleared his throat.

"Pardon me," he said. "I hope I'm not catching cold. You say it did—uh—make your flesh creep a little. That is not the phrase ordinarily employed to describe this particular sensation, but I think I catch your meaning. However, it would not appear to have significance in this case. A slight creeping of the flesh is not infrequently observed even when the deeper motions are not involved. But the probabilities are that when the Syd person makes up her mind to really kiss you, you won't come out of the ether in any such neutral frame of mind as seems to possess you at present. I mean to say, you'll quite definitely know that you've been kissed."

I rose out of my chair. There must have been something in my face for Claine rose from his and laid strong hands on me.

"Steady, all," he said. "What we're getting at is that the lady you kissed was probably not Syd but Frieda."

That steadied me, indeed. It was like a bucket of cold water. Kissing Frieda when I thought I was kissing Syd! It was inconceivable. It was, likewise, embarrassing, if true. But, of course, it couldn't be true.

"That's nonsense," I declared. "Frieda wears a scarlet toque-thing."

"But it didn't grow on her," Claine pointed out. "She may, conceivably, have borrowed her sister's helmet. Such things are known to have been done. And, if she did, it changes the face of things considerably."

CHAPTER XV

AS though Claine's words had been a stage cue, the doorlatch clicked—to the day I die I shall hear the sinister click and clatter of those ancient doorlatches, in my dreams. Syd marched in. Her face was grim. She marched straight up to me. She ignored Claine utterly; I am not sure she realized he was there.

"Why did you kiss Frieda?"

I think the shock of that must have driven Claine's latest words completely out of my mind. I said:

"I didn't kiss Frieda."

"Don't lie to me," she said. Her cheeks were red but her voice was quite level. "Oh, I didn't think you were that kind."

Then she slapped my face. Really she is quite frightfully strong. For a moment, my eyes were full of flashing lights. My ears roared. I was quite dizzy. I think I even staggered a little. When I was able to see her clearly again, she was marching toward the door. I hurried after her. I seized her by the shoulders and shook her until her hair flew wild. She wears it rather short. I have always preferred hair that way. Even in the faint lamplight there were, after all, flecks of gold in it when it stirred. I had never known that brown hair could have gold in it. I was glad because, from the very start, my heart had been quite set on flecks of gold in Syd's hair.

Suddenly I realized that, after all, I had kissed Freida. It made me feel rather silly. Still, it was no excuse for Syd to slap me, that way. It is disconcerting to be slapped by a woman, especially when it hurts like that. I shook her again.

"I thought it was you," I said. "You ought to know——"

"Let go of me!" she said. She seemed out of breath. She twisted her shoulders and I let her go. "Don't you know the difference between Freida and me?"

"I couldn't see a thing," I told her. "My glasses were covered with ice.

She stared at me as though I had said something queer. Then she laughed. It was a short, unpleasant laugh. She said, "He can't tell the difference without seeing!" She laughed again and walked out of the room. She slammed the door hard. I started to follow her. Claine said:

"Hey!" I turned. He seemed to be preparing to sneeze, again, but he mastered it. "Where are you going?" he demanded.

"None of your damn business," I said.

"Technically correct," he admitted. "Still, I should not be doing my full duty as a friend if I did not advise you that your best bet is to sit tight. When a lad's best girl slaps him for kissing her sister, his strategic position is practically impregnable. If you move out of it to pursue her she'll ambush you in the defiles and cut yor to pieces."

"But she didn't even ask me if I was hurt." It had only that moment occurred to me. I was quite unconscious that I spoke aloud, until Claine answered:

"She'll be back to rectify that, as soon as she thinks of it.—Now if Gladdy was trying to avenge his firewood fatigue or his Adam's-apple we can determine the fact by the condition of his gun. He apparently couldn't have been doing it on Syd's account—unless the headgear deceived him, also. Can you think of any one who might be roused to murder by the sight of you kissing Frieda in a snowdrift?"

IT was as though a light flashed suddenly in my mind. Out of nothing leaped a picture of that ugly, fascinating, pitiful scene in the ruined ballroom. It was on the tip of my tongue to say, "No one but you." I did not say it. I was not ready, yet, to talk that out with him. Straightway I knew that I was afraid to say it. If he had fired that shot at me he would not hesitate to fire a surer one now.

I stared at him, fascinated. His eyes seemed to bore into mine with unfamiliar, daunting tensity. He was not the brutal, cynical yet always dependable friend. I recognized him as the materialization of a shadowy, sinister Claine who must always have been hovering in the background of our friendship. I was confused and afraid. Then he smiled—his bantering affectionate smile. I seemed to hear, again, the note that had been in his voice when he called to me over the body of Little Zave and out there in the snow.

"Calm your fears, old son," he said. "Nobody is going to shoot our Dink as long as Cousin Cobb can prevent it."

I smiled weakly and felt a fool. There had been nothing in his attitude toward Frieda to indicate that he would shoot anyone on her account. More likely to want to shoot her—shoot her? My chest grew tight again. What assurance was there that he had not known the girl out there was Frieda. Then why had he sent me out? To get me out of his way, of course—I could not make myself believe it. Furthermore, if Cobb had aimed at Frieda he would not have grooved my chin. That was not his manner of shooting. And still again——

"Cobb," I said, as casually as I could manage, "you haven't fired your gun, have you?"

He studied me with a quizzical expression. "Our Watson is beginning to cerebrate as Holmes." He produced his revolver and offered it to me, butt first. I felt ashamed. I shook my head and tried to smile. He grinned.

"Still pure and undefiled," he said. "I shall find a simpler way of bumping you off, when I get around to it. And if I ever draw a bead on Frieda, I shall hope to miss her by something less than two feet. But your subtle ratiocination suggests an interesting possibility. Suppose Frieda really was the intended target. Who, that you can think of, might be driven to murder-frenzy by the sight of Dink Randall in the arms of Frieda Twin?"

"Dammit, Cobb," I burst out, "you're always insinuating nasty things about Syd."

"And it always elicits coarse language from you. I am merely interested, as a student of crime, in pointing out that Syd possessed a possible motive, a probable opportunity and the indubitable nerve to shoot your apparent inamorata of the moment. She had been shooting up the place, high, wide and handsome, ever since she got here so, of course, the condition of her six-gun signifies nothing. It is comfortably certain, however, that if she had seriously set herself to eliminate Frieda, Frieda would have been eliminated. If she was merely trying to throw a salutary scare into you she wouldn't have felt it necessary to draw practical blood from your chin.

"All of which suggests that the silent and mysterious Mr. Dick Delchester is the only member of the menage

on whom we have no dope, either pro or con. I should like to take a look at that young man's gun."

The click of that accursed latch made me jump again. It was only Syd. I said, peevishly, "I wish you wouldn't go tiptoeing around, that way."

She looked at me quite haughtily and ignored what I had said. "Frieda thinks that bullet may have struck you. I came down to see."

"So thoughtful of you," I said. "It is a mere trifle."

"I felt sure it had not disabled you. I am glad." She stalked out of the room. Once more I rose to follow her.

"Sit tight," Claine whispered. "Everything is lovely. Isn't the old flesh beginning to creep satisfactorily, again?"

That reminded me, quite suddenly. Claine had talked so much I hadn't had a chance to really collect my wits. But now I realized it hadn't been Syd I kissed, after all. No wonder it disappointed me! And, when I shook her, it thrilled me all over. I had wanted to keep right on shaking her. I felt sure of happiness that almost choked me. Then I remembered that it was too late, now. That instant I determined that if Claine said one more objectionable word to me about that woman I would strike him in the *solar plexus* and abide by the outcome.

CHAPTER XVI

I SAID to Claine, "I'm going to put a chair at the top of those front stairs, where I can watch the Doctor's door."

We had moved into the parlor. He groaned. "Boy, it's perishing cold up there. Suppose we sit right here by the stove. We can hear every move he makes."

"We can't hear Conlord," I said. "Those girls ought not to be up there, anyhow. They'll get pneumonia. I don't see how they stand it—any of them."

"Folks can stand a lot when they're scared," Claine responded, grimly. "The animal instinct is to crawl into a hole. Much safer, really, if we all sat down here together and watched each other's hands—a jolly old watch-party, what?—by and large, you know, quite a few people have slept in those bedrooms in a hundred and twenty-five winters and, probably, some of them escaped pneumonia.

"Mr. Bakers, now, he's living the life of an orchid with that big chimney. Doc's got a chimney. Dick enjoys the hot blood of youth, and a grouch. They've all got warm rooms under them. The front of the house is warm enough, now the wind has dropped. Gladdy has the kitchen stovepipe and the kitchen is under him. The girls have got the short end of it—but they asked for it. Over that open woodshed! The floor—you could build a hockey rink on it. I'll bet they're wearing silk scanties—or did someone tell me the girls were going in for Volstead-Act wool, this Winter? Well, the women are gluttons for punishment."

It made me shiver. I said, "I'm going up and make them come down here."

"Oh, you are? An interesting experiment. Let me know the results."

I tramped up the stairs and down the L. I made as much noise as possible but I had to batter at the door for some time before Syd answered. Actually, her voice sounded drowsy. It made my heart beat fast—or that may have been the stairs. Of course, I should have known it is fright that makes the flesh creep. Silly of me to say that. Still, positively, Syd did make me feel just that way—up and down my backbone.

"Go away from that door!" Syd's voice may have been drowsy, but it meant what it said.

"Syd, we want you and Frieda to come down stairs"—

"Oh, it's you. What is the idea, a party? I give you credit, you're better than Baldy Conlord. He wanted to throw his up here."

"Now, Syd, listen; honest, you'll get pneumonia. We'll fix two cots in the parlor; you can sleep there. It's too cold, up here. Honest, it isn't safe."

I was tremendously in earnest. Syd's voice sounded a little different but you couldn't call it really enthusiastic.

"Thanks a lot, Dink. It's really thoughtful of you. But, you know, safety is nothing but a state of mind. There are times when the old pneumonia looks right friendly, by comparison. Truly, we're no end acclimated and cozy up here—you'd be surprised. Toddle on, now, like a good lad—you woke us out of a sound sleep. And don't come banging at that door again. You startled me. I'm that nervous and jumpy I might do something I'd regret all my life. Go on back where it's warm and safe and you won't catch pneumonia."

Well, actually, there didn't seem to be anything else to do. Sound asleep! Startled! I said to Claine, "You'd think she'd been living like this all her life." I was thoroughly irritated.

"It's an outrage," Claine agreed. "Women are born illogical, like that, Dink. Two protective male instincts going to waste beside a warm stove and those fool women sleeping their dashed heads off in a refrigerator. If they had any sense, at all, they'd be down here with their heads on our manly bosoms. Make the long night watches shorter, what?"

"Shut up," I said. I always wanted to hit him when he talked that way about Syd.

"Sh-h-h; you'll wake the Doctor. That classroom voice! I'll bring the mattress from the kitchen. We'll stand watch-and-watch, if you insist. You do the first trick and I'll spell you in the dark hours before the dawn."

"If I were you," I said, as cuttingly as I knew how, "I'd stay awake and apply my master-mind to the solution of this affair. You're not making your usual progress, you know." My irony rather broke down. "You don't act as though you really cared."

"Talk low," he warned. "Why not give my tottering intellect a boost? You have watched the master-mind at work—you must have picked up some useful ideas about criminal investigation. Apply them. What would you suggest as a starter?"

"Well," I said. It wasn't so easy, after all. "I—I'd disarm them."

"Disarm whom?"

"Well—the Doctor."

"But, to the best of our knowledge and belief, he is disarmed. I'm supposed to have his gun in my pocket."

I confess I had forgotten that, for the moment. I didn't like all this. I have no instinct for such matters. Claine was having me on—but I wouldn't give him the satisfaction.

"Well, disarm the others, then."

"Including you and me?"

"Of course not." That was palpably absurd.

"Including Syd?"

"Most certainly not. She needs her revolver."

"Quite. And so do you and I. And the others, poor fools, probably cherish a delusion that they need theirs—to carry out fell purposes of their own or protect themselves against the purposes of others. They may, even, be toying with the absurd idea of disarming us. We might start something we couldn't finish—and leave the girls to fight it out alone with Gladdy and the Doctor and that strong, silent Delchester boy."

HONESTLY, it made my blood run cold. I never knew what that expression really meant, before. I had not thought of that possibility. And I had forgotten that Claine had some sort of interest in Frieda. I wouldn't have believed anything could drive that disturbing thing out of my mind—but things always were. Claine went on:

"You see, Dink, our position, here, is different. We have no standing. We are suspect with the rest—fair enough. It would be different if a thousand dicks had been combing the U. S. A. for dope on Cousin Daniel, and the Doctor and Gladdy and Mr. Bakers—not to risk a punch in the eye by suggesting that they might be cynical on the subject of Cousin Syd's coyness about her legal monicker.

"We should have this Abode of Woe all lit up with detectives and flatfeet. We should know whose fingerprints are on that gun I dug out of the snow. We should know whether the bullet in Little Zave's carcass was fired from it. In a word, we should have that elementary affair all washed up and ready for the jury. We might even have unearthed its background. You probably wouldn't have been shot at. Certainly there would be little danger of further trouble—unless there is someone lurking about that we haven't seen."

"You think there is?" I was rather explosive, I fear. New things were all the while popping up.

"Pianissimo, Dink! The Doctor may have an ear to that stovepipe. —It is possible, of course. Cousin Daniel, for instance. He might have a hideout."

"In the walls?"

"In the walls! Dink, what have you been reading, lately? There are no secret stairways in the walls of Vermont farm houses of the Jeffersonian period—except for mice and squirrels. Sometimes there are blind closets and cellar-holes. But one doesn't lie doggo in closets and cellar-holes with the temperature at thirty below.

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"It seems highly unlikely—unless he has a warm lair off the premises and comes in to his work. He could have done Little Zave in and got away without trace; it was snowing, then. But if he shot at you, tonight, his tracks are still out there. The Zave affair is, clearly enough, the Doctor's work. If an outsider fired at you why did he come and pose on the doorstone to do it? Why did he dodge into the house? He ran an excellent chance of meeting some of us. Unless, to be sure, he is hiding inside—and that brings us back where we started."

I never knew Claine's equal for suggesting unpleasant possibilities. His stock seemed practically inexhaustible. I had more or less adjusted myself to my environment. I had established relations with its potential perils. They had become orthodox routine. I knew everyone in the house to speak to. And here was Claine, interpolating a perfect stranger—not a material being who would rustle eggs and coffee with me in the kitchen, but a nameless, formless, incorporeal presence that would lurk—exactly the sort of thing to keep cold chills running up and down a chap's back when he didn't have it against a wall. I found myself somewhat less keen for my vigil over the tangible Doctor.

"We-ell," I said, "I suppose if it's got to be done, it's got to be done. Suppose we could get one of these easy chairs up there?"

"We-ell," Claine mimicked, "I haven't heard anyone say it's got to be done, except yourself. But if it's a restful nap you're planning, why not stretch out and take one in the orthodox manner, down here. If your idea is to stay awake and watch the Doctor I suggest two dining room chairs of the hardest."

"Why two chairs?'

"One to sit on and one for your feet. Something tells me, my bold lad, that you haven't reckoned all the costs of this jocund adventure. Have you, by any chance, measured the wind-velocity on those stairs?"

"I can stand it," I assured him.

"Dauntless fella! Up and at 'em!"

CHAPTER XVII

WE set the chairs at the head of the stairway, close to the junction of the front and main corridors, with my back tight against the wall. I could see down the main corridor almost to the Doctor's door. At the same time, I could keep an ear cocked around the corner, at my right shoulder, for sounds from the L. Claine wrapped a blanket around my shoulders and another around my legs. He bent over and whispered:

"While you are using your eyes and ears, don't forget to keep the old sixth sense tuned up for movements of the Mysterious Unknown. No telling what medium he may employ to signal his approach. Make the old flesh creep, does it?"

I knew, instantly, that he was spoofing me. But it did make my flesh creep, a little. Really, when I came to think of it, it was very much the same sensation but the effect of it was, of course, entirely different. I did wish he hadn't brought up the subject of that lurking possibility. I was very close to the corner; quite defenselessly close, in fact. I couldn't see around it, into the main corridor behind my shoulder, at all. It was quite unpleasant. Claine suddenly became serious:

"Look sharp, now. If you feel the least bit sleepy, call me. You're all right as long as you keep awake. But this is a right poor place for a nap. It's midnight—Sunday morning. Let's hope our Doctor will remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Wake me up at two o'clock; two hours is plenty in this draught. And don't forget you can't pull a trigger with that mitten on."

I heard him bring Zave's mattress from the kitchen. There were sounds of movement as he prepared his cot in the parlor. Then silence, except for the groaning and snapping of timbers in the cold. The moon did not strike the corridor windows directly but there was dim visibility from its diffused light. I took off my right mitten, clutched the revolver and wrapped a corner of blanket around my gun-hand.

Quite promptly I discovered what Claine had meant by the wind-velocity on those stairs. Outdoors it was calm, but a draught, sweeping up from the weathered front door on its way to the yawning windows of the ballroom, whirled past me like a gale from the regions of eternal ice. It numbed my face. It cut through blanket, fur and wool to the marrow of my bones. I drew the blanket over my head, holding a corner across my face, with only the eyes exposed.

It did not work too well. The edges, impinging on the frontiers of vision, set obnoxious shadows dodging about in the dim light. Also, it dulled my hearing. I dropped the blanket to my shoulders, again, and gathered it about my chin.

I was disturbingly conscious of that vast expanse of no-man's land which lay behind my right shoulder, just around the corner—the closed rooms of the L, the unfastened side door, the wide-open woodshed, that eerie sinister ballroom above, the secret closets and the cellar-holes, Mr. Bakers, Gladdy, the Mysterious Unknown—At each explosion of a frost-drawn nail, my heart cut off the rhythm of my breath and my tingling legs went tense.

DOWN the corridor in front of me, a latch clicked softly. I threw back the blanket to free my shooting arm. Utter silence. I bent forward and freed my legs from the encumbering blanket. Very cautiously I lowered my feet to the floor. An hour passed—or it may have been a second. I thought I heard a faint, rasping sound, as of a slowly-turning hinge. A shadow appeared upon the floor and wall. A board creaked. The dim figure of a man came into sight, advancing cautiously on tiptoe, testing each step. I stood up, suddenly, and presented the gun. I said:

"Stick 'em up!" I had always understood that this was the proper formula to be employed in such circumstances. But I wondered, rather dumbly, what I should do if he did not stick them up. I decided that I would shoot. The thought aroused absolutely no repugnance.

The man stopped, with a subdued grunting sound and raised his hands above his head. For a long moment we faced each other—two vague shadows. I could not think of anything to say.

"Oh," said the Doctor's voice, scarcely above a whisper, "it's you, Randall. I thought I heard noises out here," I found the slow, purring drawl most unpleasant. "Taking the fresh air, eh? Be careful you don't catch your death—a dangerous place to be sitting."

I did not answer. I was still too startled and excited to rally my wits for speech. The Doctor turned and reversed his stealthy progress—a creaking board, the turning of a hinge, the soft click of a latch, and silence again. I drew breath deeply; it fluttered a little as I exhaled. My forehead was wet. I rubbed it with the tips of my fingers. Manifestly, midnight sentry-go was not the most congenial role in my repertoire. I looked at the watch on my wrist. It was half-past twelve. Half an hour gone and ninety minutes to go. I heaved a sigh and silently resumed my seat.

The frosted nails had taken up their drumfire again. My mind was once more in condition to appraise the icy breath of the staircase gale. I tried to readjust the blankets but I could not manage. I could feel the bite of the speeding air through my heavy boots. It sought the openings of the disordered blankets and whirled around my body. Each move I made to close one gap served only to open a larger one.

I wondered why the Doctor had come out. Was he after me? "Catch your death"—"a dangerous place." He had not been talking about the draught. I abandoned my struggle with the blankets. I sat tense, listening and peering down the dim hallway. A long time passed. Then, sharp, clear, unmistakable, the crash of a shot from the rooms below.

My first, subconscious reaction drove the chair from beneath my feet. It went clattering over upon its back. My legs were tangled in the blankets. I kicked them free and plunged noisily down the stairs. When I opened the parlor door, Claine was half-way from his bed to the door which led into the annex-room. He whirled on me; then grunted, "Oh!" He motioned me back and resumed his cautious advance. He carried the flashlight in his left hand, the revolver in his right.

Relief at finding him unhurt submerged every other thought. I stood in my tracks. Claine reached the door and laid his hand on the latch. Standing aside, pressed to the wall, he jerked the door and let it swing wide, away from him. It clashed against the wall.

I began to move forward. He heard me and waved me back, without looking. Even my inexperience recognized that he faced a dangerous situation. The room was dim but the moonlight was sufficient to outline him clearly if he stepped into that doorway. He snapped on the torch. Still hugging the wall he thrust it, at arm's length, into the opening. There was no result. Still holding the light at arm's length, he edged forward and suddenly lurched through the door. I rushed after him and we stood, side by side, revolvers poised.

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The beam of Claine's light completed a circuit of the annex-room without revealing anything except the litter on the floor and that solitary, incongruous wooden chair. He searched the room again and again, with the light. The place was absolutely empty. The dirt-filmed, rag-stuffed windows stood closed as we had seen them first. No one could have opened and closed those age-sealed sashes in the time that had elapsed. The remaining window was blocked, as before, by the blank sheet of wall-board. Yet the air was heavy with the reek of fresh-burned powder. There could be no doubt that the shot had been fired in there.

Claine grunted softly. "He may have got out those folding doors to the dining room——"

There was a shrill, barking scream—terrified, horrible, indistinguishable as beast or man. It came from somewhere above, shrieking down the front stairs and through the open parlor-door. It came again, taking form as words:

"Ben—Don't—Oh God—Ben-n——"

The voice died suddenly in the roar of two swift shots.

CHAPTER XVIII

EVEN Claine seemed numbed by that gurgling scream. He stood as frozen and helpless as I was. That was a new experience for me—but then, I had never seen him face anything quite so dreadful as that scream. The silence that followed was even more dreadful. It throbbed on the air like the throbbing of a noiseless drum.

For once, it was I who first gathered wits to move. I dashed headlong through the parlor. At the foot of the stairs Claine overtook me and jerked me back into the room.

"God's sake!" he whispered. "Are you trying to get yourself killed? Those stairs are poison."

We strained our ears. There was nothing to be heard. Presently Claine said:

"Stay here and make stealthy noises. I'll try the back stairs. Attract his attention, but don't show yourself."

He slipped across the entry and through the dining room door. I began to stir around but I could not seem to make convincing noises. Almost immediately, I stopped trying. It suddenly became clear to me. It was all a pious fraud of Claine's to keep me out of danger. Of course, no self-respecting murderer would rise to such obvious bait. I could fairly see him, lurking at the top of the back stairs, to shoot Claine down. I had no mind to be left to wrestle alone with the affairs of this accursed Tavern.

I took a deep breath, clutched my gun and rushed the stairs. The dim moonlight was deceptive. At the top I stumbled over one of my chairs. The edge cut viciously across my knee-cap. I said "Ow!" quite distinctly. A beam of light flashed. Claine said, low but distinct:

"Steady, Dink; come here."

I hobbled around that sinister corner, swearing rather dreadfully under my breath. I was sure my knee-cap would be cracked across. Claine was standing in Mr. Bakers' door, near the top of the back stairs. He said:

"But for your headlong impetuosity and the alertness of that chair, we might have shot each other up. Look!"

In the room an oil lamp burned dimly by a disordered bed. On the floor, in a ghastly sitting posture, was Mr. Bakers. His legs were bent grotesquely under him. His shoulder rested against the bed. His head had fallen over upon the tumbled blankets. The staring eyes said, plain enough, that he was dead.

Claine pointed to two holes in the coat, above the heart, so close together they seemed like one. The cloth about them was powder-burned. "A thoroughly cold-blooded job," he said, "though I've no doubt he deserved it." I think even his tough fibres felt the tug of it—that pitiful, despicable, cringing old man, pleading for his life; the murderer looking him in the eyes and pumping those two swift shots into his breast. But who?—

Claine had not once turned his back to the door nor taken his eyes from it for more than a flash. Now, sharply, his revolver snapped up. I turned. The Doctor stood inside the doorway. His head was tilted a little sidewise; his lips were pursed. With his left hand he slowly, meditatively stroked his beard. He was, to a T, the gentle physician, considering his diagnosis.

"Ah, promptly on the scene, once more," he drawled. I found the unctuous, bedside manner quite appalling. But Claine said, briskly:

"Come right in, Doctor, and take your hand out of your pocket." He might have been saying, "Come in and take your coat off and stay a while." The Doctor removed his right hand from his pocket. Claine lowered his revolver. He said:

"Won't you examine the body and give us your opinion, Doctor?"

For a moment the man seemed not quite sure. His eyes narrowed and he pressed his lips together. Then he smiled, faintly. He drawled: "Quite unnecessary. I'm sure you have attended to the case in your usual adequate way."

He quickly thrust his hand into his pocket, again, and stepped aside, along the wall. Claine's revolver rose to cover him. A floor-board creaked and Gladdy, treading softly, appeared in the door. His eyes instantly fixed themselves on Mr. Bakers. They widened and grew round until they seemed about to pop out of his head. I never saw a more ridiculous expression on a human face, but what it signified I could not determine. Claine said:

"Come right in, Cousin Gladdy."

Conlord shook his head, violently, and drew back into the hall. Instantly he stepped forward, with haste, into the room again. A door had slammed and firm, swift, forthright footsteps were tramping down the corridor.

"Ah," Claine said, as Dick appeared. "So you two gentlemen are beginning to interest yourselves in affairs at Mountain Tavern—"

Dick interrupted him. He had grasped the meaning of the scene. He gasped, "My God!" and stared with his jaw hanging. It was the first time I had heard his voice. The Doctor linked arms with them both and turned them toward the door. He said, suavely, "I think we may leave these gentlemen alone with their dead."

At the L they stopped and talked in low tones. Then they separated, each to his own room. We lifted the body to the bed and Claine spread a blanket over it. He extinguished the lamp and we returned to the parlor. I looked at my watch; it was not yet one o'clock. Claine lighted the lamp.

"Let us squander a little of our precious oil—I suspect I have the only flashlight on the premises. It's a gift of the gods; we must guard it."

"You think the Doctor did that, too," I said. "I thought you had his revolver."

"I have—or rather, it's behind the clock over yonder—the one Cousin Daniel sent him. But I am quite certain the Doctor did it. I can't seem to pin it onto Gladdy—or Syd," he added, spitefully. "It was done with an automatic; there are two shells on the floor, up there. He probably brought along an extra gun."

"But why shoot Mr. Bakers? He was only a nephew; he wasn't in line of inheritance."

"That is what he told us. Really, I think he was telling the truth. But suppose he wasn't. Suppose he was 'The Unfortunate,' the heir. He called the man who shot him, 'Ben'—presumably the Doctor. By that hypothesis, Benjamin—the Doctor—has killed Little Zave and 'The Unfortunate,' alias Mr. Bakers, thus removing the two men who stood between him and the inheritance. Simple, what?"

"Ye-es," I said, a bit doubtfully. Claine retorted:

"Exactly; much too simple to explain the intricate convolutions of this frivolous week-end."

"I can't understand that first shot," I said, at length.

"Eh?" he said, absently. "Oh—well, the logical explanation would be that it was fired to draw you away from the top of the stairs, when the Doctor discovered you blocking his road to Mr. Bakers."

"Yes, but the Doctor couldn't have got down here to fire it." I had one of my brilliant thoughts. "Someone else must have fired it for him."

Normally Claine would have laughed at me. He merely shrugged his shoulders. He spoke testily. "You've seen everything that I have. It's hardly likely there is anyone else working with him, if that's what you mean. Let's forget it till daylight."

The door suddenly swung open. We leaped to our feet. The Doctor stood in the doorway, covering us with a pistol. Behind him we could see Conlord and Dick, also bearing arms. The Doctor said, suavely:

"Put up your hands, please!"

CHAPTER XIX

CLAINE surveyed the Doctor with an air of dispassionate appraisal. He said: "I think it might be wise to obey the gentleman. You will note that he has his automatic."

We raised our hands. A subtle inflection in Claine's

voice had made the word "automatic" stand out. The Doctor stiffened but the smoothness of his voice belied the vicious gleam in his eyes. He drawled:

"It is not often one has the honor of catching Cobbden Claine, the great detective, off his guard. The tiger, I am told, always sleeps after the kill."

"We had so assumed," Claine said. "Apparently, there are exceptions to the rule."

"Get their guns!" the Doctor snapped to Dick. The boy took the revolvers from our pockets. "Search him!" The Doctor gestured at Claine. The latter's voice expressed a mildly-shocked, benignant protest:

"My dear Benjamin, you will never make the grade—never. *Noblesse oblige*—fair field and no favor—the sporting chance—all quite meaningless to you, are they not? I brought no gun, except the one with which Cousin Daniel endowed us all, alike. I play the game, as is."

Again and again, I had thought the Doctor would shoot. For some reason, Claine's slow words seemed to bruise him, like lead-tipped whips. His eyes, just then, were the meanest, the ugliest I have ever seen. He turned to Dick.

"Put those guns on the chair—over there, by the door." Then, to us, "Sit down." He took his own seat opposite, his gun-arm resting on the table. He said:

"We've decided it's time to stop this thing." He was talking at us but, quite plainly, for the benefit of Gladdy and Dick. I watched their faces. There was no mystery about Dick—he was simply a bewildered boy. Gladdy's face was a puzzle. He looked like a slack and flabby playboy, deprived of his barber. But his eyes were peculiar. They might mean something; or they might not.

"The same thought had occurred to us," Claine said. The Doctor was disciplining himself to his bedside manner. He said:

"I came downstairs, last night—night before last; how time does fly. I found these gentlemen in the dining room, bending over the body—"

Claine interrupted him, speaking casually in the direction of Conlord and Dick:

"Or, to put it in different words, sitting in here with our backs to the wall. A minor point—pray go on, Benjamin."

The Doctor struggled with himself, for a moment. He resumed,

"I found the body of our cook lying on the dining room floor—"

"That is scientifically accurate," Claine broke in. "Much better to be accurate, even in small things." He turned to the other two. "Our cook, by the way, was Little Xavier Bakers, son of Old Xavier and half-brother of that Benjamin whose name you may have heard Mr. Bakers invoking on the eve of his shocking demise. It may help your understanding of the Doctor's absorbing tale."

HE smiled benevolently at Dick and Gladdy. The former was staring, with his mouth open—that seemed to be his normal reaction to exciting events. He was plainly trying to fit things together but not making sense out of them. Conlord was studying the Doctor, with narrowed eyes and a speculative expression. The Doctor flashed one of his stealthy glances at them and turned back to Claine, with his eyes concealed. He seemed to be having another struggle with himself.

"Go on with your story, Doctor. Most thrilling. You were saying you heard a shot in the night. You seized your trusty shooting-iron. You rushed downstairs, hoping to capture the assassin, red-handed—"

"I heard the shot and came downstairs," the Doctor began, with an assumption of dignity, speaking toward Conlord and Dick. Claine cut in on him, again:

"Do let me tell it for you, Doctor. I'm a much more accomplished liar. — You found Professor Randall and me bathing our hands in the victim's gore. You covered us with the trusty shooting-iron—not this automatic; the slender, graceful revolver that Cousin Daniel sent you. You disarmed us. You alarmed the house. You locked us in separate rooms and set guards at the doors. Unless we've jumped out the windows, we're still there, awaiting the police—"

He broke off. The Doctor's feet were shuffling nervously, under the table. His mouth was compressed. He was breathing fast and audibly through his nostrils. The nervous movements of his finger on the trigger frightened me. Claine said, in a soothing voice:

"The levelled automatic is annoying, Dink, but we shall have to concede it to the Doctor's state of mind. He feels, quite strongly, the necessity of shooting us but he can't make up his mind as to the advisability of doing it in the presence of armed witnesses. A most annoying situation. So many things hinge on the decision—hanging-by-the-neck, and that sort of thing."

The Doctor let the automatic sink slowly to the table, but he kept his hand on the butt. Claine smiled approvingly. He said:

"You're absolutely right about that, Doctor—miserable weather to be hanged in. Now, where was I? Oh, yes; I was about to apologize. I've been telling the wrong story, Doctor; I do confuse things so. I recall, now, it was you who came downstairs redhanded, so to speak, to get your damaged knuckles bandaged. Oh yes, I remember, you had fallen against the window and broken out a pane. No doubt the shock of hearing that shot—or was it seeing Mr. Bakers on the stairs as you went up. Most disturbing, either way.

"BY the way, that reminds me. I said I had no other gun. I had quite forgotten—there is one on the shelf there, behind the clock. Won't you get it, Dick, and put it with the others. It was your mishap with the window that reminded me, Doctor—the train of thought, you know—broken window—fresh air—room stuffy—take a walk. Positively, after you had told us about that broken window, the fresh-air urge was so overpowering that I went right out in that terrible storm and took a walk. The strangest coincidence, Doctor, I found that revolver in a snowdrift, right under your broken window. Most remarkable—a revolver just there—just then—with one chamber fired."

The Doctor sprang to his feet. Dick and Gladdy had made some sort of movement. I think it signified merely realization of the import of Claine's rambling words. But the Doctor's nerves had been ground to a thin edge. He swung the automatic to cover them. There was a note of hysteria in his voice.

"Put up your hands—stick 'em up—quick!"

"Under the circumstances, very sound advice," Claine drawled. "I'd follow it."

They did so. "Turn around," the Doctor ordered. With an eye on us, he sidled over. Fumbling nervously, he removed the revolvers from their pockets and put them with the others. He retrieved his chair and sat down, pointing the gun at Claine. I held my breath. I really thought he was going to shoot. He said, in a hoarse, threatening voice:

"Just what are you hinting, Mr. Daniel Bakers?"

I jumped half out of my chair, literally. Dick spun around. We stared at Claine. Conlord did not stir. Claine's eyes slowly lighted with apparent amusement, but I had learned that this did not always signify. He possessed amazing power over his outward manifestations. He said, "No use trying to conceal anything from the old supermind, is there, Ben?"

That seemed to unsettle the Doctor's convictions. His voice lost its confidence. It conveyed more question than threat.

"Do you mean to tell me you didn't write those letters?" Claine turned to Gladdy's unrevealing back.

"What do you say, Cousin Gladstone? Is it your reasoned opinion that I wrote those letters?"

Gladdy turned. His face expressed sodden surliness. He said: "What the hell should I know about it? You leave me out of this, see. I got nothing to do with this, see."

It was surprising, really, but I knew Claine's shocked astonishment was simulated. He said, "My word, Cousin Conlord, what has happened to your native suavity? That was a terrible slip; you must be on your guard."

"I don't know anything," Gladdy said, dully. His mind worked smoothly enough when it was oiled with liquor. In periods of abstinence, he seemed stupid. The Doctor, too, seemed to be feeling the lack of stimulant. That thought alarmed me. Claine began to speak, swiftly, but in a low, level voice.

"Before you shoot, my friend, consider the winds of Vermont, how they blow in Winter; you will remember from night before last. No end grisly, hanging by the neck in a gale like that—creak, creak; back and forth; back and forth. I should imagine one's corpse might get thoroughly chilled. Or do they hang you in a steam-heated room, up here. Their justice is reputed to be swift and thorough but I imagine they are as merciful as circumstances permit."

It does seem incredible, but it worked, every time. Perhaps it was the lack of stimulant. The Doctor's glance wavered. He seemed puzzled, uncertain in his mind. His hand relaxed upon the gun. When it began to tighten, again, Cobbden Claine became confidential.

The Imperfect Twins

"You see, Doc, you've backed yourself into a bad corner —unstrategic. You've disarmed all the rest of us and now you'll have to stand the rap for everything that happens. You had a truly gorgeous set-up. All you needed was an automatic with two or three shells gone and my fingers or Randall's on the butt. Now you've got the automatic and nobody else has got anything."

This time, it did not work. The Doctor's gun-hand came back to his body. He rested the heel of his other hand on the edge of the table, as though to hoist himself to his feet. I felt, rather than saw, Claine's hands go down to grasp the bar of the table from beneath.

Sharply, Syd's voice cut in:

"Drop that gun!—Drop it!—DROP IT!—*DROP IT!*"

CHAPTER XX

SYD stood in the doorway, her revolver leveled at the Doctor. Frieda peered fearfully over her shoulder, pressing a clenched hand against her teeth. The blurred patter of Syd's words told of nerves near the breaking point.

I felt a wave of relief that seemed to turn my bones to wax. Claine spoke casually but his relief was plain enough.

"A goddess descends from the machine," he said. "Steady, Cousin Syd." Then, crisply, "I'd drop it, Doc."

The Doctor laid the automatic on the table. Syd said, "Put up your hands—all of you!"

We obeyed, but Claine said, good-naturedly: "The Doctor has mobilized the artillery for you. It's all there, on the chair."

"Frieda, pick up that gun," Syd ordered. Frieda shrank back. She cried, hysterically, "I can't."

Without turning from us, Syd reached back and dragged her sister into the room. "Pick it up!" she urged, and pushed Frieda forward. The girl's eyes were blank, expressionless, as though her mind were dead. She advanced to the table but seemed unable to force herself to touch the gun.

"Pick it up by the barrel, Frieda, please," Claine said, gently. "There are priceless finger-prints on the handle."

She looked at him and the dead eyes came alive. It was amazing to see—and pitiful.

"Pick it up," Claine urged. "It's harmless."

She picked it up gingerly, with her finger tips, and put it with the others.

"Now get a basket from the kitchen," Syd commanded.

"It's dark, out there," Frieda wailed. It was, literally, just that; a wail. I had never seen a woman in that condition of nerves; it was perfectly fearful. Syd shrugged her shoulders in a gesture of nervous exasperation. Her left fist was beating gently against her hip. I think she was not far removed from hysterics, herself. But the muzzle of the revolver did not waver. She looked toward me. "You get it, please, Dink." It was sweet to have her turn to me.

I brought a basket from the kitchen. "I'll put them in for you," I said.

"Never mind. Get back where you were." That was not so sweet. But I did as she bade me, and promptly. Claine said:

"Please, Cousin Syd; by the barrels. The police, you know."

"I'm going to put them where they won't bother the police, or anyone else."

"But, gallant lady," Claine protested, "give thought, a moment. The police are presently going to reduce this phantasmagoria to commonplace reality. If they find a house full of dead men and no weapon but your reeking gun, they're going to ask you, "How come?" Hide the evidence, if you want to; but mark the spot, "X"—Has that one been fired?" he asked, sharply.

Syd sniffed at the revolver in her hand, and nodded. Claine bent toward me and whispered, "Cousin Dick's." It took a moment for me to grasp the significance of it. When I had grasped it, I looked at the young man with considerable interest. I assure you a person who has been shooting at you in the moonlight is quite an interesting sight.

The girls took the basket of revolvers out of the room and were gone some time. When they returned, Syd demanded, abruptly, "How much longer have we got to stay here?"

She looked at Claine and he answered her, "Until someone breaks out the road; a day—or a week."

"Frieda and I are starting as soon as it is light. Where did you put our snowshoes?"

"In the bar. But you can't use them in this snow. It's too light. You'd perish miserably—and I mean that."

"They seem to have disappeared," Syd remarked, significantly.

"I'll see if I can find them," I told her.

"That would be a waste of time, wouldn't it?" She addressed Claine, in an unpleasant manner. She took Frieda's arm and led her out of the room.

Claine surveyed us with a whimsical look in his eyes. "Well," he said, "that's one way to bring about peace on earth. Doctor, I advise you to go and take a drink; it may restore your mental balance."

"For God's sake, Doctor, give me one," Gladdy pleaded. Actually, it was pitiful. The man was suffering. But the Doctor growled, "Go to hell!" He glared at us, one after another, and shambled out of the room.

"I'll go crazy," Gladdy whined.

"Not necessarily," Claine rejoined. "Personally, Conlord, I like you better drunk; but for the young women's sake we shall try to keep you sober."

Conlord flashed an ugly glance at him and went out. Claine laid a detaining hand on Dick's arm and led him to the table. He assumed his best faculty manner, gentle, suave yet ominous. He said, "Dick, why did you shoot at Randall?"

The boy started, violently. He glanced about, with a hunted look, like a cornered animal. Finally he said, sullenly:

"I thought it was you."

It was a tremendous shock to me but Claine seemed not the least surprised. He said:

"Ah, your eyes need attention, Delchester. Randall and I are not often mistaken for one another. Just why were you so desirous of my death that you would risk hanging for it?"

"You know damn well what it is."

"No—tell me."

"It's Frieda—you know that, well enough."

I suppose I must have been very dumb or I should have interpreted the expression that always came into Dick's face when he looked at Frieda. But, positively, it came upon me out of a clear sky. I stiffened so perceptibly that Claine glanced at me with a bleak smile. He seemed to be very much in earnest. He said, quietly:

"Just exactly what do you mean?"

"You've taken her away from me."

"How long have you known Frieda?"

"Since last Summer," the boy replied, morosely.

"My relations with Frieda have been established for more than two years. That would make it appear that you have been trying to take her away from me." Suddenly he smiled. No smile could be more captivating than Claine's when he chose to make it so. He dropped his great hand upon Dick's locked fists. The boy did not remove them. In a moment, the sullenness went out of his face. He raised his eyes to Claine's for the first time. The latter went on:

"Dick, you have thirty years advantage of me. But to sulk and glower is not the way to win a woman. It doesn't give her the idea that life with you would be one glad, sweet song. You must interest her; stir her. If you should succeed, even mildly, my doddering years would do the rest."

HE rose, briskly. It was really quite marvelous, the relief, embarrassment and timid hopefulness in the boy's face. He thrust out his hand, impulsively. Claine took it and held it, with an air of paternal benignity. Dick said:

"That's awfully white of you, Mr. Claine. I'm sorry I was rotten."

"You are the only sufferer, my boy. Let's forget it."

Under other circumstances, I might have been impressed by this gesture of noble renunciation. But in the light of that pitiful dialogue in the ballroom, it assumed a quite different aspect. It affected me most unpleasantly. Futhermore it was I who had been shot at. I felt it should have been my privilege to do the forgiving—if any. I said, a bit snappishly:

"How did you know it was Frieda, out there? She was wearing Syd's cap."

"I guess I know Frieda from Syd." That made me uncomfortable, if it was what he wanted. I remembered what Syd had said on that subject. Evidently there was something wrong with me. The boy's eyes were filled with ugly hostility. Suddenly it flashed on me that, after all,

I had been keeping his date. I think I should have offered some sort of apology, if he had given me time. But, quite abruptly, his face was suffused with a truly astonishing expression of joy. He said—he was quite breathless:

"You mean you thought it was Syd? Was that why you kissed her?"

It was with difficulty that I restrained myself from striking the young man in the face. It impressed me as most impertinent. I said, with what dignity I could manage:

"That's none of your damn business. Get out!"

He seemed somewhat bewildered; but he went. I thought, by the expression of Claine's face, that he was going to make one of his low remarks. But he didn't. He said:

"In spite of your perhaps justifiable suspicion, my remarks to the young man were wholly sincere. I shall try to enlighten you before I die. For the present, bear with me."

Before I could make much out of that, Syd came in. She said to Claine:

"Whose gun was that you asked me about—the one that had been fired?"

"Cousin Dick's," Claine told her.

Her face hardened. "He was the one who shot at Dink?"

"He thought it was me," Claine explained.

"Oh," she said, with a change of expression. "Well, better luck, next time."

She marched out of the room and slammed the door. I rushed after her. She was on the first stair. As she turned and recognized me, I thought the expression of strained alertness went out of her face. I put my hands on her arms. She smiled, faintly. I said:

"You're terribly tired, Syd."

"I'll tell the cockeyed world," she said. It was quite frightfully pitiful and appealing. For a moment I really thought I was going to put my arms around her. But I restrained myself. I said:

"Let me have the gun. Or let me have my own gun. I'm going to keep watch, and you can rest."

She hesitated; then shook her head. It meant she didn't trust me. It was disheartening. She seemed to understand. She took hold of the end of my nose. It is quite a long nose and not the least attractive. She wagged my head back and forth. It was quite thrilling. She said:

"Silly ape, it isn't that. But I don't trust your best friend. He'd wangle that gun away from you in no time. Then the crime wave would be on again."

"But Syd," I gasped, "it isn't Cobb—you know it isn't. He's the only one we can depend on to stop this thing."

"Well, if he's as good as you think he is, he can stop it without a gun. At least, he can't possibly do worse than he's been doing with one. Good-night."

She tweaked my nose and went upstairs. The gun dangled limply from her right hand; her left crawled wearily up the banister. But her shoulders were squared and the little round head poised gallantly as ever on the firm column of her neck. She did not look back.

CHAPTER XXI

DICK had left us, to go to his room.

I found Claine tramping back and forth in the parlor. I had seen him do that only once before—the night of the ballroom episode. There was something alien in the atmosphere. Perhaps he felt it. Claine seemed stiff, constrained.

"That was a narrow escape," he said.

"What were you driving at, anyhow?"

"Stalling, mainly. There was a chance those two fatheads might feel inspired to horn in and disarm him. Failing that, there was nothing to do but keep his mind balled up and trust to luck for an opening. The Doctor is a killer, plain enough. But his wits are thick; he's easily confused and he's too cautious to kill when he is confused. He wants to figure it out, first, and that is a slow job. As a last resort, I should have had a try at heaving the table over on him, lamp and all. Well, we owe a bit to your gallant lady, Syd," he said. "How about a spot of sleep?"

"It's too damn cold up there," I said.

"Well, what do you want to do?" There was an unfamiliar note of petulance in his voice.

I didn't know what I wanted to do. I pondered it. Finally I said:

"I'm going to have another try for Syd's gun. I'm going to watch the Doctor."

"Oh, all right. Call me if you need me." His manner was listless; not at all like himself. But, then, he was tired. He had had less sleep than I.

I knocked lightly at the girl's door. In a moment it startled me by swinging open. Something hard poked into the pit of my stomach. It was as suddenly withdrawn. I recognized it as Syd's revolver. Syd was behind it. She whispered: "Oh, it's you. Be quiet; Frieda's asleep. What's wrong, now?"

"I want your revolver."

"I heard you the first time—and answered frankly."

"But I want to watch the Doctor."

"Has he got another gun?" I thought there was a brighter note in her voice. It occurred to me that firearms might have assumed a new interest in her life since she started collecting them. I said:

"Not that I know of, but I wouldn't put it beyond him. I'm watching him on general principles."

SHE thought for a moment. Then she said, "I'll watch with you—if you'll bring the chairs around where we can watch this L, too."

The idea of watching with Syd was pretty thrilling. But it would not do. I said, "That would put you close to Mr. Bakers' door—and he's in there."

"And reasonably certain to stay there," she retorted. "He and the cook person are the only ones in this caravansary that never give me a moment's anxiety."

"But Frieda—she won't stay alone."

"Oh, won't she? You watch her. She's practically full of sleeping capsules. If they don't kill her they'll cure her. Either way, she's off my mind for the time being." The bitter weariness of her tone! I said:

"You're worn out. Why don't you take a nap, yourself."

"Never. Not ever again. I'm off the sleep, for life. I've broken myself of that habit."

I tried to be sorry she wouldn't listen to me but I couldn't, really. We brought the chairs around the corner and sat down with our backs to the wall.

We put one blanket around our shoulders, the other around our legs. We were between Mr. Bakers' door and Claine's and mine. We faced directly down the L. To our left were the front stairs, the Doctor's room and Dick's; to our right, the back stairs; diagonally opposite, the stairs to the ballroom. It was a highly strategic position, but cold and windy, my word!

Syd sat at my left. Her right hand, bare and holding the revolver, rested on her thigh. In the faint light it looked so small and frail to be so efficient. And it must be cold! I drew off my left mitten and laid my hand over it. She did not seem to resent it. I asked her to let me hold the revolver but she shook her head—merely in weary stubbornness. Presently I felt her hand relaxing, under mine. Very slowly her head settled over against my shoulder. Her breathing grew slower, more measured. I looked down into her face. Her eyes were closed; her lips parted a little; she was sound asleep.

I took the revolver and slipped her hand into my great mitten. The blanket had dropped from her shoulder and I could not reach across to fix it. She must not sit there, relaxed in sleep, with that icy gale upon her. There seemed nothing else to do—I slipped my arm behind her shoulders. I drew her a little closer and held the far corner of the blanket up about her breast and throat.

It might have been five o'clock—my arm had had time to become quite numb—when I heard Claine come out of the parlor. He flashed his light up the front stairs, and then went back. Some time later I heard a board creak. There was no one moving in the corridors. It sounded like the front stairs. There seemed no reason for Claine to be so extraordinarily cautious.

I thought, suddenly, of the Lurking Presence at which Claine had hinted. I don't know what there was about that Thing to frighten me but it always did; every time I thought of it. It made the hair on the back of my neck stir and bristle. It made cold, crinkly things march down my spine. Positively, it made my ears wriggle. I took a fresh grip on the revolver and tightened my arm around Syd.

A dim figure appeared at the head of the front stairs. It advanced a step and halted, as though it had detected us. After a moment it strolled forward, quite boldly. To my astonishment, it was Claine. I could not imagine why he should be so elaborately circumspect. He stopped and smiled down upon us. His expression, I thought, was rather insulting. I laid a finger on my lips.

He turned away and went softly up the stairs to the

ballroom. I caught reflected flashes of his light, as it swept the walls, up there. He came down and moved on tiptoe to the end of the L and back. He started for the front stairs, then returned and entered Mr. Bakers' room. I heard the bed creak as though he were moving the body. He came out, waved his hand and went down the back stairs. I could not make out what he was up to. If he were seeking the Mysterious Unknown, it seemed a bit foolhardy without a gun.

I was still muddling over it when I became aware that faint daylight was creeping into the corridors. Syd began to stir, uneasily, and sigh and groan very gently. Presently she opened her eyes. Then she sat up, quite vehemently, and stared at me. I braced myself. But she did not reproach me, at all. She merely said: "Oh, for heaven's sake!—How long have I been asleep?"

"Only a few minutes," I assured her. She looked about her. Then she said:

"You're a liar, by the clock. I've been asleep hours—it's daylight. I'm so sorry, Dink."

"It's quite all right," I told her. "Really, I haven't minded a bit."

"Well, run down like a good lad and start the hot water. We'll be right down. Let's have some regular breakfast, for a change. I feel like somebody else, again—give me that gun!"

At the head of the back stairs, I turned. She stood there, watching me. I didn't want to go down until she was safely in her room. But she gestured, quite decisively, and I went on. After all, she had the gun and knew how to use it. If she needed help she knew how to yell.

I suppose I was ten minutes getting the fire under way. As I opened the kitchen door, to go back upstairs, the sound of a muffled shot came thudding down to me. I declare to you, shots had become so much a part of the conventional life of the establishment that my heart did not miss a beat.

An instant later, it was missing them all—and turning somersaults, besides. It had flashed upon me that Syd possessed the only known gun remaining in the Tavern.

CHAPTER XXII

AS I dashed up the back stairs I could hear Claine leaping up the front. He turned toward the Doctor's room. I saw Syd coming up the L corridor. Her revolver was in her hand. Her head was bare and she was tugging her sheepskin coat on, as she ran. The sight of her lifted one burden of fear.

Claine had kicked open the Doctor's door. He relaxed, suddenly, and turned toward me. There was a grim, unmirthful smile about his mouth but his face, in the gray dawn light, looked haggard. He pointed with a limp hand. The Doctor lay in an outlandish heap beside a straight-back chair. An empty cartridge shell was beside his hand.

Syd was pressing against me, peering in. She asked, "Is he dead?"

"Apparently," Claine said.

"Please see." Her tone was expressionless.

Claine straightened the Doctor's body. "Quite so," he said.

"Who did it?" Syd demanded.

Claine looked at her intently. She met his gaze, quite unmoved. "So far as the facts are publicly known," he said, "you have all the weapons in the house—including the Doctor's automatic from which this shell apparently came." He picked up the shell and regarded it, speculatively.

"I *thought* I had them all," Syd said. "I'll go down and check them up."

"See how many shells are gone from the automatic," Claine suggested.

When she returned, she said, "The guns haven't been disturbed. Three shells gone from the automatic."

"Three, eh? Two of them are present and accounted for in Mr. Peters' room. This would seem to be the third. — I'd suggest, Cousin Syd, that you seek your bower and get a little rest."

"No!" Her tone was explosive. "I'm going to stay with you, this time, until the thing is straightened out."

Claine shrugged his shoulders. "A rather big contract, with our limited facilities. We're back in the Primitive, you see—no modern conveniences—no authority, no police, no finger-prints, no microscopes, no ballistics—no nothing. We are tolerably helpless."

"The Doctor," Syd said, "was an explanation of anything that might happen." She spoke absently, as though she were trying to explain something to herself. "As long as we kept him blockaded we could feel safe. Now someone has shot him, and that upsets everything. I don't know which one of you to watch. I'm going to watch you all. — He was shot in the forehead?"

THERE was a hole at the edge of the hair. Claine shook his head. "That's where it came out." He lifted the Doctor's head and turned it a little. There was another hole at the base of the skull. Syd looked away. Her face was chalk-white. "Not pleasant work for a woman, Syd." Claine suggested. He resumed his other tone:

"He was shot from behind and from low down. That is a most curious thing. I am sure he was sitting in that chair, facing the door. Judging by the angle the shot must have been fired from the level of the floor. Why should anyone go around behind him and fire from that clumsy position. It will bear a bit of explaining."

I said, "Was he asleep?"

"He must have been. No one could have come in the door and got behind him if he'd been awake. Probably dozed off in the chair. I doubt if he's been sleeping any more soundly than the rest of us, lately."

He stepped backward, carelessly. His heel struck a square of wallboard that lay on the floor. It slipped away, revealing a rectangular hole, a foot or more in length. Claine's lips twisted in a wry grin. He spread his hands, with an expressive gesture.

"There you are," he said. He held up the cartridge shell and regarded it with whimsical intentness. "And there you are, again."

Syd and I stared at him, quite without comprehension. He proceeded to explain, in words of one syllable:

"That is a register hole. At some time there was a metal register there, a grating, like the register of a hot-air furnace. Its purpose was to let surplus heat from the annex-room come up into this bedroom. In old country houses that was the only method of heating the bedrooms. The Doctor stuck his gun through that hole and fired the shot we thought was fired downstairs. This would be the shell his automatic ejected when he fired it. Elementary, my dear children. But, apparently, it didn't occur to his simple mind that the rule might work both ways. He thoughtlessly sat down with his back to the hole and someone made use of it to shoot him from downstairs. Let's go down and take a look."

The annex-room was still almost dark. Claine led us along the wall toward the register-hole in the ceiling. His feet dragged as though he had become too weary to lift them. The shuffling sound, in the powdered plaster, was distressingly reminiscent of that unpleasant dance of his, in the ballroom. The incongruous wooden chair stood exactly under the hole. Claine said:

"Too bad we didn't explore this room more carefully. This chair ought to have stirred one's curiosity. It palpably doesn't belong here. I think it is one of the few physical traces we have found of Cousin Daniel's activities."

He flashed his light on the seat of the chair. There were smears of snow on it, like blurred footprints. In the center, was a hole—a fresh bullet-drill.

"The Doctor's decoy shot," said Claine. "And these would seem to be the footprints of the man—or woman—who stood on the chair to shoot him."

The snow tracks led from the chair to that window which was closed by a sheet of wallboard. Claine pried at the edge of it with his fingers. It yielded and swung smoothly inward, leaving a small hook dangling from the window-casing, outside.

"Hinges!" Syd exclaimed.

"Exactly, hinges!" Claine echoed, with exaggerated solemnity. 'Carefully and elaborately prepared in advance to make entrance easy. The one palpable clue in the whole blasted go-down—and we seem to have missed it."

Outside, under the window, there was a small trampled spot in the snow with a trail of queer little indentations leading away from it toward the corner of the house. They looked to me like the trail of some small animal. Claine said, "Let's go outside and have a closer look at those."

Midway through the parlor, Syd exclaimed, "We're making a mess of this carpet."

In truth, our boots were leaving a glaring trail of white plaster-dust. Claine said:

"There speaks the perfect housewife. To me, that 'mess' is the perfect alibi. Presently some keen intellect is going to point out that I was down here, alone, when the Doctor was shot from that next room. I call you to witness there

were no plaster-marks on this carpet until we made these." There seemed a touch of seriousness under his light tone.

In the entry he stopped to try the unused front door. It was fastened. An immense, old-fashioned brass key stood in the lock. Claine tried vainly to turn it. It required all the strength he could apply with both hands before it yielded and threw back the rusted bolt, with a terrific screeching. "I suspect, Cousin Syd, you were sleeping in a cradle, the last time this door was opened," he commented.

Some snow had settled into the windswept path along the house, after the gale fell—an inch, perhaps. Along the front and the two ends Claine's boots had tramped it hard, in his nervous march after the dance with Frieda. But along the rear the snow lay unmarked except by those queer indentations. Claine bent to examine them. He straightened up with a rueful laugh.

"Walking on the rear edge of his heels," he said. "A clever guy. And tough muscles—it's brutal on the shins."

We were able to trace the marks clear around the front of the building to the side door. "And a lot of good they do us," Claine complained. "Apparently he heeled it around to that window, did his stuff and heeled it back to this door. But how did he get out and in again? You're sure you didn't take a nap up there in the hall, Dink."

"I did not," I protested. He made me mad, with his innuendoes.

"How long were you down in the kitchen?"

"Long enough to start a fire—ten minutes or so."

He turned to Syd. "You were in your room?"

"Yes," she said, "and the door was closed."

"Then he could have gone out, easily enough," Claine said. "But he couldn't have got back in after the shot—unless he waited until after we came downstairs. We ought to have checked up on Delchester and Conlord before we came down. A bit strange, isn't it, their failure to join in the excitement?"

"I don't know," Syd remarked. "I should rather expect them to crawl under the bed. I can't see either of them doing this heel stunt—let alone thinking it up."

"He didn't come out that door while I was in the kitchen," I said, with sudden conviction. "Nobody has lifted one of those damn latches, yet, without my hearing it. I haven't heard anything else but latches since I came into this damn house."

Claine said to Syd: "This 'damn' complex of his is something entirely new. It must be the general atmosphere of crime. He never talks that way when he's home — What is your idea, Dink; are you still enamoured of your Mysterious Unknown?"

"It stands to reason those two fatheads didn't do it," I retorted, rather warmly. That Mysterious Unknown had dallied too intimately with my spinal column to be treated with levity. "There is no reason why someone shouldn't have come in from outside and done it."

"Presumably in a pocket airplane," Claine jeered. "There are no marks in the snow."

"We haven't looked," I said. "I'm going to make a circuit of the place and see."

"I think that's a good idea," Syd said, earnestly.

"Good exercise, at any rate," Claine grunted. "I'll wait for you here, on the doorstone."

We started along the L toward the woodshed. As we floundered through the drifts, keeping a sharp lookout for radial trails, my mind busied itself with Claine. There was something about him, this morning, that puzzled me. Superficially, his manner seemed the same. But there was an air of weariness, of dullness or lassitude about him. He acted as though he were going through a prescribed set of motions without any particular enthusiasm. Of course, as he had pointed out, our primitive surroundings limited the possibilities narrowly. But I should have expected that to pique his enthusiasm, to spur him on.

We had rounded the woodshed and were half way along the far side of the L, up to our waists in snow, when we heard a scream from within the Tavern. It was faint and muffled, but the words were plain enough:

"Dick! — Dick! — Help! — Dick!"

CHAPTER XXIII

THE scream brought us up, rigid. Syd cried, "Frieda! Oh, God!" It was like a sob.

The human instinct to cry, "Oh, God!" in moments of crisis had always struck me as silly and deplorable. But, if Syd did it, there must be something fundamental, irresistible about it.

We started back along our trail. I took Syd's arm, to hasten her floundering progress. The screams continued for several moments. They ceased abruptly. The silence was yet more appalling. Syd shook off my hand. She gasped:

"Go on—hurry—hurry!"

I went on alone, in clumsy leaps and bounds. And again my mind turned to Claine. I am astonished, now, at the suddenness with which our suspicions veered against him. With the Doctor removed from the picture, he was, I suppose, the only one among us whose personality was strong enough to support suspicion. But Frieda! I had learned enough to know that he regarded her as a burden —perhaps a threat. Much as I loved the man, I believed that strange, rebellious mind of his was capable of anything, no matter how grotesque. But openly—in broad daylight—it would be stark insanity. Gladdy popped into my mind. I dismissed him, instantly. He was harmless, except in his cups.

I staggered through the woodshed and the kitchen. My heart was pounding and the breath actually stabbing at my lungs. I am not inured to violent exertion. The entry door stood open. I thought I never should reach the top of the stairs. I came to the open door of Frieda's room, and stopped, abruptly.

SHE lay on the bed, motionless. There was a cloth across her forehead and eyes. I thought it was a bandage, and thought she must be dead, or dying. Claine knelt on one knee, beside her. He was chafing one of her hands. His back was toward me. I do not believe he knew I was there. He bent over and kissed her mouth. She jerked to a sitting posture and the cloth fell from her eyes. They were utterly blank. She stared at Claine and one could see the slow growth of angry emotion in her face. She said:

"Oh!"

It is difficult to find words to describe that moaning "Oh." Repulsion, certainly; anger, even hatred, perhaps. She moaned: "Go away—Oh, go away!"

Claine took hold of her arms. "Frieda," he said. There was infinite tenderness in his tone. "Frieda!" He shook her, not violently, angrily, as I shake Syd when I am mad at her, but gently, as though to bring her back to herself. "Frieda, listen to me," he pleaded. "Everything is all right. I love you. Don't you understand? I have always loved you. We're going to be married, Frieda. Everything is all right."

She wrenched free and sidled away from him, on the bed. The life had come back into her eyes. She knew what she was doing, now. "All right?" she railed. "Everything is all right! I nearly killed myself and everything is all right! Killed myself for an old man like you!"

She laughed. It was shrill; really, it was horrid. The scorn in that laugh and in her voice—it was perfectly ghastly. I saw Claine cringe; he seemed fairly to shrivel. He reached forward, groping for her hands but she snatched them away and edged farther from him.

"Frieda—darling—don't you understand? I've always loved you. I was only doing it for your own sake. Frieda, I want you—please—"

Positively, he was begging—on his knees. This was not my Claine. If the ground should begin to crumble away under my feet, this minute, I would feel exactly as I felt then. She laughed again in that shrill, horrible, scornful way. Then she stopped, suddenly and spoke calmly:

"Don't *you* understand, Cobb? I am awake, finally. If you want to find out about yourself, take poison, like I did. When you think you're dying, things look different. You made a fool of me—a fool! I don't want to see you again—ever. Go away!" Claine did not move. She cried, "Go away!" He rose and stood bewildered.

Abruptly, Frieda stretched her arms toward me. She called, "Dick" I had not heard him approach, but he was there, beside me. "Dick!" she called, again, "Oh, Dick!" He hesitated, then rushed forward. She moaned, "Dick!" He sat down on the edge of the bed and took her in his arms. She dropped her head upon his shoulder and began to sob. Claine gazed at them, fascinated. Then he strode past me, out of the room. His eyes stared emptily. I do not think he saw me, at all.

Next instant, Syd was clinging to my arm, as though to steady herself. Her breath was sobbing, as mine had been. She carried her revolver in her hand. The sight of Frieda must, of course, have reassured her. She appeared merely puzzled and exasperated, but I could sense that her

nerves were tearing at her. She stared at Dick and Frieda; then turned questioningly to me. Before I could speak she abruptly pushed me back, through the doorway. I said: "What's the matter, Syd?"

"I don't know; I don't know," she gasped, with nervous intensity. "Please go."

She slammed the door, almost against my nose. I had the silly feeling that comes when one is hustled back by the police. I was wholly at a loss. I did not know what to do. Claine had resumed his nervous, tramping, outdoors. I had no mind to face him with this appalling thing. By the gathering clouds, it was going to snow again. God forbid more snow!

I was deathly curious about this Frieda business. It irritated me. The thought of Claine upset me, terribly. I wanted to know what it all meant. But, more than anything else on earth, I wanted to sleep. I was utterly worn out, mind and body. If I woke up with a bullet in me, what of it? I was past caring.

Before I had finished tucking myself in, Claine came clumping up and went to the Doctor's room. When he came back, past my door, he was carrying the black bag of gin. He stopped in Mr. Bakers' room, then went downstairs and outdoors again. My first thought was that he wanted the stimulant for himself. But he was not that kind. More likely he was removing temptation out of Gladdy's way. Amazing that he could think of it in this terrible crisis of his own emotions. But he was like that. An excellent idea, anyhow. I dropped asleep, almost instantly.

CHAPTER XXIV

IT was past noon when I awoke, with violence. Syd was bending over me. She was shaking me and calling: "Dink!" quite plaintively. Her eyes looked unnatural —wild, sort of. My brain was numb from sleep. I couldn't put things together, very well. She frightened me. I said: "What's the matter?"

"I wa-anted you."

Well, the way she said it, really, it was sort of pitiful. But it frightened me more than ever, her saying a thing like that. I thought it must be something rather terrible. In a flash, I remembered Frieda. I said: "Is anything wrong with Frieda?"

"Why, she committed suicide."

I can't remember feeling at all shocked or grieved on Frieda's account. My thought regarding her was that she was a pest, anyway. And persistent about the suicide thing. But I could tell, from the way Syd spoke, that this, coming on top of everything else, had practically unhinged her. That was pretty alarming. She was all tied up with hysteria. I kicked off the blankets and swung my legs across the bed. I yelled: "Where is she?"

I suppose it was the yell, as much as anything. It was a rough yell, probably. It seemed to wake Syd up, a little —not entirely. She said, rather blankly: "What?"

"Where is she—where is Frieda?"

"Oh. She's in our room. Dick's with her."

"You told me she committed suicide."

She still had that vague, dazed way of looking at me. She said, uncertainly:

"Did I? I meant, she tried to—this morning—why, you knew about it—you were in there. She took all the headache tablets, at once. She's all right, now. Dick's with her."

Well, it made me mad—to wake me up for that! I hadn't more than closed my eyes, and I needed hours of sleep. I stood up. I took Syd by the shoulders and shook her, good. Shaking Syd always has a salutary effect on me; soothes me and invigorates me, sort of. It makes her hair fly and the gold in it flashes. I felt better, almost immediately. I said:

"You desiccated ape; what did you wake me up for that, for?"

She looked at me. Her eyes were big and round as though she couldn't believe it. She said: "But, Dink, I wa-anted you."

Well, I have to admit it was sort of pitiful. But I was mad. I'd been figuring on a good long sleep. Then, all of a sudden, she began to cry, and tremble all over. I hadn't noticed before that she didn't have her overcoat on. And that Tavern like a Siberian mortuary vault! She had no business running around without any overcoat on. She made me mad, anyway. One minute she was swinging a gun and ordering strong men about; the next she was blowing up with hysterics and spoiling my sleep. And running around without any overcoat on! I pretty nearly told her to go back to her room and let me sleep, but, somehow, it seemed sort of brutal. But I couldn't let her stand there and catch cold.

I picked her up and dropped her on the bed, not any more gently than I could help. I tucked the blankets around her. That left me without any place to finish my nap. She had stopped crying. She was looking up at me with one eye, which was all that remained out in the open air. She looked so snug and warm and I was relaxed from sleep and my pores all open—all of a sudden, the cold struck right into me. My knees shook and my teeth began to chatter. I had forgotten I didn't have any overcoat on. Syd stuck her head out of the blankets. She sounded more like herself. Perhaps the crying had done her good. She said:

"For heaven's sake, haven't you got any more sense than to be running around without any overcoat on? Lie down and cover yourself up."

"Yeah," I said. I realized, instantly, that it sounded like Gladdy. But really, you know, I was feeling rather like Gladdy in one of his less polished moods. I can go without sleep when I set myself to it but, once I start sleeping, I want to finish it. It ruins me to be waked up in the middle. "Yeah," I said. "And where, for instance, am I going to lie down? Out in the snow or in with Mr. Bakers or in with the Doctor, or where?"

"What's to prevent your lying down, right here?"

"Certainly not," I said.

"Well, I suppose a young boy can't be too careful. I'll go back down in the Bar and you can finish your nap. But probably I'll shoot your Claine. Every time he's been in to fix those stoves he's had a narrow escape."

"I don't see why you can't go back in your own room."

"You're so peevish," she said. "I told you Frieda and Dick were in there."

"Well, then, you certainly ought to be in there—or somebody."

"So-o-o," she said, "that's it, is it? Well, Mr. Eighteen-ninety-five, I'm here to tell you you've got a vile mind."

"I think you've got the vile mind," I told her.

"It isn't vile enough to see any harm in lying down here, like this—in an emergency. Especially with you a hundred-and-one per cent asleep." Her voice became quite serious. "Can't you understand, Dink? Freida and Dick are at a crisis of their lives. I don't know why, or anything about it—but it's so. Any time I think Frieda and I need police protection, I'll phone for some."

Suddenly the solution came to me. I said: "I'll go in and sleep in Dick's bed."

Syd sat up straight. "If you do, I'll follow you. I'm not going to be left alone. I've been lone-wolfing around this murder mansion for forty-eight hours. I'm fed up. I'm all set for a tantrum you'll love to tell your grandchildren about." She dug the revolver out of her hip pocket. "Take that! From now on, I'm a clinging vine. If anything starts, Syd's head goes under the blankets, and stays there—— Now, lie down and go to sleep."

WELL, really, there wasn't much a chap could do when Syd started giving orders. After all, what difference did it make? Apparently people did things like that. It might be good for me. I've always believed people ought to have experiences, a little. To broaden them. As soon as the road was broken out, that would be the end of Syd, for me, anyhow. It would be something to remember. I stretched myself out on the edge of the bed. She thrust her arm under my head and drew it over onto her shoulder. It certainly was an experience. I felt her relax. She drew a slow, deep breath and expelled it, quite violently, in my neck.

"O-o-o-o-h! What a reassuring beard! Dink, you won't let anybody shoot me, will you?"

I told her I certainly would do all I could—there was probably not much danger, anyway. I think it reassured her. She seemed to grow quite calm. Her breathing became easier, more regular. I thought she was falling asleep but, presently, she said: "I don't see what made Frieda do it."

"Well," I said, "what did she do?" Not that an incomplete suicide, more or less, amounted to much in that Tavern but, still, I couldn't help being a little curious.

"I told you, she took all the headache medicine—gosh, an awful lot. Then she changed her mind and yelled for Dick; we heard her. He missed the train—I guess he

generally does. Your Claine tickled her throat and got all the capsules back."

Well, I was glad I hadn't been there to see that. I dislike such things. I'm fastidious, really. I suppose it's necessary, sometimes.

"He's frightfully versatile," Syd said, drowsily. Presently she went on, in a sleepy, drawling voice: "It was lousy of me to go off the deep end, this way. I don't do it often, Dink, honestly. But you've no idea what it's like to have an identical twin go sour on you. It's been like this for ages, and she won't tell me. It's ghastly. And now she bobs up, way out here in the woods, doing a Bernhardt with two perfect strangers. Are they the guys who have been ruining my life right along? Or are they a couple of other fellows she's engaged to keep her miserable over Sunday? Is Claine her permanent Secret Sorrow? And who is this Dick bird? And how come Frieda to eat the pain-killer—we're not naturally suicidal, really. And how come she changed her mind so extraordinary quick? And how come the three of them to be among those present at this Indian massacre? That would keep me awake nights if I hadn't been awake so darn many, already. If I can only sleep, I don't care what happens to me—or anybody else."

I felt a good deal the same way about it, myself. The next I knew, someone was tickling my ear and giggling. It sounded like Syd.

CHAPTER XXV

I TURNED my head and looked up. It *was* Syd. She was standing by the bed, with Dick beside her. His arm was around her shoulders; hers around his waist.

It was too much—too damn much. First Gladdy and now Dick. I tried to sit up. There was an arm around my neck and it drew me down, again. I looked. It was Syd, to be sure—with my head on her shoulder. We had been sleeping—like that. It was appalling. My cheeks burned.

The other one was Frieda, of course. Her face was transfigured. So was Dick's. There was a kind of youthful glory of happiness upon them both. They were grinning at me—perfectly vile. Frieda said—I could have sworn it was Syd's voice:

"Well, Syd, you're quite thoroughly compromised, now."

Syd said: "Tragic, isn't it?" She didn't seem to be wholly awake.

"Maybe he'll do the honorable thing by you," Frieda said. Syd shook her head.

"Not a chance. There isn't a spark of chivalry in him."

It was an embarrassing situation. It was terrible. I wanted to explain. I began, "Honestly, Frieda——"

She stopped me. She said, quite sternly: "Don't try to explain. You'll only make it worse."

When she was not smiling there was something in her eyes that I had never seen in Syd's. I hoped I might never see it in Syd's. There still was a weary drag in her voice. She said to Syd:

"It's five o'clock. I thought we might get some dinner—I mean, on a table. It might make things more cheerful."

Syd spilled my head off her shoulder, quite briskly. "Right snappy headwork," she said. "I haven't taken nourishment off a table since the Civil War. Go start a fire while I beautify myself."

She came bustling into the kitchen before I had the fire going. She said:

"Now, Scullions, a lot of action. Who knows how to cut steaks off that beef-critter in the shed? As I feared. Fetch the inimitable Claine—he can do anything. And summon Fatty Conlord. I want to watch him go over the culinary jumps. Scram!"

Claine cut the steaks and departed, without speaking. Conlord was of no earthly use. He simply followed Syd around, like a hungry poodle. I feared I might be going to strike him.

Judged as food, dinner that night was as good as Little Zave's. As a social event, it had shortcomings. Claine was silent and ugly—a new manifestation. He kept his eyes down. Dick glared at him and hardly ate at all. Frieda, having fully recovered from her too large dose of sleeping tablets, which Cobb had forced out of her system in the nick of time, was enjoying an attack of talkative exhibitionism, apparently for Claine's benefit. The vacant places of the Doctor and Mr. Bakers rather dominated the feast. It was altogether verminous.

Out of a clear sky, Syd hailed Claine, "Have you decided who it was that shot the Doctor?"

I think his thoughts were not with us, at the moment. "Eh?" he said. "Oh—well, do you think a discussion of that would add anything to our peace of mind, just now?"

"What do you mean, peace of mind?" Syd demanded. "We've got a murderer in our midst. It wouldn't do my peace of mind any harm to know which one of us is It. We might take steps."

Claine stared at the tablecloth and drummed with his fingers. Finally he shrugged and looked up at Syd.

"You've seen as much as I have," he said. He sounded bored and unwilling. "That seems to indicate that our murderer went out the side door, walked around the front of the house on his heels, climbed in the annex window, stood on a chair and fired through a hole in the ceiling. He returned by the same route. It would have been impossible for you or Dink or me to have done all that and reached the second floor at the time we met there.

"That eliminates you and Dink. But I was downstairs in the parlor. I might have stepped into the annex, fired the shot and returned through the parlor. But we have discovered no way in which I could have done that without leaving plaster-marks on the parlor carpet. Your sister, of course, could not have left the bedroom without your knowledge. Either Conlord or Delchester could have got out the side door while you were in your room and Dink was in the kitchen. But they could not have come in again until after we three had finished in the Doctor's room and come down stairs—ten or fifteen minutes. We have no means of determining where they were during that period."

Dick's face was congested with anger. Conlord looked sulky and uneasy. Neither spoke. I just chanced to look at Syd. My heart came right up into my throat. That instant—I don't know how it happened but, out of a clear sky, it flashed on me that I was interested in her—in a serious way, I mean; really in—well, quite terribly in love with her. I was simply appalled. I hadn't had the remotest suspicion. What was I going to do? She must be pretty important. She told us she didn't dare reveal her name because people recognized it. It must be pretty well known.

Claine had acted as though he knew—why, darn it all, of course he knew. He knew Frieda. He wouldn't care how important they were. He wasn't afraid of anything. But I wouldn't dare ask him. And I don't keep track of such things. I seldom read newspapers, especially society news or the picture pages or anything of that sort.

She was speaking to Claine, again, "Some one might have worn overshoes in the plaster and taken them off before he stepped on the carpet."

"Given time enough," Claine conceded. "But, if I had stopped to take off overshoes, I should not have reached the second floor when I did."

"Could any of us have gone into his room and shot him, there?" Syd asked.

"An interesting idea," Claine said. "It could have been done if the Doctor was asleep. I shouldn't have had time to go down the front stairs and back again, after it. We know Dink built a fire in the kitchen; so he didn't have time to do it. You could have done it and dodged into the L and out again. We have only your sister's testimony that you actually went to your room——"

"Syd had her hat off," I blurted. "She was just putting on her coat. She couldn't have done it, of course." It struck me aghast to have him dragging her into things, that way, now that I realized who she was. But she was such a good sport. She didn't seem to mind, at all.

"Attaboy!" she grinned. "That's my parfait, gentil knight." It did make me glow, kind of; but, right afterward, I felt desolate and forlorn.

"That's what you saw as you ran, Dink," Claine rejoined, calmly. "She might merely have thrown her hat on the floor. —Conlord is out. He couldn't have got back to his room before Syd came out of hers. Delchester had the best opportunity—his door isn't six feet from the Doctor's. It might explain his curious deafness to a shot in the next room."

"I sleep with my head under the blankets," Dick burst out, angrily.

"An excellent refuge in time of trouble," Claine said. "But, really, young man, I am not crediting the thing to you. I doubt it was done in the room. Silly risk and trouble to creep around behind the Doctor and kneel down to fire from the edge of that hole——"

"Unless someone wished to give the impression that it was fired from downstairs," Syd broke in.

The Imperfect Twins

Claine turned toward Dick with a suggestive: "Ah-h!—A pregnant thought. Snappy way to settle a grudge with the fella downstairs—what?"

Dick brought his fist down on the table. He half rose. "You're trying to pin it on me," he shouted.

Claine raised a deprecating hand. "No, no," he said, mildly. "I told you I didn't credit it to you. The snow-tracks, downstairs, for instance—they don't fit the upstairs theory. They might, of course, have been planted in advance, as a blind. They would last indefinitely in that temperature. But that involves a more or less intricate plot—a bit beyond this young man's capacity, I suspect."

"Who was the Doctor?" Syd demanded, suddenly. "What part did he play in the sweet little bedtime story Mr. Bakers told us?"

"What makes you think he played any part?" Claine began. Dick broke in on him.

"You called him 'Benjamin,' last night." His voice was ugly and triumphant.

"A simple enough deduction. Mr. Peters called the man who shot him. 'Ben.' We think the Doctor was the man who shot him. Therefore the Doctor was Benjamin."

"Then who was Mr. Bakers?" Syd asked.

"We have nothing to indicate that he was not 'Mr. Bakers.'"

"I was wondering," Syd said, "if he could have been that oldest brother—the one with the fragrant nickname—'The Unfortunate.' Perhaps your Mysterious Unknown just hovered around until Benjamin had killed the other two and then stepped in and killed Benjamin. That might explain why they were invited to this quaint week-end. But it doesn't explain why the rest of us were invited—unless our turns are yet to come."

Claine laughed, shortly. He said: "No danger of that, I think. —Your inference would be that the Mysterious Unknown, if any, is Cousin Daniel? But Mr. Bakers made no mention of a fourth party who might be interested in the demise of the three brothers. I do not think Mr. Bakers was 'The Unfortunate.' I think he was what he said he was and that Cousin Daniel was one——"

"The Doctor called you 'Daniel,'" Gladdy shot at him, viciously. "You tried to put it off on me."

"Merely spoofing you, Cousin Gladstone. You're an irresistible temptation. I think the Doctor's remark was intended as a random shot."

"Just the same, Claine, there was something between you and the Doctor," Dick interjected, with ugly emphasis. "You both knew something."

"Are you Cousin Daniel?" Syd asked, smoothly. It made me gasp. I think it made everyone gasp except Claine. He smiled at her. It was the first sign of the old Claine that I had seen. He said, drawling:

"If I were Cousin Daniel, might it not be dangerous to run me into a corner with such a question?"

She smiled back at him and shook her head. "I should not be a bit afraid that Cousin Daniel would harm me. Besides, you haven't any gun."

"Cousin Daniel must have had a gun if he shot the Doctor," he said, quizzically. "But I thank you, angel lady, for the compliment implied in your first remark."

I was completely bewildered—but Frieda interrupted: "I'm fed up on this kind of talk. If we're going to wash the dishes, let's get at it."

"Let the dishes go," Claine said—to Syd, not to Frieda. "I think we'll be getting out of here, tomorrow."

"You think the gory drama is at an end?"

"I feel quite sure of it, Cousin Syd."

She studied his face. So far as I could judge it was blankly non-committal. She said, cryptically,

"Ask Cousin—uh—Cobb; he knows."

CHAPTER XXVI

I HAD expected to sleep. But when I closed my eyes the old apprehension, the old, strained vigilance came back upon me. And there were my unhappy thoughts about Syd and my misgivings and anxiety about Claine. But it was more Syd than Claine.

He had gone outdoors—to resume his gloomy tramping, I supposed. I heard him come in, at intervals, to put chunks in the stoves, but it was half-past twelve before he came upstairs. With the moon overcast, he was merely a moving blur as he tiptoed to the bed.

"Hello," I said.

"Oh—you awake? What's the matter?"

"Nothing. Can't get to sleep."

"Foolish," he said. "Nothing to worry about, tonight. Go to sleep."

"Coming to bed?"

"No."

"Why not?" I demanded. "What's the matter? What are you afraid of?"

"Nothing, I tell you." He was snappish, irritated. "I give you my word there is absolutely nothing to worry about. Go to sleep!"

He left the room, abruptly, and began to pace the corridor. He went downstairs and came up again. For an hour he roamed the house, like a questing cat. It was a negation of his whole temperament as I had known it. It was incredible; it was upsetting. It was a riddle that I could not solve. I knew that strange mind of his—self-sufficient, rebellious, impatient of conventional restraint. Claine was a cold-blooded, logical realist with a code all his own. In some of his relations it went far beyond the conventional inhibitions of the herd; in others it denied them utterly. Into what had it led him now?

DOWN the L a door opened. I heard heavy steps. I sat up, very suddenly. There was a danger I had forgotten—Gladdy's hunger for Syd. But the steps came forward to join Claine in the main corridor. I heard Gladdy pleading; Claine firm and denying. Gladdy cursed him and tramped back to his room. I surmised it was the matter of the Doctor's gin. It brought a startling thought. Syd's revolver was in my overcoat pocket. She was without means of defense. After some debate, I decided to take it to her. In the hall, Claine intercepted me.

"Taking Syd's revolver to her," I explained. "She left it with me, this afternoon."

"You'll wake them up," he objected, "frighten them. She won't need it."

"Gladdy," I began.

"Gladdy?" he seemed puzzled. "Oh, I'd forgotten. He'll never bother her when he's sober. I've put the booze where he can't find it. I'll be stirring around, anyhow. Go back to sleep—you've been asleep?"

"Yes," I lied, to avoid argument.

He might be right. At any rate, I should be awake and ready. I went back to bed, holding the revolver in my hand, under the blanket. I felt not the slightest desire to sleep. Syd filled my mind, now—or, rather, the bitter thought of life without Syd.

Again there were heavy footsteps, from the other direction, this time. My heart jumped—the Doctor! I had to laugh at myself. The Doctor had become an obsession. He was dead. This must be Dick. Claine met him and they talked, in tense undertones. Then, together, they went down the front stairs. What could that mean? Those two!

They were gone more than half an hour, by the glow of my watch-dial. One came back, alone, and tramped away down the corridor. It must be Dick. I heard the faint, distant closing of his door. It was another hour before Claine came up. He tiptoed into the room. I simulated sleep. He bent over me, so close that I could feel his breath. He whispered my name several times. My nerves grew taut.

In the nick of time he straightened up and left the room. He went down the back stairs and out of doors, I thought. Quite soon he returned and moved quietly down the L to Gladdy's door. I heard the faint rumble of their voices, with a sudden change in the timbre of Gladdy's. The door clicked shut. There was dead silence; then the sound of Claine moving cautiously about in the L. I caught brief, faint flashes of his torch. Then I lost track of him until, suddenly, I saw the blur of his shadow in the doorway. I braced myself but he did not approach the bed. He reached in and drew the door closed, with one sharp squeaking of a hinge. Incongruously it flashed upon me that, in all this ancient, weathered, rusty Tavern, it was the first real squeaking of a hinge that I had heard.

I was in a pretty state of mind. I was frightened—not for myself; I never questioned Claine's loyalty to me. But what was he up to? It seemed clear that he had brought gin to Conlord. Certainly not from kindness of heart toward that cheerless dipsomaniac. Incredible that he could be deliberately inflaming him to make trouble for Syd. But why had he closed my door unless to cut me off?

I did not know what to do. I dreaded to act a fool and bring Claine's irony down upon me. It would be quite characteristic of his mother-instinct to close that door for the safeguarding of my slumbers. If I rushed out upon him what could I say to him except the truth? I am

wholly without the gift of dissimulation. Yet, subconsciously, I knew that something impended and that I must be ready.

I swung out of bed and moved stealthily to the door. Clutching the revolver in my right hand, I located the latch with my left. I pressed my ear against the crack and stood, waiting. It seemed an age. From my unspecialized knowledge of the workings of intoxicating liquor, I should say it could not have been less than twenty minutes—it may have been thirty. Several times, I had to shift position to ease the intolerable rigor of my muscles. More than once I was on the point of bursting forth to confront Claine. Just as often I made up my mind to kick myself and go back to bed. Then Syd's voice—sharp, angry, terrified—screamed:

"Dink!—Help—Dink!"

Before she had called my name the second time, I was in the corridor. Almost instantly, the thump of other boots mingled with mine. Hands grasped my shoulders from behind. Ahead of me, down the L, I heard the rush of feet; saw a shadow lurching toward us. It swerved to one side; disappeared. A door slammed.

The lunge of my rush carried me on, dragging my assailant with me. His grip tightened. I fought to writhe free. Our struggle turned us around. For a step or two, we staggered backward, down the L, the other man in advance of me. There was a flash; a barking explosion. I felt the shock of it; felt the heat of it—so violently that, for an instant, I thought I had been shot.

The man at my back grunted, horribly. His grip relaxed. I shook myself free of him. As I dodged past, he was gliding down into a shadowy, boneless, most appalling heap.

CHAPTER XXVII

I DO NOT clearly remember anything of the split-second that followed. Syd's need of me possessed my mind to the exclusion of every other thought. What had happened there behind me, was merely a confused, unrelated nightmare.

Then Syd came rushing through her door. She carried a lamp above her head. At sight of me she stopped short. We both gasped, "Oh." I thought her relief seemed as great as mine. She cried, breathlessly, "You're not hurt?" I shook my head. "What was it?" I must have gestured, in my numb helplessness, for she looked past me, then went striding up the hall. When I overtook her, she was peering down at that distressing heap. She turned and gripped my arm. She said, very gently,

"Dink—it's Claine."

I knew what was in her voice was not her own feeling for Claine but her thought of my feeling for him. The sudden, sharp pain in my heart; the bewilderment of my mind—I could not speak. She pressed my arm and knelt, setting the lamp on the floor.

"He's breathing," she said. "Get that fool Delchester."

I found his bedroom door open. That seemed a strange thing. He appeared to be sound asleep, with his head under the blankets, as advertised. He was still more or less asleep when I delivered him to Syd. He asked, stupidly, "Who is it?"

"Claine. Help Dink lift him. I wish I had your gift of sleep."

We made clumsy work getting his great bulk down the stairs. We stretched him on the cot, in the parlor, and got his clothes off to the waist. There was a bullet hole, low in his right side. It had not bled much. I thought Syd ought not to see it, but she passed the lamp to me and bent over to examine it. She said, crisply:

"Heat some water—just a little. Dick, get some chunks for the stoves."

She was the only one who knew what to do. When I brought the water she was tearing a sheet into strips. She had been upstairs alone, in the dark, to get it. Frieda had come down with her. She and Dick were in the dining room together. I said:

"There's an aid-kit, upstairs."

"Get it," she ordered, "and whisky, if there is any."

Seeking Claine's flashlight, I realized suddenly that he had not been wearing his overcoat. He had roamed that Tavern for hours, without it—outdoors, too, no doubt. I wondered if there had been something I might have done to ease the pain that tormented him into these things. He would not have left me alone as I had left him.

I fetched the kit and a flask of whisky from Claine's bag. Syd sterilized the wound and bandaged it. She forced a little whisky down his throat. She said, "Bad medicine, I suppose, but the best that offers. I want to give his heart a little help."

It seemed to help. His breathing grew stronger and more even. I said, miserably, "What can we do?" Syd took my hand in both of hers, patting it gently.

"There is nothing to do, my dear, but grit our teeth and wait. A body like this one can take a powerful lot of punishment." She took hold of the blankets. For a moment we stood, looking down upon his massive torso—the skin as smooth as a boy's, and the long muscles beneath. Syd whispered, "He is magnificent," and drew the blankets over him. She did not seem to be speaking to me.

We looked at each other with some constraint. I think we both dreaded to approach this thing. It may have been partly sheer weariness of mind; partly fear of the problem, itself. A sound of maudlin singing came down the stairs. It brought me a sense of relief and a certain unlovely satisfaction. I started for the door.

"Where you going?" Syd demanded.

"I'm going to get that gin."

Conlord was reclining on the bed, propped with pillows and swaddled in blankets. He held a tumbler in his hand and he was crooning happily to himself. The Doctor's black bag was on the floor. I picked it up and took the half-empty bottle from the table. Conlord shouted:

"Hey!"

I walked toward the door. He unwrapped himself, set down the tumbler and rushed after me. He tried to wrench the bag from my hand. I turned and pushed him back. He rushed at me again and struck at my face. Fortunately, I was able to roll my head aside, as I had seen Claine do. Conlord's knuckles merely rasped across my cheek but they hurt me quite painfully. I had never been struck in anger, before.

I dropped the bag and the bottle, and struck him, as hard as I could, in the stomach—or whatever place it was that Little Zave struck Claine—the *solar plexus*, I think Claine called it. I am not sure that I hit the right spot, exactly, but it answered the purpose. He grunted, "Ow!" and doubled up over his folded arms. I immediately struck him in the face. It was a weak blow, so I struck him again, with the other hand. He attacked me very fiercely, then. Really, now that he was drunk, he was quite lion-like, just as Claine said. It gave me immense satisfaction. I had not taken any great pride in subduing him, that other time when he was sober.

At that moment I think I became possessed of a lust, or frenzy. What with my grief and fear for Claine coming on top of everything else, I was in a quite beastly state of mind. It came over me that for days I had been nourishing a hunger to pound this indescribable scoundrel in the face. So I kept striking him, first with one hand and then with the other. Whenever he put up his arms to shield his face, I struck him in that stomach place and he put them down again.

At first I was clumsy and ineffective and he struck me quite as often as I struck him. I was wholly without experience in such matters. But I improved astonishingly as I went along. Finally I managed a really tremendous blow, a swinging, upward blow with my right hand, directly under his ear. He fell sidewise, rolled over on his back and lay entirely still, with his eyes closed.

For a moment, I actually thought I had killed him, but I saw he was breathing. I knelt down and shook him and called to him. He gave no sign of hearing me. His face was really quite appalling. I could hardly believe I had done all that with my knuckles—they pained me, frightfully. I began to be alarmed. It was possible that he might be going to die. Not that this was undesirable, in itself. It was merely that we seemed to have an ample supply of dead men, without him. I decided I had better consult Syd; her mind is so much better than mine. I took the gin and went downstairs.

"Syd," I said, "I don't know what to do about Conlord."

"What's the matter with him?"

"He's unconscious. I can't rouse him."

She gave a funny little laugh. "Oh," she said, "Cover him up and let him sleep it off."

"It isn't that," I said. "I—uh—struck him."

She looked at me. Then she leaned forward and began to stare at me. The light was not good. She got up and came over to me. She began to touch my cheeks and nose and forehead with the tip of her finger, quite gingerly. They were quite painful and it soothed me, really. She said:

"My word; that face! You little rascal—you've been fighting."

"Well," I admitted, "we were striking each other."

"And you knocked him cold? Dink, you coarse, brutal darling! Lead me to him! Quick, before he comes out of it."

She ran up the stairs, ahead of me. When I reached Conlord's room she was standing before him with an expression of rapture on her face.

"There is a Santa Claus," she said. "Look at that face! A workman-like job, I call it. You're a genius. Honest, Dink, did you do that alone, without anybody helping you or telling you how, or anything?"

"I'm afraid I lost control of myself, rather," I said. I really was beginning to feel a little ashamed. It seemed sort of a horrid thing to do to a fellow-creature. "You're sure he'll come out of it, all right?"

"I'm afraid so—unless we take steps to prevent. It would be a patriotic act. Still, there may be someone who loves him."

She broke the ice in the water pitcher and emptied it on his head, ice and all. He sat up with astonishing suddenness, gasping and staring. It was ludicrous, really.

"Patch yourself up and go to bed," she told him. "If you show that face downstairs I'm going to let this mauler have his will of you."

When we were walking up the dark hall she slipped her arm under mine and pressed it against her. She said, rather unsteadily:

"Dink, for what you have done for me, this night, may God reward you—if I don't find a way."

I thought that was a funny thing to say—but it made my flesh creep, sort of; the way she said it.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WHEN Syd had patched the broken spots in my face—a quite enjoyable experience—we sat for a long time, watching Claine and saying almost nothing. I could not force myself to bring up the subject that was in both our minds. I did not know how to face it without Claine. It was Syd, finally, who broke the ice. She said:

"Well, what are we going to do? Who fired that shot?"

"I don't know," I said. "I didn't see anyone. I don't see how anyone could have been there."

"Conlord went out of our room, just before the shot. Frieda screamed and I hit him in the eye, and he ran out."

"Frieda screamed!" I exclaimed. "I thought it was you. Why did she yell for me?"

"I never screamed in my life," Syd declared. "It was Frieda. She didn't yell 'Dink'; she yelled 'Dick.'"

I said, "Oh." I hadn't thought of that. "But it wasn't Conlord," I added. "He went into his room and shut the door. It wasn't fired from that side, anyway."

"Could it have come from that empty room on the other side?"

I shook my head. "We were four or five feet from that door. The shot was so close I could feel it—I thought it had struck me. I could swear nobody was in that hall close enough to fire it."

"It couldn't have been Dick, then," she began. That brought a startling thought. I said:

"His door was open when I went to get him."

"Open!"

"Wide open. But I'm sure he was really asleep. Anyhow, he isn't tough enough to shoot anyone."

"He shot at you, the other night."

Positively, I had forgotten that—and it suggested something else. "He thought I was Claine," I reminded her.

"There you are," she said. "His door was wide open and he claims he didn't hear Frieda scream. He tried to shoot Claine, the other night; he hates him. There's this mess about the three halfbreeds and this other mess about Frieda and Claine and Dick. And there isn't any connecting link unless Claine provides it. Why did Claine attack you?" she asked, sharply.

"He didn't; he was trying to stop me." I realized, suddenly, that she actually didn't know what had happened. I told her everything.

"There you are," she said again. "Why did he bring the gin to Conlord? Why did he want you to be sound asleep? Why did he close your door? Why didn't he come, himself, when Frieda screamed? That wasn't like him. Perhaps it was he who opened Dick's door. Why? And why did he try so hard to keep you from coming to help us? Do you suppose he thought you were Dick and tried to shoot you—and shot himself?"

"He knew me," I told her. "He saw me come out of my room. He couldn't have fired that shot—he had his hands on my shoulders. He didn't have a gun—we'd have found it."

"Did he know you had my gun?"

I stiffened so suddenly that she stopped. I uttered that vulgar phrase which I so firmly deplore. I groaned, "Oh, God!"

Syd cried, "What is it, Dink?" She looked positively frightened. It was my face, I suppose. I said:

"I shot him, Syd."

"You!"

"I had the gun in my hand. It must have gone off."

"But, Dink, if it had gone off in your hand you would have known it."

"I didn't know anything—it was all mixed up."

"Well, that's easily decided." She picked up the revolver, broke it and examined the shells. She snapped the breech closed. "Not guilty," she said, with a note of relief. "All there—six of them. But that doesn't help much."

She extinguished the light. Day was beginning to enter the room. The reaction had left me rather weak. Before I could frame words, Claine called, faintly, "Dink." His voice was weak, but, really, quite astonishingly firm. We hurried to the bed. He was trying to smile.

"Everybody all right?" he asked.

"Everybody but you," Syd replied.

He seemed relieved. "I'm all right; quite satisfied. A bit lingering, perhaps, but it may be for the best. There are certain things to be done."

Syd caught his meaning before I did. She sat down on the bed and laid her hand over his. She said, "We're going to pull you through, Cobb."

A faintly bantering look came into his eyes. He said, "All things considered, Cousin Syd, would that be desirable?"

She looked steadily into his eyes. "I don't know all the facts, Cobb," she said, "but I trust your judgment."

His hand turned under hers and closed about it. "Stout fella!" he whispered. I felt bewildered. These two always seemed to understand each other and I could never understand either of them. Claine went on:

"We shall be spared the burden of decision, I think. I want to do what I can to ease your ordeal with the police. We must hurry. A little hot broth or coffee, if you can manage."

When he had had these, he seemed stronger. He asked that Conlord and Frieda and Dick be called in as witnesses. I wrote as he dictated. He was, plainly, in great pain and he paused frequently to rest. But he held himself grimly to the task until it was finished:

"To the Police or Whomsoever:

"I, the undersigned, legally known as Cobbden Claine, but christened Daniel Bakers, do solemnly affirm that the following statement of the events of the past three days is the truth and that I make it of my own motion, of my own free will and under no compulsion whatsoever except the expectation of imminent death:

"(1)—Xavier Bakers was killed, by his half-brother, Dr. Benjamin Bakers, as he was in the act of attempting the life of Artemas Laurence Randall; the said attempt being made in the belief that the said Randall was myself, Cobbden Claine.

"(2)—Charles Bakers, cousin of the two half-brothers, Bakers, aforesaid, was killed by Dr. Benjamin Bakers.

"(3)—Dr. Benjamin Bakers was killed by the undersigned, Cobbden Claine, half-brother of the aforesaid, Benjamin and Xavier.

"(4)—The wound, from which I confidently believe myself to be dying, was wholly the result of my own acts.

"(5)—The aforesaid, all and several, richly deserved their fates.

"(6)—None of the others present in the so-called Mountain Tavern during these events, to wit: Artemas Laurence Randall, Richard Delchester, William E. Gladstone Conlord, Frieda Smith and Alsatia Smith, had any part in or knowledge of the said events."

We witnessed his signature. My brain had been whirling so that I could scarcely write. Claine was Cousin Daniel! Syd's name was Alsatia Smith! Claine had killed the Doctor! Syd's name was Alsatia Smith! Claine had

shot himself—with both hands on my shoulders! Syd's name was Alsatia Smith! What did that signify? I could not recognize it. Who was Alsatia Smith? Claine had opened his eyes again. He was saying:

"They will surely break out of the road, today. Notify the authorities and stay here till they come. It will be unpleasant but these chaps are not like city police. They have more commonsense and less itch for newspaper notoriety. I want to talk with Dink and Syd. Good-bye and good luck. I am truly sorry for all this."

When the others had gone he smiled, faintly, with a pallid flash of his old self. He said: "Alsatia, I want you to promise me you'll watch over my Dink. He'll need someone to guide his artless soul through this complicated world."

She looked at him with a sort of queer expression on her face. I couldn't tell what it meant. She said:

"That would be a terrible responsibility, Cobb. But I'll try to check up on him, once in a while, if I can find time.

"Dink," he said, "please go over by the door."

They whispered, intensely. Claine seemed to be urging something; Syd denying, vehemently. Finally she appeared to yield. Claine smiled, weakly, and patted her hand. Quite suddenly she bent and kissed his forehead. When she went out, her face was flushed. She did not look at me. I thought there was happiness in Claine's eyes. I said, "Cobb, who is Alsatia Smith? I don't recognize the name. Is she really terribly important?"

He began in the old teasing way. Those frail wraiths of the old Claine were, I think, the hardest things of all to endure. He said: "Dink, there are people who think she is the most important person in the world—" He broke off and his manner changed. "No, son, I do not want the term of our fellowship to close on that chaffing note. Listen—Syd is no more 'terribly important' than you and I are. 'Smith' is one of the most common names in the world and almost everybody would recognize it. She was spoofing her own name, that's all. She does not like it—but, remember, she thinks 'Randall' is a ripping name."

His face suddenly went sombre, again. He said, in a weary voice: "There is a letter for you in my coat pocket. Read it aloud with Syd. She may help you to understand it."

The last faint light of interest faded from his eyes and he closed them. His hand groped for mine. I took it. I sat thus, for a long, unhappy time. Then he opened his eyes. They peered toward me in a curious, blurred, yearning way. He said, with great difficulty:

"Thirsty, son. Will you get me some water—fresh—from the spring?"

He died while I was gone. I think that is why he sent me.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE Parlor—Saturday afternoon. Dink:—Little Zave is dead. The first act is ended. I do not know what the second act will be. But, somewhere in the course of this affair, I shall be killed. If no one else does it I shall do it, myself, at the end. I have that understanding with myself. Otherwise, of course, I should not be doing what I am.

I am fed up—sick and weary of the infinite numskull-duggery of the human herd. When this job is cleaned up, my work is done. I'm through. My views and conduct have puzzled and distressed you but you have tolerated me. Set this affair down as merely the last and greatest of my incomprehensibilities. Do not try to explain or justify me to anyone else.

Now, while you are finishing your nap, upstairs, I want to sketch the story as far as it has gone. Actually the vital facts have all been presented to you, in one form or another. I merely draw the threads together. I am, of course, "The Unfortunate" of Mr. Baker's tale. I did not know they had given me that name. My mother christened me Daniel Bakers though none of these others was aware of that. Little Zave and Benjamin—the Doctor—are my half brothers. Mr. Bakers is our cousin Charles, the son of our father's older brother. His father and my father quarreled bitterly over the inheritance of the Tavern and their father's money.

My father—Old Zave—was a maverick, a lone wolf, but he was a gentle and an honorable man, according to his lights. My mother was of French-Indian blood. She was a woman of character and intellect. She loved my father and he loved her. He wanted to marry her.

Charles Bakers lied to us when he said he was taken West as a child. He grew up in this neighborhood. He was about my mother's age. He loved her, perhaps honorably—if he was ever capable of anything honorable. He was always a mewling, despicable cad. She feared and detested him. He learned of her relations with my father and tortured her. She ran away to escape him. That was before I was born.

My father tried to find her but he never did. Charles found her twice. Both times she gave up her home and her livelihood and ran away to escape him and his lying tongue. The fear of him brooded over her. It broke her spirit and her health, and she died. She was Indian—and so am I. She drilled that story into me as a litany of revenge. She pledged me to find him and kill him, when I was old enough.

Soon after she died my father's agents found me. He would not leave his forest. I could not bring myself to come up here. I never saw him but he provided for my living and my education, and he made me his heir. When I grew up, I changed my name. I thought it might make it easier for me to find Charles Bakers.

My father had had an affair with my mother's younger sister. Xavier—Little Zave—was their son. Later, my father married another woman. Benjamin—the Doctor—was born to them. He was my father's only legitimate offspring.

I want to touch this part lightly. It hurts. The girl Charles Bakers told you of, last night, was to have married me. She came up here to get acquainted with my father. It is the bitterest thing in my life that I let her come alone. Zave and Benjamin were here. Benjamin found her walking in the woods, and assaulted her. Zave came upon them. He and Benjamin fought. He stabbed Benjamin in the arm and took her from him. When she finally escaped from Zave she wrote me a letter and killed herself—in the room upstairs where Benjamin is now. I hope to kill him in that room, tonight.

I hunted these three men steadily but I could not find them. That, really, is why I resigned from the faculty—to devote myself to finding and killing them. To finish my work and pass on. I located them, one by one, last year.

So much for the background of the story.

CHAPTER XXX

YOU have heard me say that the criminal in a case has most of the fun. He knows all the facts. He sets the problems for us to wrestle with. I have always hankered to try his end of it. I had three men and myself to dispose of. There seemed to be material for an interesting experiment.

Of course, I had no thought of a "perfect crime." Quite impossible to control the actions of four major characters. The idea was, simply, to put actors and audience into primitive surroundings and let nature take its course. I rather fancied the dual role. — Cousin Daniel and Cobbden Claine; the villain and the detective. In that aspect it threatens to be a grievous disappointment; like doing a jigsaw puzzle with a duplicate picture.

It was a problem how to persuade the actors to join the cast. I offered special inducements in each case. I let Zave know that I would be here—the only obstacle between him and the inheritance. I told Benjamin that both Zave and I would be here—his two obstacles. It does not seem to have occurred to them, or to Mr. Bakers, that I might have made a will—which I have, as you will discover; so that neither of them could inherit, in any case.

Benjamin and Zave knew each other, of course, and were able to identify me as their missing brother. Thus we three entered the action on equal terms except that no one knew it was I who wrote the letters. I tempted Charles Bakers by reminding him of his father's claim to the property. He apparently has no suspicion of my identity. To complicate things I invited four neutral characters. Conlord was the only one who came.

I brought you as a matter of course. There would be no point to the thing unless I had you to expound it to. I thought it might provide the roughage which your intellectual diet has lacked. I offer you no apology on that ground. But I had no thought of danger for you. Your affair with Zave, last night, has disturbed me seriously. The Frieda-Delchester-Syd group, has no connection with the other. I brought them for personal reasons which I do not feel justified in revealing, even to you. But they are wholly without guile and blameless in the matter.

The Imperfect Twins

This blizzard is a bit of sheer luck. I had planned to disable the ignition of the cars. Even so, you might all have walked out on me, after Zave's death, if the snow had not held you here. The only preparations I made were to remove the bolts from the bedroom doors, oil the hinges and prepare two "plants", which I may or may not have occasion to use. These were random shots—to create an atmosphere of mystery, as much as anything else.

It was I, of course, who hid the kerosene can in the snow. The less light on the subject, the better. And it gives you something to think about. I also buried the girls' skis and snowshoes in a drift. They haven't discovered that, yet. Aside from these minor things I am doing nothing to influence the course of the action. I merely play my own role according to my cues.

I think the detective Claine has been honest with you. He has revealed everything he legitimately discovered. But Cousin Daniel cramps his style more than I expected. There are some obvious lines that he cannot follow up without revealing the villain's work prematurely and stopping the show. That is not done to protect me. I am quite ready to be suspected, any time. In fact, some of my acts and some of Claine's right supernatural deductions have been deliberately designed to raise a question in your mind. That is part of the game.

Zave and Benjamin took up their roles with an enthusiasm beyond my fondest hope. Zave, of course, was expecting me, not you, to come through that door, last night. He was planning to eliminate his obstacle without delay. Fortunately, Benjamin chose that moment to eliminate the first of his obstacles, and he beat Zave to it by a hair.

I ought to shoot Benjamin before he gets a chance to shoot me. But I am inclined to wait. I hope he may feel impelled to attend to Charles Bakers, first. That is a job I do not fancy. I hate to kill soft, squashy things. Benjamin must know that Charles is cognizant of his guilt. You remember, I emphasized that point, in the kitchen, this morning. I hope the seed may take root.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE Parlor—Sunday Afternoon. Dink—You and the Syd person make a charming picture of young love and innocence, asleep in each other's arms, upstairs. I hope it is a portent. At least, it gives me a chance to write, free from your gentle espionage.

I am not sure, now, that you will ever see this. Things have crashed quite badly, my son. I did not dream the Frieda-Delchester thread would develop this spontaneous violence on its own initiative. It has brought you close to death from the bullet Delchester meant for me. It has impelled Frieda to attempt suicide and to turn against me. It has brought my own philosophy tumbling about my ears. In Frieda's room, this morning, you saw me out of control for the first time in my life. My impulses and my plans are still so confused that I do not know what will emerge from them. I shall have to tell you about Frieda, now—but first I will clean up the other phase which ended when I shot Benjamin.

I had prepared that annex-rom in advance—the wallboard at the window and the chair under the register-hole. I did one other thing which you have not seen. I prepared a path through the plaster from the chair to the parlor door. I brushed footholds and wiped the floor with a damp cloth so that I would not track plaster-dust on to the parlor carpet. While I was outdoors, last evening, I made those heel-marks around the house and the snow-tracks in the annex—purely mystery stuff.

The decoy shot that Benjamin fired through the register-hole into the annex, puzzled me as much as it did you. I approached it from the wrong angle. I thought he was after me. I thought he had, somehow, got down into that room and had fired the shot to draw me in there, expecting to shoot me as I came through the door. My timorous maneuvers in that doorway were entirely sincere. As soon as I heard the two shots that killed Charles Bakers, the whole thing became clear. It was stupid of me.

Benjamin's talented performance of his role has, unquestionably, saved the show from being a complete flop. But it has added nothing to my self-esteem. He has rather had it on me. His hold-up was particularly humiliating. But for your stout-hearted Syd it might have been disastrous for all of us. The trouble has been, I think, that since my talk with Frieda, in the ballroom, my heart hasn't been in it.

After Syd had disarmed us, I had Benjamin to shoot and nothing to do it with. My problem was to get Charles Bakers' revolver which the rest of you seem to have overlooked. My elaborate tour of exploration, this morning, while you were held thrall in the bonds of young love, up there in the corridor, was a pretext for entering his room. You must have heard the bed creak when I turned his body over to get the gun. I returned it later, at the same time that I salvaged Benjamin's gin.

HAVING the gun, it was simple enough to slip into the annex from the parlor. Nasty to shoot him in his sleep. But I was weary of the thing. I wanted to clean it up and be done. And Benjamin deserved no better. From the time I showed you the hole in the floor there could be no doubt that it was I who shot him. It remained only to discover how I had been able to return through the parlor and meet you upstairs, without leaving plaster-marks on the parlor carpet. I had an impulse to show you the missing link, the path through the plaster. That would have clinched the case against me. Quite dramatic; really what I had hoped for at the start; the detective running his criminal self to earth. Then I could have withdrawn to a quiet spot and taken myself off your hands.

But I was no longer sure I wanted to take myself off. I destroyed the path before your eyes by scuffing plaster over it with my feet. You must have wondered, a little, at that. I destroyed the one vital clue and wrecked the career of Cobbden Claine, the great detective. So much for trying to be criminal and investigator at the same time. And so much for trying to introduce an alien *leitmotif* into a straightforward drama of revenge.

"I suppose this Frieda motif has puzzled you. My motives in bringing her here may seem obscure. They are less clear to me than they were.

I followed many blind trails in my search through the Bakers family jungle. One of them led me to Frieda. Another led her to Delchester, last Summer. That explains the existence of our triangle within the frontiers of the Bakers clan. You must not judge Frieda by what you have seen here. She has been under terrific strain for a long time. Fundamentally she is as fine a woman as your Syd—I could not say more, could I?

Frieda took deeper hold on me than any other woman in my life. I won't go into that. But to marry her, to shackle a young woman to man past fifty, doom her to spend the prime of her life nursing me through old age, seemed to me a cruel thing. I did not know Delchester. But things she said convinced me that she could find happiness with him if I were out of the picture. But, if I were to die, this obsession of hers might crystallize and torment her all her life. I thought things might happen, up here, which would disillusion her so violently that she could turn to him and be happy.

Her hysterical revulsion against me, this morning, was inevitable under the circumstances. She suddenly faced the fact that she was actually destroying her young life "for an old man," as she expressed it. Her feelings must have been beyond analysis—terror, anger, disgust, hatred. I do not question her attitude. But my own change of heart, I cannot understand. It is inexplicable to me. I tell myself that I can solve my problem by shooting myself, as I planned—an easy way out. But I cannot bring myself to do it. It may be perverted pride. I have never been flouted like that. It hurts, in spite of the fact that I thought I was seeking it in all sincerity. I simply cannot face the prospect of going out of life and leaving that puling whippersnapper to gloat over me and enjoy her. She cannot enjoy him for long. He is not man enough to make her happy.

Perhaps I shall be able to bring some reason out of my chaos. But, right now, I do not know what I am going to do. So much for the lifelong delusion that I was big enough to boss my own destiny.

* * *

Monday, 2:30 a. m.—I have just finished a talk with young Delchester. It was of his seeking. He has said things that I never expected to take from any man. I am going to lay this problem on the knees of the gods of chance and let them decide between him and me. The odds will be greatly in his favor.

There is a spring-gun in the wall of the L corridor. I put it there when I prepared the annex-room "plant." You will find it behind a wallboard patch in the partition of the bedroom opposite Conlord's. It is a revolver clamped in a small bench-vise. The muzzle comes through a hole and is flush with the plastering of the corridor. It is covered with a bit of wallpaper.

The Imperfect Twins

The trigger is wired back. The hammer is fastened back with twine. There is a wire hooked into a strand of the twine. It leads out, through a hole in the plastering, to the corridor. It hangs there now, behind a loose strip of wallpaper. There is a screw-hook in the opposite wall. The gun can be set by stretching the wire across the corridor and looping the end over that hook. If anyone runs against that wire it will snap the twine and release the hammer of the gun. I tell you all this so that you will know how to remove the thing, safely, if it has not been fired.

You have Syd's gun. The girls are without protection. When I finish this, I shall go up and give Conlord his gin and close your door. You are sleeping more soundly than I ever knew you to sleep. If the gin works on Conlord as it has before, it will send him to Syd's room. Frieda's impulse in fear, yesterday, was to scream for "Dick." I shall open his door. If Conlord goes to their room and if Frieda screams and if Delchester hears and responds, he will run against that wire and be killed. In that case, I shall destroy this letter and see what I can do with life. If he does not respond, I shall accept the decision and shoot myself, as planned. You will note that there are three big "ifs" on Delchester's side of the gamble. I think he will win.

I shall stay there, in the hall, to make sure no one else blunders against that wire. If Frieda's dashing young knight does not get his head out from under the bedclothes promptly, I shall, of course, take Conlord off Syd's hands before any harm is done.

Good-bye, my son. May you fare well. You are the one thing in life that I regret to leave.

COBB.

* * *

After a long silence, Syd said, "He was fighting to keep you from that wire."

I could not answer her.

CHAPTER XXXII

SYD says all the rest of this is anti-climax and ought to be thrown out to the chickens. It may be anti-climax to her but it makes a hit with me.

The police were quite decent, considering Syd's provocative conduct. She started right in by telling them that, if they had waited a bit, she would have had three more corpus delictis ready for them—maybe four, counting me. A little later I saw her shooting tin cans on the wing for the entertainment of a swank young trooper or constable or whatever you can call them. It seemed untactful in a murder suspect.

But that was later. This other was while Syd and Frieda and I were in the kitchen, getting something to eat. Frieda backed me into a corner. She said:

"Dick is going to make an honest woman of me. What do you propose to do about Syd?"

"Syd doesn't need anybody to do anything about her," I said, with quiet dignity. Frieda said:

"You can't squirm out of it, that way. She's my sister and no young wastrel is going to do her wrong. You've compromised her"—

I turned my back. I was going to walk out of the room. I thought it was very poor taste. Frieda seized my arm. She said: "Syd, he's trying to walk out on you. He's an unprincipled scoundrel."

SYD came over to us. Her face was flushed from the stove, and the collar of her flannel shirt was open. She was terribly beautiful but her eyes were terribly sad, I thought, and the corners of her mouth trembled, sort of. She put her arms around my neck and laid her face against my coat. She began to sob. I swear, I was at my wits' end. I never can make out about women, anyhow. I didn't know how to express it. I said:

"Have I really compromised you, Syd?"

She nodded, quite vigorously, against my coat.

"Does she mean I ought to—uh—marry you?"

She nodded even more vigorously. Well, that thought made my head whirl. It frightened me, too. I had never dared think of such a thing—especially with Syd. I've always been terribly afraid of women—and Syd was so frightfully wonderful. I said:

"Why, of course I'll marry you, Syd."

Then she shook her head—violently.

"But I will, Syd, honest."

She shook her head again. She said—her voice was sort of muffled in my coat, "It's noble of you, Dink, but I couldn't accept such a sacrifice."

"It isn't a sacrifice," I told her.

"It is, and I won't accept it," she said, quite unsteadily. "I'll get along, somehow. It was my fault, as much as yours. I can't let you sacrifice your whole life for a girl you don't love."

Well, that made me good and mad. I took hold of her and shook her. I said, "Damn it all! Do I have to tell you I love you?"

Then she looked up at me. Really, you know, I don't think she had been crying, at all. Her face was pretty red but her eyes were sparkling, positively. She said, "Of course, it isn't absolutely mandatory, but it's quite often done. Some girls prefer it that way."

Well, I guess it must have been her eyes. I simply could not believe it. I said, "Do you mean you would want to marry me, anyhow, Syd—even if I hadn't—uh—compromised you?"

"And how!" she said. "Besides, I promised Cobb I'd marry you if I had to propose, myself."

Then, positively, I kissed her. As nearly as I could determine, it was exactly as Cobb had said it ought to be. It was not the least like kissing Frieda—

But, of course, I cannot go into details. That sort of thing is not discussed.

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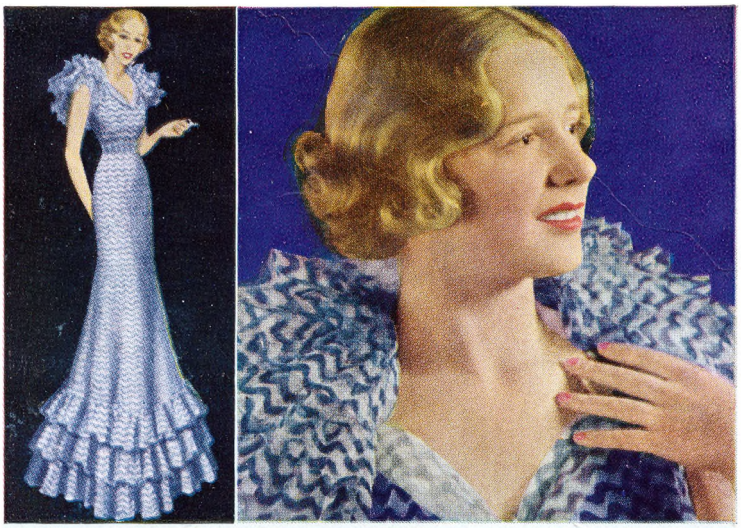

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(In Canada, P. O. Box 2320, Montreal)
I enclose 10¢ for new Cutex Color Wheel and generous bottle of Cutex Liquid Polish in shade I have checked: ☐ Rose ☐ Coral ☐ Cardinal ☐ Ruby ☐ Natural

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CUTEX Liquid Polish

LUCKIES ARE ALL-WAYS KIND TO YOUR THROAT

"it's toasted"

Only the Center Leaves—these are the Mildest Leaves

The Cream of the Crop

They Taste Better

NOT the top leaves—*they're under-developed—they are harsh!*

NOT the bottom leaves—*they're inferior in quality—coarse and sandy!*