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ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE



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June, 1948

From Another World
Dry-Kye

The Letters in Evidence
The Phantom Archer

The Silver Dollar
The Weapon That Didn't Exist

The Strategy of Ah Lo
Your Face Is Familiar

The Tontine Curse
A Murder at the Dôme

The Devil Is a Gentleman
The Tallor's Squares

A Puzzle in Essence

CLAYTON RAWSON
 BEN AMES WILLIAMS
 C. S. FORESTER
 JOHN DICKSON CARR
 RINK CREUSSEN
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4. The judges who will make the final decision in the contest will be Ellery Queen and the editorial staff of Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine.

5. All entries must be received at the office of the magazine, 570 Lexington Avenue, New York 22, N. Y., not later than October 20, 1948.

6. Prize winners will be announced and the prizes awarded by Christmas 1948. The prize-winning stories will appear in Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine during 1949.

7. All prize winners and all other contestants whose stories are purchased agree to grant Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine first book-anthology rights, and when these rights are exercised, they will be paid for as follows: \$50 for the original edition, \$25 for cheap editions, and a pro rata share of 25% of the royalties if the anthology should be chosen by a book club. Authors of all stories bought through this contest agree to sell non-exclusive foreign rights for \$35 per story.

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SECOND PRIZE WINNER: CLAYTON RAWSON



The genesis of Clayton Rawson's first short story about the Great Merlini is one of the most fascinating "detective stories behind the detective story" ever to come to your Editor's notice. It is truly "one for the books." As you probably know, all writers are plagued by friends and well-wishers who "have a marvelous plot idea for you." They back the poor defenseless writer into a corner and his only escape is to listen to the "new idea" in all its details. In the field of the detective story the idea usually proves to

be (1) a mechanical murder gadget as unlikely as anything Rube Goldberg ever dreamed up; or (2) a simple enough device used at least a dozen times since 1892 and therefore long since put out to peaceful pasture; or (3) a gimmick which any experienced writer would promptly discard because it offered no dramatic or creative possibilities whatever. In this last category we are reminded of what Arthur Train once wrote: "Since Mr. Tutt first made his appearance in print I have received thousands of letters . . . offering suggestions for his further adventures. The major part of this correspondence is from lawyers who wish me to write up legal experiences of their own, in or out of court, which seem to them interesting or thrilling. A curious feature . . . is that in the course of over ten years, and out of all these letters, there has been but one that held . . . the slightest value as fiction."

Clayton Rawson, being a detective-story writer by vocation and a prestidigitator by avocation, has been doubly plagued; and as in the case of Arthur Train one of these suggestions "from another world" proved to be the exception to the rule. Several years ago Mr. Rawson was talking shop with Ted Anneman, mentalist, magician, editor of a famous magic journal, "The Jinx," and a prolific inventor of conjuring miracles. Mr. Rawson tells us that in Ted Anneman's professional work he seldom uses more than the barest minimum of sleight-of-hand — he depends instead on a diabolical blend of simplicity and subtlety. And it was exactly this combination of ingredients which made up the method Ted Anneman proposed for the disappearance of a murderer from a sealed room.

Mr. Rawson immediately recognized the gimmick as a "honey"; but since he was busy with other things at the time, he merely cached it in his Idea notebook. Later, while corresponding with John Dickson Carr on their mutual addiction to impossible situations, the Anneman illusion came to the surface again. John Dickson Carr had written: "As you say, we shall

have to be careful or we will stumble bang over the same plot"; and a few sentences further on, Mr. Carr added: "The perfect impossible situation, I suppose, would be one whose secret could be explained in four or five lines."

Well, Mr. Rawson grinned to himself. He could afford to — he had in his possession a perfect-impossible-situation and a perfectly-possible-solution, and one, moreover, that had never been used before. In a challenging sort of way he wrote to Carr: "I've got it. The victim is found in a room whose exits are all sealed on the inside with gummed paper tape and from which the murderer has vanished — and with an explanation so brief you could engrave it on the head of a pin." And then hoping, naturally, that he was giving the Maestro of the Locked Room some sleepless nights, Mr. Rawson casually neglected to say how it was done.

Mr. Carr accepted the challenge. He replied: "Your gummed-paper murder piques me; I am having a go, now, at a complete disappearance from a room similarly guarded." And there, as predicted, Messrs. Rawson and Carr were stumbling bang over the same plot idea. But now the insomnia had shifted its attack: it was Rawson who now put in a few sleepless nights — worrying if Carr had hit upon the same solution!

Mr. Carr's answer to the gummed-paper murder saw print first — in his Carter Dickson novel, HE WOULDN'T KILL PATIENCE. It was a neatly contrived solution but needless to say, so long after the fact, it was not the one Mr. Rawson had in mind; and Mr. Carr's answer did employ a mechanical device, whereas the Anneman-Rawson explanation, as you will discover for yourself, depends solely on the subtlest and simplest deceptive principle in the magician's whole bag of tricks.

So, here is Clayton Rawson's perfect impossible situation and his equally perfect solution which takes the "im" right out of impossible — and comment from John Dickson Carr is hereby cordially invited.

FROM ANOTHER WORLD

by CLAYTON RAWSON

It was undoubtedly one of the world's strangest rooms. The old-fashioned roll-top desk, the battered typewriter, and the steel filing cabinet indicated that it was an office. There was even a calendar memo-pad, a pen

and pencil set, and an overflowing ash-tray on the desk, but any resemblance to any other office stopped right there.

The desk top also held a pair of handcuffs, half a dozen billiard balls, a shiny nickel-plated revolver, one

celluloid egg, several decks of playing cards, a bright green silk handkerchief, and a stack of unopened mail. In one corner of the room stood a large, galvanized-iron milk-can with a strait jacket lying on its top. A feathered devil mask from the upper Congo leered down from the wall above and the entire opposite wall was papered with a Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey twenty-four sheet poster.

A loose-jointed dummy-figure of a small boy with pop-eyes and violently red hair lay on the filing cabinet together with a skull and a fish-bowl filled with paper flowers. And in the cabinet's bottom drawer, which was partly open and lined with paper, there was one half-eaten carrot and a twinkly-nosed, live white rabbit.

A pile of magazines, topped by a French journal, *l'Illusioniste*, was stacked precariously on a chair, and a large bookcase tried vainly to hold an even larger flood of books that overflowed and formed dusty stalagmites growing up from the floor — books whose authors would have been startled at the company they kept. Shaw's *Joan of Arc* was sandwiched between Rowan's *Story of the Secret Service* and the *Memoirs of Robert Houdin*. Arthur Machen, Dr. Hans Gross, William Blake, Sir James Jeans, Rebecca West, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Ernest Hemingway were bounded on either side by Devol's *Forty Years a Gambler on the Mississippi* and Reginald Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft*.

The merchandise in the shop be-

yond the office had a similar surrealist quality, but the inscription on the glass of the outer door, although equally strange, did manage to supply an explanation. It read: *Miracles For Sale — THE MAGIC SHOP, A. Merlini, Prop.*

And that gentleman, naturally, was just as unusual as his place of business. For one thing, he hadn't put a foot in it, to my knowledge, in at least a week. When he finally did reappear, I found him at the desk sleepily and somewhat glumly eyeing the unopened mail.

He greeted me as though he hadn't seen another human being in at least a month, and the swivel chair creaked as he settled back in it, put his long legs up on the desk, and yawned. Then he indicated the card bearing his business slogan — "Nothing Is Impossible" — which was tacked on the wall.

"I may have to take that sign down," he said lazily. "I've just met a theatrical producer, a scene designer, and a playwright all of whom are quite impossible. They came in here a week before opening night and asked me to supply several small items mentioned in the script. In one scene a character said, 'Begone!' and the stage directions read: 'The genie and his six dancing girl slaves vanish instantly.' Later an elephant, complete with howdah and princess, disappeared the same way. I had to figure out how to manage all that and cook up a few assorted miracles for the big scene in heaven, too. Then I spent thirty-six hours in bed. And I'm

still half asleep." He grinned wryly and added, "Ross, if you want anything that is not a stock item, you can whistle for it."

"I don't want a miracle," I said. "Just an interview. What do you know about ESP and PK?"

"Too much," he said. "You're doing another magazine article?"

"Yes. And I've spent the last week with a queer assortment of characters, too — half a dozen psychologists, some professional gamblers, a nuclear physicist, the secretary of the Psychological Research Society, and a neurologist. I've got an appointment in half an hour with a millionaire, and after that I want to hear what you think of it."

"You interviewed Dr. Rhine at Duke University, of course?"

I nodded. "Sure. He started it all. He says he's proved conclusively that there really are such things as telepathy, mind-reading, clairvoyance, X-Ray vision, and probably crystal-gazing as well. He wraps it all up in one package and calls it ESP — meaning Extra Sensory Perception."

"That," Merlini said, "is not the half of it. His psychokinesis, or PK for short, is positively miraculous — and frightening." The magician pulled several issues of the *Journal of Parapsychology* from the stack of magazines and upset the whole pile. "If the conclusions Rhine has published here are correct — if there really is a tangible mental force that can not only reach out and influence the movements of dice but exert its

mysterious control over other physical objects as well — then he has completely upset the apple-cart of modern psychology and punctured a whole library of general scientific theory as well."

"He's already upset me," I said. "I tried to use PK in a crap game Saturday night. I lost sixty-eight bucks."

My skepticism didn't disturb Merlini. He went right on, gloomier than ever. "If Rhine is right, his ESP and PK have re-opened the Pandora's box in which science thought it had forever sealed Voodoo and witchcraft and enough other practices of primitive magic to make your hair stand on end. And *you're* growling about losing a few dollars —"

Behind me a hearty, familiar voice said, "I haven't got anything to worry about except a homicidal maniac who has killed three people in the last two days and left absolutely no clues. But can I come in?"

Inspector Homer Gavigan of the New York City Police Department stood in the doorway, his blue eyes twinkling frostily.

Merlini, liking the Cassandra role he was playing, said, "Sure. I've been waiting for you. But don't think that PK won't give you a splitting headache, too. All a murderer would have to do to commit the perfect crime — and a locked room one at that — would be to exert his psychokinetic mental force from a distance against the gun trigger." He pointed at the revolver on the desk. "Like this —"

Gavigan and I both saw the trigger, with no finger on it, move.

Bang!

The gun's report was like a thunder-clap in the small room. I knew well enough that it was only a stage prop and the cartridge a blank, but I jumped a foot. So did Gavigan.

"Look, dammit!" the Inspector exploded, "how did you —"

The Great Merlini grinned. He was fully awake now and enjoying himself hugely. "No," he said, "that wasn't PK, luckily. Just ordinary run-of-the-mill conjuring. The rising Cards and the Talking Skull are both sometimes operated the same way. You can have the secret at the usual catalog price of —"

Like most policemen Gavigan had a healthy respect for firearms and he was still jumpy. "I don't want to buy either of them," he growled. "Do we have a date for dinner — or don't we? I'm starved."

"We do," Merlini said, pulling his long, lean self up out of the chair and reaching for his coat. "Can you join us, Ross?"

I shook my head. "Not this time. I've got a date just now with Andrew Drake."

In the elevator Merlini gave me an odd look and asked, "Andrew Drake? What has he got to do with ESP and PK?"

"What doesn't he have something to do with?" I replied. "Six months ago it was the Drake Plan to Outlaw War; he tried to take over UN single-handed. Two months ago he an-

nounced he was setting up a fifteen-million dollar research foundation to find a cancer cure in six months. 'Polish it off like we did the atom bomb,' he says. 'Put in enough money, and you can accomplishing anything.' Now he's head over heels in ESP with some Yogi mixed in. 'Unleash the power of the human mind and solve all our problems.' Just like that."

"So that's what he's up to," Merlini said as we came out on to 42nd Street, half a block from Times Square, to face a bitterly cold January wind. "I wondered."

Then, as he followed Gavigan into the official car that waited and left me shivering on the curb, he threw a last cryptic sentence over his shoulder.

"When Drake mentions Rosa Rhys," he said, "you might warn him that he's heading for trouble."

Merlini didn't know how right he was. If any of us had had any clairvoyant ability at all, I wouldn't have taken a cab up to Drake's; all three of us would have gone — in Gavigan's car and with the siren going full blast.

As it was, I stepped out all alone in front of the big 98th Street house just off Riverside Drive. It was a sixty-year-old mansion built in the tortured style that had been the height of architectural fashion in the '80's but was now a smoke-blackened monstrosity as coldly depressing as the weather.

I nearly froze both ears just getting across the pavement and up the steps where I found a doctor with his finger

glued — or frozen perhaps — to the bell push. A doctor? No, it wasn't ESP; a copy of the *A. M. A. Journal* stuck out of his overcoat pocket, and his left hand carried the customary small black case. But he didn't have the medical man's usual clinical detachment. This doctor was jumpy as hell.

When I asked, "Anything wrong?" his head jerked around, and his pale blue eyes gave me a startled look. He was a thin, well-dressed man in his early forties.

"Yes," he said crisply. "I'm afraid so." He jabbed a long forefinger at the bell again just as the door opened.

At first I didn't recognize the girl who looked out at us. When I saw her by daylight earlier in the week, I had tagged her as in the brainy-but-a-bit-plain category, a judgment I revised somewhat now, considering what the Charles hair-do and Hattie Carnegie dress did for her.

"Oh, hello, doctor," she said. "Come in."

The doctor began talking even before he crossed the threshold. "Your father, Elinor — is he still in the study?"

"Yes, I think so. But what —"

She stopped because he was already gone, running down the hall toward a door at its end. He rattled the doorknob, then rapped loudly.

"Mr. Drake! Let me in!"

The girl looked puzzled, then frightened. Her dark eyes met mine for an instant, and then her high heels clicked on the polished floor as she

too ran down the hall. I didn't wait to be invited. I followed.

The doctor's knuckles rapped again on the door. "Miss Rhys!" he called. "It's Dr. Garrett. Unlock the door!"

There was no answer.

Garrett tried the doorknob once more, then threw his shoulder against the door. It didn't move.

"Elinor, do you have a key? We must get in there — quickly!"

She said, "No. Father has the only keys. Why don't they answer? What's wrong?"

"I don't know," Garrett said. "Your father phoned me just now. He was in pain. He said, '*Hurry! I need you. I'm —*'" The doctor hesitated, watching the girl; then he finished "'— *dying.*' After that — no answer." Garrett turned to me. "You've got more weight than I have. Think you can break this door in?"

I looked at it. The door seemed solid enough, but it was an old house and the wood around the screws that held the lock might give. "I don't know," I said. "I'll try."

Elinor Drake moved to one side and the doctor stepped behind me. I threw myself against the door twice and the second time felt it move a bit. Then I hit it hard. Just as the door gave way I heard the tearing sound of paper.

But before I could discover what caused that, my attention was held by more urgent matters. I found myself staring at a green-shaded desk lamp, the room's only source of light, at the overturned phone on the desk

top, and at the sprawled shape that lay on the floor in front of the desk. A coppery highlight glinted on a letter-opener near the man's feet. Its blade was discolored with a dark wet stain.

Dr. Garrett said, "Elinor, you stay out," as he moved past me to the body and bent over it. One of his hands lifted Andrew Drake's right eyelid, the other felt his wrist.

I have never heard a ghost speak but the sound that came then was exactly what I would expect — a low, quivering moan shot with pain. I jerked around and saw a glimmer of white move in the darkness on my left.

Behind me, Elinor's whisper, a tense thread of sound, said, "Lights," as she clicked the switch by the door. The glow from the ceiling fixture overhead banished both the darkness and the spectre — but what remained was almost as unlikely. A chair lay overturned on the carpet, next to a small table that stood in the center of the room. In a second chair, slumped forward with her head resting on the tabletop, was the body of a young woman.

She was young, dark-haired, rather good-looking, and had an excellent figure. This latter fact was instantly apparent because — and I had to look twice before I could believe what I saw — she wore a brief, skin-tight, one-piece bathing suit. Nothing else.

Elinor's eyes were still on the sprawled shape on the floor. "Father. He's — dead?"

Garrett nodded slowly and stood up.

I heard the quick intake of her breath but she made no other sound. Then Garrett strode quickly across to the woman at the table.

"Unconscious," he said after a moment. "Apparently a blow on the head — but she's beginning to come out of it." He looked again at the knife on the floor. "We'll have to call the police."

I hardly heard him. I was wondering why the room was so bare. The hall outside and the living room that opened off it were furnished with the stiff, formal ostentation of the over-rich. But Drake's study, by contrast, was as sparsely furnished as a cell in a Trappist monastery. Except for the desk, the small table, the two chairs, and a three-leaf folding screen that stood in one corner, it contained no other furniture. There were no pictures on the walls, no papers, and although there were shelves for them, no books. There wasn't even a blotter or pen on the desk top. Nothing but the phone, desk lamp — and, strangely enough, a roll of gummed paper tape.

But I only glanced at these things briefly. It was the large casement window in the wall behind the desk that held my attention — a dark rectangle beyond which, like a scattered handful of bright jewels, were the lights of Jersey and, above them, frosty pinpoints of stars shining coldly in a black sky.

The odd thing was that the window's center line, where its two halves

joined, was criss-crossed by two-foot strips of brown paper tape pasted to the glass. The window was, quite literally, sealed shut. It was then that I remembered the sound of tearing paper as the lock had given way and the door had come open.

I turned. Elinor still stood there — motionless. And on the inside of the door and on the jamb were more of the paper strips. Four were torn in half, two others had been pulled loose from the wall and hung curled from the door's edge.

At that moment a brisk, energetic voice came from the hall. "How come you leave the front door standing wide open on the coldest day in —"

Elinor turned to face a broad-shouldered young man with wavy hair, hand-painted tie, and a completely self-assured manner. She said, "Paul!" then took one stumbling step and was in his arms.

He blinked at her. "Hey! What's wrong?" Then he saw what lay on the floor by the desk. His self-confidence sagged.

Dr. Garrett moved to the door. "Kendrick," he said, "take Elinor out of here. I'll —"

"No!" It was Elinor's voice. She straightened up, turned suddenly and started into the room.

But Paul caught her. "Where are you going?"

She tried to pull away from him. "I'm going to phone the police." Her eyes followed the trail of bloodstains that led from the body across the beige carpet to the overturned chair

and the woman at the table. "She — killed him."

That was when I started for the phone myself. But I hadn't taken more than two steps when the woman in the bathing suit let out a hair-raising shriek.

She was gripping the table with both hands, her eyes fixed on Drake's body with the rigid unblinking stare of a figure carved from stone. Then, suddenly, her body trembled all over, and she opened her mouth again — But Garrett got there first.

He slapped her on the side of the face — hard.

It stopped the scream, but the horror still filled her round dark eyes and she still stared at the body as though it were some demon straight from hell.

"Hysteria," Garrett said. Then seeing me start again toward the phone, "Get an ambulance, too." And when he spoke to Paul Kendrick this time, it was an order. "And get Elinor out of here — quickly!"

Elinor Drake was looking at the girl in the bathing suit with wide, puzzled eyes. "She — she killed him. Why?"

Paul nodded. He turned Elinor around gently but swiftly and led her out.

The cops usually find too many fingerprints on a phone, none of them any good because they are superimposed on each other. But I handled the receiver carefully just the same, picking it up by one end. When Spring 7-1313 answered, I gave the operator the facts fast, then asked

him to locate Inspector Gavigan and have him call me back. I gave Drake's number.

As I talked I watched Dr. Garrett open his black case and take out a hypodermic syringe. He started to apply it to the woman's arm just as I hung up.

"What's that, Doc?" I asked

"Sedative. Otherwise she'll be screaming again in a minute."

The girl didn't seem to feel the needle as it went in.

Then, noticing two bright spots of color on the table, I went across to examine them closely and felt more than ever as though I had stepped straight into a surrealist painting. I was looking at two rounded conical shapes each about two inches in length. Both were striped like candy canes, one in maroon against a white background, the other in thinner brilliant red stripes against an opalescent amber.

"Did Drake," I asked, "collect sea-shells, too?"

"No." Garrett scowled in a worried way at the shells. "But I once did. These are mollusks, but not from the sea. *Cochlostyla*, a tree snail. Habitat: The Philippines." He turned his scowl from the shells to me. "By the way, just who are you?"

"The name is Ross Harte." I added that I had had an appointment to interview Drake for a magazine article and then asked, "Why is this room sealed as it is? Why is this girl dressed only in —"

Apparently, like many medical men, Garrett took a dim view of re-

porters. "I'll make my statement," he said a bit stiffly, "to the police."

They arrived a moment later. Two uniformed prowl-car cops first, then the precinct boys and after that, at intervals, the homicide squad, an ambulance interne, a fingerprint man and photographer, the medical examiner, an assistant D. A. and later, because a millionaire rates more attention than the victim of a Harlem stabbing, the D. A. himself, and an Assistant Chief Inspector even looked in for a few minutes.

Of the earlier arrivals the only familiar face was that of the Homicide Squad's Lieutenant Doran — a hard-boiled, coldly efficient, no-nonsense cop who had so little use for reporters that I suspected he had once been bitten by one.

At Dr. Garrett's suggestion, which the interne seconded, the girl in the bathing suit was taken, under guard, to the nearest hospital. Then Garrett and I were put on ice, also under guard, in the living room. Another detective ushered Paul Kendrick into the room a moment later.

He scowled at Dr. Garrett. "We all thought Rosa Rhys was bad medicine. But I never expected anything like this. Why would *she* want to kill him? It doesn't make sense."

"Self-defense?" I suggested. "Could he have made a pass at her and —"

Kendrick shook his head emphatically. "Not that gal. She was making a fast play for the old man — and his money. A pass would have been just what she wanted." He turned to Gar-

rett. "What were they doing in there — more ESP experiments?"

The doctor laid his overcoat neatly over the back of an ornate Spanish chair. His voice sounded tired and defeated. "No. They had gone beyond that. I told him that she was a fraud, but you know how Drake was — always so absolutely confident that he couldn't be wrong about anything. He said he'd put her through a test that would convince all of us."

"Of what?" I asked. "What was it she claimed she could do?"

The detective at the door moved forward. "My orders," he said, "are that you're not to talk about what happened until after the Lieutenant has taken your statements. Make it easy for me, will you?"

That made it difficult for us. Any other conversational subject just then seemed pointless. We sat there silent and uncomfortable. But somehow the nervous tension that had been in our voices was still there — a foreboding, ghostly presence waiting with us for what was to happen next.

A half hour later, although it seemed many times that long, Garrett was taken out for questioning, then Kendrick. And later I got the nod. I saw Elinor Drake, a small, lonely figure in the big hall, moving slowly up the wide stairs. Doran and the police stenographer who waited for me in the stately dining room with its heavy crystal chandelier looked out of place. But the Lieutenant didn't feel ill at ease; his questions were as coldly efficient as a surgeon's knife.

I tried to insert a query of my own now and then, but soon gave that up. Doran ignored all such attempts as completely as if they didn't exist. Then, just as he dismissed me, the phone rang. Doran answered, listened, scowled and then held the receiver out to me. "For you," he said.

I heard Merlini's voice. "My ESP isn't working so well today, Ross. Drake is dead. I get that much. But just what happened up there, anyway?"

"ESP my eye," I told him. "If you were a mind-reader you'd have been up here long ago. It's a sealed room — in spades. The sealed room to end all sealed rooms."

I saw Doran start forward as if to object. "Merlini," I said quickly, "is Inspector Gavigan still with you?" I lifted the receiver from my ear and let Doran hear the "Yes" that came back.

Merlini's voice went on. "Did you say sealed room? The flash from headquarters didn't mention that. They said an arrest had already been made. It sounded like a routine case."

"Headquarters," I replied, "has no imagination. Or else Doran has been keeping things from them. It isn't even a routine sealed room. Listen: A woman comes to Drake's house on the coldest January day since 1812 dressed only in a bathing suit. She goes with him into his study. They seal the window and door on the inside with gummed paper tape. Then she stabs him with a paper knife. Before he dies, he knocks her out,

then manages to get to the phone and send out an S.O.S.

"She's obviously crazy; she has to be to commit murder under those circumstances. But Drake wasn't crazy. A bit eccentric maybe, but not nuts. So why would he lock himself in so carefully with a homicidal maniac? If headquarters thinks that's routine I'll —" Then I interrupted myself. There was too much silence on the other end of the wire. "Merlini! Are you still there?"

"Yes," his voice said slowly, "I'm still here. Headquarters was much too brief. They didn't tell us her name. But I know it now."

Then, abruptly, I felt as if I had stepped off into some fourth-dimensional hole in space and had dropped on to some other nightmare planet.

Merlini's voice, completely serious, was saying, "Ross, did the police find a silver denarius from the time of the Caesars in that room? Or a freshly picked rose, a string of Buddhist prayer beads — perhaps a bit of damp seaweed —?"

I didn't say anything. I couldn't.

After a moment, Merlini added, "So — they did. What was it?"

"Shells," I said dazedly, still quite unconvinced that any conversation could sound like this. "Philippine tree snail shells. Why, in the name of —"

Merlini cut in hastily. "Tell Doran that Gavigan and I will be there in ten minutes. Sit tight and keep your eyes open —"

"Merlini!" I objected frantically, "if you hang up without —"

"The shells explain the bathing suit, Ross — and make it clear why the room was sealed. But they also introduce an element that Gavigan and Doran and the D. A. and the Commissioner are not going to like at all. I don't like it myself. It's even more frightening as a murder method than PK."

He hesitated a moment, then let me have both barrels.

"Those shells suggest that Drake's death might have been caused by even stranger forces — evil and evanescent ones — from another world!"

My acquaintance with a police inspector cut no ice with Doran; he ordered me right back into the living room.

I heard a siren announce the arrival of Gavigan's car shortly after, but it was a long hour later before Doran came in and said, "The Inspector wants to see all of you — in the study."

As I moved with the others out into the hall I saw Merlini waiting for me.

"It's about time," I growled at him. "Another ten minutes and you'd have found me D.O.A., too — from suspense."

"Sorry you had to cool your heels," he said, "but Gavigan is being difficult. As predicted, he doesn't like the careful Doran has been giving him. Neither do I." The dryly ironic good humor that was almost always in his voice was absent. He was unusually sober.

"Don't build it up," I said. "I've

had all the mystery I can stand. Just give me answers. First, why did you tell me to warn Drake about Rosa Rhys?"

"I didn't expect murder, if that's what you're thinking," he replied. "Drake was elaborating on some of Rhine's original experiments aimed at discovering whether ESP operates more efficiently when the subject is in a trance state. Rosa is a medium."

"Oh, so that's it. She and Drake were holding a séance?"

Merlini nodded. "Yes. The Psychological Research Society is extremely interested in ESP and PK — it's given them a new lease on life. And I knew they had recommended Rosa, whom they had previously investigated, to Drake."

"And what about the Roman coins, roses, Buddhist prayer beads — and snail shells? Why the bathing suit and how does that explain why the room was sealed?"

But Doran, holding the study door open, interrupted before he could reply.

"Hurry it up!" he ordered.

Going into that room now was like walking onto a brightly lighted stage. A powerful electric bulb of almost floodlight brilliance had been inserted in the ceiling fixture and its harsh white glare made the room more barren and cell-like than ever. Even Inspector Gavigan seemed to have taken on a menacing air. Perhaps it was the black mask of shadow that his hat brim threw down across the upper part of his face; or it may have been

the carefully intent way he watched us as we came in.

Doran did the introductions. "Miss Drake, Miss Potter, Paul Kendrick, Dr. Walter Garrett."

I looked at the middle-aged woman whose gayly frilled, altogether feminine hat contrasted oddly with her angular figure, her prim determined mouth, and the chilly glance of complete disapproval with which she regarded Gavigan.

"How," I whispered to Merlini, "did Isabelle Potter, the secretary of the Psychological Research Society, get here?"

"She came with Rosa," he answered. "The police found her upstairs reading a copy of Tyrrell's *Study of Apparitions*." Merlini smiled faintly. "She and Doran don't get along."

"They wouldn't," I said. "They talk different languages. When I interviewed her, I got a travelogue on the other world — complete with lantern slides."

Inspector Gavigan wasted no time. "Miss Drake," he began, "I understand the medical foundation for cancer research your father thought of endowing was originally your idea."

The girl glanced once at the stains on the carpet, then kept her dark eyes steadily on Gavigan. "Yes," she said slowly, "it was."

"Are you interested in psychical research?"

Elinor frowned. "No."

"Did you object when your father began holding séances with Miss Rhys?"

She shook her head. "That would only have made him more determined."

Gavigan turned to Kendrick. "Did you?"

"Me?" Paul lifted his brows. "I didn't know him well enough for that. Don't think he liked me much, anyway. But why a man like Drake would waste his time —"

"And you, doctor?"

"Did I object?" Garrett seemed surprised. "Naturally. No one but a neurotic middle-aged woman would take a séance seriously."

Miss Potter resented that one. "Dr. Garrett," she said icily, "Sir Oliver Lodge was not a neurotic woman, nor Sir William Crookes, nor Professor Zoëllner, nor —"

"But they were all senile," Garrett replied just as icily. "And as for ESP, no neurologist of any standing admits any such possibility. They leave such things to you and your society, Miss Potter — and to the Sunday supplements."

She gave the doctor a look that would have split an atom, and Gavigan, seeing the danger of a chain reaction if this sort of dialogue were allowed to continue, broke in quickly.

"Miss Potter. You introduced Miss Rhys to Mr. Drake and he was conducting ESP experiments with her. Is that correct?"

Miss Potter's voice was still dangerously radioactive. "It is. And their results were most gratifying and important. Of course, neither you nor Dr. Garrett would understand —"

"And then," Garrett cut in, "they both led him on into an investigation of Miss Rhys's psychic specialty — apports." He pronounced the last word with extreme distaste.

Inspector Gavigan scowled, glanced at Merlini, and the latter promptly produced a definition. "An apport," he said, "from the French *apporter*, to bring, is any physical object supernormally brought into a séance room — from nowhere usually or from some impossible distance. Miss Rhys on previous occasions — according to the *Psychical Society's Journal* — has apported such objects as Roman coins, roses, beads, and seaweed."

"She is the greatest apport medium," Miss Potter declared somewhat belligerently, "since Charles Bailey."

"Then she's good," Merlini said. "Bailey was an apport medium whom Conan Doyle considered *bona fide*. He produced birds, oriental plants, small animals, and on one occasion a young shark eighteen inches long which he claimed his spirit guide had whisked instantly via the astral plane from the Indian Ocean and projected, still damp and very much alive, into the séance room."

"So," I said, "that's why this room was sealed. To make absolutely certain that no one could open the door or window in the dark and help Rosa by introducing —"

"Of course," Garrett added. "Obviously there could be no apports if adequate precautions were taken. Drake also moved a lot of his things

out of the study and inventoried every object that remained. He also suggested, since I was so skeptical, that I be the one to make certain that Miss Rhys carried nothing into the room on her person. I gave her a most complete physical examination — in a bedroom upstairs. Then she put on one of Miss Drake's bathing suits."

"Did you come down to the study with her and Drake?" Gavigan asked.

The doctor frowned. "No. I had objected to Miss Potter's presence at the séance and Miss Rhys countered by objecting to mine."

"She was quite right," Miss Potter said. "The presence of an unbeliever like yourself would prevent even the strongest psychic forces from making themselves manifest."

"I have no doubt of that," Garrett replied stiffly. "It's the usual excuse, as I told Drake. He tried to get her to let me attend but she refused flatly. So I went back to my office down the street. Drake's phone call came a half hour or so later."

"And yet" — Gavigan eyed the two brightly colored shells on the table — "in spite of all your precautions she produced two of these."

Garrett nodded. "Yes, I know. But the answer is fairly obvious now. She hid them somewhere in the hall outside on her arrival and then secretly picked them up again on her way in here."

Elinor frowned. "I'm afraid not, doctor. Father thought of that and asked me to go down with them to

the study. He held one of her hands and I held the other."

Gavigan scowled. Miss Potter beamed.

"Did you go in with them?" Merlini asked.

She shook her head. "No. Only as far as the door. They went in and I heard it lock behind them. I stood there for a moment or two and heard Father begin pasting the tape on the door. Then I went back to my room to dress. I was expecting Paul."

Inspector Gavigan turned to Miss Potter. "You remained upstairs?"

"Yes," she replied in a tone that dared him to deny it. "I did."

Gavigan looked at Elinor. "Paul said a moment ago that your father didn't like him. Why not?"

"Paul exaggerates," the girl said quickly. "Father didn't dislike him. He was just — well, a bit difficult where my men friends were concerned."

"He thought they were all after his money," Kendrick added. "But at the rate he was endowing medical foundations and psychic societies —"

Miss Potter objected. "Mr. Drake did *not* endow the Psychic Society."

"But he was seriously considering it," Garrett said. "Miss Rhys — and Miss Potter — were selling him on the theory that illness is only a mental state due to a psychic imbalance — whatever that is."

"They won't sell me on that," Elinor said and then turned suddenly on Miss Potter, her voice trembling. "If it weren't for you and your idi-

otic foolishness Father wouldn't have been — killed." Then to Gavigan, "We've told all this before — to the Lieutenant. Is it quite necessary —"

The Inspector glanced at Merlini, then said, "I think that will be all for now. Okay, Doran, take them back. But none of them are to leave yet."

When they had gone, he turned to Merlini. "Well, I asked the questions you wanted me to, but I still think it was a waste of time. Rosa Rhys killed Drake. Anything else is impossible."

"What about Kendrick's cab driver?" Merlini asked. "Did your men locate him yet?"

Gavigan's scowl, practically standard operating procedure by now, grew darker. "Yes. Kendrick's definitely out. He entered the cab on the other side of town at just about the time Drake was sealing this room and he was apparently still in it, crossing Central Park, at the time Drake was killed."

"So," I commented, "he's the only one with an alibi."

Gavigan lifted his eyebrows. "The only one? Except for Rosa Rhys they *all* have alibis. The sealed room takes care of that."

"Yes," Merlini said quietly, "but the people with alibis also have motives while the one person who could have killed Drake has none."

"She did it," the Inspector answered. "So she's got a motive — and we'll find it."

"I wish I were as confident of that as you are," Merlini said. "Under the circumstances you'll be able to get a

conviction without showing motive, but if you don't find one, it will always bother you."

"Maybe," Gavigan admitted, "but that won't be as bad as trying to believe what she says happened in this room."

That was news to me. "You've talked to Rosa?" I asked.

"One of the boys did," Gavigan said sourly. "At the hospital. She's already preparing an insanity defense."

"But why," Merlini asked, "is she still hysterical with fright? Could it be that she's scared because she really believes her story — because something like that really did happen in here?"

"Look," I said impatiently, "is it top secret or will somebody tell me what she says happened?"

Gavigan glowered at Merlini. "Are you going to stand there and tell me that you think Rosa Rhys actually believes —"

It was my question that Merlini answered. He walked to the table in the center of the room. "She says that after Drake sealed the window and door, the lights were turned off and she and Drake sat opposite each other at this table. His back was toward the desk, hers toward that screen in the corner. Drake held her hands. They waited. Finally she felt the psychic forces gathering around her — and then, out of nowhere, the two shells dropped onto the table one after the other. Drake got up, turned on the desk light, and came back to

the table. A moment later it happened."

The magician paused for a moment, regarding the bare, empty room with a frown. "Drake," he continued, "was examining the shells, quite excited and pleased about their appearance when suddenly, Rosa says, she heard a movement behind her. She saw Drake look up and then stare incredulously over her shoulder." Merlini spread his hands. "And that's all she remembers. Something hit her. When she came to, she found herself staring at the blood on the floor and at Drake's body."

Gavigan was apparently remembering Merlini's demonstration with the gun in his office. "If you," he warned acidly, "so much as try to hint that one of the people outside this room projected some mental force that knocked Rosa out and then caused the knife to stab Drake —"

"You know," Merlini said, "I half expected Miss Potter would suggest that. But her theory is even more disturbing." He looked at me. "She says that the benign spirits which Rosa usually evoked were overcome by some malign and evil entity whose astral substance materialized momentarily, killed Drake, then returned to the other world from which it came."

"She's a mental case, too," Gavigan said disgustedly. "They have to be crazy if they expect anyone to believe any such —"

"That," Merlini said quietly, "may be another reason Rosa is scared to death. Perhaps she believes it but

knows you won't. In her shoes, I'd be scared, too." He frowned. "The difficulty is the knife."

Gavigan blinked. "The knife? What's difficult about that?"

"If I killed Drake," Merlini replied, "and wanted appearances to suggest that psychic forces were responsible, you wouldn't have found a weapon in this room that made it look as if I were guilty. I would have done a little de-apporting and made it disappear. As it is now, even if the knife was propelled supernaturally, Rosa takes the rap."

"And how," Gavigan demanded, "would you make the knife disappear if you were dressed, as she was, in practically nothing?" Then, with sudden suspicion, he added, "Are you suggesting that there's a way she could have done that — and that you think she's not guilty because she didn't?"

Merlini lifted one of the shells from the table and placed it in the center of his left palm. His right hand covered it for a brief moment, then moved away. The shell was no longer there; it had vanished as silently and as easily as a ghost. Merlini turned both hands palms outward; both were unmistakably empty.

"Yes," he said, "she could have made the knife disappear — if she had wanted to. The same way she produced the two shells." He made a reaching gesture with his right hand and the missing shell reappeared suddenly at his fingertips.

Gavigan looked annoyed and re-

lied at the same time. "So," he said, "you do know how she got those shells in here. I want to hear it. Right now."

But Gavigan had to wait.

At that moment a torpedo hit the water-tight circumstantial case against Rosa Rhys and detonated with a roar.

Doran, who had answered the phone a moment before, was swearing profusely. He was staring at the receiver he held as though it were a live cobra he had picked up by mistake.

"It — it's Doc Hess," he said in a dazed tone. "He just started the autopsy and thought we'd like to know that the point of the murder knife struck a rib and broke off. He just dug out a triangular pointed piece of — steel."

For several seconds after that there wasn't a sound. Then Merlini spoke.

"Gentlemen of the jury. Exhibit A, the paper knife with which my esteemed opponent, the District Attorney, claims Rosa Rhys stabbed Andrew Drake, is a copper alloy — and its point, as you can see, is quite intact. The defense rests."

Doran swore again. "Drake's inventory lists that letter opener, but that's all. There is no other knife in this room. I'm positive of that."

Gavigan jabbed a thick forefinger at me. "Ross, Dr. Garrett was in here before the police arrived. And Miss Drake and Kendrick."

I shook my head. "Sorry. There was no knife near the door and neither Elinor nor Paul came more than a foot

into the room. Dr. Garrett examined Drake and Rosa, but I was watching him, and I'll testify that unless he's as expert at sleight-of-hand as Merlini, he didn't pick up a thing."

Doran was not convinced. "Look, buddy. Unless Doc Hess has gone crazy too, there was a knife and it's not here now. So somebody took it out." He turned to the detective who stood at the door. "Tom," he said, "have the boys frisk all those people. Get a police woman for Miss Drake and Potter and search the bedroom where they've been waiting. The living room, too."

Then I had a brainstorm. "You know," I said, "if Elinor is covering up for someone — if three people came in here for the séance instead of two as she says — the third could have killed Drake and then gone out — with the knife. And the paper tape could have been . . ." I stopped.

"— pasted on the door *after* the murderer left?" Merlini finished. "By Rosa? That would mean she framed herself."

"Besides," Gavigan growled, "the boys fumed all those paper strips. There are fingerprints all over them. All Drake's."

Merlini said, "Doran, I suggest that you phone the hospital and have Rosa searched, too."

The Lieutenant blinked. "But she was practically naked. How in blazes could she carry a knife out of here unnoticed?"

Gavigan faced Merlini, scowling. "What did you mean when you said a

moment ago that she could have got rid of the knife the same way she produced those shells?"

"If it was a clasp knife," Merlini explained, "she could have used the same method other apport mediums have employed to conceal small objects under test conditions."

"But dammit!" Doran exploded. "The only place Garrett didn't look was in her stomach!"

Merlini grinned. "I know. That was his error. Rosa is a regurgitating medium — like Helen Duncan in whose stomach the English investigator, Harry Price, found a hidden ghost — a balled-up length of cheesecloth fastened with a safety pin which showed up when he X-rayed her. X-rays of Rosa seem indicated, too. And search her hospital room and the ambulance that took her over."

"Okay, Doran," Gavigan ordered. "Do it."

I saw an objection. "Now you've got Rosa framing herself, too," I said. "If she swallowed the murder knife, why should she put blood on the letter opener? That makes no sense at all."

"None of this does," Gavigan complained.

"I know," Merlini answered. "One knife was bad. Two are much worse. And although X-rays of Rosa before the séance would have shown shells, I predict they won't show a knife. If they do, then Rosa needs a psychiatric examination as well."

"Don't worry," Gavigan said gloomily. "She'll get one. Her at-

torney will see to that. And they'll prove she's crazier than a bedbug without half trying. But if that knife isn't in her . . ." His voice died.

"Then you'll never convict her," Merlini finished.

"If that happens," the Inspector said ominously, "you're going to have to explain where that knife came from, how it really disappeared, and where it is now."

Merlini's view was even gloomier. "It'll be much worse than that. We'll also have an appearing and vanishing murderer to explain — someone who entered a sealed room, killed Drake, put blood on the paper knife to incriminate Rosa, then vanished just as neatly as any of Miss Potter's ghosts — into thin air."

And Merlini's prediction came true.

The X-ray plates didn't show the slightest trace of a knife. And it wasn't in Rosa's hospital room or in the ambulance. Nor on Garrett, Paul, Elinor Drake, Isabelle Potter — nor, as Doran discovered, on myself. The Drake house was a mess by the time the boys got through taking it apart — but no knife with a broken point was found anywhere. And it was shown beyond doubt that there were no trapdoors or sliding panels in the study; the door and window were the only exits.

Inspector Gavigan glowered every time the phone rang — the Commissioner had already phoned twice and without mincing words expressed his dissatisfaction with the way things were going.

And Merlini, stretched out in Drake's chair, his heels up on the desk top, his eyes closed, seemed to have gone into a trance.

"Blast it!" Gavigan said. "Rosa Rhys got that knife out of here somehow. She had to! Merlini, are you going to admit that she knows a trick or two you don't?"

The magician didn't answer for a moment. Then he opened one eye. "No," he said slowly, "not just yet." He took his feet off the desk and sat up straight. "You know," he said, "if we don't accept the theory of the murderer from beyond, then Ross must be right after all. Elinor Drake's statement to the contrary, there must have been a third person in this room when that séance began."

"Okay," Gavigan said, "we'll forget Miss Drake's testimony for the moment. At least that gets him into the room. Then what?"

"I don't know," Merlini said. He took the roll of gummed paper tape from the desk, tore off a two-foot length, crossed the room, and pasted it across the door and jamb, sealing us in. "Suppose I'm the killer," he said. "I knock Rosa out first, then stab Drake —"

He paused.

Gavigan was not enthusiastic. "You put the murder knife in your pocket, not noticing that the point is broken. You put blood on the paper knife to incriminate Rosa. And then —" He waited. "Well, go on."

"Then," Merlini said, "I get out of here." He scowled at the sealed door

and at the window. "I've escaped from handcuffs, strait jackets, milk cans filled with water, packing cases that have been nailed shut. I know the methods Houdini used to break out of safes and jail cells. But I feel like he did when a shrewd old turnkey shut him in a cell in Scotland one time and the lock — a type he'd overcome many times before — failed to budge. No matter how he tried or what he did, the bolt wouldn't move. He was sweating blood because he knew that if he failed, his laboriously built-up reputation as the Escape King would be blown to bits. And then . . ." Merlini blinked. "And then . . ." This time he came to a full stop, staring at the door.

Suddenly he blinked. "Shades of Hermann, Kellar, Thurston — and Houdini! So that's it!"

Grinning broadly, he turned to Gavigan. "We will now pass a miracle and chase all the ghosts back into their tombs. If you'll get those people in here —"

"You know how the vanishing man vanished?" I asked.

"Yes. It's someone who has been just as canny as that Scotch jailer — and I know who."

Gavigan said, "It's about time." Then he walked across the room and pulled the door open, tearing the paper strip in half as he did so.

Merlini, watching him, grinned again. "The method by which magicians let their audiences fool themselves — the simplest and yet most effective principle of deception in

the whole book — and it nearly took me in!”

Elinor Drake's eyes still avoided the stains on the floor. Scott, beside her, puffed nervously on a cigarette, and Dr. Garrett looked drawn and tired. But not the irrepressible Potter. She seemed fresh as a daisy.

“This room,” she said to no one in particular, “will become more famous in psychic annals than the home of the Fox sisters at Lilydale.”

Quickly, before she could elaborate on that, Merlini cut in. “Miss Potter doesn't believe that Rosa Rhys killed Drake. Neither do I. But the psychic force she says is responsible didn't emanate from another world. It was conjured up out of nothing by someone who was — who had to be — here in this room when Drake died. Someone whom Drake himself asked to be here.”

He moved into the center of the room as he spoke and faced them.

“Drake would never have convinced anyone that Rosa could do what she claimed without a witness. So he gave someone a key — someone who came into this room *before* Drake and Rosa and Elinor came downstairs.”

The four people watched him without moving — almost, I thought, without breathing.

“That person hid behind that screen and then, after Rosa produced the apports, knocked her out, killed Drake, and left Rosa to face the music.”

“All we have to do,” Merlini went on, “is show who it was that Drake selected as a witness.” He pointed a lean forefinger at Isabelle Potter. “If Drake discovered how Rosa produced the shells and realized she was a fraud, you might have killed him to prevent an exposure and save face for yourself and the Society; and you might have then framed Rosa in revenge for having deceived you. But Drake would never have chosen you. Your testimony wouldn't have convinced any of the others. No. Drake would have picked one of the skeptics — someone he was certain could never be accused of assisting the medium.”

He faced Elinor. “You said that you accompanied Rosa and your father to the study door and saw them go in alone. We haven't asked Miss Rhys yet, but I think she'll confirm it. You couldn't expect to lie about that and make it stick as long as Rosa could and would contradict you.”

I saw Doran move forward silently, closing in.

“And Paul Kendrick,” Merlini went on, “is the only one of you who has an alibi that does not depend on the sealed room. That leaves the most skeptical one of the three — the man whose testimony would by far carry the greatest weight.

“It leaves you, Dr. Garrett. The man who is so certain that there are no ghosts is the man who conjured one up!”

Merlini played the scene down; he knew that the content of what he said was dramatic enough. But Gar-

rett's voice was even calmer. He shook his head slowly.

"I am afraid that I can't agree. You have no reason to assume that it must be one of us and no one else. But I would like to hear how you think I or anyone else could have walked out of this room leaving it sealed as it was found."

"That," Merlini said, "is the simplest answer of all. You walked out, but you didn't leave the room sealed. You see, *it was not found that way!*"

I felt as if I were suddenly floating in space.

"But look —" I began.

Merlini ignored me. "The vanishing murderer was a trick. But magic is not, as most people believe, only a matter of gimmicks and trapdoors and mirrors. Its real secret lies deeper than a mere deception of the senses; the magician uses a far more important, more basic weapon — the psychological deception of the mind. *Don't believe everything you see* is excellent advice; but there's a better rule: *Don't believe everything you think.*"

"Are you trying to tell me," I said incredulously, "that this room wasn't sealed at all? That I just thought it was?"

Merlini kept watching Garrett. "Yes. It's as simple as that. And there was no visual deception at all. It was, like PK, entirely mental. You saw things exactly as they were, but you didn't realize that the visual appearance could be interpreted two ways. Let me ask you a question.

When you break into a room the door of which has been sealed with paper tape on the inside, do you find yourself still in a sealed room?"

"No," I said, "of course not. The paper has been torn."

"And if you break into a room that had been sealed but from which someone has *already gone out*, tearing the seals — what then?"

"The paper," I said, "is still torn. The appearance is —"

"— *exactly the same!*" Merlini finished.

He let that soak in a moment, then continued. "When you saw the taped window, and then the torn paper on the door, you made a false assumption — you jumped naturally, but much too quickly, to a wrong conclusion. We all did. We assumed that it was you who had torn the paper — when you broke in. Actually, it was Dr. Garrett who tore the paper — when he went out!"

Garrett's voice was a shade less steady now. "You forget that Andrew Drake phoned me —"

Merlini shook his head. "I'm afraid we only have your own statement for that. You overturned the phone and placed Drake's body near it. Then you walked out, returned to your office where you got rid of the knife — probably a surgical instrument which you couldn't leave behind because it might have been traced to you."

Doran, hearing this, whispered a rapid order to the detective stationed at the door.

"Then," Merlini continued, "you came back immediately to ring the front-door bell. You said Drake had called you, partly because it was good misdirection; it made it appear that you were elsewhere when he died. But equally important, it gave you the excuse you needed to break in and find the body without delay — before Rosa Rhys should regain consciousness and see that the room was no longer sealed!"

I hated to do it. Merlini was so pleased with the neat way he was tying up all the loose ends. But I had to.

"Merlini," I said. "I'm afraid there is one little thing you don't know. When I smashed the door open, I heard the paper tape tear!"

I have seldom seen the Great Merlini surprised, but that did it. He couldn't have looked more astonished if lightning had struck him.

"You — you *what*?"

Elinor Drake said, "I heard it, too."

Garrett added, "And I."

It stopped Merlini cold for a moment — but only a moment.

"Then that's more misdirection. It has to be." He hesitated, then suddenly looked at Doran. "Lieutenant, get the doctor's overcoat, will you?"

Garrett spoke to the Inspector. "This is nonsense. What possible reason could I have for —"

"Your motive was a curious one, Doctor," Merlini said. "One that few murderers —"

Merlini stopped as he took the overcoat Doran brought in and re-

moved from its pocket the copy of the *A. M. A. Journal* I had noticed there earlier. He started to open it, then lifted an eyebrow at something he saw on the contents listing.

"I see," he said, and then read: "*A Survey of the Uses of Radioactive Tracers in Cancer Research* by Walter M. Garrett, M.D. So that's your special interest?" The magician turned to Elinor Drake. "Who was to head the fifteen-million dollar foundation for cancer research, Miss Drake?"

The girl didn't need to reply. The answer was in her eyes as she stared at Garrett.

Merlini went on. "You were hidden behind the screen in the corner, Doctor. And Rosa Rhys, in spite of all the precautions, successfully produced the apports. You saw the effect that had on Drake, knew Rosa had won, and that Drake was thoroughly hooked. And the thought of seeing all that money wasted on psychical research when it could be put to so much better use in really important medical research made you boil. Any medical man would hate to see that happen — and most of the rest of us, too.

"But we don't all have the coldly rational, scientific attitude you do, and we wouldn't all have realized so quickly that there was one very simple but drastic way to prevent it — murder. You are much too rational. You believe that one man's life is less important than the good his death might bring — and you believed that sufficiently to act upon it. The knife

was there, all too handy, in your little black case. And so — Drake died. Am I right, Doctor?"

Doran didn't like this as a motive. "He's still a killer," he objected. "And he tried to frame Rosa, didn't he?"

Merlini said, "Do you want to answer that, Doctor?"

Garrett hesitated, then glanced at the magazine Merlini still held. His voice was tired. "You are also much too rational." He turned to Doran. "Rosa Rhys was a cheap fraud who capitalized on superstition. The world would be a much better place without such people."

"And what about your getting that job as the head of the medical foundation?" Doran was still unconvinced. "I don't suppose that had anything to do with your reasons for killing Drake?"

The doctor made no answer. And I couldn't tell if it was because Doran was right or because he knew that Doran would not believe him.

He turned to Merlini instead. "The fact still remains that the cancer foundation has been made possible. The only difference is that now two men rather than one pay with their lives."

"A completely rational attitude," Merlini said, "does have its advantages if it allows you to contemplate your own death with so little emotion."

Gavigan wasn't as cynical about Garrett's motives as Doran but his

police training objected. "He took the law into his own hands. If everyone did that, we'd all have to go armed for self-protection. Merlini, why did Ross think he heard paper tearing when he opened that door?"

"He did hear it," Merlini said. Then he turned to me. "Dr. Garrett stood behind you and Miss Drake when you broke in the door, didn't he?"

I nodded. "Yes."

Merlini opened the medical journal and riffled through it. Half a dozen loose pages, their serrated edges showing where they had been torn in half, fluttered to the floor.

Merlini said, "You would have made an excellent magician, Doctor. Your deception was not visual, it was auditory."

"That," Gavigan said, "tears it."

Later I had one further question to ask Merlini.

"You didn't explain how Houdini got out of that Scottish jail — nor how it helped you solve the enigma of the unsealed door."

Merlini lifted an empty hand, plucked a lighted cigarette from thin air and puffed at it, grinning.

"Houdini made the same false assumption. When he leaned exhaustedly against the cell door, completely baffled by his failure to overcome the lock, the door suddenly swung open and he fell into the corridor. The old Scot, you see, hadn't locked it at all!"

NOT FAILURE, BUT LOW AIM, IS CRIME



In the year 1927 an American editor named Charles H. Baker, Jr. got a brilliant idea. He had known for a long time that nearly every writer, novice or master, had written some stories which had failed to sell, and sometimes these rejected tales were the authors' favorites or their most unhackneyed and daring efforts. The reasons these "failures" had not been accepted by American magazines were various and obvious: editorial prejudice of one kind or another on the part of the powers that be, or fear of complaint from holier-than-thou advertisers, or underestimation of the public's I.Q., or knuckling under to prudishness, or as Mr. Baker expressed it, "sheer inability to know a good story when one comes along." Mr. Baker decided to rescue some of these stories from oblivion. He read thousands of rejected manuscripts, found dozens of remarkable stories, selected the fourteen he liked best — for their vitality or originality of style and treatment — and put them into an anthology titled REJECTIONS OF 1927. About half the stories were the work of comparatively unknown writers; the other half included tales by such authors as Ben Ames Williams, Mary Heaton Vorse, J. P. McEvoy, Gouverneur Morris, Mildred Cram, and Arthur Schmitzler — proving again that name alone does not guarantee acceptance and publication. Indeed, every story in Mr. Baker's collection had been rejected by at least ten American magazines.

Ten years later an English editor named George Joseph embarked on a project almost identical to Mr. Baker's. George Joseph selected fifteen stories that had been rejected by English magazines and put them together in a volume titled "THE EDITOR REGRETS . . ." Mr. Joseph quickly learned that many English authors shared at least one critical opinion with their American colleagues: they often considered their best stories to be the very ones which had suffered the most rejections. As a result, Mr. Joseph's anthology proved even more star-studded than Mr. Baker's, including such famous writers as C. S. Forester, Louis Golding, Alec Waugh, Martin Armstrong, G. B. Stern, H. E. Bates, A. E. Coppard, L. A. G. Strong, and Daphne du Maurier.

In their pithy forewords Charles Baker, Jr. reminded us that "The Atlantic Monthly" bought Kathleen Norris's first story only after they had rejected it and returned the manuscript to the author, and George Joseph reminded us of Thomas Hardy's differentiation between the short story and

the novel—the former is inspired by mood, artistry and the soul, the latter by habit, intellect and experience.

Now we bring you one story from each of these unusual and "forgotten" anthologies. We have picked the stories with great care, so that you can compare two "failures" — two tales that were rejected by American and English editors. Superficially, the two stories have much in common: they are both by well-known literary figures — Ben Ames Williams and C. S. Forester; both are murder stories; and both (to quote George Joseph) illustrate the Arab proverb — "After the harvest, the best grapes still cling to the vine." But down deep, in the heart of these stories — well, judge for yourself; our only regret is that we haven't many more of these "failures" to offer you.

DRY-KYE

by BEN AMES WILLIAMS

His name was Walter Feake, but most people called him Wall. He lived in an old farmhouse, weathered to a hopeless gray, its roof-line sagging like the spine of a sway-backed horse, its shingles curling and dropping off in leprous patches. His wife, and Joel Hartney, her son by a former marriage, lived with him. The house itself lies at the remote end of a back road near the northwestern margin of the big marsh.

The big marsh is an artificial product. A mill dam has backed up the waters of the outlet of Loon Pond so that they have overspread what was once level meadow-land for a distance of six miles north and south, and a quarter to a half-mile across. Save where the old stream-bed winds its way, the water across the upper meadows is seldom more than a few inches deep. In this shallow water tall grasses

grow bountifully; black duck love to nest along the stream and in early fall gather in great numbers to feed upon the grass roots. Where once the brook ran, the water is six or eight feet deep, and pleasantly navigable in a canoe; elsewhere you may make your way afoot if your boots are tall and your heart is stout. Here and there you will come upon patches of treacherous bottom, where the interwoven carpet of grass roots bulges and quakes about your feet; and when the water is low, there are mud flats into which a man may sink to his waist and flounder helplessly.

When the waters were backed up across this meadow they drowned out a clump of alders here and there. Frost and rain and snow and wind have stripped these dead alders of leaves and twigs and bark, and weathered the hard wood to the color

of old bones. The stubs straggle upward from the marsh, gaunt and gray, toughly resisting the continued attacks of the elements. It was in one of these clumps of dry-kye that Dan Mills and I had laboriously built our duck blind a month before. With maple poles dragged half a mile from the nearest dry land, we constructed a low seat that was still high enough to clear the water, and built a scaffolding above it. Upon this scaffold, at an angle like that of the walls of a tent, we leaned dry-kye broken or cut from the thicket thereabout. The stuff was brittle, but it was also strong; and its slanting lines broke up our silhouettes, when we were inside, so that so long as we sat still we would be sufficiently concealed, while at the same time we could watch in any direction through the many apertures. The chosen spot faced a shallow little pond-hole full of lily pads, formed by the bend of one of the tributary brooks. We counted upon half a dozen wooden decoys and a pair of call ducks to bring the wild fowl within range.

The duck season in Maine opens upon the sixteenth of September; but that date fell upon a Sunday, when hunting was forbidden, so that the actual opening was on the morning of the seventeenth. Since the black duck, educated by hard experience, flies early and late, it was our plan to be safely within the blind before dawn. To that end we had decided to spend the preceding night in our blankets on the nearest point of solid ground and go out through the marsh

afoot in the early morning. Dan knew the countryside better than I; he said we could drive in to Wall Feake's farm and down through his pasture to the borders of his wood lot, which ran along the margin of the bog.

That afternoon was overcast, with an easterly wind bringing a promise of rain. When we turned off the main road along the grass-grown byway to Feake's farm, alders shut us in, brushing against either side of the car; and sometimes trees drew together over our heads. Faint drops of moisture condensed upon the windshield now and then, as we passed through wandering currents of warmer air. Once a rabbit emerged from the undergrowth to leap desperately along the road ahead of us for half a dozen rods or so, before dodging to one side into the woods again. An abandoned farmhouse stood in a weedy clearing which broke the line of trees on the right-hand side of the way. Boards were nailed across its sightless windows, like the closed lids of a dead man's eyes. Dan and I rode silently, each of us a little oppressed by the wet gloom of the afternoon. I asked by and by:

"Will Feake object to our crossing his land?"

Dan shook his head. "He don't farm much," he explained. "He's not much good. Guns a good deal. I expect he'll be out after them today. This stepson of his comes into the store sometimes; he's a kind of an invalid."

"It's a lonely hole," I commented, and Dan nodded.

"They didn't get outside for nearly a month last winter, when the snow was deep," he said. Added soberly: "I wouldn't want to be shut up with Wall that long."

"What's the matter with him?" I asked; but Dan had no time to answer, for we came abruptly around an angle of stone wall into the farmyard, and the man himself stood before us. I was faintly surprised to find him stalwart and hearty and of a prepossessing cast of countenance. When Dan called a greeting to him, he lifted his hand in pleasant response, grinning in a good-natured way. I stopped the engine and we alighted and Dan spoke my name. Feake's hand enveloped mine strongly.

"We've got a duck blind built in back of here," Dan explained. "But the water's gone down so you can't get up through to it with a canoe. We figured to sleep out tonight down at the foot of your pasture, if that was all right with you."

Feake replied heartily: "Why, sure." Then added: "Why don't you sleep in the barn? We'll git some rain tonight."

"We'll sleep under the car," Dan told him. "Got rubber blankets and everything." And he asked: "Have you tried them yet?"

A woman had come out of the farmhouse and looked toward us. I saw her worn countenance and the stoop of her shoulders and the wiry emaciation of her gaunt form. Her hair was drawn into a painful twist at the back of her head, so that her high

brow was bare and white. She stood a moment, and spoke her husband's name in a low tone; but he paid no heed, and the woman, without further word, crossed to the wood pile and gathered an armful of wood. I had a curious and surprising impression of strength and slow endurance as she moved. It was not till she had disappeared into the kitchen that my attention returned to Dan and Feake, who were discussing the prospect of ducks. Then a younger man came out of the house, and Dan told me this was Joel Hartney, the stepson. He may have been twenty, and he was spare and weary, and his eyes were red. He wore a very old and faded blue sweater which sagged about his drooping shoulders hopelessly; a cotton sweater of a pale and despondent hue. It seemed to fit the man; to summarize and describe him. He had come up behind Feake, and the other, becoming aware of his presence, turned and said slowly:

"I told you to git that wood piled in before it come on to rain, Joel."

The young man, with a flicker of a glance toward his father, said in a low voice, "I been sick."

"You're always sick when there's work," Feake commented grimly; and without warning his foot lashed out, striking the other in the lower leg so that he tottered and was near falling. "Git at it!" he commanded.

Joel nodded without replying, and limped toward the wood pile. Passively enough he began to throw the wood in through the door of the shed.

Feake told us loudly: "He's lazy as a hog. I can't git a lick out of him, half the time. His maw's a good worker, though."

I caught a glimpse of the woman's face at the kitchen window, as though she had been watching, but it was instantly withdrawn. Dan let down the bars of the pasture lane while I drove through, and replaced them, climbing into the car again. We proceeded in silence, picking our way among the boulders in the pasture; and Dan pointed out a little clump of hemlock trees near the lower end and suggested that I head that way.

"They'll be some shelter from the rain," he explained. "And it ain't far from there along through the birch growth to where we hit into the marsh."

I asked: "Has Feake been gunning?"

"He said he was going out right away," Dan replied. "Wall usually beats the bell a little. Good shot, too. He'll probably get a bird to-night."

"Not attractive, is he?" I suggested.

"He's been a kind of a mean devil," Dan confessed. "I guess he's always abused Joel. His wife was right good-looking when they got married, too."

"She's not now," I remarked. He shook his head in agreement.

"No." Added, after a moment: "She comes of good folks, but she married Wall Feake."

We reached the hemlocks and wedged the car among them and began spreading rubber blankets to shelter our prospective bed. Almost at

once we saw Feake coming down across the pasture, a gun under his arm. He stopped to speak with us, full of loud amusement at our folly in choosing to sleep on the ground when his mow was offered us. "You'll be hunting cover before nine o'clock," he predicted. "Like drowned rats."

"Leave a duck or two for us," Dan called, as he went away through the birches, and Feake grinned over his shoulder as he disappeared.

A few minutes later, while we were laying browse for our beds, young Joel drifted down the hill, a switch in his hands. "Seen the cows?" he asked idly. "They ain't come up tonight."

"Didn't see them," Dan replied.

The boy seemed in no hurry to pursue his search. I asked: "How does it happen you're not out after ducks, too?"

"I ain't much on that," Joel replied. "Anyway, I got to milk the cows." He sat down, indolently watching our operations, and he and Dan fell into casual talk together. There was a weary hopelessness in all his bearing; a tragic dignity in his very acceptance of the narrow life in which he was confined. The shabby old farmhouse over the hill above us; these rock-sprinkled acres; the gloom of the marsh beyond. And Wall Feake with right of hand and foot over him every hour. I wondered whether his mother was in partisan, and what effect her efforts to protect him might have. He seemed a dull and lifeless young man; the old blue sweater drooped across his shoulders hope-

lessly. By and by he drifted away through the birches in the direction his father had taken.

We had come early so that we might be prepared for bad weather before dark; but it was nearing sunset now. The deepening gloom told us this much, though low fog clouds quite obscured the sun. Once, as we ate the sandwiches we had brought, and drank coffee from a vacuum flask, Dan said sharply: "Listen!" And we caught the whistle of wings high above our heads as ducks slid down into the marsh behind us.

Once and then again we heard the report of a gun; and Dan said: "That's Wall! He don't miss many." Gray dusk confused the outlines of the birches, blurred the rim of the pasture where a knoll hid the house from our sight. We finished supper, and our pipes were going. "I suppose we ought to move by four-thirty in the morning," I suggested.

"Earlier," Dan replied. "We ought to be in there by that time. And we've got a good deal to lug. Guns and decoys and all. Lunch, too."

"We can leave that here," I reminded him. "Come back for it during the morning."

He agreed, and we decided to roll out at four. "I'll wake," he said.

It was now almost wholly dark — only in the gray sky overhead some light still clung. He looked at the watch on his wrist. "Twenty past six," he commented. "Guess Wall has give up by now. He couldn't see to shoot."

But upon the heel of his words shots came. Two shots, close together. Dan chuckled. "That's him, and he missed," he guessed. "When a man shoots that quick, you can bet nothing falls."

"He couldn't see a duck in this light," I commented.

"He'll come back past here," Dan prophesied. "I'll kid him about it."

It began just then to rain; a sprinkle that became a downpour and continued for half an hour or so. This was the first of many fog showers, which were to last the night through; and it drove us to shelter and our blankets, where we lay for a while, pipes glowing with our inhalations. We expected Wall Feake, but he did not come back that way, and by and by we slept.

Dan woke me by dropping his hand on my head and shaking it to and fro. It was black dark, but he said in the hushed voice men use before dawn: "It's five of four."

I could hear rain pricking upon the top of the car above us, could hear the water dripping from the trees all about. Where we lay we were both warm and dry, and I said as much. "Don't know as I want to shoot a duck anyway," I protested.

Dan laughed and switched on the electric lantern and found a bottle of coffee. A cup of the hot stuff reconciled me to arising. We ate and drank, then dragged on our boots and oilskins and climbed out into the rain. There was no hint of day in the east, and I asked Dan if his watch was right.

"Sun rises about five-twenty," he

replied. "Over an hour yet. It won't get light much before five today."

We assumed the load of stuff that must be transported out to our blind. I took the wooden decoys, slinging them over my shoulder, gun and shell box in my hands. Dan put the live ducks into a corn sack for transportation and led the way as we set out. When we emerged from the partial shelter of the hemlocks, it was to discover that the rain had for the moment ceased; but every blade of grass and weed and twig was loaded with moisture, so that it was almost as though we swam. The lantern was left behind; our eyes became accustomed to the darkness as we threaded our way among the birches, while the little dead twigs lashed our faces and prodded at our eyes. Dan, ahead, chose our course as much by instinct as by knowledge. When we had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile, he swung to the left into a tangle of alders and old dry-kye. I felt the ground soft under foot and knew we were breaking in toward the marsh. For fifty yards it was necessary to battle through the stubborn undergrowth; the decoys caught and held at every opportunity, and their anchors tripped me. When we came out into the tall grass of the marsh itself, it was like a deliverance. Within my oilskins I was steaming, and the dull pound of my heart was terrifying. We waited, resting where we stood.

"Move slow, now," Dan advised. "Take your time. That's the way to get there. It ain't far."

There was not yet sufficient light for us to see any distance; yet he seemed sure of his way. Walking was terribly difficult. The ground was soft, so that each foot sank six inches or more at every step. Dead grass was matted underfoot, tough and stubborn; standing grass thrashed to our waist. Each foot must be lifted and set down; it was impossible to stride forward; each step was an achievement.

Dan, ahead, got into difficulties. He broke through the mat of grass roots into the muck below and went in above his knees before his feet found hard bottom. The mire sucked about his feet, and I had to relieve him of his burdens while he worked painfully back to better footing. We made a detour, keeping to more solid ground, and picked our laborious way out into the marsh. A muskrat run betrayed me, filled my right boot with bog water. As I fell, the decoys thumped against my spine. Loaded as we were, and engulfed in heavy oilskins, our movements were ponderous and slow, our exertions terrific. Again and again soft footing turned us aside. Once our movements flushed a pair of ducks from the grasses somewhere to the right; we heard their wings without being able to see them. A spit of rain cooled us for a moment, then left us to steam again. The marsh sucked at our feet, quaked about us as we passed, tripped and harassed us. At last, through a patch of cat-tails where fallen dry-kye lay in wait to catch our boots, we came out upon the side of

the sluggish little brook, and so to the blind. I slid the wooden decoys into the water while Dan fastened the live ducks; and we took our seats at last with an ineffable relief. It was after five o'clock, just light enough to see. Rain dappled the water before us, slacked off, then leaped down upon us again. Water dripped from the brims of our hats, worked up our sleeves at the wrists, collected in pools in the folds of our pants. Under foot our boots were halfway to the knee in brown, thin muck of the consistency of hot chocolate sauce, and of much the same color.

I had been here before, but at mid-day when the sun shone; the rain, the foggy gloom of early morning, vaguely oppressed my spirits now. Dan had a flask, and we drank; but the reaction from our strenuous exertions left me chilled and cold. Once my teeth chattered together, and I gritted them into silence. Dan said whimsically: "Looks like it might rain!"

"I don't know whether we're brave men or fools," I replied.

"Time for the ducks to start to come," he reminded me; and for a while we kept vigil, eyes alert, striving to bore into the mist that obscured even nearby outlines. I thought of Wall Feake, out here last night till dark, caught somewhere here by that first downpour.

"Funny Feake didn't come back past where we were," I remarked. Dan nodded.

"I thought he'd come, just to ride

us," he agreed. "But he could cut across lots and get home quicker, in the rain."

This seemed probable. I wondered if the man's wetting had sent him home in bad humor, and whether he had kicked his stepson again; and I fell into speculation as to this isolated household and the relations between Feake and his wife and young Joel. A cumulative dislike of the man increased in me. No doubt, I thought, he often abused this worn and tormented wife of his. She who had been of good family till she married Wall Feake.

A lone duck passed down the other side of the marsh, ignoring our decoys. I squawked an invitation on a mechanical call and the duck wheeled in panic and fled away. A blue heron, moving on heavy and elastic wing, beat toward us and alighted a hundred yards down brook, its slim head and rigid neck visible above the grass. Little gusts of rain and cloud marched past us on the wind, the fog scudding low. It was warm, the marsh steamed; yet now and then there seemed to come upon the wind a damp and tomblike chill that made us shudder.

Then two more ducks swept over our heads and circled once and dropped into the grass a hundred yards away behind the blind. We had sat motionless, moving only our eyes to watch them; but as soon as they alighted Dan rose. "We can walk them up," he said quickly. "They're meat in the pot."

Between us and where they had

dropped, a patch of cat-tails barred our way. It was full of dry-kye, and muskrats had built a house near its middle. We worked slowly, avoiding noise so far as it was possible. Each of us took the way that seemed best to him, and so it happened that Dan and I were ten or fifteen yards apart when I came upon the body. It lay face down across an ancient stump, as though it had been flung there; limp and dragged and wet it lay, and I knew it for the body of Wall Feake, and knew, beyond any doubting, that he was dead. After the first moment of stark horror, I shouted huskily; and even as Dan answered I saw the ducks we had been stalking take wing. Dan fired, but the distance was too great; he called to me:

"What's the matter?"

I answered — and my voice was thick: "Come here!"

"What is it?" he asked again, and I replied:

"Feake's here, dead."

He came quickly enough at that. Came up beside me, and we stood and looked down at the sprawled body, uncertain what to do. It was Dan who bent for a closer scrutiny; Dan who lifted one of the dangling arms; Dan who pointed out the shotgun, entangled in dry-kye just ahead of where the body lay. His investigations were made slowly; I watched, and I found myself thinking that for Feake's wife and for the boy this would be a grim deliverance.

Dan said at last: "You can see what happened?"

I shook my head. "What was it?"

"He stepped in a muskrat hole."

Dan pointed, and I saw that one leg was indeed sunk into the marsh. "That threw him forward," Dan explained. "He had hold of his gun in one hand, but he must have had the safety off. And when he fell, a stick of dry-kye happened to go inside the trigger guard. It pushed the trigger down. The charge hit him, kind of slanting up."

"He never moved," I commented, and Dan nodded.

"No, he wouldn't move," he agreed.

I said: "I suppose we'll have to leave him here and go bring help — a doctor or something."

"I guess so," Dan assented.

"It must have been one of those shots we heard," I suggested, after an interval, and Dan nodded slowly.

"We'd hear it," he agreed. "It ain't far from here to where we camped. In a straight line."

"It was just before it started to rain," I reminded him. "You remember. We heard a double."

"A double!" There was faint surprise in his tone. "That's right. Yes. We did hear two shots. Right together."

"Both barrels," I remarked.

He looked down at Feake's gun. The stub of dry-kye was still wedged within the trigger guard. "That wouldn't set off *both* triggers," he said thoughtfully, and stopped and picked up the gun and broke it and stared at the exposed ends of the

shells. Looking over his shoulder, I saw that only the shell in the right-hand barrel had been fired. Our eyes met, but neither of us spoke. My thoughts were racing.

Dan closed the gun again and put it back as it had been. "That's funny," he said at last.

"I didn't hear any shot after that double," I remarked.

He knelt and lifted the body a little, looking at the gray and weathered stump across which it had fallen.

"The wood's pretty dry," he said.

"It came on to rain hard just after those two shots," I reminded him.

"It must have happened before the rain," he agreed.

We began to cast to and fro, without consultation, looking for tracks in the tangle of cat-tails and dry-kye. But the rain had gone far toward eliminating all traces; it was not even possible to say certainly from which direction Feake himself had come to this spot. Dan worked out on the farther side, toward the birch growth along the higher ground, and came back after a while to report.

"It's only about fifty yards to good going," he remarked. "There's a sort of a ridge that's pretty solid."

I nodded. "Here's something else," I said, and pointed. Feake had fallen into the very edge of a clump of dry-kye. One stick of it, slanting upward toward him, was heavier than the others. Near its upper end and a foot or two higher than a man's head, there was a torn and jagged scar where the raw wood was freshly exposed. Dan

and I were equally familiar with the effect of a shot-charge on wood. Dan looked thoughtfully at the scar, looked again at the body and the gun. Then slowly said:

"That's the charge from his gun. It pretty near cut that stub right off."

"When he fell," I agreed, and Dan murmured under his breath:

"I wonder what made him fall."

"That muskrat run."

"Or something else," Dan amended.

His eyes went wandering to and fro. Half a dozen ducks circled above us, took fright at the movement of his head, towered and flew away unmolested. Day was fully come and the wind was freshening. I thought it was growing colder. Dan's head ceased to move, his gaze became fixed, and I followed his eyes.

Lower down on that stick of dry-kye which the shot-charge had struck there was a short, weathered stub of the sort that catches at a man's clothing, impedes his progress, and frays his temper. Caught upon the end of this stub I now saw that which had attracted Dan's attention, a little threadlike strand. The rain had drenched it; it was, nevertheless, unmistakably a strand of faded blue cotton yarn, of the sort from which the cheaper-grade sweaters are sometimes woven. Such a sweater, for example, as that which Joel Hartney had worn.

Dan's eyes met mine, and neither of us spoke for a moment; then Dan laughed in a mirthless, nervous fashion. "You look kind of white."

"I'm cold," I lied. He drew the flask from his pocket, and we drank, and he stowed it away again.

"Well," he said.

"I expect Feake had kicked him around all his life," I remarked. My voice would shake.

Dan nodded. "He stood a lot," he agreed, and added: "He's a decent kind of fellow." We both looked again at that telltale strand of cotton yarn, and after a moment, and with a firm hand, Dan plucked it from the stub and laid it across his palm beneath our eyes. Then looked at me inquiringly.

I took a step forward and bent and broke away the dry stick at its base in the mud. "I'll lean this on the blind," I told Dan. "We need some more cover there. There are some big holes."

"We might have shot into it, that way," he agreed. He was rolling the bit of yarn into a tiny ball between his hands. As I turned away, he dropped it and trod it into the mud with his boots, then followed me to our blind.

"We can go up to the house and send Joel for help," he suggested.

"Someone ought to stay here, I should think," I proposed.

We considered this as we moved back toward where the body lay; but we were each reluctant to stay. I was relieved when Dan at last assumed this duty. He pointed out my way to me.

"Go across there," he advised, "till you strike harder ground. It'll carry you right up to the birches. Then

angle through toward the pasture and you'll come out near the house."

"I suppose I'll have to tell them," I remarked.

He nodded. "You might take the car," he proposed. Then shook his head. "No. No use in that. Bring Joel down with something to carry him on, and we'll lug him out. He just stepped in a muskrat hole and shot himself."

"That's right," I agreed. Dan was lighting his pipe as I turned away. Rain descended once more, and I looked back and saw him sitting on the muskrat house. Then the task of crossing the narrow patch of bog demanded my attention.

When I climbed the pasture wall, it was to see young Hartney coming down the hill toward me. I had a sudden pang of something like fear, and stood still, awaiting him. He wore, I saw, an old hunting coat, buttoned close about him against the rain; but he had no gun. As he drew near me, he said slowly:

"I came down to look for the old man. He ain't come home."

Something made me dissemble. "Not since last night?"

He shook his head. "Maw said I better come down and look. He prob'ly got in somewhere out of the rain."

I watched him without speaking; and he seemed to feel something unusual in my regard, for he asked:

"Hev you seen him?"

I nodded then. "Yes, we found him," I replied.

"Found him?"

I spoke hurriedly, wishing to reassure the man. "He stepped in a muskrat hole and his gun went off and killed him," I explained.

He stared at me for a long time, and I saw the gray pallor creep into his cheeks; saw also a curious, eager light in his eyes.

"Whereabouts?" he asked. I gave directions, and he turned that way.

"Wait a minute," I said. "We ought to take something to carry him on."

He considered this, then nodded. "Come up to the house," he proposed.

So we walked up across the pasture together and came into the farm-yard. After an irresolute moment he turned into the shed. "There's an old door somewhere here," he suggested, peering into the litter of lumber that filled the place. "You reckon that will do?"

I said it would. The young man fascinated me; he seemed, after all, so spiritless and so uncertain. It was hard to believe he could have done that which he had done. We found

the door at last and took it out into the yard between us. He would have turned at once toward the pasture, but I said:

"You'd better tell your mother."

He hesitated. "There's time enough."

"She'll want to know."

He was all indecision. "Well, I dunno as there's such a hurry." I said no more, and by and by he surrendered. "Maybe I'd best," he admitted, and went into the house. I found myself filled with incredulity; it seemed impossible he could be at once so resolute and so weak.

By and by the young man came out. "She's going down with us," he said, and we waited.

In a few minutes the woman did emerge from the kitchen door. I had again that impression of strength and endurance; felt this even before I observed that she was dressed to make her way into the marsh. She wore overalls and high boots — and the faded blue sweater that Joel had worn the afternoon before.

THE LETTERS IN EVIDENCE

by C. S. FORESTER

Exhibit 1.

17 HAWTHORN ROAD.

DEAR MR. LACY,

My husband asks me to write to you and say that he would be glad if you would come round here on your way

to the office tomorrow morning and bring with you all the papers regarding the sale of 72 Hilditch Road. His arm is much better, but of course he cannot drive his car yet and the doctor says that he had better not exert

himself too much just at present.

Yours truly,
S. L. HART.

Exhibit 2.
17 HAWTHORN ROAD.

DEAR MR. LACY,

My husband would like you to come again tomorrow morning, as he has a good many private instructions to give you about the auction in the afternoon. He will be able to conduct the sale himself, but as I daresay he has told you, he finds it difficult to get out in the morning because of having to wait for the barber to come and shave him and so on.

Yours truly,
S. L. HART.

Exhibit 3.
17 HAWTHORN ROAD.

DEAR MR. LACY,

Just for a change this is not a business letter written on behalf of my husband, but it is one from me personally. Of course you can guess what it is about. I want to apologize for the scene yesterday in my house. It was very sweet of you to try to interfere, but you must never do that again. As you have worked for my husband for five or six years now, you ought to know how quick his temper is and how he often says things he doesn't really mean. Yesterday, of course, it was worse than usual because he still feels very helpless with his arm in a sling and he has been shut indoors a good deal, and that preys on his temper.

But his arm will soon be well again now and when he can get about and look after his business himself, he will be more cheerful. I was very frightened when you interfered, because I was afraid you might lose your job, and jobs aren't so easy to get nowadays. You will be careful with him, won't you? It doesn't matter about me because I am used to him by now, and you needn't ever worry on my account.

It is all right for me to worry about you, because I am older than you. I want you to promise me that you won't do anything to make him angry with you.

Yours very sincerely,
SYLVIA HART.

Exhibit 4.
17 HAWTHORN ROAD.

DEAR MR. LACY,

It was very good of you to write me that nice letter, but I am afraid you must never write to me again. My husband knew there was a letter for me this morning, and he wanted to know who it was from and what it was about, the same as he always does about my letters. I didn't let him see it, although it wasn't very easy to stop him.

Of course, there was nothing in it which you should not have written, but I didn't want him to see it and so of course there was an argument and a row, and he made Peter cry, and I was very unhappy. I do hope he was not in a very bad temper when he got to the office. I thought about you after

he had gone, and I wondered if he was being rude to you. I expect he is often rude to you in the office, but you must not mind that, as it is just the way he has.

I hope when he comes home you will have managed to sell that house for him, as then he will be better tempered for the next few days. I remember that he told me once that you had a very good manner with "prospects," and you can guess that that means an awful lot when he says it about one of his own employees. One of these days I suppose I shall hear that you have set up as an auctioneer and estate agent on your own, and then the firm of Hart and Co. will have to look out for itself!

But to go back to your letter. It hurts me very much to have to say what I have said about your never writing to me again, but you understand, don't you? I have had to burn your letter, because I don't dare leave it about. Please forgive me.

Yours,

SYLVIA HART.

Exhibit 5.
17 HAWTHORN ROAD.

DEAR FRANK,

Here I am sitting down to write to you the moment you have gone out of the house. I am so frightened in case George gets to hear that you have been here. You must never *never* come here again even if it is ever so safe. I can't think what he would do if he knew.

I was so glad when you came, too.

I was upstairs putting Peter to bed for his morning sleep when I heard your knock, and I thought "Oh, dear, here's another man come to sell things" and when I opened the door it was you! It was ever so nice of you to come, but I was so frightened. It is all very well for you to say that you always used to stop and have a cup of coffee while you are out on my husband's business, and so you can easily find time to come in and see me instead, but you shouldn't. You know you shouldn't.

There really isn't any need for you to worry about me, Frank. After all, I have been married to George for five years, and I ought to be able to look after myself by now. And I'm not a relation of yours, so there isn't any need for you to worry about me. And if I was a relation, you wouldn't be able to do anything because you work for George and you know that you would lose your job if you said anything to him about me. I have made my bed and now I must lie on it. That's what Auntie said to me when I told her the first time George was unkind to me.

I shall just have to go on lying on it. George is very clever as you know, and he knows he can always get at me through Peter. I hate him when he makes Peter cry, and now I shall always be anxious about you and worrying in case he is being unkind to you as well. I can guess quite easily how he treats his clerks. I am terrified in case you got back to the office late today and he was angry about it —

although that would not be as bad as if he guessed where you had been. That is what I am really worrying about. I shall be very nervous until I know.

Yours,
SYLVIA.

Exhibit 6.
17 HAWTHORN ROAD.

FRANK DEAR,

I don't think you'd better come again. I know I said that before, but this time I mean it and you know why. It's not because I'm frightened about George finding out that you've been here, although I'm frightened about that too, but it's for a different reason, which you ought to be able to guess without my telling you. We ought not to go on like this, because I am frightened of myself and something might happen. Please, Frank, let's end this thing now and never see each other again. We can just say goodbye and you can forget about me. I'm two years older than you are, Frank. George told me how old you were a long time ago, just after we got married. You will soon find someone the right age for you and you can marry her and forget about me. You didn't know that I had your photograph to remember you by, did you? But I have. It's in the spare bedroom — do you remember when George had a photo taken of the office with him outside with his staff? You're in that photo looking over George's shoulder, so I can always creep into the spare bedroom and see your photo

whenever I want to, after we've said goodbye.

Frank, George is going to Eastbourne tomorrow about that house, "The Hazels," isn't it, and he will be away all day. If you could come here in your lunch time we could say goodbye to each other much more comfortably than any other time. Do come, Frank, because I want to show you what a nice lunch I can cook for you, ever so much nicer than Mrs. Haines can, I am sure. I don't expect she gives you very nice food. You ought to be better looked after than in those lodgings. Do come, and then we will have a lovely hour before we say goodbye.

Yours ever,
SYLVIA.

Exhibit 7.
17 HAWTHORN ROAD.

FRANK DARLING,

I love you so much. George came back from Eastbourne and it was all right. He brought back two African spears which he wants to hang up on the dining-room wall as ornaments. I don't mind as long as Peter can't reach them. He has just gone down to the "Lion" and so I am writing this quickly and I will slip out and post it before he comes back. Frank darling, I love you. I told you so such a lot of times today but I want to tell you again. Frank, we were mad today. We mustn't ever do anything like that again. And you didn't have your nice lunch after all. I should never have thought of looking at the time

if I hadn't smelt the potatoes burning and found the saucepan all boiled dry. We mustn't ever do it again. I feel so ashamed, although I love you more than ever now, more than I did this morning, although I didn't think I could love you more than I did then. And we haven't settled anything at all because you had to run away so fast back to the office as soon as we saw what time it was. Darling, I wish I could kiss you goodnight although I'm not going to kiss you again ever any more. I wish I didn't have to hurry writing this letter. Goodbye, Frank darling.

Always yours,

SYLVIA.

P.S. I have opened the envelope again because I am afraid that after today you won't love me or want to see me any more. It makes me feel awful. Tell me that you love me, Frank.

Exhibit 8.

17 HAWTHORN ROAD.

FRANK DEAR,

I'm afraid this is going to be a terribly long and businesslike letter, but I simply must say to you now all the things I've got to say. I never seem to manage it when we are together. We have other things to talk about then, haven't we, darling?

First of all, though, I must write down what I said to you yesterday, just to show I mean it. I won't leave George. It was sweet of you, darling, to ask me to, but you must see that we can't do it. George would give you

the sack, of course, and we haven't any money or anything then. Isn't it dreadful that our love should be all tied up and hampered because of money! But there it is, darling. We'd starve, because you'd never get another job after the sort of reference George would give you. You know what he's like. I'd do charwoman's work for you, darling, but I can't bear the thought of you being out of a job and going short of things. It's bad enough now with you in those beastly lodgings. And I couldn't leave George anyway, because of Peter. It just shows what George is like the way he is so careless about those spears he brought from Eastbourne and leaving them where Peter could get at them. And if I went away, George would keep Peter just because he knows that it would make me miserable. I simply couldn't leave Peter with George, darling. That would be dreadful. He's only two and a month, you see, dear, and George would never have him looked after the way I look after him. Life is dreadfully hard for lovers, isn't it, darling? We've just got to go on and on and hope for something to happen. So don't let's talk about it any more because it makes me miserable, and I want to be brave and happy and cheerful with my beautiful lover.

That makes me go on to the next thing I want to talk about. I do hope you destroy all these letters I send you, dear. Letters are very dangerous things, you know. It is a dreadful nuisance that Mrs. Haines hasn't got a telephone in her house because then

I could ring you up and we wouldn't have to write anything. It would be lovely if I could ring you up in the evening and have a long talk with you, wouldn't it, sweetheart? I should have to wait until George had gone out to the "Lion," though. Then it would be just before my bedtime, and I could tell you how much I wanted to have you with me and how I was going to dream about you all night. Darling, I love you so terribly. You will destroy these letters of mine, won't you? I've only had one letter from you and I had to burn that.

And I don't know when I'm going to see you again, sweetheart. It is all so difficult, and George is such a brute to me. I don't want to bore you with my troubles, darling, but he is so hard and cruel, and these last few days when he's seen me happy he's begun to wonder why I am, and it makes him worse, I'm sure. He made Peter cry at bedtime, and he had a lot more to drink than usual. I'm very glad my dear lover only drinks a glass of beer in the evening and nothing else.

I've got to leave off this long letter now, darling. It's a shame that I have to stop writing to my lover just to get George's tea ready for him. Lots and lots of love, my sweet darling Frank, and hundreds of kisses.

Ever your loving,
SYLVIA.

Exhibit 9.

17 HAWTHORN ROAD.

Yesterday was so lovely, sweetheart, that I simply must sit down now

and write to you about it. It all seemed too good to be true, what with George going to Eastbourne again (I hope he won't ever bring any more spears back) and Auntie saying she would have Peter for the day. It was a heavenly day that we had. When George came back in the evening I was still going through it in my mind but I had to stop myself when George said to me, "What do you keep on grinning about?" Then at night when I was in bed in the dark, I thought about it all over again and what a nice wild Irishman you are. I think blue eyes are much the nicest, and you have the nicest blue eyes there are, darling. And I like the way you part your hair, too. I think it was your parting that I noticed more than anything else the first time I saw you. That and the way your face crinkles up round your eyes when you smile.

I remember how terribly angry you looked that day the second time you came here when George's arm was bad and he was rude to me in front of you. It made your eyes flash fire just as they say in books. I've always heard that Irishmen have hot tempers, darling, but you are the first Irishman I've ever met. You won't ever be angry with me like that, will you, sweetheart? I think I should die if you were. You are so big and strong that sometimes it is hard for me to believe that you are really my lover. I have to close my eyes and think very hard about it, and then I can remember how I have held your head on my shoulder and kissed you

and how young you looked then.

You're only twenty-five, darling, and I'm twenty-seven, and I feel like a mother to you then. I felt like that last night when I shut my eyes in the dark and tried to remember all that had happened during the day. It was ever so real, darling. It was horrible to feel George's chin all bristly on the pillow beside me instead of your nice smooth cheek. He hasn't any right to be in your place.

I should hate George even if he wasn't cruel to me, darling. But we can only go on hoping that something will happen soon. I love you such a lot, darling. My arms are hungry for you and I want you ever so badly and I can't have you. Darling, tell me you love me too. I can't help doubting it sometimes when I feel that all the world is against me like this. Think of me very hard tonight and I shall think of you.

Ever so much love, darling,
SYLVIA.

Exhibit 10.

17 HAWTHORN ROAD.

Darling, you say we can't go on like this and I know we can't but what can we do? I can't leave George and I've told you so before. I can't leave him even for you, darling, as long as Peter is only a baby. And we should be starving in a fortnight if I left him. It is terrible for me as well as you, dear, to have to live with a man I hate so much. He was a beast to me again yesterday. I felt I could have stuck one of those spears into him easily.

They were on the wall just beside me, but of course I didn't do it. I'm not Irish and not nearly as hot-tempered as some nice men I know — I mean one nice man, darling, because I only know one.

Sweetheart, come and kiss me soon so that I can forget my troubles. I don't know what we can do but while you kiss me it doesn't matter and perhaps something will happen which will make things come right. But if he hits me again, I don't know what I shall do, darling. I could stick one of his spears into him, really I could. I mustn't think about things like that, must I, dear? Of course you burn all my letters, dear, don't you? I keep on forgetting to ask you while you are with me — we do have such lots to say to each other then without being practical.

Lots of love, darling,
SYLVIA.

Exhibit 11.

DEAREST,

Make sure you do everything I tell you. I was in such a hurry to get you out of the house that I couldn't make quite sure that you understood. You mustn't know anything about it, of course. You've never been here except those times when George asked you to come on business. I'm going to say I did it. By accident. I'm going to say I was trying to fix the spear upon the wall and it fell down and hit him. After I've gone out and posted this I shall come back and scream for help. You'll get this by tonight before any-

one can do anything to you about it. And make sure you burn this letter the same as the others. I'm not a bit frightened now, darling. Not even though it is lying on the dining room floor with its eyes open and the blood all round it. When everything has settled down again, we shall be able to get married quietly if you still want me, beloved. I must stop now, darling,

because soon Peter will be waking up out of his morning sleep and I want to get all this finished and settled before then. Goodbye, darling. I don't blame you at all for it and I am glad you did it. George only had what he deserved. We shall be so happy together later on.

Ever your loving

SYLVIA:



SPECIAL PRIZE FOR THE BEST STORY BY A COLLEGE STUDENT



"Rink Creussen" is a pseudonym. We are honor bound not to reveal the author's real name, or the curious reason which forced the author to adopt a pen-name. Perhaps those of you whose undergraduate memories are still green will see the truth in a flash of intuition . . . At the time Rink Creussen wrote "The Silver Dollar" he was — to quote him exactly — "a blushing twenty." His background consisted of twelve years of schooling, "completed in the prescribed manner—without ever experiencing the embarrassment of a single original thought." Mr. Creussen (whose chosen first name prompts us continually to refer to him as Rinkydink) was finishing up a delayed freshman year at Princeton when we notified him that his story had won a Special Prize. At that time he was single, and very glad of it; his hobbies (sic) were weekends; and while he had had "a few lukewarm articles printed in college and Army publications, the latter of which were enjoyed no end by my captain after someone had read them to him," Mr. Creussen's prize-winner represents his "first mystery-story undertaking, and was entered upon only when" Rinkydink (there it goes — just couldn't resist it!) discovered certain well-known economic laws.

Mr. Creussen's ambition is to be President of the United States.

Now wouldn't it be amazing if a generation from now Mr. Creussen really did become the President of the United States (it has happened before at Princeton); and if EQMM were still flourishing and your Editor still editing, we could sit down circa 1980, brush aside our long white beard, and with feeble fingers type out the astounding story of how the President of the United States, in his callow youth, had written a mystery story and how Ellery Queen, with his remarkable nose for "rare, undreamt-of finds," had actually published it . . . Do you realize what a fabulous price this copy of EQMM — the one you now have in your hand — would fetch? Better hang on to it! Encase this issue in protective wrapping and salt it away — it will be a nest-egg for your children and treasure-trove for your grandchildren. You see how it pays to buy EQMM? It's an investment for the future!

Oh, day-dreams! Oh, frabjous thoughts! Oh, collegiate influences!

Which gets us back to Rink Creussen's story. For all its freshman (and sophomore) faults, "The Silver Dollar" is an all-around tale — you

might say, a pentathlon of a story. Its five facets include crime, detection, mystery, suspense, and riddle — and it is the fifth characteristic which gives "The Silver Dollar" its outstanding interest. For Mr. Creussen does not end his story: he concludes with a question, asking the reader to solve the mystery for himself. Yes, the facts necessary for a solution are there — in the story — and you can spot them as you read. And when you have finished the story and arrived at your own solution, we shall discuss the other possibilities. You see, Mr. Creussen had one answer in mind, and your Editor deduced a totally different explanation, and perhaps you will come up with still another solution to the riddle of "The Silver Dollar" . . .

THE SILVER DOLLAR

by RINK CREUSSEN

THE BAR had been fairly crowded that night Big John was murdered, but for long after, Bert, the bartender, could remember the face of every man who had been in the place, especially those of the three who had the silver dollars.

The first had come in shortly after nine — a man Bert had never seen before. He was dressed like a shop mechanic on his day off, wearing a worn but respectable brown suit and a white shirt open at the collar. He paused at the door, letting his eyes get accustomed to the dim light of the room, then sauntered over and took a stool near where Bert was leaning on the bar, talking with Paul Stratton.

"What'll it be, mister?" Bert asked, wiping the bar with a rag.

"Rye and soda."

Bert served the drink, slid a bowl of peanuts over to him, and returned to talking with Paul. A group of

sailors came in, and Bert took no more notice of the man till he began flipping the silver dollar. He would balance it a moment on the nail of his thumb, then with a sudden release arc it up end-over-end, to catch it in his palm with a smart *smat*. Then a muffled *plut!* and the coin was over on his wrist. The man took no notice of which side came up, but just continued to sit there, sipping his drink and flipping the dollar up.

Bert studied the man several minutes, then walked up to a position in front of him and began taking down glasses from the shelf behind the bar, giving each several turns with a dry cloth before replacing it.

"That looks pretty big to be a half-dollar," he said to the man over his shoulder, as he reached for a glass.

"It is," said the man.

"It looks to me as though it might be a dollar," said Bert.

"It is," said the man.

Bert put down the glass he was holding and leaned forward on the bar on his elbows.

"May I look at it?" he asked. "You don't see many of them around."

The man caught the turning coin and flipped it over towards Bert. It bounced once on the hard wood of the bar and slid across until stopped by the molding. "Sure, why not?"

Bert picked up the coin and half-turned with it, to get the benefit of the light thrown off by the highly-decorated mirror which backed the bar. It was a dollar all right, a silver dollar minted in 1878. Its edges and facings were almost worn smooth and one side was slightly scratched, as if by a ring of keys. Bert leaned even farther forward and spoke confidentially to the man.

"Say, mister, you wouldn't like to trade that in for a new bill, would you? I'll give you one I got from the bank just this morning."

"No thanks," was the reply.

Bert stroked his chin for a minute, intending to signify great thought and internal debate, then nodded his head resolutely and said: "Mister, I'll tell what I'll do. I'll even throw in another half-rock besides. Yes sir, I'll give you a buck and a half for that dollar, that's what I'll do."

The man took a long sip from his drink before setting it down carefully. He looked Bert directly in the face and said: "The answer is still no. But tell me, just what makes this dollar worth an extra half-buck?"

"Well, I guess you'd call it sort of a

hobby. When I first come to work here, seven years ago, I started collecting the things. I don't know why, guess it was mainly because of the name of the place," he said, indicating a sign such as beer companies distribute pasted high on the mirror, which in frosted letters declared that "The Silver Dollar recommends" — plus a list of some fifteen drinks. "I only keep those that come across the counter," he continued, "don't go to no bank or nothing. 'Course we don't get very many in these parts, but even so, I've done all right." He reached down under the bar and withdrew several long pictureframe-like cases in which were mounted, in order of date, some thirty or forty silver dollars. Each case had a hinged glass cover and each coin was identified by a small card on which its year had been inked.

"Now you can see why I am willing to lose a half-buck," Bert told the man. "What do you say?"

"No, I'm sorry, fella," said the man. "I am keeping ahold of that buck. I've had it near thirty years now. Sort of a lucky piece, you might call it." He reached out and retrieved the coin from Bert's reluctant fingers. "How about a re-fill on this?" and he pushed his empty glass forward.

Bert shook his head sadly, picked up his coin cases and after gazing at them a moment, folded them and slid them under the bar. He filled the man's order and then returned to the end of the counter to put out his latest lament to his friend Paul Strat-

ton, who was nursing a perpetual beer at the corner stool.

The second man came in about fifteen minutes later. Like the first he was a complete stranger, not only to Bert but to Paul, who thought he knew everyone in town. The regular evening customers had begun to fill the place, and the booths which lined the far wall were all occupied. But Big John had not come in yet and thus the back room was still closed.

The second man couldn't have been more out of place with the rough trade of fishermen, sailors, stevedores, and other dock folk *The Silver Dollar* catered to if he had been Uncle Don. He was dressed impeccably in a Brooks Brothers suit, conservative silk tie, and a dark Homburg which he laid on the bar together with his reed cane, when he took the seat next to the first man. He ordered a "Scotch and soda, please," and while waiting for his drink made notes and figures in a small leather-encased pad he took from his breast pocket.

Bert laid the Scotch-and-soda on the bar. The man said "Thank you" and reached into his pants pocket for the proper change to pay for it. He felt for a moment, but could not seem to find any. With an expression of momentary annoyance, he dug down deeply and withdrew the entire contents of the pocket, spilling it out on the bar. The handful of loose change scattered, but the man fingered out the right amount and slid it over.

Bert, however, was paying no attention to the man's actions. His eyes

were glued to the bar; for, nestling like a sun in the center of its moons, in the midst of the quarters, dimes, and nickels the man had spread out on the counter was a highly polished, almost mint 1882 silver dollar.

Bert immediately went into his routine. Realizing that an extra fifty cents would mean very little to a man of this sort, he appealed at once to his better nature. He drew out his collection, waxed long and eloquently over each coin and the need for more, pleaded, cajoled, tried desperately to charm — but it was to no avail. The man simply would not part with his dollar.

"No, sir, I am sorry, but I have had this too long to lose it now. I shall, however, keep you in mind and send you any other silver dollars I come across. That is a very fine collection."

Bert's disappointment was insoluble. As he told Paul later, over a freshly drawn brew, "It's not once every three months a silver dollar comes in here. Then two in one night — two in one night, mind you! — and I don't get to keep either. It's enough to make a man start collecting pennies in a piggy-bank!"

But the height of Bert's disappointment was yet to come. About a quarter to ten, the door to *The Silver Dollar* opened slowly and a little tramp of a man eased his way into the smoke-filled atmosphere and went over to stand in front of the gayly-lit juke-box, just as though he had a nickel he could afford to throw away on music. He waited out almost two

records before he approached the bar.

He was a very small man, not much over five feet tall. A pair of dark baggy trousers covered his thin legs, and an almost unbelievably dirty green Army jacket was zippered tight under the gaunt face, which was badly in need of a shave. He was very old and very dirty.

"Whiskey shot," he told Bert.

Bert looked at him, turned once to three long rows of bottles in front of the mirror, then faced the old man. "Look, Pop," he said, "I'm sorry, but I don't own this place, I only work here. And the owner — well, he said I would have to pay for any drinks I serve that don't get paid for. I'll have to see the money first."

The old man looked down, started to speak, then shrugged his shoulders, and began a careful search of his pockets. From the first he withdrew two nickels and a dime. These he laid out on the bar towards Bert. The next pocket produced nothing, but from the right-hand jacket pocket he drew out a silver dollar. This he placed on the bar, but close to the molding on his side and not out towards Bert. A careful thrusting of the remaining pockets added two more nickels and three pennies to the little pile on the varnished surface, but that was all.

The effect of this third silver dollar on Bert can well be imagined. But the little man took no notice, being engrossed again in slowly searching his pockets. Bert reached over and picked up the silver dollar.

"Sorry, Pop, I just had to make

sure. You can get two out of this — do you want them both now?"

The old man looked up quickly. "Never mind the whiskey," he said. "That dollar ain't goin' to be used for that. Give it here."

"Oh, come now, Pop," said Bert, "You ain't got enough here without it, and it's good money. I'll take it. What kind of whiskey do you want?"

"I know blasted well it's good money, but you just give it here. If I ain't got enough without it, forget the whiskey and give me a beer. But just hand back that silver dollar. It's mine, and I am goin' to keep it."

The thought of losing a third silver dollar the same night made Bert desperate. He explained about his collection, and in the heat of the attempted persuasion, he even raised his price to two dollars and a half. But the old fellow remained firm.

Bert looked lovingly at the coin he held in his hand. It was worn and scratched, but it had been minted in 1899, a year Bert did not have represented in his collection. Regretfully he handed it back to the old man.

"Hell," he said, scooping up the change that lay there, "this will be enough for your whiskey. But I sure wish you would sell me the dollar."

Bert's mourning at his third great loss of the evening was cut short by the arrival at that moment of Big John. Big John was the type of man whose arrival cut short everything and anything.

If there was one thing that could be said about Big John, it was that every-

one agreed he was no good. The people of the docks are not known as pillars of civic interest, but even in this company he was known as a bad apple. Even Father Flynn, who always had a good word for everyone, was hard put when Big John's name came up.

The man had had an amazing career, though. For some fifty-five years he had supported himself on the proceeds of his many and varied rackets. The ways of the blackmailer, extortionist, bootlegger, and procurer were not unknown to him. Getting a start some place in the West, he had come to Port Chester ten years ago and immediately set about taking over the dock area. This proved to be somewhat more of a job than he had anticipated, and finally he was reduced to building *The Silver Dollar* out on one of the piers. *The Silver Dollar* really wasn't much more than a couple of shanties strung together on some pilings, but the dock folk liked it and it supported Big John.

In stature the man certainly deserved the adjective which had become so associated with his name. The man was immense. Huge, hairy arms swung from a barrel chest, and a square heavy head topped the thick bull-neck. He was well over six feet in height and the broad shoulder muscles lay across his back like extra clay on an unfinished piece of sculpture.

Big John entered *The Silver Dollar* like a dust-bowl twister sweeping through the yard of a deserted farm. Shouldering his way roughly through

a small knot of men who had gathered by the door, he called loudly for Bert, although the bartender was in plain sight mixing drinks behind the bar. The men looked up and then gave way, to converge back on his path after he had passed through. He made his way to the end of the bar and paused a moment before swinging under the counter through the half-door.

"You still here?" he said, addressing Paul Stratton. Then to Bert. "You make sure this grifter pays for his beers — we're not running any hand-out joint here."

He swung under and straightened out beside Bert. "Where's my apron and the key?" he demanded. While Bert was picking up these things from under the counter, the proprietor of *The Silver Dollar* crossed to the cash register, rang a "No Sale," and began counting the contents of the cash drawer.

Bert handed him a blue change-apron, such as newsboys wear at the corner stands. Big John strapped it about his waist after filling it with an assortment of coins from the cash register. He then picked up the key, ducked out under the bar, and unlocked the door to the back room. This was Big John's secret: he knew how to make an entrance. Every action of his was intended to create a sensation. The people who frequented *The Silver Dollar* knew this and hated him for it, but such was the fascination of this big, powerful man that they could not keep from watching

his nightly routine of noise, exhibitionism, and abuse.

The back room was even less pretentious than the front. When the wooden door was unlocked, only a cloth curtain separated the two. The room itself contained a few tables and some curtained booths where a gentleman might entertain the lady of his choice without too great a risk of being seen. The back room was kept closed each evening until ten o'clock when Big John usually arrived.

Big John alone served the customers in the back room. With Bert still busy at the bar, Big John would waiter back and forth between the two rooms, talking lustily with the men at the bar while Bert made up the order. Big John wore the change apron as a matter of convenience — it saved the bother of ringing up each sale. He would sally back and forth between the rooms, shouting orders to the harassed Bert, and the place remained quiet only on those rare occasions when Big John could persuade someone in the back room to buy him a drink. In his eight years as proprietor of *The Silver Dollar*, Big John was never known to have so much as offered to buy someone else a shot of his own liquor; but in the same period he had never been known to refuse someone else's generosity.

The bar became busy and Bert was lost in a welter of thirsty, laughing men crowding the bar, demanding fresh pretzels, occasionally tipping over a stool, and constantly moving back and forth between bar and

booth. The juke-box ground out *Mexicali Rose* over and over again, and the air became foul with smoke and talk. Bert opened both of the square windows which flanked the bar, and a thick belly of waterfront fog rolled in from across the bay, only to be lost in the heavier murk of *The Silver Dollar*.

It was close to eleven o'clock, and Bert had just begun to get ahead on washing his glasses, when he realized Big John hadn't called for an order in quite some time. There had been several just after he had first come in, but for the past half-hour the curtained doorway to the back room had remained undisturbed. Bert waited ten minutes more, then ducked under the bar and made his way through the crowd into the back room. It wasn't until he reached the third curtained booth that he found Big John slumped in one corner, his great ham of a hand still wrapped about a highball glass. For the first time in his life Big John did not jump at Bert for disturbing him. But then he hardly could have. He was dead.

Detective Robert Day wasn't a detective because he thought the life exciting, or because he possessed any particular aptitude for the job. Detective Day was on the municipal payroll solely because his mother had certain influence along those lines and because Detective Day's mental limitations forbade him the possibility of earning a living in any other field. He had flunked out of some of the best prep

schools in the East, and then out of some of the next-best. He was young, good-natured, beautifully dressed, and popular.

However, he was the only detective the town possessed, and when the Chief called him that night to *The Silver Dollar*, he entered into the affair with his customary gusto. It was well after twelve before the fingerprint men and police photographers had finished with the back room, and the Chief turned to Detective Day and said, "O.K. Bob, it's your baby."

They were all gathered in *The Silver Dollar's* main room — everyone who had been in the bar when the police arrived, plus a few others Bert had remembered as being there earlier. There were some complaints about waiting wives, a few soggy protestations of Constitutional rights, but on the whole the patrons of *The Silver Dollar* had settled down to enjoy the proceedings.

The men were scattered throughout the room pretty much as they had been all evening. Bert continued to serve orders from his post at the bar, between whispered consultations with Paul Stratton who had ordered a fresh beer. Detective Day selected a reed chair and placed it in front of the doorway to the back room, sitting astride it with his hands folded over its back. He pushed his gray fedora to the rear of his head with much, he hoped, the same motion he had seen Dick Powell execute many times in the movies, and addressed his audience.

"Big John is dead. The doc tells me he swallowed just about four times as much arsenic in that drink as was necessary. Now we all knew Big John, and men like him don't commit suicide. So I'm calling this murder, and now we have to find out who did it. Personally, I'd like to shake the man's hand, but murder is murder even in this town, and when we find the guy who did it, you may all get a chance to thank him — before he burns.

"The doc says a dose like that would have dropped Red Grange in his tracks, so I guess we can figure he got killed in the back room all right. Now all we have to do is find out who was in the back room this evening. Bert, you know the guys — who was in there?"

"Cripes, Bob, I don't know. I was busier than a two-dollar bookie all evening. People were coming and going — I couldn't keep track."

"When did he order the highball? There was another glass there in the booth. Apparently, the murderer bought John a drink and then salted it when he wasn't looking. Now when did he come out and order two drinks?"

"You know how we work it here, Bob. I can't tell who he's ordering for. After he opened up the back room, he came out maybe three, four times with orders; then I don't see him no more, so I get . . ."

"Yes, I know Bert. Well, then we have to do it the long way. Now everybody start thinking who went

near that door and where everybody was all evening."

For the next hour Detective Day individually questioned each patron and checked his story with the others in the room. Some stories conflicted slightly, but it soon became apparent that all but three men in the room had witnesses to the fact that they had never entered the back room while Big John was in there. However, Detective Day continued the investigation until the last man had been questioned. Then he turned to the three, who happened to be sitting at the same wall booth. Bert was a little shocked to note that these were the same three who had shown him silver dollars. Detective Day was saying:

"Gentlemen, it looks as though one of you three is our man Friday. All the other gentlemen in the room were either sitting with friends or observed never to have left their seats. Your stories alone have no confirmation. You are also the only three in the room who are strangers; the rest of us have been around listening to the deceased's roar for the past four or five years.

"I might add you three are under arrest right now on suspicion of murder. Of course we will check up on you down at the station, but I think you owe it to the boys here to tell us all about it. You, there," he indicated the man in the brown suit, "suppose you tell us who you are and what your story is."

The man in the booth shrugged and

straightened up. "Oh, the hell with it, you'll find it all out anyway. Name's Alec Barlow. Sure, I was in the back room. I came up from Cherterton just to talk to him. I wish I had killed him, but I didn't."

"What did you have to talk about?"

The man paused and drained his glass. He studied its wet bottom a moment, then replied. "The rat married my sister. Good many years ago. They had three children, then he left her. One of the kids needs an operation now and I wrote to him three times for money. Turned me down flat. Tonight I came up here as a last chance, to try and persuade him to kick through. Still no dice. So I came out here to get lit."

"Did you drink with him?" Detective Day asked.

The man looked him full in the face. "I don't drink with that kind."

Detective Day nodded and pointed to the old man who sat next to Alec Barlow. "O.K., Pop, who are you and what's *your* story? Were you in the back room?"

"Yes, I was. My name is Shifty Jameson. I knew Big John a long time back. I helped him out once. Well, times has been hard lately, so when I run into John on the street the other day, I puts the touch on him. He gives me the brush. I tails him to his boarding house and go see him a couple of times. Finally, he tells me to come see him tonight and he will give me fade-money. When I meets him in one of those booths, he chickens out and don't give with a red cent. Me, who

fixed him up one time! Good old Shifty, give him the ax! I gets up and leaves and goes to the bar to enjoy the hospitality of some of the other patrons."

Detective Day nodded and asked: "Did you have a drink with him?"

"No."

The detective turned to the last of the trio, the well-dressed man with the silk tie, "O.K., Buster, let's have it."

"Well, detective," the man started, "there is very little to tell, really. I am Ambrose Judson, of Fairville. I had an engagement with John for this evening, involving a personal matter which took place when we were both considerably younger. I suppose your people will tear into that, and when they do that will have to be soon enough for you. It will suffice to say that it concerns a matter not very pleasant which John was being stubborn about. We both parted in somewhat of a huff. But I certainly did not kill him."

Detective Day stroked his chin. "Ambrose Judson, eh? Yes, I have heard of you. Well, tell me, Mr. Judson, did you buy John a drink?"

"Certainly not."

The detective stood up and stretched. "Well, kiddies, I guess that's it. Here we have three men, all of whom hated Big John, had motive to kill him, knew they were going to see him tonight, yet not one of them admits buying the two drinks found on the table. John never gave those drinks out of the generosity of his own

heart — that we know. No, gentleman, I am sorry; one of you is lying. There's no other entrance to that back room, and yet someone bought two drinks, slipped John the arsenic, and got up leaving a dead man in the booth. Two of you are telling the truth; the third man is not only a liar but a murderer. All three of you are going down to the station under arrest and will stay there until we find out who the naughty boy is."

The crowd melted to let them pass through. As Ambrose Judson straightened up from the booth, he paused.

"Might I remind you, detective, that that may prove more difficult than you suppose? You can't hang all three of us, and there doesn't seem to be any great show of evidence to indicate just which one did the deed, beneficial as we all agree it was. Anyway, you can discuss it with my lawyer in the morning. Shall we go?"

Detective Day rubbed the back of his neck thoughtfully, then nodded jerkily. "Yes, let's go."

A uniformed policeman stepped up at that moment. "Bob, here's the stuff off the stiff. Just the usual. Wallet, watch, some bills and receipts." He handed him a manila envelope. "There were four quarters, six dimes, three nickels, a half dollar and a silver dollar in the change-apron. It's all there in the envelope with the other stuff."

Detective Day said, "O.K." and was just thrusting the envelope into his coat pocket when Bert spoke up from behind the bar.

"Say, Bob, how about that silver buck for my collection? I'll put a bill in the cash register to make up for it."

Bob Day laughed and pulled the envelope from his pocket.

"O.K.," he said and flipped the coin across the bar to Bert.

Bert stood with his hands at his sides, talking and joking until the last policeman had left. Then he walked quickly to the open window, and threw out his right arm with all his

strength. In the early dawn light he could see the coin skip twice before it sank into the still waters of the bay.

Paul Stratton half-jumped across the bar and grabbed Bert's arm.

"Why, Bert, you didn't even look at it! Not that we would have done anything about it, but I still would have liked to have known."

Bert turned, smiled slowly, and began wiping the bar. "I didn't have to look at it to know who killed Big John."

Do you know who killed Big John? Obviously, the all-revealing clue is the silver dollar which Bert the bartender threw out of the window and into the bay. But how could Bert have known the identity of the murderer without even looking at the silver dollar?

There is an answer. Indeed, there is more than one answer. Readers on our staff suggested two different solutions even before your Editor read the story. One reader believed that the author was pulling our leg, making us sweat out an answer when, in actuality, there was no answer at all. Another reader decided that Bert the bartender had poisoned Big John—therefore, Bert had no reason to look at the silver dollar to know who the killer was.

Neither of these solutions satisfied your Editor. Both were negative, creating only a let-down for the reader. And we didn't believe the author had planned either a hoax or a solution unsupported by evidence. Besides, a perfectly logical answer leaped to your Editor's mind the moment we finished reading the story, and on turning back to various pages in the original manuscript, we promptly found evidence which confirmed our solution.

But was it the same answer the author intended? It was necessary to know. So we wrote to Rink Creussen and to our delight he outlined a solution entirely different from the one we had deduced!

Here is the author's own explanation:

(1) *How did the silver dollar get into Big John's change-apron? It was well known that Big John never bought anyone a drink. Therefore, the murderer bought the drinks, paying for them with the silver dollar.*

(2) *All three suspects who owned silver dollars had refused to part with them — each silver dollar had a high personal value to the owner. Yet one*

of them used his silver dollar to purchase drinks. Which one? Only the man who had to, in order to go through with the murder.

(3) Now we know from the context that Ambrose Judson and Alec Barlow possessed money other than their silver dollars (Judson's "handful of loose change" on the bar and Barlow's drink while being questioned by Detective Day plus his statement that he went out front "to get lit"). But one man was penniless save for his silver dollar. This was plainly given in the text and confirmed when he said he left the back room and went to the bar "to enjoy the hospitality of some of the other patrons." The murderer is therefore Shifty Jameson. Would the other two men be likely to pay for drinks with their luck coins, when they both had other money? And would Shifty spend his keepsake, his last money, merely to buy Big John a drink? Hardly. Shifty paid for the whiskey because he needed it for the poison, and he paid for it with his silver dollar because this was the only money he had.

The author makes out a cogent case. We can't quarrel with the logic of it. And yet our solution was altogether different.

Here is the way we reasoned:

Obviously, the silver dollar had belonged to the murderer. So, if Bert the bartender could identify the silver dollar, he would automatically know the identity of the killer.

How could he identify the silver dollar without looking at it? Well, there are other senses besides sight. Had Bert looked at the coin, the sight of the year of issue would have been sufficient to identify the original owner — all three silver dollars bore different dates. But leaving out sight, and eliminating the possibilities of identification by smell, taste, and sound, there is still — touch.

Bert did not look at the dollar — but he did feel it.

And what do we know about the three silver dollars? The coin belonging to Barlow, the man in the brown suit, was described as having "edges and facings almost worn smooth and one side slightly scratched." The coin belonging to the old man, Shifty Jameson, was described as "worn and scratched." On the other hand, the silver dollar belonging to Judson, the well-dressed man, was described as "highly polished, almost mint."

Bert could not have distinguished between Barlow's and Jameson's silver dollars — both were worn and scratched. But he could have identified Judson's — not only without looking at it but the moment his fingers touched it. Judson's silver dollar was the only one of the three with palpably distinct edges and facings.

The author says Shifty Jameson was the murderer. We deduced that Ambrose Judson was the murderer. Who-do-you-think-dunit?

THE STRATEGY OF AH LO

by LEMUEL DE BRA

THERE was no doubt about it. The money was gone. Kwan Kim closed the lid of his father's camphor-wood chest, and sat down on it. From beneath his black satin blouse he got a cheap Chinese cigarette and a small block of matches. There was dismay, pity, and anger in his deep bronze eyes as he looked at his father.

His father, Kwan Gar, sat in his chair by the window, his long-stemmed pipe across his bony knees, his tired old eyes gazing out at the winter rain that was drenching San Francisco's Chinatown.

"Father," said Kwan Kim, "why did you do it?"

The old man jumped. He glanced swiftly at the chest; then slowly his gaze crept up to the young man's face.

"Do what, my son?"

"Why did you do it?" repeated Kwan Kim, the unlighted cigarette between his fingers. "It took me two long years to save that five hundred dollars. It was not much; but it would have paid your passage back to China and kept you in comfort until I could send you more. And to think that you would gamble it away!"

Kwan Gar was looking out the window again.

"I saw Ah Yet this morning," went on Kwan Kim. "He told me that you

were at Loy Kee's last night. He said everyone noticed it because you had not been there for years. He told me you lost heavily. Father, did you lose — all?"

"All!" groaned Kwan Gar.

Kwan Kim made an odd sound with his lips, a sound that is difficult to spell in English. It is peculiarly Chinese, and expresses mingled anger and contempt.

"You should have known that you would lose it. *Haie!* Things are not what they were twenty years ago when you were the luckiest *fan tan* player in Chinatown. Today there are no honest gamblers. You were robbed."

The old man swung around.

"Do you think that, my son? Do you think that? I have been wondering how it all happened so quickly; but I — I am old. I thought it was that."

"You were robbed," repeated Kwan Kim. "Ah Yet told me it was pitiful the way that vulture, Loy Kee, took your money. Well, it is gone. There is nothing to do, I suppose, but start all over again. I am very sorry for you, father. I know how your old heart hungers to return to your native village in China. But now —"

"*Aih!* It is for you I am sorry, my

son! It is true that I do want to go back. I want to smell the plum blossoms once more, and I want to die there among my own people in the village of the Kwans. But I did not want to take your money. I am not blind, my son. I know that you are soon to marry Ah Lo, the moon-bright daughter of my friend, Chun Moy; and I know you feel it keenly because I can not make Chun Moy the usual betrothal present. I —”

“Do not worry about us,” Kwan Kim broke in gently. “Ah Lo and I are young; we have an American education; and we have our lives before us. It is my filial duty —”

“But I have some pride left! I have suffered more than you know because all these years I have been sick and worthless and a burden on you. The sight of that money gave me an idea. There was only one way that I could help you, and I took that way. I never thought of losing. I felt certain that my old luck would return. I was going to play until I had won enough to pay my way to China; then I would not have to touch a single copper *cash* of your hard-earned money. But — I lost it all!”

Kwan Kim said nothing. The old man turned again and gazed sadly out of the window. There was no sound but the melancholy drum of rain on tin and gravel roofs.

A moment later Kwan Gar heard a door close softly. He looked around. Kwan Kim had left.

For a space the old man blinked stupidly at the door, struggling with

the memory of something that was but half-formed in his mind. Then, suddenly, it came to him. It was the sound of the chest being closed. Kwan Kim, while his father stared out the window, had opened the chest again — and closed it cautiously.

For a moment then Kwan Gar frowned at the camphor-wood chest; and, slowly, a suspicion crept into his mind. He got to his feet, shuffled across the room, and opened the chest. A hissing intake of breath betrayed his dismay and alarm. Still hoping, he dropped to his knees and began searching. He soon gave it up.

The loaded revolver they always kept in the chest was gone.

Above the drone of winter rain on window and tin roof rose the sudden and unmistakable sound of a revolver shot — dull, blank, yet pregnant with sinister meaning. Then — they seemed to be everywhere — the shrill call of police whistles.

Chun Moy, learned and venerable editor of *The Earnest Compendium of Chinese Classic Thought*, did not raise his head; but over his horn-rimmed glasses he looked across the desk at his daughter, Ah Lo, who at the same instant glanced up at him with alarm in her wide dark eyes.

“The *tongs!*” exclaimed the girl in musical Cantonese.

Chun Moy dipped his camel's-hair brush in the jar of *Azure of Heaven* ink and put the final downward, heavy strokes to the ideograph he had started.

"You are no doubt correct, Ah Lo. This *tong* war gives our people a bad name. Here I have just finished a poem entitled *Chinese Philosophy has made the Chinese Heart a Throne of Contentment and Enduring Peace*. And now" — Chun Moy sighed deeply — "some *tong* man punctuates my poem with a bullet."

"And four slain already this week! Oh, how piteous! Father — listen!"

Someone with swift but stealthy tread went down the hall past the door of Chun Moy's office. Ah Lo listened, her pretty head perked sideways like a bird's, her eyes bright as jewels, her lips like a crimson rosebud. Men — and women — always looked around when Ah Lo passed down the street. From the gold and jade ornaments in her sleek black hair to the embroidery that edged her Chinese pantaloons of Shantung silk she was decidedly and beautifully Chinese. But there were two things about Ah Lo that were American. One, a trifling but noticeable detail, was her high-heel shoes. The other, equally noticeable but not at all trifling, was the radiant glow, the animation that life in an American college had put in the girl's face.

Chun Moy's office was on the top floor of Chinatown's tallest and quietest building. Through the rain that streamed down the windows Ah Lo could see a jumble of tin and gravel roofs. On warm days, with the windows open, she could hear the rattle of dishes in the restaurant on the ground floor; on warm evenings she

often heard the eager yet cautious "yet, *kee, saam* —" of the players in Loy Kee's gambling rooms above the restaurant.

Chun Moy and his family lived in rooms adjoining the office. This office was a small room. The desk was by one of the windows. One door opened into the hall; the other into the living rooms. The walls were lined with books. In one corner of the room, resting on stools, were two heavy and beautifully lacquered coffins. Chun Moy was far from being rich; but he had dutifully provided against the day when he and Ah Lo's mother would die and be shipped back to Canton for burial in the cemetery of the Chuns.

The shuffling footsteps died away down the hall. Somewhere a door slammed. Then silence.

"The original idea of the *tongs* was good," said Chun Moy, "but it has degenerated into something that is wholly bad. It is strange that the foreign devils can do nothing about it."

"Father, I was just reading about the *tong* problem," said Ah Lo, picking up *The Chronicle* that lay on the desk before her. "Last night the Chief of Police had a long conference with the Government officials. They have made what they call a momentous and far-reaching decision. Shall I read it to you?"

Chun Moy grunted indifferently. He hadn't a great deal of confidence in anything done by the American officials.

Ah Lo opened her lips to read, but at that instant the hall door was flung open — silently. A young Chinese sprang in. Swiftly, soundlessly, he closed the door then stood with his back to it, his slant eyes narrowed, his breath coming in quick gasps.

"Kwan Kim!" cried father and daughter in unison.

"Do not talk!" Kwan Kim spoke quickly. "Listen: I have just killed Loy Kee, the gambler. The —"

Ah Lo flung up her hands, a low cry of horror and dismay on her lips.

"*Haie!*" Chun Moy sprang to his feet. "Why did you do that? And —"

"I will tell you everything later," Kwan Kim broke in quickly. He locked the door then stepped to Chun Moy's desk. "There is no time now for talk," he went on. "The American police are all around. They were watching for *tong* men. They heard the shot. They have the place tightly surrounded. Hide me, Chun Moy!"

There was an instant of silence, while Chun Moy's face became grave and stern.

"You have done wrong, Kwan Kim," he said quietly. "You have fanned the flame of abuse that the foreign devils have set against our people because of the continued bloodshed in the Chinese quarter. You —"

Chun Moy checked his words as someone ran down the hall past the door. There was the sound of a scuffle, again a door slammed.

"You do not seem to realize what you have done," continued Chun

Moy in sober Cantonese. "Your father is my life-long friend. You and Ah Lo grew up together. It is but three days gone since I posted the announcement of Ah Lo's betrothal to you. And now — now you come to me with blood on your hands and ask me to hide you."

"There is no time —"

"No murderer shall find refuge in my house!" Chun Moy cut in. "Unless you speak quickly and show me that you were justified in what you have done, I will consider it my duty to turn you over to the police."

Kwan Kim turned pleading eyes to Ah Lo; but the girl bowed her head as though to hide the pity and consternation that lay in her eyes.

"I did not mean to kill him," said Kwan Kim. "And I did not want to tell you anything about the matter. It is this way." In rapid Cantonese Kwan Kim told about the money he had saved to send his father back to China and how his father had lost it all in a crooked game at Loy Kee's. At the point of a pistol he had forced Loy Kee to return the money. As Kwan Kim made to pick up the money, Loy Kee had attacked him. In the scuffle, the gun was discharged. Loy Kee fell. Kwan Kim grabbed the five hundred dollars and fled. Everywhere he turned he heard the police whistles, and men running. Finding himself cornered in the building, he hastened to Chun Moy's room.

Chun Moy had been studying the young man's face. Now he spoke sharply: "Loy Kee recognized you?"

"Yes, but Loy Kee is dead. Anyway, he would tell the police nothing."

"Yes, that is quite true. Who else saw you?"

"No one."

Chun Moy grunted, and pulled thoughtfully at his chin. "Give me the money and the gun, Kwan Kim." When they had been laid on the desk, Chun Moy handed them to Ah Lo. "Go quickly and hide these. Do not return here." He turned again to Kwan Kim. "Now —"

Someone tried the door. The two men looked up in surprise. They had not heard anyone come down the hall.

Chun Moy gestured imperatively, and stepped quickly to one of the coffins. He removed the books that had been laid on it, and raised the lid. Kwan Kim got in and lay down, face up, like a corpse. Chun Moy dropped the lid and put the books back on it. Then he slipped a pamphlet on the *Sayings of Lu-tsu* under the lid that Kwan Kim might have air.

The one at the door had ceased rattling the knob and was rapping sharply with the ends of his fingernails. Chun Moy went to his desk, picked up his brush-pen, then crossed to the door and opened it.

Kwan Gar glided in. He closed and locked the door quickly.

"My friend," said Kwan Gar, "have you seen my son?"

"Not for some time," replied Chun Moy evasively.

"Did you hear a shot?"

"I believe I did hear something that might have been a pistol shot. Why do you ask that?"

The old man did not reply at once. Apparently, it was a hard moment.

"Alas, venerable Chun, I have done a terrible thing!" groaned Kwan Gar. "And I am afraid that my son, in trying to set right what I did wrong, has done something even worse. I thought — I thought perhaps he came here to hide."

"If he should come here you should not be here. You had better go home. Perhaps everything —"

There was a heavy step in the hall. Instantly the two Chinese knew it was the tread of a white foreign devil. The knob rattled, then knuckles drummed imperatively on the panel.

Chun Moy stood for a breath in indecision; then he caught Kwan Gar by the wrist and hurried him across the room. He opened the lid of the other coffin. Kwan Gar lay down in it, face up, like a corpse. Chun Moy wadded a booklet on *Kung Fu Tse as a Politician and as a Philosopher* and put it beneath the lid that the man inside might not suffocate.

Then he put a few books on the coffin, and went to the door.

"Who is there?" Chun Moy called out in his slow, careful English while he glanced around the room. Everything appeared to be in order.

"Lyons. Detective Lyons. Open up, Chun!"

Chun Moy opened the door, then closed it again. This time he did not lock it. "I heard a shot," he told the

detective. "Immediately I locked my door. Is it the *tongs* again?"

"The *tongs* — yet!" replied Detective Lyons. He was a big man, red-faced and perspiring. "Got Loy Kee this time. I think Loy knows who did it, but he won't cough up a thing except 'no savvy, no savvy.'"

The old editor laid his pen down. He folded his hands on his stomach.

"And Loy Kee? He will live?"

"Got a ditch ploughed across his forehead, but he'll live, I'm sorry to say."

Chun Moy blinked but said nothing.

"We have the place surrounded and are searching every room," went on the officer. "I came up to tell you that I want you to help me question several Chinks we found hiding downstairs."

"I am willing to help you in every way, Mr. Lyons."

"I know it, Chun. You're a square-shooter. But just the same, don't forget that I'll put all the suspects over the ropes again with our own interpreter."

"Of course." Chun Moy bowed to hide his smile.

"I'll beat it now," concluded the detective. "This is my busy day. No one can leave this building. We got every door, window, alley, and roof guarded. We're going to search every nook and cranny of this old joint, even if it takes all winter. This is one *tong* man whose goose is cooked."

He started for the door.

"Wait!" cried a voice, and Detec-

tive Lyons wheeled around. Ah Lo had stepped in from the living rooms. Her face was pale, her dark eyes narrow and gleaming with an eager light. "Wait!" repeated Ah Lo. "I know who shot Loy Kee. I know where he is. He —"

"*Pa lok!*" cried Chun Moy. "Stop! Are you —"

"Not a word, father!" broke in Ah Lo in Cantonese. "You must trust me. Listen, and you shall understand!" She turned to the detective and spoke in English. "My father knows nothing of this. I was here alone when it happened. A man came to the door. I recognized him as a *tong* gunman and wanted to order him away but was afraid. Then you rapped on the door. The *tong* man hid. Before I could think what to do, my father came in. He heard you and went to the door. I went back to our living room but hid by the door and listened. And now—"

Ah Lo paused. She stood motionless, scarcely breathing, her gaze on the floor. Then, with sudden decision, she stepped quickly to one of the coffins and flung up the lid. No one saw her slip a revolver from beneath her blouse and drop it inside the coffin.

"There!" cried Ah Lo, pointing. "He shot Loy Kee!"

The man in the coffin sat up. It was Kwan Kim's father!

The detective pounced on the old man, dragged him out of the coffin, and pocketed the gun. He made a swift search of Kwan Gar's clothes, then examined the weapon. One cartridge had been exploded.

"Ummh! Old man, what have you to say 'bout this, eh?"

Kwan Gar, not understanding a word of English, said nothing.

"No savvy talk, eh? Young lady, tell him he's under arrest for shooting Loy Kee. Ask him what he has to say."

Ah Lo spoke in rapid Cantonese.

"Sir, listen closely to what I say! Kwan Kim accidentally shot Loy Kee while getting back the money you lost. He is in hiding but he cannot escape. There is only one way to save your son. You must tell the official that you did the shooting."

Kwan Gar bobbed his head energetically. That much the detective understood. He did not know that the old man was saying: "I will tell them anything to save my son."

"Good!" exclaimed Ah Lo. "But remember this: You must tell the officials nothing, absolutely nothing, except that you are a *tong* man and that the shooting of Loy Kee was a *tong* affair. Understand?"

"I understand. I will tell them only what you say. I suppose I shall be hanged?"

"Loy Kee will not die; so you shall not be hanged. More than that, sir, I dare not tell you now. And please, sir, keep your tongue in your cheek."

"Let it be so!" echoed Kwan Gar.

Ah Lo, shaking her head as if she had found her task futile, turned to the impatient detective.

"Kwan Gar admits he shot Loy Kee and that it is a *tong* affair. I can't get another word out of him that makes sense. You will find it useless

to question either Loy Kee or Kwan Gar, for neither dares to talk."

"Fair enough!" grinned Lyons. "I know better than to waste time on Loy Kee. As for this old highbinder — he's got a surprise coming!"

There was a big wedding, a banquet that lasted for three days and nights. Then, with the five hundred dollars he had recovered from the gambler, Kwan Kim bought a grocery store and settled down.

The winter rains passed. Spring came. Chinatown blossomed out in its brightest and happiest colors. And with spring came a long letter from Kwan Kim's father.

"— so it was a great surprise to me," the letter concluded. "I could hardly believe that the white foreign devil government intended to send me back to China and pay all my expenses. I wanted to thank them; but I remembered what Ah Lo had warned me, so I kept my tongue in my cheek. There were three of us on the boat; Feng Soi, an old gunman for the Bin How *tong*; and Gin Hop, who, as you know, was the worst killer in Chinatown. We were well-fed and well-treated, and apparently it is a great honor to be deported by the rich American government.

"It has just entered my old mind that perhaps Ah Lo knew something of this when she got me to say that I was a *tong* man and had shot Loy Kee over a *tong* matter. Perhaps she read all about it in that honorable American paper I saw on her desk. *Ho to y!*"

THE WEAPON THAT DIDN'T EXIST

by RUFUS KING

IN A CELL down at the Tombs a young Irish girl stared through bars at the dawn. If the afternoon found her indicted with attempted murder she determined not to look upon the dawn again. Concealed in the fold between her thumb and forefinger was a tablet she had taken from her mistress's medicine chest before the police had come to arrest her. The bottle had been marked "Poison."

On a bed in a tenement of Second Avenue and the Twenties an Irish woman stared wide-eyed through an open window toward the east. A ship's whistle blew impatiently, shattering the stillness of daybreak. It served to remind her that if anything really dreadful *did* happen to little Margaret there was always the river.

"Hrrumph," announced O'Day with grim decision, and rubbing his vigorous hands still more vigorously together, as his lashes lowered a bit before the sun that streamed lavishly through the windows of his office in the O'Day Detective Agency on lower Broadway. "Hrrrrmphaa!"

"Might I inquire whether you got me out of bed at six o'clock in the morning to get me down here for the esoteric purpose of making noises at me?" asked young Reginald De

Puyster, gently placing one excellently muscled and immaculately tailored leg across the other.

"Not so much as the tip of my goat's nose could tell," said O'Day briskly, "for the business on hand is beyond the pale of levity. 'Tis attempted murder."

"So early?" murmured De Puyster.

"Yes," said O'Day, beginning to breathe a bit heavily in spite of himself, and wishing for the thousandth time that the slim, two-fisted creature of more than insulting elegance lounging before him had never come into his life, to say nothing of into his business, where more than once the young millionaire had solved cases for him that he had been on the point of giving up. "And here is the weapon that did it."

"Weapon?" De Puyster, through incurious, sleepy eyes, glanced at the steel phonograph needle cupped in the palm of O'Day's outstretched hand. "I rather imagined that such mementoes were the normal perquisites of the police. Or, perhaps," he added politely, "this was to have been a private murder?"

"It was not," said O'Day, opening wide the fingers of his other hand after finding them clenched too tight for comfort. "For no less a public spot did the attempt take place in than at

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the corner of Forty-Second Street and Fifth Avenue at five o'clock yesterday afternoon."

"Then my sympathies are with the murderer, especially if he owned a motor and was driving it himself."

"There were two," said O'Day thickly. "The one did and the other didn't."

"This is getting scandalous," said De Puyster. "Might one inquire which one did?"

"The murderer — that little shrimp who is the husband of Mrs. Hamilton Jones, and nothing else."

"That one!" said De Puyster. "It never occurred to me during the fortunately rare and unavoidable instances when we have come into contact that he had even a good murder in him."

"He hasn't," said O'Day. "The murder was a dud; like everything else about him. And if you will make up your mind that there is not so much as one single wrinkle left in the fit of your gloves, I will acquaint you with the details of the case."

With a distinctly pointed smile young De Puyster conveyed the impression that that, after having pulled him out of bed at such a ghastly hour in the morning, was the least that O'Day could do.

"This would-be Chapman, as you may or may not know, was a second-class singer from a Heaven-alone-knows-what-class family who became a protégé of Mrs. Jones when she was a wealthy widow with no ear for music and the heart of a child, but

without the face or figure to go with it. Now, in appearance this silver-plate-throated tenor who was and still is a good ten years younger than herself — though she is ever marveling at the fact that their birthdays fell on the same day and in, she minds you, the same year — has the pink-and-white features of a cherub who is a little sick from eating too much cream."

"We need not linger on his description. I have seen him twice. I presume he is now at large and in disguise?"

"He is not," said O'Day. "He is alternately patting his wife on such parts of her hand still left vacant by diamonds and sipping hot chocolate to soothe his nerves at their studio apartment on the roof of a business building on Fifth Avenue in the Fifties."

"The telephone service is becoming impossible," said De Puyster sympathetically. "The police haven't been able to put through a connection with him as yet?"

"No," said O'Day softly, and keeping his eyes riveted by sheer force of will on a photograph depicting the fingerprints of an intelligent gunman who had had, at the moment of his seated demise, a wife and six promising children. "The police have arrested somebody else."

"Of course," said De Puyster. "And while we are, as one might say, in the purlieu of the subject, just whom did Mr. Jones attempt to murder, and why, and of what conceivable interest can it be to me?"

"It was his wife he tried to murder," said O'Day, satisfying himself that he could still work his larynx, "for the silly creature's money, and it will interest you because of Margaret O'Ryan, who is known for business reasons as Margot Orient."

"I believe you still have the advantage of me — unless the lady has a third alias?"

"It is the same name but with a French accent, and no alias at all," said O'Day with excellent distinctness, considering the shrinking effect going on with his collar. "For ever since Maggie became a lady's maid she found that a 'zee' was worth a healthy five fish more a week to her than a plain, God-fearin', upright 'the.'"

"It was Miss O'Ryan, I gather — rather cleverly — whom the police have arrested?"

"No other, and her mother, Ellen — my second cousin — has been on my neck all night begging for me to save her."

"This Mr. Jones — does he bite?"

"Bite?" said O'Day foolishly.

"If not, why not arrest him, and thus permit me to return to sleep?"

"Because there's no proof," said O'Day, treating a near-by eraser in a manner to which no perfect eraser is accustomed.

"If we were to start at the beginning?" suggested De Puyster mildly.

"I will," said O'Day, balefully watching the eraser pop into the center of the room and wishing it hadn't, "for every instant is of value.

Now this Mrs. Jones, being the liar that she is and stingy as only the very rich know how to be when they are, tells such as may be dependent on her that she has put them in her will, thinking by this to get better service from them which — God help the credulous babes! — she does.

"And so when, at five o'clock yesterday afternoon, at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-Second Street, she felt a sudden sharp pain in her right arm and she, being a nervous creature unused to trifles, telling her chauffeur to speed to her doctor, whose office was near by on Park Avenue, had this phonograph needle extracted and learned it was poisoned, she at once accused my cousin Ellen's daughter Maggie of trying to murder her for the legacy she'd promised her in her will."

"Miss O'Ryan was in the motor?" De Puyster's already quite well-lifted eyebrows rose a fraction higher.

"She was; for she was half-pet as well as half-maid, which is another one of the peculiar ways of Mrs. Jones. And at the instant she felt the pain, so Mrs. Jones told the police, she was having a brooch that had come loose fastened by Maggie. It was then she's supposed to have jabbed the needle into Mrs. Jones' arm."

"And Mr. Jones, during this time —?"

"Had left the car," said O'Day, "while they were blocked by the cross-town traffic. He was standing on the curb saying a few choice words to his wife through the open window. And

even Maggie herself admits he was too far away to reach in and touch Mrs. Jones at the moment she felt the jab; nor did his hand raise a blow-pipe to his lips such as the heathens in India use when they wish to say good-by to a friend and not have to repeat it."

"Then why do you presume that it was he who made the attempt?"

"Because he needs the money he hoped to inherit, and because it wasn't Maggie. And unless we can prove so before three this afternoon she'll be arraigned and her mother, whose heart is already bent, will find it broke entirely. Now the case, so far as Mrs. Jones and the police are concerned, is closed and not a bootlegger's chance — she being a teetotaler — would either I or one of my regular 'ops' have for getting near her. But you can do it in the disguise of a friend."

"The disguise would be complete," agreed De Puyster.

"Nor is it only your ingenuity you will need, nor your plush clothes," said O'Day. "Should there be rough stuff there'll be no help for you but your own two fists."

"Rough stuff — with Jones?"

"Not with Jones, but with his man Wilkins, who is no other than the 'Twin-Punch Kid' rigged out as a valet and looking as much like one as I do like the Prince of Wales."

"One might say that the ménage was a bit queer were one to say the least."

"Even more than that," agreed

O'Day. "For what hold Jones has on that passé pug I don't know, but it's like a vise. And now then it's up to you to find out how this needle traveled the four odd feet or so between Angel-face and his bigger-and-brighter half, and then to pin the job on him as unescapably as a poppy on tag-day."

"Before three?"

"Before three."

"I'll thank you for the needle," said De Puyster, carefully folding it in a slip of paper and placing it in the pocket where it would least affect the perfection of his clothes. "Just how did you obtain it, inasmuch as officially you have no connection with the case?"

"The janitor in the office building where the doctor —" began O'Day.

"I comprehend perfectly. His name will be O'Rourke and he will be another cousin either with or without the embellishment of a remove."

"He will." An anxious look came into O'Day's eyes. "You'll get busy at once?"

"At once."

"By going to the Jones's?"

"Certainly not," said De Puyster, placing a handkerchief over the knob of the door before turning it, "by going to bed."

Which, with the aid of an Hispania-Suiza limousine, a chauffeur, a doorman, a private elevator boy, and an enthusiastic valet, he shortly did.

The hour of one-thirty brought — in addition to amber-colored *Celestines à la Maintenon* not badly served with

Béchamel sauce, some chicken *Charreusse*, a dash of *Aspic of Pâte en Bellevue*, and a perfectly stunning *Charlotte Princesse de Galles* made of rolled *gauffers*—a ring upon the phone.

Mrs. Hamilton Jones mingled a sight of satiety with one more befitting her role of all-but-murdered and hence very interesting invalid, who has been ordered to stay in bed by her doctor, and pointed a jeweled finger toward the Spanish doll whose dress, as a perpetual little surprise, concealed the transmitter.

She sustained the pose while the bell continued to ring with a gentle insistence. The Caroline of Denmark look—"Oh, keep me innocent—make others great"—that lay both from practice and habit in her pallid blue eyes snapped into sterner stuff, and though they still bore a striking resemblance to a fish, as she pivoted them until they rested upon her Hamilton, her look was like that of a tarpon rather than of such species as are popularly supposed to be made up almost exclusively of jellies.

"Hamilton, my love!" Her tone belied the endearment.

"Huh?" muttered Hamilton, caught unawares between a nap and a rather terrible dream.

He sat up sharply, and an observing person, preferably one who moved in police circles, would have noted that he first cast a furtive glance across his shoulder before engaging his eyes with those of his wife.

"That's right—sleep! Sleep, while

I lie here dying—without being able to lift a finger—and if you don't answer that damned telephone and make it stop ringing I'll scream."

The worst of it was she would, thought Hamilton as he bounced from the chair and lifted the receiver.

It being always rather difficult for Hamilton's face to convey any expression at all, Mrs. Jones was, one might say, electrically intrigued by the one that vitalized her husband's features for an astonishing instant. His lower jaw, never tight at best, sagged heavily; his eyes lost their natural aptitude toward beadiness and became almost poppy as they glinted with a strange excitement while darting toward her.

"Send them right up," he said in a voice that sounded like nothing so much as a microphone on the B.M.T. announcing any station in Brooklyn.

"Who?" snapped his invalid. "Send up who?"

"Just young Reggie De Puyster," said Hamilton casually, returning the telephone to where it shouldn't belong, "and a friend."

"De Puyster—the Reginald De Puyster who almost spoke to you that time you bumped against him at Sadie Bartow's lush for Mestrinov?"

"Yes, dear, yes," said Hamilton with a few motions such as parrots indulge in during the delightful operation of preening. "I met him a coupla times—never knew I'd made such an impression on him. He asked permission to pay his respects, if you would receive him."

"He must have read it in the papers," said Mrs. Jones, snatching her eyes away from the hand mirror, which was reflecting a vigorous process in touching-up, long enough to glance at the pile of dailies clouding a table beside the bed. "Sort of strange his wanting to come up like this, though," she added, plucking a grain of common sense from the chaff of her social knowledge. "He should have just telephoned to inquire — or sent flowers."

"He said he had a mission," mentioned Hamilton, who had transferred his preenings to the close vicinity of a pier glass. "It's in some way connected with his friend."

"Friend — who is his friend?"

"He didn't mention her name."

"Her name!"

The puzzle in Mrs. Jones's mind grew blinding. There were rare instances when she was nobody's fool, and this was one of them. That an all but total stranger, and one to whom the most obscure of social usages must have been an open book, should call the day following an attempt upon her life and request to see her personally — with a mission — quite obviously a female mission!

Her wonder shifted into third and transcended all bounds. She sidetracked to a fleeting wish that Margot were at hand instead of in the Tombs, and promptly got the shock of her at present not uneventful life when a familiar knock was followed by an opening of the door and Margot Orien, a pale and rather burning-eyed Margot, stood at the threshold.

Mrs. Jones wasted no time in radically changing her belief in fairies. Shocks were in the crescendo, and her first lucid action upon being confronted by her ex-maid and ex-almost-successful-murderess was to produce a masterful shriek, the tail end of which was muffled by the counterpane beneath which, with surprising agility, she dived.

"Take her," she mumbled, "away!"

A curious look came into Hamilton's eyes. If one has ever noticed either in a glass cage in a zoo or in the vaster book of knowledge accurately, if ceaselessly, dubbed all-outdoors, the glint inspired by a sudden and quite deadly determination in a puff adder's glance, one can then picture that look. Mere words, as is their wont, would fail to describe it.

Hamilton reserved it for Margot; lavishly gave it to her for a startled, concentrated moment, then, with astonishing rapidity and all but incredible presence of mind, he did three things.

The first was to press a button set in the paneling of a wall; the second was to insert a fresh cigarette in an amber holder and light it with hands that visibly did not tremble; the third and most important was to turn to the, yes, to the elegant vision of young De Puyster who had supplanted, through the medium of a firm if polite push, that of Margot on the threshold, and say, "Really, my dear chap, isn't this just a bit, well, extraordinary?"

"Quite," said De Puyster, with a metallic but sufficiently affable smile.

"It is probably one of the most extraordinary things I have ever done in my life. I trust that upon adequate explanation you will forgive me?"

The smile, among its other qualities, broadened for an extra fraction of an inch to a point where it became disarming. It is rather easy to make a smile disarming if one has behind its enigmatic curves the power of many millions of dollars and a social position firmly gripped in the bedrock of one of the few great cities of the world.

Mrs. Jones, being incurably curious by nature, had emerged from the billow of heliotrope-toned silk that had been serving so inspirationally as her refuge.

"Even for nowadays," she said in the weird, fluty voice she reserved for exceptional occasions, "you must admit, my *dear* Mr. De Puyster, that this is utterly unconventional."

"I must — I do." De Puyster sped the admission on a bow that would have wrenched a nod of approval even from a matron of the eighties.

"Margot — loose —?" continued Mrs. Jones, a note less flutily. "I do not understand —?"

"I can explain it best by admitting that the whole situation is disgracefully illegal and therefore, perhaps, thoroughly understandable," said De Puyster, casually noting the entrance through a second door of an amazing person, beneath whose theatrically conservative clothes rolled, he judged, the muscles of the "Twin-Punch Kid."

"The district attorney and I — but,

then, I'm certain you won't ask that I commit myself further. Hamilton" — the name stuck in his throat, but eventually emerged, pleasant enough — "knows how such things are arranged."

"Quite, quite, my dear Reggie," admitted Hamilton, "quite."

"Just so," said De Puyster, chewing a bit on the "Reggie" and thus getting it down. "And now, Mrs. Jones, if you will further strain the quite charming tenure of your indulgence I will present, much, I must confess in the manner of a prestidigitator producing a final white rabbit from his hat, Mr. Harris Silvestri, the district attorney himself."

De Puyster moved from the doorway and the curious tableau was complete. In his place stood Mr. Silvestri, filling with his figure, which was inclined to bulginess, an afternoon suit of exclusive Scotch cloth, and looking wearily dubious about his brightly intelligent eyes that went from person to person with calm decisiveness, while his mouth remained uncompromisingly rigid in the setting of cruelly shaved blue planes that composed his cheeks and jaw.

At the side of the district attorney, nearest to Hamilton, stood De Puyster, poised with the negligent alertness of the experienced whip while driving with a high hand a fractious coach-and-four. Unobtrusively beyond Hamilton stood the Twin-Punch Kid, waiting with an attitude of unconvincing servility for the orders to which the bell had offered a prelude.

Mrs. Jones, a fantasy in cool enamels against silk, suggested the inertness of a wax mannikin arranged for the partial exposition of lingerie for the rich; for the situation had already vanished beneath horizons far beyond her. The expression in her eyes pendulumed for a faintish moment between tarpon and jelly fish, then came to a semi-glazed point of rest in the neighborhood of a smelt.

And between the bed and all of them stood O'Day's cousin Ellen's Maggie O'Ryan, a helpless slip of fair young womanhood, the delicate grain and texture of whose being lay trapped in the bitter steel of legal circumstance; a helpless sheaf of young Irish sunlight, in spite of her "zees" and "Modomses," with the fires of her heart cold in ash. She wondered and wondered, like a squirrel racing round on the wheel in its cage, whatever at all her Patsy Mulcharchy must be thinking of her as he piloted his huge truck about the intricacies of the city, and what he would do when the tablet, still hot in the fold between her forefinger and thumb, should be popped into her mouth, and such visions as the blessed Mary kept hid behind the glory-mask of her radiance might be vouchsafed to the sight of her dead body's eyes.

Mrs. Jones, with no knowledgeable volition of her own, surged into action on the tide of social necessity that dominated so completely the shoals of her existence. "Perhaps, my dear Mr. De Puyster," she said *en treble*, "you will explain the purpose behind

this —?" She carefully swallowed the word "intrusion" and supplied in its stead a question mark, through the simple expedient of closing her carmined lips.

"Willingly," said De Puyster, focusing his eyes upon a bisque figurine presumably posed in ecstatic greeting of the dawn or of the first chill drops from a showerbath, and from which vantage point their vision encompassed in its scope the taut persons of Hamilton and of the Twin-Punch Kid. "We are gathered here in this curious little assemblage in the cause both of mercy and justice."

A glaze of rigidity tightened the muscles of Mr. and Mrs. Jones's features as the word "mercy" splashed its cool note against the shores of their attentive ears.

"I could never forgive — ever!" There was more of the banjo than of the flute in Mrs. Jones's voice as she sat bolt upright in bed and nervously fingered the rings that glistened their restless fires from the soft captivity of her hands. "As an example — a protection for others against her — justice demands" — she floundered after platitudes and ended rather lamely with — "that justice be done."

"There is no question as to that, Mrs. Jones," said the clear, incisive voice of the district attorney. "Justice, without the slightest hindrance on our part, will be permitted to run its course to the full."

As for the creamy-tinted Hamilton Jones, he said nothing at all, for a stunning idea had just reached fruition in

the fallow soil of his desires. With the presumed murderess at hand — with the district attorney with his unimpeachable official standing there as a witness — with Reginald De Puyster with his equally unimpeachable social position also present as another witness — heaven itself could not have contrived a more opportune instant for a second attempt to murder his wife.

All of which, either with or without the divine connivance of Heaven, was precisely the bait of the little trap that young De Puyster had devised.

With a complaisance surprising for a dame so fickle, nature began to do herself rather well along the line of atmosphere as the drama swept smoothly toward its crisis.

Black clouds piled thickly across Manhattan from the sea and a jagged fork of fire brightened momentarily their leaden depths, while a crash of celestial artillery dwarfed the life-thrum of the city into comparative quiet.

De Puyster, with the startled exuberance of a showman unexpectedly receiving a shower of theatrical manna from the gods and from Dionysus in particular, smiled with serene satisfaction. It was a grand day for a murder.

As Mrs. Jones rarely lost an opportunity for screaming, either with or without the incontrovertible excuse of a thunder storm, she added her own not negligible mite to the clamor that had resulted from the last clap.

"My love!" said Hamilton with the spontaneity of an automaton and

advancing a step closer to the bed.

But Mrs. Jones, as she had a perfect right to, felt herself becoming efficiently hysterical. The scene had long since been transported beyond the comforting realms of reality — her ex-would-be and might-at-any-moment-again-be murderess was loose, even though held in tenuous leash by so august a custodian as Mr. Silvestri and her most private of chambers, to wit, her bed chamber, invaded by an audience of two strangers impelled by motives wretchedly fogged as to their clarity!

Having less than none of the large and rich social aplomb of the very late Madame Jeanne François Julie Adélaïde Bernard Récamier, whose aptitude for receiving any number of strange gentlemen is, of course, historically notorious, Mrs. Jones, just naturally rebelled.

"Go home," she said, "the pack of you!"

"My love!" repeated her Hamilton, in the voice for which he was justly famous when engaged in executing the third act of *Tosca* in very exclusive and equally private performances at the homes of alleged friends.

"At once," said De Puyster, accompanying each step of Hamilton's toward the bed with one of his own. "But first, Mr. Silvestri and I join in begging that you grant a single request, that you permit Mademoiselle Orien" — he chose the French interpretation of O'Day's Ellen's Maggie's name with an eye to past and possibly future additional five fishes — "to as-

sume the precise position she had taken in relation to yourself at the instant when the poisoned needle entered your arm."

Mrs. Jones stalked the idea much in the manner of a hypnotized prey reluctantly drawn toward a cobra. As for her singing half, a faint start of exultation caused the match he was applying to a fresh cigarette to go out. A significant glance sped between Mr. Silvestri and De Puyster. The bait, each knew, was now completely swallowed in its entirety and the jaws of their nimble trap would shortly close.

"Do!" urged Hamilton, with more pep in his tone than had been exhibited as yet, and with the air of an efficiency expert removing a monkey wrench from some balking piece of machinery.

"All right, but I don't see the use in it," said Mrs. Jones petulantly.

"You will," said Mr. Silvestri briefly, and thus going the proverbial countess one better by entering into the conversation for the second time.

Mrs. Jones looked frankly skeptical. She emerged more largely from her inundating seas of silk and pressed jeweled fingers against her breast. "The brooch," she said, "was here — one of the first gifts that Hammy gave me." And, she might have added, the last. "It's a lizard done in diamonds and green emeralds. It belonged to his mother."

"Yes, it did," thought De Puyster and Mr. Silvestri with uncanny unanimity.

"Hammy, dear, was standing on

the curb and talking to me through the window," continued Mrs. Jones, gaining strength and volume simultaneously as the dramatic fervor of the scene bloomed afresh in the rehearsing. "My love," he was saying, "no matter *what* you may say to the contrary, or how firm a stand you may take, I am convinced, *convinced* that the beige-toned stockings with the appliqué of silver will be divine with your new Drécol *charmeuse*, and that the gold and sand ones would be unspeakably horrid."

"Oh, but, my *dear*," I was saying, starting in, you know, to contradict him, when I noticed the lizard was loose. I motioned to this — this female fiend" — she hurtled her stored-up venom toward Margot on a glare — "to fasten it. She leaned across me — so —"

"One moment, Mr. Jones, if you please!" De Puyster added his steps to those of Hamilton until they had all but reached the bedside. "The point of our inquiry will be lost if Mademoiselle Orien — who you have of course noted is near the breaking point —" he added in a discreet whisper charged with words of significance, "does not enact the scene herself. Come closer, *mademoiselle*, approach and touch your mistress as you did when you *pressed the needle into her arm in the motor*."

Three sharp intakes of breath descended rapidly down as many pipes in the respective throats of Mr. and Mrs. Jones and the Twin-Punch Kid as they realized the hoariness of the

trick that De Puyster, apparently, was playing upon the weak and all but fainting Mademoiselle Orien.

If the girl moved a step, one inch toward her reputed victim, it would be a tacit confession of her guilt; certainly a sufficient one, in the hands of a clever lawyer — and Mr. Silvestri was acknowledged to be a very clever lawyer indeed — to obtain a binding conviction against her.

A sense of pleasant reassurance seeped through Mrs. Jones like an anodyne. All was explained. The unconventional enigmas of the situation vanished like mists before the glaring sun of her inward comprehension. With the smug look of a heroine in any drama devised in the nineties by Herne she composed herself for the dénouement that must instantly burst.

And the veriest tyro in explosions could tell that something most decidedly did burst.

Margot had moved her confessional inch and her steps had multiplied sufficiently to transport her to the side of the bed. There was a trancelike quality in her walk, similar to the one highly in favor among Thespian Ophelias during such scenes in which the lady is presumed to be madder than usual.

During an absolute hush they watched her bend slowly down and advance her hands toward her mistress's agitated and theoretically lizarded breast. Her fingers had no sooner touched it than, with a leap made famous by panthers, young De

Puyster had hurled himself upon Hamilton Jones and had sent him crashing backward, halfway across the room.

Together they pounced for an object that lay midway between them on the floor. De Puyster reached it first, snatched it from the rug where it lay and swiftly slipped it into a pocket of his coat.

"Cokey!" screamed Hamilton in a voice no opera singer certainly might be supposed to house. "Get it away from him — quick!"

With impassive eyes Mr. Silvestri reviewed the scene as he casually removed the small automatic from his breast pocket, where he habitually carried it, and meticulously tabulated "Cokey" as another alias, hitherto unknown, of the Twin-Punch Kid.

It became immediately obvious that Hamilton's pseudo valet required no further urging. With a cage full of pet jabs and swings, to say nothing of a refined assortment of haymakers, all ready to loose upon the elegant dilettante smoothing his pale champis gloves before him, the Twin-Punch Kid waded in.

"Give us it!" he demanded, from the lower west corner of his mouth as he hooked his left with what must have been mock affection under De Puyster's arm and then went to work with his right.

"Tut!" said De Puyster, politely breaking the clinch and launching a neat but not gaudy left hook that made a most seamanlike landing in a far from abstract fashion on the very

point of the Twin-Punch Kid's jaw.

Mr. Silvestri, with a shrug, returned the automatic to its pocket. He rested a capable hand on either jamb of the doorway and accompanied the gesture with a mean and meaning look toward Hamilton, whose steps, in a fashion in vogue among crabs, were bearing him in that direction. "Drop your mud hook, sister," he advised quietly, "and haul in your sheets."

A worried, puzzled frown added a further crease to the Twin-Punch Kid's serried brow. Such of his blows as were landing — and the percentage was so slender as to be almost negligible — bore, apparently, no fruit. His footwork, for which in days not so long past he had always been quite famous, began to take on the aspect of an old southern breakdown, which was further accented by his opponent inquiring of him in an irritatingly suave voice just where were his Topsy and his cute Little Eva.

"You go to hell," he advised soulfully as soon as his lips were freed from the sealing knuckles that had just caressed them with the force of an affectionate sledge hammer. Then he lashed out with his right and succeeded in driving home a one-two punch into De Puyster's face that rocked its owner backward upon his heels and into the lap of a marble lady who had been, until then, perpetually engaged in the delicate operation of removing a thorn from her foot.

A timely shriek from Mrs. Jones accompanied the statue's crash. If this

was high society, she said to herself with a fervid curse, give her, she implored, the cruder but more staple chivalry of the corn belt. If Vienna, Illinois, didn't see her back home again, and for keeps, before many moons had polished off their rises and their sets she, for one, was going to know the reason why.

De Puyster, during one of the lengthier and more artistic private ballets of his opponent, took a look at his watch. Its hands were closing in upon the hour of two. He made a rapid and rather startled calculation — ten minutes, say, for the return home; half an hour in which to dress; another quarter in which to reach the Ritz — that left him a bare five minutes at best for finishing up the matter at hand.

"Come here," he said, beckoning with a coaxing finger toward the gentleman who was still indulging himself in a *pas seul*.

With a bellow of rage the Twin-Punch Kid closed in and whipped a wicked left toward De Puyster's lovely face. But the blow never connected, for a cartwheel that started from the ground floor smashed past his guard and he instantly enjoyed the privilege, for a sickening moment, of viewing stars by daylight before such slender consciousness as he ordinarily employed was snuffed out.

"Your evidence, Mr. Silvestri, is here," said De Puyster, taking Hamilton's amber cigarette holder from the pocket where he had placed it after having picked it up from the floor.

He held it against the light and carefully noted the dark, slender, pointed shape outlined in its cloudy depths. "Just as I imagined — you will find a needle in its tube similar to the one removed by her doctor yesterday afternoon from Mrs. Jones's arm.

"One can readily understand how neither Mademoiselle Orien nor Mrs. Jones paid the slightest attention as to whether or not your prisoner held the holder in his mouth while talking from the curb through the motor's window. I daresay the use of such a holder is so commonplace that it would no more be remarked upon or remembered than the fact that one were wearing any customary part of one's attire. It is a perfect example of the invisibility of the obvious.

"Mr. Jones, I might venture, held himself in constant readiness for some time past for an opportune moment for the attempt, and our little ruse this afternoon of supplying him with

such an advantageous second one was more than he could resist. As for his connection with that distant relation of Mordkin's on the rug one can only surmise — unless your records down at police headquarters can establish some former affinity between the two."

"I imagine they can," said Silvestri, "though that aspect of the case is of scant importance."

"Quite so," agreed De Puyster, arranging the last misplaced section of his clothing into the perfect alignment from which it had strayed. "And now, my dear Mrs. Jones, permit me to thank you for your very cordial assistance, and to hope that shortly, under more auspicious circumstances, I may have the pleasure of presenting myself again."

"And I hope to God," said Mrs. Jones, with a foretaste of that refreshing Mid-Western frankness to which she expected so swiftly to return, "not."



YOUR FACE IS FAMILIAR

by GUY GILPATRIC

HUGHEY CAVANAUGH wrote well, and he had the knack of picking the right things to write about that makes a good reporter. He never forgot a face, he rarely forgot a fact, and he knew everybody in town. And if somebody happened to be out of town, Hughey Cavanaugh could tell you why — even to the penny of the missing amount, the real name and complexion of the heart-broken blonde, or the exact offense of the bullet-blasted deceased which had caused him to be put on the spot — marked "X" in the photographs in the morning edition (Story on Page 3).

The paper was using Hughey on special assignments now and letting him sign his stuff. He was doing a good job with his human-interest sidelights on important events — telling who was who and who with at the football game, the prizefight or last night's first night. He wrote what he pleased, what he wrote pleased the readers, and this pleased the boss. Thus everybody was happy, particularly Hughey Cavanaugh.

Weddings — ordinary weddings — were a bit out of his line. But this was no ordinary wedding. This was high-hat, big-shot and front-page, with plenty of champagne for the gentlemen of the press. Real champagne, too — not just speakeasy vinegar with

sodium bicarb to make it fizz. . . . For this was the matrimony of millions ("Matrimoney" — Hughey jotted it down), a carnival of cold cash, an affair which only the adding machine of a Bradstreet or a Babson could adequately describe. The groom had thirty millions, and just how much the bride had was nobody's business — that is, it was nobody's business except her father's.

Ah, there was Papa now — Old Man Nichols (Hughey grinned as he spelled it Nickels) taking some people into that room at the side: That was where the wedding presents were, probably. But let's see, who were those people? . . .

Hughey's camera eye slid from one to another of them, and, in time with each flicker, his mind delivered up a little biographical sketch. Mrs. Stanislaw Parsons, former Vanities girl, fell off water-wagon and stern of yacht, Miami, 1927. . . . Miss Gertrude Swinburne, Spence School, ran over traffic cop, 57th Street and Park Avenue. . . . Yes, and there was Eddy Straus from Police Headquarters, all dressed up in gardenia, cut-away and striped pants, trying to look like a guest. Well, if his gun didn't bulge his coat, and if you happened to be half-witted and wholly blind, you'd never guess that Straus was a

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dick. Here to guard the presents, of course.

Hughey strolled through the comfortably-champagned crowd toward the gift-room — the Sub-Treasury, he'd call it in his story, or, no, Tiffany's Annex. The necklace, he'd heard, was worth — oh, gosh, he'd forgotten the exact amount, but it was enough to keep a City Roomful of scribes like Hughey Cavanaugh in liquor and laziest luxury from now until the pavement was fixed on the Queensborough Bridge.

The presents were displayed on a table which extended the length of the anteroom. Some of them were beautiful, most of them were hideous, all of them were costly. But the necklace, besides being costly, was both hideous and beautiful at the same time. Though its every icy, blazing bit was flawless, there was a great deal too much of it. But, Lord, what a jewel it was!

Out of the corner of his eye Hughey saw a waiter strolling by the door — strolling, and glancing casually in as he passed. It was only a flash, but in that instant Hughey's memory clicked. Police Headquarters . . . the morning line-up of crooks before the detectives . . . a row of sullen faces beneath the blinding lights . . . this waiter's face among them.

Well, a great detective, Straus was! He deserved to have the necklace swiped from under his nose, letting a crook with a record wander around in a place like this! Just the same Hughey supposed he'd better tip him off.

It would make a great story, come to think of it! — "Herald-Standard Man Spots Crook, Shames Coppers." "Cavanaugh's 'Camera Eye' Picks Jewel Thief at Billion-Dollar Wedding" . . . Chuckling to himself, he started toward the door, already writing the story in his mind.

And then, suddenly, unaccountably, his chain of thought switched off on a sidetrack and went rushing through a new and totally strange section of mental territory. In the time it had taken him to walk a single step — to lift one foot from the floor, move it forward thirty inches and put it down again — the whole thing was clear. Not as a story, mind you, but as a plan of action.

Hughey would steal the necklace. Then he would whisper to Straus that he had seen the waiter drop . . . something . . . from that open window on the Park Avenue side.

The necklace would be missing. The waiter's criminal record would do the rest. Cinch!

Hughey didn't need the money. He didn't want the necklace. It was simply that a plot for a story had gone astray in the making. Instead of writing it, he was living it. The imaginary had become the actual. Fiction was transmuted into fact.

He halted, turned, and retraced his steps toward the table. As he was about to pick up the necklace, a precautionary instinct caused him to glance over his shoulder.

The waiter was standing there, smiling at him.

"Hello, Mister Cavanaugh," he greeted. "Say, I'll bet it's three years since we've seen each other, but I'll bet you don't remember where."

Cavanaugh swallowed, and swallowed again. There was no occasion to be nervous, he told himself, but still — but still — it had been a mighty close call . . . And speaking of nerve, this waiter, this crook certainly had his crust!

"Yes," Hughey answered him gruffly, "I remember your face, and I remember where I saw you. And as long as you're so darned curious, I saw you in the line-up at Police Headquarters in May, 1927. Yes, it was a Monday, about May 15th. I don't remember your name, but I guess the police could recall it!"

"At the line-up, right! Well, say, you are pretty good!" declared the waiter, nodding his head in admiration. "I hope you'll excuse me for bothering you when you're trying to work, but I really didn't think you could place me like that, Mr. Cavanaugh. I'm Lieutenant MacIntyre, in charge of Criminal Identification down at Center Street — remember? I heard that you're like me — that you've got a camera eye and never forget a face."

Hughey's fingers were not quite steady as he fussed with his cigarette lighter. "No, I never do," he said. "Only today — well, just for a minute, sort of — I seemed to forget who the faces and — things — belonged to."



It is a long time since we presented one of John Dickson Carr's excellent radio stories, written by Mr. Carr especially for the program called "Suspense." Here is another, never before published in any form whatsoever. It was wave-lengthed on March 9, 1943, over Columbia Broadcasting System, and it starred two famous actors — Walter Hampden in the role of Professor Ballard, and Ralph Bellamy as Christopher Drew.

Suspense, to give the definition used by CBS, is compounded of mystery and suspicion and dangerous adventure; it is calculated to intrigue you, to stir your nerves, to offer you a precarious situation and then withhold the solution until the last possible moment. This is undoubtedly what CBS asked John Dickson Carr to plot and write, and they certainly asked the right man. Every element in their bill of particulars is smack down the middle of Mr. Carr's alley. Read "The Phantom Archer" and see for yourself, and remembering that it was originally conceived and constructed as a radio play, hear for yourself.

THE PHANTOM ARCHER

by JOHN DICKSON CARR

The Characters

LADY DREW	owner of St. Ives Castle
CHRISTOPHER DREW	her nephew
CHARLES NORMAN	her solicitor
PROFESSOR BALLARD	caretaker of St. Ives Castle
SALLY BALLARD	his daughter
CAESAR	his parrot

Such a mysterious, unusual crime. Such an extraordinary way to commit a murder. In London homes everywhere people were reading about it in the newspapers . . .

WOMAN'S VOICE: St. Ives, Cornwall. July 15th, 1938.

MAN'S VOICE: Harriet, Lady Drew — elderly widow of the late Sir George Drew — was mysteriously slain tonight at St. Ives Castle, on an island off the Cornish coast.

SECOND MAN'S VOICE: The means of death is said to have been an arrow.

WOMAN'S VOICE: An arrow!

SECOND MAN'S VOICE: An arrow fired from the end of the Portrait Gallery, and in the presence of two witnesses.

MAN'S VOICE: Historic St. Ives Castle, though still the property of the Drew family, is no longer lived in. It has been converted into a public museum . . .

WOMAN'S VOICE: And is in charge of two caretakers, who were witnesses to the killing. But both witnesses swear . . . (*Hesitates*)

MAN'S VOICE: Well? What's next?

WOMAN'S VOICE: (*Slowly*) Both witnesses swear that the arrow was fired by no human hand.

In the red sunset of one evening a week later, the Cornish coast looms dim and forbidding as two men walk out on the little pier that juts into the steel-dark sea. A motorboat is waiting there. One of the men is young and puzzled. The other is stout and elderly, and carries a briefcase. And as they meet suddenly at the end of the pier . . .

CHRIS: Excuse me, sir. Are you going to St. Ives Castle, too?

NORMAN: I am, young man.

CHRIS: May I ask . . . if you're related to the family?

NORMAN: (*Amused*) Not exactly. But let me see if I can't make a guess as to who *you* are.

CHRIS: Well, sir?

NORMAN: You're Christopher Drew, Lady Drew's nephew. She sent you packing off to America fifteen-odd years ago.

CHRIS: That's right. But *you* . . . ?

NORMAN: Take a good look, and see if you don't remember.

CHRIS: (*Surprised*) Good lord!

NORMAN: Got it in one. I'm "Old Charley" Norman, the family solicitor. A little stouter, a little grayer, but the same person you used to devil years ago.

CHRIS: (*Worried*) Look, Mr. Norman. I took the first ship from New York, as soon as I got your cable. But what I want to know is . . .

BOATMAN: (*Calling*) The boat's ready, gen'lmen, if you are. The boat's *ready!*

NORMAN: The boatman seems to be getting impatient, Chris. You'd better jump in.

CHRIS: Right. Can *you* manage?

NORMAN: I'm not quite as unswieldy as that, thanks. (*They both get in the boat*)

CHRIS: We're in, old man. Let her rip. (*Boat starts*)

NORMAN: You know, Chris, you *were* a young limb of Satan in those days.

CHRIS: I liked *doing* things!

NORMAN: Don't we all?

CHRIS: I mean, I liked tinkering with things — bells and locks and toy planes and all that. I'm an aircraft designer now. But would that suit Aunt Harriet? Oh, no! I had to be a lawyer. . . I *beg* your pardon, Mr. Norman!

NORMAN: That's all right, Chris. A lawyer is always the first to be sworn at and the last to be paid. So you and Lady Drew parted company?

CHRIS: When I was barely more than a kid. Yes.

NORMAN: And I gather you're not exactly — glad to be back?

CHRIS: Would *you* be? Look out there!

NORMAN: I see it.

CHRIS: Same old desolate, rocky island, with the surf boiling over it . . .

NORMAN: As a matter of fact, there's a bad surf boiling now. I hope we can make the landing-stage.

CHRIS: Same old shell of a castle, towers and battlements and slimy walls, up against an ugly red sky. It was bad enough when we lived there, before the place was turned into a museum. But now —! Tell me, Mr. Norman, is Professor Ballard still the caretaker?

NORMAN: Yes. The Professor is still there.

CHRIS: Why a cultured old guy like that should want to bury himself just to take care of the so-called "Drew treasures" —!

NORMAN: You remember Professor Ballard?

CHRIS: Very well. He used to own a parrot named Caesar.

NORMAN: Yes. Caesar's still alive.

CHRIS: I used to throw water over that parrot to make it swear. (*Reflecting*) Oh, yes! Professor Ballard had a daughter.

NORMAN: You mean Sally?

CHRIS: That's it! Sally! Scrawny, long-legged kid. I used to pity her, she was so ugly . . .

NORMAN: "She was so ugly," you say. Yes.

CHRIS: I pitied her for having to live in a place where you always imagined something was following you along the halls, and might tap you on the shoulder one night when you went upstairs.

NORMAN: You were rather a nervous kid, weren't you?

CHRIS: I don't know. But I didn't like it. Even now, when we come near the place, I have a feeling I might be getting into a ghost story.

NORMAN: (*Quietly*) As a matter of fact, Chris, you already have.

CHRIS: (*Sharply*) Have what?

NORMAN: Got into a ghost story.

CHRIS: Now look, Mr. Norman —

NORMAN: Haven't you seen the London newspapers?

CHRIS: No, I've just come straight from Southampton.

NORMAN: Then you don't know how your aunt died?

CHRIS: That's what I've been trying to ask you!

NORMAN: Just a minute, Chris. Boatman, do you think we can get through to the landing-stage?

BOATMAN: Easy, sir. We'll be through the jetty and into calm water in half a tick. Hold tight!

NORMAN: (*With relief*) There! That's better!

CHRIS: Just one other thing, Mr. Norman. I don't have to stay at the castle, do I?

NORMAN: It would certainly be advisable, Chris, until the estate's wound up. You're the heir.

CHRIS: But I don't want the old shrew's money! Or these "art treasures" either!

NORMAN: All the same, Professor Ballard and I have to make an accounting to you.

CHRIS: Hang it, I don't doubt your honesty!

NORMAN: That's not the point, Chris.

CHRIS: And as for staying at the castle, I'll stay there one night out of . . . well, call it respect. But not an hour longer! I tell you, sir, I wouldn't stay another night at this place if . . . Hullo!

NORMAN: Anything wrong?

CHRIS: Who's that? Standing on the stone pier, with a lantern in her hand? Just about the prettiest girl I ever saw!

NORMAN: (*Dryly*) That, Chris, is the "scrawny, long-legged kid."

CHRIS: Not Sally Ballard?

NORMAN: The very same.

CHRIS: She looks scared half to death.

NORMAN: She *is* scared half to death.

NORMAN: (*Reassuringly*) Now, take it easy, Sally! It's all right!

SALLY: Mr. Norman, I'm so glad you're here, I could break down and cry. M-maybe I will.

NORMAN: There's nothing to be afraid of now. Sally, this is . . .

SALLY: I can guess — you're Christopher Drew, aren't you? I'd have known you anywhere.

NORMAN: That's more than Chris himself could have said.

CHRIS: Never mind that. Give me the lantern, Sally. Your hand's shaking.

SALLY: Is it? I — I suppose it is.

NORMAN: Yes. And what are you doing out in this wind without a hat or coat?

SALLY: I'm afraid to stay in the castle. I'm afraid I might hear it again.

CHRIS: Hear what?

SALLY: I wish I could describe the sound to you. It's a sound like . . . (*pause*) The bowstring twangs, and the arrow sticks in the door. And then the parrot screams. But when you go to look, *nobody's there!*

CHRIS: Wait a minute! What *is* all this?

NORMAN: The phantom archer.

CHRIS: Phantom archer?

NORMAN: That's the newspaper's sobriquet. But, Sally, what about the police? Aren't they here to see that nothing else happens?

SALLY: The police have gone.

NORMAN: Gone?

SALLY: Yes. There's nobody here but my father and old Maggie, who does the cooking and cleaning.

CHRIS: How *is* your father, Sally?

SALLY: He's well enough, for a man over seventy, except that his eyesight's going. And — he broods. Over all this. Mr. Drew!

CHRIS: Chris is the name, Sally. It always used to be.

SALLY: All right, Chris. It *is* nice to see you again.

NORMAN: That's better!

SALLY: You may not know it, Chris, but your aunt was thinking of selling the castle to a millionaire named Mr. Singleton, who wanted to tear it down and put up a summer residence on the island. (*Intensely*) I don't think my father could have stood that! This castle is his whole life.

NORMAN: That's true, Chris.

SALLY: Now that you're the owner

... are you planning on selling it off?

CHRIS: My dear Sally! You can keep the place, or tear it down, or do anything you like with it! But . . .

SALLY: Yes, Chris?

CHRIS: I shouldn't think you'd like to live here.

SALLY: Like to live here? With death striking out of the dark before you can move a finger?

CHRIS: Striking out of the dark — from where?

SALLY: People can go mad when they're all alone. They don't go mad when they have friends with them. I can face it now. Come along. I'll show you.

Take care how you walk, now. Walls and towers and battlement whipped by the east wind. Twisting staircases, that once echoed to the clank of armor, and a hundred lightless rooms. True, the castle is supplied with electricity from its own power plant, but only a few of the rooms — the show-places — have even that life which is the life of death. In the core of all this damp stone is the sitting room of Professor Ballard and his daughter. A pleasant room, furnished in almost modern style, despite its stone floor. First of all, as we approach, you might notice the ancient parrot, its cage swung from the ceiling, and

...
SALLY: This is our sitting room, Chris. Mr. Norman knows it well. (The parrot lets out a horrible shriek of laughter)

CHRIS: Good lord! What's that?

SALLY: Be quiet, Caesar!

CAESAR: Die and rot! Die and rot! Die and rot! (*Caesar screeches again*)

CHRIS: Same old parrot, I notice.

SALLY: Do you remember how you used to throw water over him, Chris? And imitate him?

NORMAN: He's got a wicked-looking eye, that parrot.

CAESAR: Stow your gab! Blast your eyes! Die and rot! (*Laughs again*)

CHRIS: Doesn't Caesar get on your nerves, Sally?

SALLY: He never used to. He does now. That's what I was going to tell you. You see that big door over there?

CHRIS: Well?

SALLY: Do you remember what that door leads to?

CHRIS: Let me get my bearings for a second . . . Yes! That door leads into the Portrait Gallery.

SALLY: Yes. And do you remember what the Portrait Gallery looks like?

CHRIS: Well . . .

SALLY: (*Insistently*) Do you?

CHRIS: It used to be a long, narrow room without any windows and only this one door. Pictures hung up on each side.

NORMAN: Including a Rubens, a Rembrandt, and a Van Dyck.

SALLY: Please, Mr. Norman!

NORMAN: I'm sorry, my dear.

SALLY: Finally, do you remember what used to stand at the other end of the narrow gallery, facing this door?

CHRIS: Now wait a minute! That's going too far!

NORMAN: What is?

CHRIS: Mr. Norman, she's talking about a wooden figure — a dummy! It was dressed up as a medieval archer. It used to stand at the other end of the gallery. It held a bent bow with an arrow on the string. You're not going to tell me that blasted dummy started firing arrows?

CAESAR: Caesar eats flesh! Caesar eats flesh! Caesar eats flesh! (*Laughs again*)

NORMAN: Throw the cloth over his cage, Sally. That ought to quiet him down.

CAESAR: You're a thief! You're a thief! You're a . . . (*Squawk*)

SALLY: There, Caesar! Now you be quiet!

CHRIS: But what I want to know is . . .

SALLY: One night about two weeks ago I was sitting in here alone. Father had gone to bed. I . . .

CHRIS: Go on!

SALLY: The door to the Portrait Gallery, of course, was locked. It's got a rather elaborate lock, because the paintings are so valuable, and father has the only key.

CHRIS: Well?

SALLY: That was when I heard the sound. If I could describe it to you, it would be a sound like . . . a twang. And Caesar screamed. And I — I don't know why — I was so terrified I couldn't move. I knew there couldn't be anybody in the

Portrait Gallery. But I didn't dare open the door to see.

CHRIS: What did you do?

SALLY: Nothing. I didn't say anything about it. But the next morning, when we opened the door . . .

NORMAN: The next morning, Chris, there was no arrow on the bow-string of the wooden dummy. The arrow was buried in the door forty feet away.

CHRIS: Now, look! That is impossible!

SALLY: (*Quietly*) It's true, though.

NORMAN: And it happened on *three successive* nights.

SALLY: Some local paper got hold of the story. Finally, my father telegraphed to Lady Drew. And on the night of the murder . . . (*pause*) Just a moment, please!

CHRIS: Anything wrong?

SALLY: No. But I think I hear my father coming. (*Door opens and closes*) Hello, father.

(*Professor Ballard's voice, though thin and elderly — in sharp contrast to Norman's — is by no means weak or senile. It has strength, and more than a little dignity*)

BALLARD: Hello, my dear. I — I heard voices, but I wasn't aware we had visitors. Who are these gentlemen?

NORMAN: You surely know *me*, Professor Ballard!

SALLY: And this is Chris Drew, father. The new owner!

BALLARD: Indeed.

SALLY: And he's *not* going to sell the castle to Mr. Singleton after all!

Let me help you across to that chair.

BALLARD: Thank you, Sally, but I am not quite as blind as all that. Christopher Drew, eh?

CHRIS: That's right, sir.

BALLARD: I was afraid it might be our friends the police back again. It is one thing to have a suspicious mind, and quite another thing to be paid to have one. Still, I suppose they must do their duty. *Fiat justitia, ruat coelum!* — I think I will have that chair.

SALLY: Here you are, father. I was just telling them about how you telegraphed to Lady Drew, and how she came down here . . .

BALLARD: Oh, the night of the murder. Yes.

SALLY: I can tell you everything that happened that night. Father and I were in this room when Lady Drew came storming in here. You remember what a strong-minded person she was, Chris. No nerves or nonsense about *her!* In she came, with her umbrella and that funny hat of hers . . .

(Music bridge to flash-back)

BALLARD: If you would allow me to explain, Lady Drew . . .

LADY DREW: I don't want explanations, Professor Ballard! I want an end to this tommyrot! *(Caesar screeches)* Hasn't somebody strangled that parrot yet?

CAESAR: Ugly old mug! Ugly old mug! Ugly old mug!

DREW: I'll take this umbrella to you, you beastly little . . .

SALLY: Please, Lady Drew. Caesar doesn't mean any harm!

DREW: *(Grimly)* Neither do I, my girl. But I very often do harm.

BALLARD: I can easily believe your ladyship.

DREW: Ghosts in the Portrait Gallery! Wooden dummies firing arrows! Never heard such stuff-and-nonsense in all my born days! *(As she speaks, she keeps pounding on the stone floor with her umbrella)*

BALLARD: It is not really necessary, Lady Drew, to keep hammering the ferrule of that umbrella on the floor.

DREW: It is necessary, Professor Ballard, if I *think* it's necessary! And it's easy enough to see what's happened here. Somebody's playing a trick on you.

BALLARD: *(Wearily)* Yes. I'd already thought of that.

DREW: *(Surprised)* You had?

SALLY: Father prides himself on his detective wits, Lady Drew. You have to have that quality, you know, to be a decent research historian. But a trick — how?

DREW: Oh, some contraption rigged up to fire an arrow when nobody's there.

SALLY: Father thought of that too. Only — it won't work. *(Caesar laughs)* Be quiet, Caesar!

BALLARD: My daughter is quite right, Lady Drew. The wooden figure *is* a wooden figure, without any mechanism inside or outside.

- The rest of the Gallery is as bare as your hand. But what makes you so certain this is a trick?
- DREW: Because there's somebody hiding in this castle!
- SALLY: *What!*
- DREW: Don't argue with me! I *know!* (*Hammers with umbrella*) I saw him dodge round the corner of the stairs just outside the Armor Hall, and a nasty ugly look he had too!
- BALLARD: You must be mistaken, Lady Drew. There's nobody here except myself and my daughter and old Maggie, who does the cooking and cleaning.
- DREW: I know what I know, Professor Ballard. Have you the key to that Portrait Gallery?
- BALLARD: Of course.
- DREW: Give it to me, please.
- SALLY: Don't go in there, Lady Drew! Don't do it!
- DREW: And why not?
- SALLY: Because . . . (*A small clock begins to strike nine*)
- DREW: Well, my girl? Why not?
- SALLY: Because this is the time the arrow is usually fired. And when you open that door, you'll be facing the archer forty feet away.
- DREW: (*Snorting*) You mean I might get an arrow through *my* neck?
- SALLY: Yes. You might.
- CAESAR: Die and rot! Die and rot! Die and rot!
- DREW: I've had just about enough of this! Professor Ballard!
- BALLARD: Yes, Lady Drew?
- DREW: *You* don't believe in this tommyrot, surely?
- BALLARD: I have no belief in the supernatural, if that's what you mean. At the same time . . .
- DREW: *Will* you give me that key?
- BALLARD: If you insist.
- DREW: Then hand it over.
- BALLARD: One question, please, before I do. Are you still determined to sell this castle to Mr. Singleton?
- DREW: (*Surprised*) Yes. Naturally. I told you so.
- BALLARD: Then here is your key.
- DREW: (*Changing mood*) No, you don't! You're coming with me, both of you! You take that key, Professor Ballard, and you open the door for me!
- BALLARD: Just as you like.
- DREW: It isn't enough — oh, no! — to have my life half worried out with rates and taxes that would ruin Croesus! *This* has to happen on top of it, and maybe spoil a good sale! *Will* you open that door so I can go in?
- BALLARD: Certainly.
- CAESAR: Die and rot! Die and rot! Die and rot!
- (*Ballard puts key into lock*)
- SALLY: Stand to one side, father! *Please* stand to one side!
- BALLARD: Will you go first, Lady Drew?
- DREW: Yes, I will! And don't think I won't!
- BALLARD: As you know, this part of the castle dates back to the Twelfth Century. (*He turns key and opens the door, then stands aside*)
- SALLY: Father!
- BALLARD: What's wrong?

SALLY: All the lights have gone out!
(The parrot shrieks on a long, sustained note. Then a choking noise, and a heavy thud)

BALLARD: Lady Drew! *Lady Drew!*

SALLY: We were all so shocked we couldn't move, Chris.

CHRIS: But, well . . . what happened then?

SALLY: Twenty seconds later the lights went on again.

CHRIS: Well?

SALLY: Lady Drew had been shot through the chest with an arrow. She was lying across the threshold, already speechless and dying. But there was nobody in the Portrait Gallery!

NORMAN: Excuse me, Sally. But . . .

SALLY: Yes, Mr. Norman?

NORMAN: I've been over the evidence many times, of course. All the same, are you *sure* there was nobody in the gallery?

SALLY: Absolutely sure.

CHRIS: Why, Sally?

SALLY: As soon as Lady Drew was hit, father moved over and stood in front of the door. Nobody came out. And the lights went on twenty seconds later. Isn't that true, father?

BALLARD: *(Blankly)* Eh?

CHRIS: *(Whispering)* Sally, what's wrong with your father? He's sitting at that table with his hand shading his eyes, as though he were a million miles away.

SALLY: He *is* a million miles away — in his own thoughts. Father!

BALLARD: Yes, my dear?

SALLY: Isn't it true that there was nobody in the Portrait Gallery after Lady Drew was shot?

BALLARD: Oh, yes, Sally. That's true enough.

CHRIS: Then how in all blue blazes was Aunt Harriet killed?

NORMAN: That, Chris, is what the police want to know. Speaking as a mere lawyer, I'm a little out of my depth. If Professor Ballard has any ideas. . .

BALLARD: I beg your pardon for my discourtesy, gentlemen. I was merely sitting here thinking about the nature of evidence, and the curious ways in which the human mind can be misled.

SALLY: Misled, father?

BALLARD: Into error. And into great crime.

SALLY: Yes, but. . .

BALLARD: I was also wondering, if you will forgive me, whether this young man is really Christopher Drew.

SALLY: Father!

CHRIS: Great Scott, sir, you don't think I'm an imposter? Your own daughter can identify me! So can Mr. Norman!

BALLARD: At the same time, I move in a world of visual shadows. And I have a great trust to hand over before I . . . speak.

SALLY: Before you *speak*?

BALLARD: I should prefer some more formal identification of Mr. Drew. A passport, for instance?

CHRIS: I have a passport.

BALLARD: May I see it, please? — Thank you.

NORMAN: This isn't necessary, is it? Even I . . .

BALLARD. (*Sighing*) No. It is all correct. Photograph, fingerprint, height, age, weight. Landed Southampton July 14th; immigration stamp. You are Christopher Drew. I have here the keys to all the inhabited parts of the castle. I take great pleasure in turning them over to you.

CHRIS: Tell me, sir. Is the key to the Portrait Gallery among them?

BALLARD: It is.

CHRIS: Which key is it, Professor Ballard?

SALLY: Chris: What are you going to do? (*The clock begins to strike nine*)

NORMAN: I think I can guess. But are you sure it's wise?

CHRIS: You can't tell me arrows can be fired out of empty air! Either Aunt Harriet was killed by some mechanical contrivance rigged up in there . . .

BALLARD: On my solemn word of honor, Mr. Drew, there was nothing of the kind.

CHRIS: . . . or else she was killed by a ghost. And I'm going to find out which, Mr. Norman!

NORMAN: Yes, Chris?

CHRIS: We might have the conditions as they were before. Would you mind taking the cover off the parrot's cage?

NORMAN: I'm a sensible man. I'm a practical man. But I still don't like this! If . . .

CHRIS: Would you mind, Mr. Norman?

NORMAN: If you insist. But. . .

CAESAR: You're a thief! You're a thief! You're a thief!

SALLY: Why do you jump back, Mr. Norman? You're *not* a thief, are you?

NORMAN: No, of course not. But this infernal bird gets on my nerves even more than it must get on yours. It's got the eye of a rattlesnake and the face of a mummified Pharaoh.

SALLY: Maybe Caesar knows the truth.

CHRIS: Maybe he does. But we won't count on it. Which is the key to the Portrait Gallery, Professor Ballard?

SALLY: Don't do it, Chris! Don't do it!

BALLARD: This is the key, Mr. Drew.

CHRIS: Then stand back, everybody, and let's have a look at the ogre's den. If any wooden dummy starts shooting arrows at me, you can call the wagon for the loony-bin. (*He starts unlocking the door*)

SALLY: Chris! Please! Don't do it!

CAESAR: Die and rot! Die and rot! Die and rot!

(*Christ turns the knob*)

BALLARD: Just one moment, please!

CHRIS: Yes, Professor Ballard?

BALLARD: It will not be necessary to expose yourself to any danger.

CHRIS: No? Why not?

BALLARD: Because I should prefer to tell you who killed Lady Drew, and how it was done.

NORMAN: You *know*?

BALLARD: My dear Mr. Norman, there is one obvious question for the research student — or detective, if you prefer — to ask himself in this matter. That question is why the lights went out before Lady Drew was killed, and on again twenty seconds later.

NORMAN: Well? Why did they?

BALLARD: They were extinguished because someone pulled out the switch of the fuse-box, which is just outside the door of this room. They went on again because someone threw back the switch twenty seconds later.

NORMAN: Someone?

BALLARD: Yes, someone.

SALLY: That's all very well, father, but it doesn't tell us anything!

BALLARD: You think not, my dear?

SALLY: It certainly doesn't tell us, for instance, who fired an arrow from the Portrait Gallery.

BALLARD: There never was any arrow fired from the Portrait Gallery.

CHRIS: *WHAT?*

BALLARD: On what grounds, Sally, do you assume that there was? Did you hear any sound of the bow-string?

SALLY: (*Bewildered*) No, I — I didn't.

BALLARD: Why not?

SALLY: Because just at that moment, just as Lady Drew was going in, Caesar. . . (*The parrot screams*) like that!

NORMAN: (*Shakily*) Very convenient for the murderer, wasn't it?

BALLARD: Not convenient. Arranged.

CHRIS: Go on, Professor Ballard!

BALLARD: Let me repeat. Why did you assume an arrow was fired from the Gallery? Simply because, on three successive nights, an arrow *had been* fired in there by someone who detached the bow from the dummy figure and aimed at a locked door.

SALLY: But somebody had to get into the Gallery to do that?

BALLARD: Of course. With a key, for instance, like mine.

SALLY: Father!

CHRIS: Look here, sir, do you know what you're saying?

BALLARD: I am saying that our minds were prepared for it. We expected it. When Lady Drew was struck down by an arrow in the dark, we assumed that the arrow had been fired from the Gallery. Of course, the arrow was never fired at all.

NORMAN: Never . . . fired . . . at all?

BALLARD: Does it surprise you, Mr. Norman?

NORMAN: Very much.

BALLARD: That arrow, you see, was in the *hands* of the murderer — it was used *like a dagger*. When those lights were out, the murderer simply caught Lady Drew from behind and drove the arrow into her chest.

CAESAR: Die and rot! Die and rot! Die and rot!

BALLARD: It was all over in less than twenty seconds. Much less.

NORMAN: See here, Professor Ballard. Are you confessing to this murder?

BALLARD: *I?* Confessing to the

murder? (*Chuckles*) Sir, you amuse me.

SALLY: But you must be 'accusing somebody!

BALLARD: Does Mr. Norman forget so easily as that?

NORMAN: Forget what?

BALLARD: Does he forget, for instance, the man who was hiding here in the castle? The man seen by Lady Drew herself?

CAESAR: You're a thief! You're a thief! You're a thief!

NORMAN: Are you accusing *me*?

BALLARD: Sally, my dear! I have trained you well. Can't you use your reason even yet?

SALLY: But I don't see. . .

BALLARD: I am accusing the man who liked to tinker with locks and could have made a key like mine. I am accusing the man who could and did imitate Caesar, to cover any absent noise of a bowstring.

SALLY: You mean . . . ?

BALLARD: I am accusing the man who claims to have arrived in England only today, though his passport-stamp . . . look at it! . . . bears the date of July 14th, the day before the murder; I am accusing . . .

SALLY: *Chris Drew! You wanted the money! You killed that old woman yourself!*

(*Caesar screams*)



Stewart flicked the white king onto his side. "This is the fifth afternoon I've wasted for you, Doctor."

"You are afraid, Signore Stewart, *'Il pesce e gli ospiti puzzano dopo tre giorni'* — 'Fish and visitors smell in three days' — no?"

Stewart never was to know whether the Dottore was about to admit to greater leniency than Poor Richard in the matter of fish and/or visitors, for at that instant there burst into the room the full majesty of the law, or at least its outward manifestation in Sant' Egidio. The local maresciallo of carabinieri, usually affable pomp and circumstance, had been reduced to near hysteria by emotions very clearly stronger than himself. Stewart watched the Dottore battle torrential floods of Italian at the same time repeating "*Si, si. Vengo subito. Vengo subito,*" and propelling the maresciallo out the door.

"He said there is a terrible accident. The wife of the English Captain Turner is fallen from the ski trail for the experts. I do not understand. The Signora only begins to learn the skiing. The maresciallo does not express himself well in English. I must go to help. You will come?"

The climb to the scene of the accident was a matter of minutes. The accident had been tragic and simple. The woman, according to her husband, had insisted on trying out the trail alone. He had remained on the practice slope. The final and steepest turn of the trail followed a ledge which almost overhung the practice slope.

In fact, the trail ended, after the turn, at the head of the practice slope, which permitted the experts a spectacular finish.

Mrs. Turner's finish had been more than spectacular. She had missed the final turn, overshot the ledge, and crashed amid boulders at the edge of the slope. She had been dead when her husband reached her side. Since Captain Turner was alone on the slope and there had been no one else on the trail, the Captain himself had gone for help.

Stewart was relieved that it had been such a tidy business. Except for the awkward angle of the head and neck, the woman might have died of almost anything but a fall onto a heap of boulders. The Captain's face was dull gray, and there were deep lines Stewart hadn't noticed the few times he'd seen the man at the hotel. The carabinieri had brought a sled. Turner himself laid his wife's body on it and lashed her to the frame. From what Stewart could understand of the soft Italian murmurs from carabinieri and villagers, the Signore Capitano Inglese was a strong man to show so little of what he must feel — the English are cold but they are brave.

Stewart wondered.

Then he realized that Merlo wondered too, because he heard the Dottore's soft voice: "*Prego, Signore Capitano, you have already explained to me, and I have explained to the Signore Maresciallo, and we regret that there should have been this tragic accident. But I would ask again. You*

were on this slope practicing in the warm sunshine, this lovely day . . .”

The English Captain's voice was toneless. "I've told you, Doctor. After my wife started for the top of the trail, I took off my jacket and tossed it over there. Then I began some fairly strenuous turns. I didn't notice the time passing, but it must have been an hour or more. Then I heard a scream. . . ."

Merlo walked over to the dark blue ski jacket lying on the snow and looked down at it a moment. Then he returned.

"It is a nice jacket, Signore Capitano; it matches your cap." Then abruptly he turned and drew the maresciallo aside. Turning back to the Englishman: "Signore Capitano, the maresciallo asks that you accompany him to the village with the body. All arrangements will be made."

Merlo and Stewart were left alone on the slope. The sun was brilliant and its warmth made Stewart understand why Turner had shed his jacket earlier in the afternoon.

Stewart exploded: "Doc, it's so beautiful here it almost makes you sick to think of that accident and that poor guy helping them drag his own wife's body away."

"Yes, Signore Stewart, the moun-

tains, the snow, the sun are all beautiful. The accident is not beautiful. The Signore Capitano is not beautiful. The accident is murder. The Signore Capitano is a murderer and a liar. Why he does this ugly thing? Just how he forces the unfortunate woman from the trail? I don't know. Wait. Do not interrupt, please. It is the Signore Dottore Beniamino Franklin who tells me the Signore Capitano is a liar and murderer. He tells me . . ."

"Hold it, Doc," Stewart cut in, "this time I can't stand waiting for the translation."

"Very well, Signore Stewart. Dottore Franklin says: 'I took a number of little square pieces of cloth from a tailor's pattern card, of various colors. They were black, deep blue, . . . and other colors. I laid them all out upon the snow in a bright sunshiny morning. In a few hours the black, being warmed most by the sun, was sunk so low as to be below the stroke of the sun's rays; the dark blue almost as low . . .'

"The Signore Capitano practices for an hour or more, Signore Stewart, and his dark blue jacket lies on the snow in the warm sun. It is still lying *on top* of the snow now! The Signore Capitano lies, as the Signore Dottore Franklin tells us he does."

Honorable Mentions

By Default by Genevieve Copeley Loessi, Beaver Falls, N. Y.
The Ordway Murder Case by Helen Schaible, Chicago, Ill.
Arithmetic by Townsend Hand, New York City

Second Prize Winner
in EQMM's First Cover Contest
A PUZZLE IN ESSENCE

by DANIEL D. SCHOEN

Adrian Lafroux applied the dust brush vigorously then crouched to sight down the long expanse of glass-topped showcase. The morning sunlight, streaming through the window, limned a solitary patch of dust. Adrian clucked and scuttled down the aisle to whisk off the offending particles.

One by one, he drew the tiny perfume bottles from the shelf below, grouped them on the counter in tempting array. He stepped back, hesitated, and returned to apply an infinitesimal twist to an oval cologne bottle. Satisfied, he strode to the front of the shop and drew the blind, exposing the show window.

She was there, as usual, her nose almost touching the glass. Her eyes, large and luminous in a drab, nondescript face, were avidly glued to the centerpiece of the display, a blue, tasseled box.

Adrian fumed.

"So!" he ejaculated, "She is dressed like a ragamuffin, she has a scrub-



woman's face, but she admires a perfume fit for queens and grand ladies! Every morning, she drinks my *Chartreuse* with her eyes, as if it will leap into her purse if she could but wish hard enough." He wigwagged an arm.

"Go away," he bel-
lowed. "Who can see

my window if you stand there all day?"

Unhearing, she remained, still staring at the precious box.

Suddenly, he softened.

"Poor child, she wants it so. Perhaps—" A Frenchman's gallantry struggled with his business acumen.

"Adrian, you are a fool," he argued with himself. "*Chartreuse* is fifty dollars an ounce!"

"But she cannot live without it," countered the Frenchman.

Impulsively, he jerked open the door. He surveyed the threadbare coat, the shabby purse. He took the few steps toward her, placed his hands on her shoulders. She whirled, fear in her eyes.

"My dear girl," he began, then paused.

Suddenly, she was running down the street. He watched her go into the employee's entrance of the small hotel at the corner. He stared after her for several minutes, a puzzled frown knitting his brow.

He shrugged, then turned to glance at the clock over the door of the bank opposite his shop.

"Eight-thirty!" he exclaimed. "It is time to open for business." He turned to reenter the shop.

Adrian had one foot in the door when the bank alarm went off. He turned to face the street again, watched open-mouthed as the massive bronze doors, supposedly locked at this hour, burst open to disgorge three men. He saw them race to the corner, get into a shiny black sedan, heard the high-powered whine as it sped out of sight.

Detective-Sergeant Ryan's opinion of Adrian's observational powers was not of the highest.

"Do you mean to say," he stormed, "that you watched the whole affair and you can't give me a decent description of those men?"

The little perfumer raised his hands deprecatingly.

"I am in the perfume business, my friend," he apologized. "Bank watching is an art in itself."

It was mid-afternoon when Adrian's thoughts returned to the mystery woman.

"It is beyond me —" His eyes widened.

A moment later, he thrust a neat pasteboard sign behind the glass door, turned the key, and boarded a passing bus.

Sergeant Ryan was not overly glad to see him.

"— and if you will go to the Emporia Hotel just down the street from my shop," Adrian explained, "you will find in their employ a young lady with big brown eyes and a homely face. She will lead you to the thieves."

Adrian was present when they brought her in. She started, then looked away.

An hour later, when she signed her confession, a squad car was dispatched to the hideout she named. Ryan gazed after her as she was ushered out of the room. He turned to Adrian.

"Would you please come into my office?" he said weakly.

Adrian rocked comfortably in the cushioned chair, smoking one of the Sergeant's Perfectos.

"My friend," he said elaborately, "my eyes do not see so well, but my nose has had many years of training." He inhaled and exhaled a perfect smoke ring, poked an experimental finger through the center.

The policeman snorted with impatience.

"A woman," observed Adrian sagely, "never desires what she already possesses. The girl was so poor, so sad! Day after day, she peers into

my window, wanting my *Chartreuse*. I am French, I am sentimental. I go out to her, to make a grand gesture. I approach her. I inhale —" He drew in his breath violently.

Sergeant Ryan shifted in his chair.

Adrian shook a dramatic finger beneath the Sergeant's nose.

"She was saturated with *Chartreuse*! She simply reeked with my scent!" He sighed. "All day, I am puzzled. She already has what she yearns for so madly. Why then does she look at my display so often? The reason strikes me!" He smote his forehead explosively.

Ryan jumped, glared at him, then relaxed as he caught the idea.

"Well, I'll be switched," he said admiringly, "*she was watching the reflection of the bank!*"

The little man's head bobbed enthusiastically.

"Exactly. She did not want the *Chartreuse*, so she must have need of my window for another purpose. She is what you police call a 'lookout' for the thieves."

He drew a small beribboned package from his coat pocket.

"*Chartreuse* for the young lady, with the compliments of Adrian Lafroux," he said with a touch of sadness. "Life will be dull where she is going."

Adrian rose to go, then hesitated a moment.

"And please tell her — a dab behind one's ear, like this — a touch here, like so!" His nose wrinkled in remembrance. "A lady does not bathe in perfume!"



A BRIDGE ACROSS A HUNDRED YEARS



Gelett Burgess, creator of *Astro*, the Master of Mysteries, co-author of *THE PICAROONS*, inventor of the Goops, and (we simply cannot resist it) perpetrator of "The Purple Cow," considers "A Murder at the Dôme" his best and most artistic story. It came to him as a poem — a prose poem. But American editors never cared much for prose poems. The original version of "A Murder at the Dôme" was rejected by virtually every first-class magazine in the United States.

To be born in print "A Murder at the Dôme" had to go abroad. It first appeared in a Parisian magazine called "This Quarter," edited and published by Edward W. Titus. In the same issue with "The Dôme" (December 1931) there also appeared an editorial titled "Criticism via Psycho-Analysis," essays by Joseph Wood Krutch and Ludwig Lewisohn, poetry by E. E. Cummings, and short stories by the expatriates of the era, including one by Ernest Hemingway. Distinguished company, indeed!

In those-were-the-days Edward Titus ran a bookshop in the Rue Delambre. His next-door neighbor was the Café du Dôme, and fearing to offend the proprietor and habitués of the Dôme, Mr. Titus changed the name in the story to Café du Monde. To most Americans in Paris at that time (at least, those of the Left Bank, who called all others Untouchables) the Dôme was the most popular and most important café in the Old World. To many it was the only café. Among the cognoscenti and intelligentsia it was the home of art, literature, and culture.

Gelett Burgess lived in the Hotel Raspail, just across the carrefour from the Dôme, which he could watch morning, noon, and night. In later years of his residence in Paris Mr. Burgess eschewed the Dôme — he came to find its atmosphere poisonous and the Dôme itself a sort of vampire sucking the blood of many promising American artists and writers.

Once launched in print, Mr. Burgess' favorite story picked up speed, gained momentum, and finally achieved a notable literary record. After its initial appearance in "This Quarter," the tale was selected by Carolyn Wells as an honor story of the year, and was included in her anthology, *THE BEST AMERICAN MYSTERY STORIES* [of 1931]. The Paris "Monde" version was used. Then, in 1937, the story was published in separate book form as Number Two in a series of short stories by contemporary California authors, distributed to members of The Book Club of California. This beautiful booklet was designed and printed by the University of California

Press, of Berkeley, in an edition limited to 600 copies. For this edition the editors and directors of the Book Club reverted, with the author's permission, to his original Dôme version.

In the special Foreword to the 1937 appearance, Mr. Burgess characterized his story as "typical of 100 many youthful, hopeful careers. I have watched all the stages of degenerating laxity of will and achievement. I have seen them come and seen them linger, seen them drinking the waters of sloth and forgetfulness, seen them gradually lose tone and native color. But a few of them I have seen, thank God, who resisted and survived the intoxication of unrestrained liberty and were able to master their pleasantly imperiled fate, to abjure the indolent charms of expatriation and become again lustily American."

In this quotation Mr. Burgess was not referring to detective-story writers, but every word of what he said applies. The detective story was American by birth; directly after Poe it suffered near-oblivion at the hands of American writers; then, Europe — especially England and France — gave the detective story its first great period of ascendancy; but now, in Mr. Burgess' words, it has "become again lustily American."

While Mr. Burgess' story does not illustrate this historical development, or the present peak of American vitality, it does reveal an evolutionary and peculiarly transitional phase of the American crime story.

A MURDER AT THE DÔME

by GELETT BURGESS

IF YOU'VE ever lingered in Paris for more than the three breathless weeks of the orthodox tourist you'll probably have discovered at least one of the two most popular social sanctuaries where Americans foregather. If you have more cash than imagination you go before dinner to see and be seen at the Ritz bar. ("Douglas Fairbanks was there yesterday" — but he's never there to-day.) If you can't afford champagne cocktails however you're pretty apt to be found of

an afternoon, or of an evening, drinking your café crème or bock at the Dôme. At the Cafe du Dome you can always find peanuts and gossip, the American papers and plenty of thirsty expatriates to help you loaf.

The Dôme stands at the Crossroads of the World. So modern French novelists call the Carrefour de Vavin, anyway. The star-rayed intersection it is of two wide, tree-lined boulevards and a lot of little streets named for dead celebrities. But enough live

ones struggle, succeed or starve within a stone's throw of the Dôme to fill a Who's Who.

From my hotel window I can easily see everyone on the broad sidewalk terraces of two big cafés. It was last November when, looking out one night, I saw Dillwood. He was sitting outside there at the Dôme. It was late; it was chilly; he was all alone, Dillwood, amongst the deserted rows of little iron tables and chairs under the big white awning. Beneath an electric light he was, near a brazier full of glowing coals.

I had always rather liked Dillwood. He was a little troubled with youngness but he had a companionable charm. I didn't think Paris was doing him much good, though. You couldn't glance into the Dôme without seeing him there. As much at home with the waiters, Dillwood was, as the dopey Dôme cat. I had to go over to the Dôme bar that night to get some cigars. But little did I expect when I offered Dillwood one that he was going to keep me guessing till three in the morning.

He was slumped down in a wicker chair. The collar of his old wrinkled trench coat turned up. His hands were shoved into its sagging pockets. He was muttering to himself. He was almost as seedy and forlorn, I thought, as the poor devil in front of us picking up cigarette butts from the sidewalk.

Dillwood needed a shave pretty badly; he needed sleep, too, I thought. But what he himself thought he needed most was a drink. It was while

he was sipping a steaming hot grog Américain that I noticed that Dillwood was pale. He was nervous, too.

When I asked him what he had been doing with himself Dillwood gave me a sick smile. Then his hazel eyes — rather intelligent they were, too, behind his tortoise-shell goggles — looked away off towards nowhere. I hope I haven't given the impression that Dillwood was a drunkard. He wasn't. But his whole face was pulled into a cynical bitterness.

"Want to know really what I've been doing?" Dillwood's voice was so deliberate, that I just looked at him.

"I've just killed a man," said Dillwood.

Over across the Café de la Rotonde you could hear the orchestra upstairs playing "Valencia" faintly . . . Valencia . . . girls hopping out of taxis . . . the door of the Dôme opening — laughter — closing. . . . An old beggar woman shuffled up to us, soggy drunk, in carpet slippers, her hand out silently. . . . A ragged boy on the sidewalk was peddling peanuts and chanting, "Cacahuètes! Cacahuètes!"

Now you know when anyone tells you he's killed a man — casually like that — you're likely to take it as a joke. I was tipped back in my chair, smoking a two-cent Voltigeur, watching him. Was it some story Dillwood was working on, I wondered. I knew he had written some, or had tried to, for the minor magazines.

"No," said Dillwood, without emphasis, "it's true."

Across the street, faintly now, we heard, "Cacahuètes! Cacahuètes!" diminishing in the night.

All I could say was, "Does anybody know it?" Of course it seemed absurd to take it seriously, but Dillwood's manner — I don't know, it made me feel queer, somehow.

Suddenly Dillwood had turned round to look behind him — then he quickly turned back. Just another girl it was, laughing her way out of the Dôme with a man. A pretty girl though, this time, tall, richly dark and velvety with a nice deep voice. A Miss Garney, it was, from Denver. As she looked over towards us her laughter stopped short.

Dillwood had deliberately turned his back on her. As he tried to re-light his cigar I noticed that his hand was trembling. He looked pretty ghastly.

He waited till she had gone on up the street. Then he turned as if he were challenging me.

"I killed him last night," said Dillwood.

The red-hot coals sagged, sank in the brazier. The night was so cold. After a while I took hold of Dillwood's arm and I induced him to come over to my room. There we sat in two easy chairs by the window, sat for hours looking out over across at the lights of the Dôme. . . .

And Dillwood talked. . . .

The French have a saying, "With an If and an If, one could put Paris into a bottle." If Dillwood's mother had taught him what his backbone was for, or his father had demon-

strated it — if he'd even had a good, sarcastic sister to laugh away his weaknesses — Dillwood's moral spine might have straightened out while it was young and supple. He wouldn't have needed, later, so painful an operation. To be sure, when he came to Paris he did have Luella Garney. But Luella was a busy girl and she couldn't watch him all the time.

It was on one of those little passenger steamboats they call "swallows" that flit up and down the river through Paris — that was where he met her. Long and lean and slippery they are and they steal silently along between the stone embankments and rows of fat trees, on the dappled, olive-green waters of the curving Seine. It was a gorgeous, gala Sunday in September. The boat was jammed with chattering, gesticulating French families with jolly lunch baskets, and solemn, silent tourists with red guide books and blue umbrellas.

Dillwood had been having some discussion with a man about his seat. He had been in Paris only a week and his Freshman French didn't seem to work so well as it had in New Haven. Everybody on the boat was looking at him. A pretty girl got up and smiling came over to him. In her free-and-easy Western way she offered to help him with her fluent French. After that of course he sat down beside her and gradually he stopped blushing and she began.

A warm-hearted, natural sort of girl she was. Not one of those little peanut faces you see everywhere (and

are sure they're named Carrie) but someone to make you look again and ask, "Who's that stunning dark sparkling girl over there with that tall highbrow chap?" Her deep brown-black eyes were so rich that it was some time before Dillwood — he was something of a prig — discovered that she wasn't really what he called intellectual. But by that time he didn't care. He was intoxicated with that magical "first time" feeling in Paris and every time he looked at her he had to smile.

Those were the days when Dillwood was fresh and enthusiastic and energetic. He was ambitious and the brown suit of Harris tweeds he had had made in London was still new. In spite of his tortoise-shell goggles he had a romantic air, cocky, but endearing, talking, talking with his hat off in the breeze. Luella Garney liked him so much that she confided her most sacred secrets — all her favorite cheap restaurants, "where no Americans ever go."

Something happened to Paris that sunny, balmy day. It slid past them invisible. The great oriental two-horned Trocadero — Dillwood had made the trip especially to see it — completely disappeared in a rosy mist. On the rapt face of him, of her, was that look as plain as a beggar's placard, "I am blind." French people in public mostly mind their own business and expect you to mind yours. Love-making in full view of the audience is as common in Paris as it is in Hollywood. But the Anglo-

saxon tourists on the boat, they nudged each other. They stared and whispered.

Under bridges they passed, they glided past little islands — or did they? They stopped at Grenelle and Auteuil, and for all they knew, Hong Kong. When they rounded the landscapy curve of the river beyond Billancourt he was protractedly examining her Louis Philippe ring. And Luella was twice as pretty as when she had come aboard. They got off at last at Suresnes only because the boat didn't go any further and they found themselves quite alone on deck with the ticketman gesticulating.

Getting acquainted is a good deal like unwrapping a tamale — or a mummy. He may turn out to be a red-hot lover or only a dead one. Up in the little blue balcony of a table d'hôte place by the bridge Luella began unwrapping Dillwood. She asked him what he did.

She had already guessed it from his vocabulary and his goggles. He had been several years in an Advertising Bureau, but now he really wrote. He wrote stories. He had even had some printed. The best one, he considered, very seriously (no laughing, now), was called "The Thing." He told it to her almost verbatim. He told it with so much fervor that he swept over a bottle of red wine. It must have been a favorite rendezvous for excitable young authors; the cloth was pretty well spotted.

Luella was rapidly falling in love but she was hungry. So as she listened

and watched she picked delicately at her sole and potatoes. Dillwood was hungry too but he was talking about himself so his fish grew cold. While Luella was wondering how old he was and if like all the rest he would end by trying to kiss her, she made out vaguely that the hero of his tale, "The Thing," was a swill-crazed Swedish scavenger, (his hazel eyes, she thought, were awfully keen), and he thought garbage was wonderful, the Swede did, ("I'll bet he got that tie in the Place Vendôme!"), and he spent all his Sundays in a sewer. There was a lot more to it; so much, in fact, that the restaurant cat ate all Dillwood's fish.

Luella thought "The Thing" was morbid. She preferred pleasant things — like the sunshiny river there with the green trees hanging over and the reflections in the water and a man with his arm round a girl out in a boat. Why didn't he write about something he knew about? she asked him.

But as they walked along the river bank, the lovely river bank to St. Cloud, he explained as to a child, patiently, that you can't write about pleasant things and be modern. Raw realism and no nonsense about it; that was Art. He couldn't see himself for example, going in for pretty, prophylactic love tales. But if you had been there you would have seen him nevertheless going in for one pretty strong. Even while deriding her adolescent love for Dickens he had somehow got hold of her hand

and was swinging it. And just as he was declaiming heatedly that, why, an artist could make a work of art even of a dentist pulling a tooth, she interrupted him.

"Look at that cute little place up there, under that wall!" said Luella. "Let's go up there and sit down on the grass a while." Luella often saw interesting things that other people never noticed. That mossy little cove was completely hidden from the road. . . . But Luella wasn't letting just any man kiss her, the way girls do in Paris. It was Percival Dillwood. In fact by this time it was only Percy.

But it's pretty hard to gag a he-talker even with a kiss. So Dillwood kept right on talking about Realism, and Dillwood, and Zola, and Gogol and Dillwood. All about his work mind you; nothing about hers until she pulled a smart little beige notebook from her bag and made a quick sketch of something she saw. Only some old red flannel shirts and a workman's faded bluish-green blouse lying on the grass to dry. But Luella said she got original ideas from all sorts of queer things. And Dillwood discovered that the child, by Jove, designed silk patterns and moreover sold them. Of course he didn't realize yet how famous Luella Garney was getting to be in the silk trade nor how much money she made. But he began to treat her a little less patronizingly. She even had to urge him to hurry a bit as they walked on up towards the boat landing at St. Cloud.

"But how do you — ?" she began.

But no, she couldn't exactly ask him how he lived, so she merely asked him where.

He was in a little hotel near the Odéon, he said. But when he told her that he'd saved up a thousand dollars or so, (he had done really very well at the advertising game in New York), and had come over to be a real author, Luella looked as if it were bad news.

"Then you haven't published anything lately?" she asked anxiously. "Oh dear, you don't earn your living now?"

"No, not exactly," he said; but he was working on Something Big. He meant a novel. He was going to call it simply "It."

They were now on the boat floating homeward and the million lights of Paris were coming nearer, nearer in the dusk. The Eiffel tower patterned with electricity was blazing like a gigantic totem pole.

"Oh, I suppose you'll wind up at the Dôme, like all the rest." And Luella laughed and tucked her hand into his arm.

But no, Dillwood said he would be too busy to hang round cafés and loaf his time away like those devitalized expatriates she had told him about. He had his name to make. "It" would keep him pretty busy.

They dined together that evening at the Negro of Toulouse restaurant where all the waitresses smile. Already young people were skipping their mousse and prunes to secure good seats early at the Dôme. You heard "Well, good-bye, Jack, see you at the

Dôme." And at the door someone would pause to call out, "Say, Anna, ask if they found my earring at the Dôme, will you?" As Percy and Luella crossed the street a boy in a low-necked shirt crawled out of an automobile the size of a baby carriage and called back over his shoulder to someone, "About midnight, at the Dôme!" The Quarter seemed like a little village whose post office was the Dôme.

Now it may be that you have never been to the Café du Dôme. Well, you open the door, and — Good Heavens, where am I? A clashing, gubble of tumult greets you, — clockwork click of French and Swedish jabbering, Russian clucks, and flat, drawling Americanese. Mirrors, mirrors, bottles, bottles and glasses. Clouds of smoke. The stink of stale beer and vivid liqueurs. A confused throng jostles you, jostles you.

At first, you think you are in some small, private Hell — all sitting about there — Latins, Slavs, Yanks, Chinks and girls (*are* they girls?), packed in on leather seats, on chairs at tables everywhere as if they were condemned. "Oh, they can't get out! They can't get out!" you feel like moaning. "Lost souls — doomed!" Yet more and more are coming gaily into the din and smoke and smell, pushing in, crowding in, talking, laughing, weaving in, through, past, across, between, amid, amongst, about that congregation of the damned. Cynical, deft waiters with trays of sloppy liquids held aloft squirm this

way, that way, like maggots in a cheese.

The tables are no sights for a good housewife. Each with its little glasses of colored drinks and piles of saucers amidst a scandal of ashes, saucers, crumbs, puddles and peanut shells. Better not look down at the floor. Men smoking, women smoking, children. Legs, legs, legs. Sweaters and bangles and pipes and rings and whiskers and bare-headed bobs of hair.

Bang! And a big New York lawyer is hit on the head with a tray. See that artist there sketching an heiress from the Ritz? How can two nice old ladies play so placidly at backgammon? And always, always, a blinking poet writing free verse — or a letter to Buenos Aires — with pen and real ink at a tippy table, tossing his hair back off his brow and being nearly knocked off his chair at the end of every other line. A man is kissing a girl while she powders her face. A girl is fondling a boy's ear while he quite ignores her. A dog is smelling of everybody's feet, a baby is crying, an unceasing clash and clatter and din, and nobody cares, and we won't go home until morning!

It was with a cold, contemptuous smile on his rather intellectual face that J. Percival Dillwood leaned back against the leather wall cushion, looking like a young American Dante visiting the latest thing in Purgatories.

"What's going on, tonight, anyway?" he asked. "Some gala occasion?"

Luella nodded to an English author, a sort of bloated Shakespeare. No, it was just like this every night, she said. Then she leaned over to speak to a Japanese artist (Lord how you do have to shake hands in Paris!), and over across the way a daughter of joy with sad eyes was smiling at her. "You're seeing 'life,' you know, Percy."

Dillwood thoughtfully poured out a glass of Vichy. Scornfully he gazed through his goggles. It was about as far from life, he told her, as a Cubist picture. And he couldn't imagine how anyone would want to come very often into such a filthy pandemonium.

Luella was cracking peanuts. Almost everyone, she said, had that same idea when they first saw the Dôme. She hadn't been in the Dôme herself for two months she said, but she assured Dillwood that most of the people there hadn't been anywhere else. Case after case Luella cited of men and girls who had come to Paris full of hope and pep and pash only to let up and slow down at the Dôme.

And she was pointing out two hatless little hags with wild, worn faces and runaway hair, lined, hardened, and she was telling him that only two years ago they were fresh young flappers come from Wisconsin for a "career," when she stopped. She put her hand on his arm.

"Why, what's the matter, Percy?" she asked. "You look so funny!"

Dillwood's eyes were fixed. "Say," he said under his breath, "did you see

that fellow over there, just now? Where the devil's he gone?"

"Someone you know?"

Dillwood seemed to be talking to himself, "Why, by jove — just like me, he was! Perfectly amazing! Might have been my twin." And then he lapsed into a moody silence. After a while, he said, petulantly, "Say, Luella, do I look as much like a puritanical prude as he did, I wonder?"

She assured him that he looked like a genius. And so, after that, Dillwood looked only at Luella.

Now, this isn't a love story; it's the story of a murder. And so it will be necessary to skip a lot of kisses. Some say there are altogether too many in Paris anyway. If Dillwood in a certain silk-strewn studio in the Rue Madame had sat with Luella on that big blue corduroy couch for another week the Maire of the Sixth Arrondissement in his red-white-and-blue sash would probably soon have made Percy Dillwood a happy husband and perhaps a better man.

But mischievous Fate began to rock the boat. Luella was unexpectedly called to Lyons. The extraordinary design she had concocted from that old-clothes motif that romantic day at St. Cloud had made a commercial hit. She had achieved the precise vendable average between the crazy Czecho-Slovak influence in Decorative Art and the timid demands of the American public for novelty.

Dillwood promised to have "It" finished by the time she returned.

"Good-bye!" said Luella, at the station, "and be sure you don't go to the Dôme unless you have worked hard all day."

It came on terribly cold as soon as she had left. But it's always warm at the Dôme. If you know what a cruel farce "central heating" is in a small French hotel you'll hardly blame Dillwood for dropping into the Dôme occasionally, especially when they began to call out, "Hello, there, Dilly!" "Come over, Dilly!" (Lord, how you do have to shake hands in Paris!) "Meet Percy Dillwood. He wrote 'The Thing,' you know. Clever." Dilly would sit right down and order drinks for the crowd. Dilly had a little money. Everybody liked Dilly.

Rather different it was from the stupid old hard-working days in the advertising office. Now when Dilly swaggered into the Dôme, as the author of "The Thing," and scornfully damned the writers of popular prophylactic fiction he was Somebody. And how he loved the good old lazy Dôme talk — the talk of books that would never be written, of pictures that would never be painted.

Pretty soon Dillwood was going about the Quarter like all the rest, bareheaded (but never, of course, without a cane). He too began to turn into the Dôme with that elated, Prodigal Son air as if at Last, at Last, I've Come Home — Why did I ever Roam? Girlish boys in Oxford bags and lad-like lasses in "arty" earrings, smoking; dark, long-haired old Santa

Clauses with woolen mufflers and flighty old ladies bobbed and bold of brisket, in flirtatious war-paint — every night, every night, joyfully they turned into the Dôme.

Dillwood of course dropped in only in the evening though after he had worked. That is — until one afternoon. He had honestly tried to write. But his typewriter stuck and his story stuck too and the girl in the next room was practising "Old Man River" on her ukulele, and — well, hang it all, he thought, maybe he'd get an inspiration at the Dôme.

Now there are a lot of smallish, square columns at the Dôme. At first you think you can look right through them. That's because whenever a Frenchman finds a bare vertical surface he always thinks he has to cover it with a mirror. Glancing into one (he was talking to a Brooklyn boy who was raising an amateur beard as the only possible way of becoming remarkable), Dillwood suddenly caught sight of something that made him stare.

By jove, there that fellow was again! he thought — the fellow who looked like him. The queer part of it was that the stranger was dressed like Dillwood, too, goggles and all. Same brown Harris tweed suit — perhaps more recently pressed, though, and with fewer spots.

Dillwood leaned forward, twisted round to get a direct view. But there was a tall, thin Hindoo in a turban (white), standing up talking to a famous Negress also in a turban

(red), and Dillwood couldn't see. And Césaire, the blasé waiter who had seen them come and go, seen them bloom and seen them wither — Césaire, too, got in the way.

And so while the bearded boy from Brooklyn (how young, oh, how young he was!) was assuring Dillwood loudly that, gee, "The Thing" was as good as Gogol and Dilly ought to write a novel, (this was always good for one drink), Dillwood was much more interested in that mysterious stranger. In the fugitive glimpses he had caught in the mirror he might have been gazing at his own image. By the time he could get up and look round though his double had disappeared.

The episode gave Dillwood a disagreeable shock. He went back to his room and wrote fiercely for several days. When Luella returned he was vain-glorious over five thousand hand-picked words, almost every one Anglo-Saxon.

"I think I'll do a novel soon," he said cockily. "They say I have a splendid brutality of Style. Why, we were talking about Gogol over at the Dôme, this —" Then he stopped.

"Not this afternoon?" Luella looked unhappy.

Dillwood explained that he'd been out of tobacco and so he had thought he'd just take a pad and pencil and work in the Dôme a while but —

Luella knew all the "buts." You go into the Dôme to write, but — you sit in a lonely corner, but — you know you ought to stop talking and go home to work, but — still, Luella

was awfully fond of Dillwood. Every evening they dined together at the Negro of Toulouse and they smiled almost as much as the waitresses. Every evening amidst her lovely, those recklessly bestrewn silks she curled up with her big black cat on her big blue couch. And there Luella listened — listened as Dillwood in his goggles paced dramatically up and down her studio, a genius. Dillwood, creating his rugged novel "It."

"It" she learned, was a gentleman of sixty-five. "It" had been born with no open sutures in his little skull. The brain of "It" never having expanded he had never learned to "condition his reflexes" and he had the mentality of a child of two.

"Oh, Percy!" Luella said, "Percy, dear, don't you think that's a little too — er — too —" She stroked her cat. "Why don't you write about something you know about?"

Percy threw down his manuscript. One powerful study like that, he assured her, and the Quarter would know who J. Percival Dillwood was. He could walk into the Dôme then with his head up.

It wasn't very long though that Luella had the pleasure of listening to Dillwood's masterpiece. Her own more practical and remunerative productions were forcing her these days to take most of her luncheons and dinners at Ciro's and the Ritz where a Boston silk manufacturer was doing his duck-and-champagne best to induce her to go back to design for his mills in Massachusetts.

Poor Dillwood without her sympathetic interest grew too uneasy to work. He began to wonder who'd be over at the Dôme, tonight . . . then he went over to see.

One night he grabbed Zizi, the famous lip-eyed model of the Dôme.

"Say, Zizi, quick! — look at that man over by the door, there, with a bottle of Vichy. Think he looks like me?"

Zizi wasn't what your sister would call an awfully nice girl, exactly — she had too much kohl on her eyelids — but Dillwood just then was trying to improve his French. Zizi gave a Parisian shrug and raised what was left of her plucked eyebrows. Mais non! She saw the Vichy, ah oui, but there was no man there who looked like Deelee. Pas du tout! Then she giggled and laid her eel-like head on his shoulder. Deelee must have drunk too many Armourettes! she said.

After a while though Dillwood saw the stranger get up, wipe off his goggles, gaze about, coolly, and then rather cockily saunter out. But it took so long to get Césaire and pay for the drinks that by the time he got to the door of the Dôme the stranger was out of sight.

Dillwood had another spasmodic, enraged fit of work after that. But it soon dribbled out. One night he got a chance to dine with Luella again and he gave himself away.

It was about the time when, from every shop sign and advertisement in Paris, capital initial letters first began mysteriously to disappear. Dillwood

had met the fellow Maximilien Vox who had started the craze (he did typography for Grasset), and Vox had advised that "It" be printed entirely without capitals.

"Where'd you meet him?" Luella asked, quietly.

"Oh, I was just walking through the Dôme," said Dillwood.

And then it was that the sad, disappointed look came again into Luella's face. Walking through the Dôme. . . . You just walk through the Dôme, you know, just to see who's there. And always the person you least expect in all the world to be there is there, or someone else (Lord, how you do have to shake hands in Paris!), and you usually stay till two A.M.

But not always. The next time Dillwood walked through the Dôme he walked out in a hurry. It was while Luella was still whirling about in taxis with the silk man (who was still urging her to go take the job in Boston), that towards ten one evening Dillwood strolled again into the Dôme for a sandwich and "to see who's there."

The Queen of the Dôme was there. She was a grandmother with short, gray hair. She spoke seven words of French and in seventy years she had never once stopped smiling nor paid for a drink or a taxicab nor called anyone by other than his given name.

"What you looking at, Percy?" she asked with her baby air, "what you see?"

"Say, who's that chap in tortoise-

shell goggles over in the corner there? See, drinking Vichy. Does he look like me or do I only imagine it?"

The Queen nodded ever so brightly and she said that she was all out of cigarettes tonight and thank you, and why no, she didn't see anybody there who looked like Percy and had he heard about Elise committing suicide last night in the Rue Delambre?

Dillwood this time was puzzled and annoyed. He sat there moodily studying the stranger. And the stranger sat in his corner, fresh and young and cocky and intellectual, looking over at Dillwood with a cynical amusement that was insulting and disconcerting. When the fellow left Dillwood didn't wait for Césaire. He tossed a ten franc note on the table (trust the Queen to gobble the change, all right), and rushed out of the café bare-headed.

Dillwood followed him down the Rue Vavin, along past the Gardens of the Luxembourg to the Odéon. And to his surprise he saw the stranger turn into the Rue Regnard. There he disappeared.

The Rue Regnard is perhaps the shortest street in Paris. It contains only one house, a hotel. What caused Dillwood's amazement was that the stranger must have entered the very hotel where he himself had stopped when he first came to Paris.

Dillwood went in and spoke to a large, moustached lady at the desk. But no, she hadn't noticed any gentleman coming in. Oh no, she was quite sure.

Well, there you have Dillwood in the middle phases of the Dôme disease. You have the sinister environment, the mystery. You have the victim. Now for the motive of the crime and the events, as the newspapers say, that led up to the tragedy.

One night along in mid-winter Dillwood and Luella dined together at the Alençon upstairs "where no Americans ever go." You would hardly have taken Dillwood by this time for an American though with his Spanish side-whiskerettes and corduroy trousers, or Luella either, slanging the garçon in idiomatic French brilliant with subjunctives, not to speak of the Gallic abandon with which they both sucked frog's legs reeking with garlic.

"Confound it, Luella," Dillwood said, "an artist has to have some periods of incubation, hasn't he? Of course I haven't quit! Lord, I can't turn out a big psychological work like 'It' overnight the way you do your designs, Luella!" As Dillwood expressed it, he had merely shoved "It" onto the back of the stove to let it simmer a while. And meantime he was thinking of another tale.

"Oh, Percy," Luella said, "not another story before you finish what you've been working on so long."

"I think," said the genius, "that I shall call it — how d'you like 'Wet Wool'?"

"Wet Wool," she learned, was the tragedy of an interior decorator whose wife made him wear long-sleeved woolen underwear. And when he

washed his hands his sleeves and wrists were always wet.

"Oh, Percy!" Luella exclaimed, "you ought to write about something you know about!"

That was the night the Horde, a band of underdone artists of Montparnasse — those who exhibit on the sidewalks — was giving a costume ball at the Bullier. There was a picturesque hubbub at the Café du Dôme. It was the first time since their first visit there that Dillwood and Luella had entered the place together. Now the riotous revellers were stoking up for an orgiac night. Red Indians mostly, apparently of the Bareleg and Cocktail tribes, and hand-painted Aztecs. The models wore merely opera cloaks. That is, they wore them while at the Dôme.

But what Dillwood looked at was Luella. Her face! Why, what had happened to her? Her rich dark beauty had become enlivened, illumined. It was a Luella he hadn't seen for months. It was the Luella he had met on that first romantic day. And his arm went round her waist again, not the way arms do at the Dôme but the way they do under an old wall sometimes at St. Cloud. But Luella pulled away a little. She was looking across the room. And Dillwood following her eyes was suddenly chilled. Luella was looking at the stranger. Luella saw the stranger!

"Why how much he looks like you, Percy!" she whispered.

And Dillwood growled through his teeth that it was some cock-sure

conceited provincial Yankee, probably come in to inspect the wild animals at the Dôme.

Luella grew more and more beautiful and she said, "Oh, but I love that splendid, fresh young, ambitious, energetic air!"

"Yes, I know. That 'Made in America' look." Dillwood dug into her arm. "Don't look at him that way, Luella!"

And then all at once somehow Luella couldn't seem to be able to stand it any longer at the Dôme. She said she wanted to go home.

And so they came at last to Luella's door. And Luella stood with tears in her eyes. "Oh, Percy," she said, "you have so much in you! So much! Oh, you could be so —!" And then she took his hand and pressed it impulsively, and she said that she wished he wouldn't go to the Dôme — not till he had really finished something anyway.

"Why, I have to have some contact with my contemporaries, don't I?" Percy said rather weakly. "What's the good of being here — in Paris? There's lots of good talk at the Dôme, Luella. Lots of fellows there who are doing things."

"And a lot who aren't," said Luella.

"Oh, you needn't be afraid, Luella. I have to know all phases of life, you know."

"It's a phase of death," said Luella.

"Well, anyway, I'm only an observer there, you know, an author. I'm not really one of them."

Yet there was something in Luella's dark eyes, that night, that made Dillwood promise, just to please her, to keep away from the Dôme.

And then Spring danced into Paris. All up and down the broad boulevards, in all the parks and gardens, she kindled the plane-trees, the chestnuts, till they flamed up in passionate tender green. All except the three dead trees in front of the Dôme, doomed to destruction with the red rings of the city forester painted round their boles. There were days of balm. Up went the thermometer and women's skirts. Down went the franc, steadily down, down, and so did the drinks at the Dôme. And on the shady upper reaches of the Boulevard Raspail do you think those close-up couples on the benches were really discussing Plato? Some say there's altogether too much kissing in Paris.

Percy and Luella too wandered up the Boulevard Raspail. And under that long, old vine-topped wall behind which the Ambassador's wife was murdered he tremblingly proposed to Luella. And there under that high wall he was refused.

She clung to him, though; oh, she clung to him just as other girls were clinging to other men on every boulevard in Paris that starry night; and she promised him that always, always she would be his friend, his truest friend; but he really must take her home now. She had a very important appointment next morning with the silk man from Boston and she hadn't yet decided whether or not

she would go back to take that job in — you don't say America in the Quarter, you say "the States."

Dillwood, desperate, went to the Dôme and made a night of it. He made many nights of it. You could see him eating breakfast there at noon. Also supper at midnight. With the precocious bearded boy from Brooklyn, whose mother took in washing to support him in Paris), with dress-makers' daughters professing to paint, and Western girls studying French and Frenchmen at the Sorbonne, gentlemen with thumb-rings and ladies with cigars, remittance men, hard lads and easy lasses, he joined the chorus of fatuous addicts who day after day continually do cry: "The Dôme gets everybody but it won't get me!" The pleasant, easy-going, procrastinating life of the Dôme went on and Percy Dillwood with it. No hurry, no worry, no competition. Sloth. . . .

Luella employed three girls now to finish her designs. She had her own telephone and, what made her still more famous in the Quarter, she rose at seven A.M. And so you may imagine how cheap and seedy unshaved Dillwood felt occasionally when sitting on the terrace of the Dôme at the apéritif hour he saw Luella go by. Now almost everybody, when passing the Dôme in warm weather, saunters slowly by that sidewalk terrace, staring as if at an aquarium. What queer fish! What hats! What hair! What costumes! But Luella passed without a glance at the throng which increased

every warm day as more and more chairs, tables, were brought out, more and more, packing them in, crowding them till they almost reached the curbstone.

It was one of those summers when the Fourteenth of July fell on a Friday and the celebration of the Fall of the Bastille lasted three days. The drinking and street dancing all over Paris never stopped. Japanese lanterns were festooned in front of the cafés, everybody was blowing horns and duck-quackers and you waded ankle-deep in peanut shells. Five bands there were around the carrefour and they played till the trombones and saxophones seemed snoring in their sleep. Ten thousand times they played "I Want to be Happy!" Old men and young girls, your butcher, your baker, the concierge, all the smiling waitresses of the Negro of Toulouse, Chileans and Chinese and two little girls in blue danced on the asphalt pavements till two in the morning, till three, four, five, sunrise. "I Want to be Happy!"

It was on the last hectic day of the revelry that Dillwood sitting outside the Caf   du Dôme abruptly jumped up.

When he got over, nearer the band, he stopped — agog. Why, wasn't that Luella dancing with the stranger — his double? Louder sobbed the saxophones, louder drummed the drums: "I want to be Happy, but I won't be Happy till I make you Happy, too!" Luella looked happy and the stranger younger and fresher, more ambitious than ever.

Months passed before Dillwood saw Luella again. After she had gone to Brittany for the Summer he nourished a sulky, defensive mood. He still had a little money left; his fellow-geniuses at the Dôme hadn't yet borrowed it all. He could take his time, he said to himself. Did he have to squat down at a desk like a book-keeper all day, to prove he was working? You couldn't harness inspiration, could you? After all, he had a right to self-expression.

True, after a whole year, "It" was still unfinished; "Wet Wool" had stalled on page five. But Dillwood refused to admit that he was a Dôme addict. He wasn't weak. If he only had Luella again to encourage him — if — if — if

It was in November when one evening Dillwood in his shabby tweeds again climbed the stairs to Luella's third floor in the Rue Madame. On the first landing he stopped; he stared. Some one was coming down. Dillwood took the wall to let someone pass. It was the stranger, young and fresh and cocky as ever, well-groomed, wearing tortoise-shell goggles like Percy's own. Percy's double smiled ironically and passed him by.

And so poor Dillwood didn't look very happy standing there in Luella's now luxurious studio holding Luella's hand.

"Can't we begin all over again, Luella? I'm going to brace up and really do something big. And if you'd only help me —"

Luella withdrew her hand. "My

mother held up my father, all his life, like a crutch," she said. "I won't do that."

She wandered listlessly over to finger a jumble of lovely silks on a chair — as if lovely silks on a chair could give her comfort.

"Is it really all over then?" Percy asked wretchedly. "D'you love someone else, Luella?"

"I'm afraid I do, Percy."

Up from the couch he jumped. He had a reckless, drunken swing. "Well, it doesn't matter then, now, where I go!"

Luella gave him a calm, cold look out of her deep brown eyes! Never perhaps had Luella Garney looked so noble.

"Why don't you go to the Dôme, Percy? There's awfully good talk at the Dôme, you know. You've often said that you have to have some contact with your contemporaries. It may stimulate you to work — or to 'incubate,' as you call it. And you like to talk about your work —"

But the door of the studio had slammed.

That night at the Dôme men came up to him as usual with "Hello, Dilly!" They went away unanswered. Even his half bottle of Vichy stood untasted in front of him. . . . Dillwood was muttering to himself. "All right! If she doesn't care, then I don't. I don't! I don't care!" . . .

It was in a far corner of the Dôme, over on the Rue Delambre side that he was slopped down on a seat under the mirrored wall. The place was

bubbling, kissing full when he had come in. Little by little the room emptied. Even the regular two o'clock drunks had at last gone over to the Café Select. Dillwood was alone. Outside the lights of the terrace were turned out. Inside they were already half down. Only two waiters left now; Césaire and a new one, a young Basque. Dillwood was still muttering, "I don't care . . . I don't care . . ." They swept the floor everywhere save in his corner and left the room.

It was almost three o'clock. Suddenly Dillwood looked up from under his scowling brows. Then he sat up, angry. There he was again, that fellow! Over in a corner he sat, the fresh young sarcastic cocky stranger, smiling through his goggles.

And he, Dillwood's double, was the one Luella loved! An insane rage coursed through Dillwood's brain. It was that young puritanical prude, with his conventional moralities and his West 125th Street standards who had got Luella away from him!

Dillwood muttered: "So he's come here to laugh at me, has he? By God, I'll see he doesn't snoop around after me, any more! I'll fix that boob. . . . I'll fix him for keeps! . . . I'll . . ."

He saw the young stranger rise and grin cockily over at him, take up his hat, then turn back for his overcoat. Dillwood slipped over noiselessly. He came up behind.

For one moment, one dreadful moment, in the mirror Dillwood caught their two faces side by side — the stranger's face and his own face,

so alike, so different. One so youthful, fresh and enthusiastic, energetic, the other twisted into a barren cynical bitterness. Then the stranger turned and caught sight of Dillwood. He laughed aloud at him in contemptuous superiority.

Dillwood gave a murderous spring. His fingers tightened at the stranger's throat. . . .

Five minutes passed. The clock struck three. Dillwood slumped down on the couch in the corner looking desperately down at something on the floor.

The Basque waiter looked in. He went over to Dillwood. He touched him on the shoulder.

"Time to close up, Monsieur," he said.

And Dillwood threw his old trench coat over his arm and walked stolidly out of the Dôme. . . .

There in my room Dillwood had stopped talking. He sat helplessly, hopelessly staring out the window. He was staring across the open carrefour at the dark, deserted Café du Dôme.

"Dillwood," said I, "are you sure that you really killed that stranger at the Dôme last night?"

Dillwood didn't answer.

Outside it was as still as any secluded village at night. Only occasionally the wild-hyena laugh of some mad girl could be heard up the Boulevard and the long shuddering rumble of the Metro train deep underground.

"You know, Dillwood," I said,

"Luella is a very clever girl. And d'you know, Dillwood, I have an idea that she not only cares for you a lot, but that when she sent you away from her studio last night she knew pretty well what she was doing."

Dillwood turned his dead eyes on me. And there came into his drawn unshaven face a wan illumination not quite bright enough for hope.

I said, "You know how they teach kids to swim, don't you, Dillwood? Chuck 'em into the water and let 'em sink to the bottom? If there's anything to 'em they'll come up again and strike out, won't they?"

Dillwood didn't move. I lighted my last cigar and I said, "Be careful, Dillwood," and now I was smiling at something I saw transfiguring his face, "if you don't look out that stranger will kill you!"

Dillwood without a word got up and marched out of my room. From my window I watched him in his wrinkled trench coat stalk across the open, empty, electric-lighted carrefour. I saw him cross the little Rue Delambre. I saw him pass into the sinister shadow of the dark, deserted, Café du Dôme. . . .

Next day I went to Nice. When I got back Spring was again frolicking through Paris. On the "swallow" I took one sunny day down the river the love-making was as spontaneous as the blossoming of the chestnuts along the Seine.

The boat was so crowded that it

wasn't till we had passed St. Cloud that I discovered them. That dark, handsome girl I knew, of course; but who I wondered, was that alert romantic, cocky youth in tortoise-shell goggles, talking to her with his hat off in the breeze?

Then I jumped up, trying to keep the grin off my face, and went over.

"Well, well, how are you?" I said. "At first I didn't recognize you, Dillwood. I thought you were a stranger."

"I am a stranger," said Dillwood. And it was good to hear Dilly laugh again. "That other Dillwood you used to know — Dilly of the Dôme, you know — why, I killed him that night, after he left your room."

(Lord, how you have to shake hands, in Paris!)

Luella flashed a big diamond on her finger. "We're awfully happy!" she said. "We're sailing for the States, you know, next week."

"Yes," said Dillwood, cockily, "I've been offered a bully position in the publicity department of a big Boston silk firm."

"And now," Luella laughed, "Percy's going to write about something he really knows about!"

When they left me at Suresnes, I stood and watched them walking along the river bank, the lovely river bank to St. Cloud. . . . The chestnuts were all in bloom. Occasionally they stopped for a moment.

Some say there's altogether too much kissing in Paris.

Charles B. Child was born in London on October 26, 1903. He is of Scottish-Cornish parentage. Both sides of his family are seafarers from 'way back and Mr. Child originally intended to follow tradition, but poor eyesight forced him to seek another career. At 18 he began to write up church socials and flower shows for a small-town newspaper. At the end of two years, however, Mr. Child discovered that he was making more money writing fiction in spare time for English pulp magazines than he was holding down a regular job as a newspaperman. So for the next seventeen years he wrote fiction and traveled, averaging 20,000 words per week. When the war came, he returned to England, was eventually commissioned into the Royal Air Force, and in November 1941 was posted overseas to a British security-political organization, with headquarters in Baghdad, Iraq.

His work took him on extensive tours through Iraq and Persia. His organization was responsible for breaking the German spy-ring in Persia and also played a part in assuring the safety of the Big Three conference at Teheran. And during this time Mr. Child became acquainted professionally with the Iraqi police. It is this experience which made possible a composite picture of his friends in the C.I.D. — a composite portrait which Mr. Child christened Inspector Chafik J. Chafik.

The little Iraqi detective, with a mind like a card index, is Mr. Child's favorite character — and he is fast becoming a favorite character with readers of "Collier's," where all the Chafik tales have so far appeared. Mr. Child informs us that he has deliberately avoided the tough school of detective-story writing because, as he says, "I have never met a thug detective, and believe that brains, not fists, solve crimes."

THE DEVIL IS A GENTLEMAN

by CHARLES B. CHILD

THE little man who entered the Cabaret of the Great Caliph, behind the fashionable Saa'dun Quarter of the modern city of Baghdad, stood for a moment in the shadows, as if he were shy of this walled garden where patrons sat in booths discreetly screened by flowering shrubs.

He looked at the stage where an orchestra of various wind instruments,

strings and drums was playing varying rhythms, while a slender girl sang a single note and then surrounded it with an arabesque of grace notes. It was music without harmony, but the man had not a Western ear and found it pleasing. As the girl began to dance, he walked down a path between the high wall and the shrubs and entered a booth so unobtrusively that the

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solitary occupant did not notice him.

Inspector Chafik of the Criminal Investigation Department carefully dusted a chair and said as he sat down, "If the thoughts of men were public, one would be justified in raiding this place. And even you, my dear Abdullah, would see the inside of a cell."

The tall, gaunt man hastily looked away from the stage, but seeing the smile lurking in the dun-colored eyes of his companion, he raised a hand in protest. "Sir, my concentration was purely of a professional nature—" Sergeant Abdullah began, and wriggled in his seat when the Inspector interrupted:

"The purity of it is what I doubt. The girl is indeed gifted." They both looked at the stage where the dancer turned full circle with swiftly moving feet and made of her body a reed rippling in a hot wind of passion.

Watching her, Chafik wondered how many men had been clay in the flowerlike hands of Khurrem. His records at headquarters described her as a Syrian, but many details of her life were lacking and this was irritating to the tidy mind of the little man. He said, voicing his worry, "She has danced in Cairo, Beirut and Teheran. Her lovers are always military men or government officials and she ignores others although they are often wealthier. An odd thread in the pattern, for surely a woman of this profession is solely interested in money?" He shrugged and then said, "But on the record one could not refuse her entry

into Iraq. A suspicion is not a fact, and you, Abdullah, will now report to me only with facts."

The sergeant answered as if reading from his notes, "On your orders I have watched this woman for a week. Her favor goes to Major Ali Rasim of the 2d Mountain Brigade. He is infatuated and sits nightly in the booth at the top right corner of the garden, where she often joins him."

Inspector Chafik turned his sleek head, the black hair oiled and brushed until it had the sheen of silk. The lights in the garden were dim, but he could see a man in the booth. Major Rasim was the younger son of an aristocratic Baghdadi family and the brigade with which he served was organized for frontier defense. Chafik lighted a cigarette and said, "This is a matter for Military Intelligence. We, as the political and criminal police, are solely interested in civilians."

"Among the civilians, sir, Mohammed Shaalan is captivated by the girl—"

"Shaalan, Mohammed. Eldest son of Ibn Shaalan, a sheik of the Muntafiq." The Inspector was quoting from his records and as he partly closed his eyes he could see the card on which the particulars were entered. "Rich," he went on. "Spends more time in Baghdad than on his father's estate. Weakness, women. Arrogant. Hot-tempered. Is the man here?"

"In the booth opposite." Sergeant Abdullah looked across the cool garden and then said, "He has gone now, but he was there when you

arrived. The girl only ignores him."

"Other men?"

"They are as bees around the queen," Sergeant Abdullah said.

"A queen bee," Chafik said, "has an unattractive appearance and is often swollen with eggs. One cannot say Khurrem is unattractive. Or swollen," he added, watching the girl who had finished her dance and was now bowing to the applause. He drew back into the shadows as the dancer left the stage and walked lightly to the booth where Major Rasim was sitting.

"The names of the other men —" began Sergeant Abdullah.

A woman's scream ripped the perfumed peace of the night and was followed by a moment of silence, broken only by the croaking of frogs in the irrigation ditches squaring the lawn. A second scream ran in mocking echoes within the high walls, and as panic gripped the crowd Inspector Chafik said calmly, "Tell the police at the doors to let nobody out. It appears there is entertainment for us at the Great Caliph tonight." He vaulted the shrubs and ran for the booth Khurrem had entered; after one brief glance he turned to the men who crowded at his heels. "Return to your seats," he said. "The police are already here." His voice, not over-loud, had the quality of a whip.

Entering the booth, he looked at the girl who crouched against the shrubs with gloved hands to her face; her eyes were black pits. She was about to scream again when the little

man caught her wrist and slapped her cheek. "It would be wise to forget hysterics," he said. "I shall have many questions to ask."

Khurrem whispered, "See, see! Oh, God the Merciful! The major —"

Chafik interrupted, "Bodies have no rank or title. They are all equal before God," and going to the table he looked at the man in military uniform who was huddled low in a chair, his chin on his breast, his mouth open.

From the base of the neck at the right shoulder projected the wooden handle of a knife. A small patch of blood stained Major Rasim's light summer tunic. The Inspector ignored the knife and put his hand on the man's heart. Casually, voicing thoughts, he said, "It was to be expected he would be dead, with the knife in such a spot." Lifting his strange, ageless eyes to the girl, who was now quiet, he continued, "Such a thrust could be made with the arm of the killer lovingly around his neck. It could also be made by one standing behind on the path between the bushes and the wall. Was your arm around his neck?"

"If You suggest —" Khurrem straightened her slender body and said in the husky voice of anger, "My arm was not around his neck. I entered the booth and thought he was sleeping. He drinks too much and you can see the whisky on the table. I spoke to him and then I put my hand on him." She covered her face with her hands.

"And then you saw the knife," Chafik prompted gently.

"Yes, I saw *that*. And only half an hour before we sat and talked."

"So he was killed when you were on the stage and all eyes were on you. Even I was watching you. But what did you see from the stage? Surely you sang for your lover?"

"The booth is in shadow. One cannot see into it from the stage. And who says he was my lover?" There was a challenge in the question, and throwing back her cloud of hair Khurrem looked at the Inspector with hatred tempered by fear.

He answered softly, "I know many things about you and will know more. Come to me tomorrow and bring your passport. The name is Chafik J. Chafik." He turned to Sergeant Abdullah who had just arrived with a squad of police summoned from a near-by station. The sergeant was ordering back a man who had roughly pushed his way through the crowd, but the Inspector said, "Permit Mr. Hassoon to pass. He has a right here." He had recognized the owner of the cabaret.

"What is this? What is this?" demanded Hassoon, hugging his hands to his breast and contorting his thin body into a gigantic question mark. "I have always had a respectable cabaret," he said. "You, Inspector Chafik, know I give good entertainment without vice. Now a woman screams and the police gather like flies on a festering wound —"

"There has not been time for the

wound to fester," Chafik said mildly, and moving aside from the body he asked, "You know him, Mr. Hassoon?"

"Major Rasim!" The shrill voice sank to a whisper as the proprietor peered at the body and projecting knife. "Murder? Oh, Compassionate God, what wickedness has this woman caused?" He turned so quickly on Khurrem that Chafik thought he was going to strike her and caught his arm.

"Why do you think the woman is the motive for the crime?" he asked sharply.

Hassoon was calmer now but his voice was edged with anger as he said, "A woman who sings and dances is as honey to men. When she gives her favors to one the evil begins. Perhaps I am in the wrong business," he said looking with distaste from the dancer to the body. He took a handful of salted melon seeds from his pocket and politely offered them to Chafik, who bowed his thanks but preferred his cigarette. "As I have told you, I make every effort to keep the atmosphere of my cabaret clean," Hassoon went on, "but I have often looked on the faces of my guests and found them lustful." He took the husk of a melon seed from his mouth and placed it tidily in an ash tray.

Chafik said dryly, "We appear to share the same opinion. As you are so observant, my dear Mr. Hassoon, can you tell me who was particularly jealous of Major Rasim?"

"There were many, but I have

noted one man who looked at him with hatred — but I must be loyal to my guests even if I dislike their ways.”

“Major Rasim was also your guest. You must not withhold information.”

“True. The name I was about to mention was Mohammed Shaalan.”

Chafik gave Abdullah a warning look because the sergeant had said, “By God and by God!”

Then the Inspector said quietly, “Let us go to your office, Mr. Hassoon. Abdullah, look for the son of Ibn Shaalan and if he is still in the cabaret bring him to me.” He gave the corpse a brief glance. “Obviously the killer took the precaution to wear gloves, but of course test the knife for fingerprints. Detectives are more fortunate in fiction,” Inspector Chafik added sadly. . . .

In the office behind the stage, where there were also dressing rooms for the entertainers, the little man sat and waited. He lighted the inevitable cigarette while Hassoon munched melon seeds. Presently the sergeant ushered into the room a sharp-nosed, swarthy man who was dressed in the fine cotton and silk robes of a tribal Arab. The gray headcloth which shaded his face was bound with a cord of braided goat's hair making a double ring about his head, and as his robes swirled Chafik noticed the holster of a gun. Mohammed Shaalan was a young man of handsome appearance, but he was burning with an inner anger and burst out, “Why have I been brought here? My father —”

The Inspector said soothingly, “I have a great respect for the sheik, your father. Please seat yourself. A cigarette?”

“I do not smoke.”

“That is wise. I myself smoke too much.” He stubbed out the butt smoldering between yellow fingers, spilling husks from the tray on the desk and sweeping them tidily into a wastepaper basket. “You will excuse me asking questions,” he said, “but I am obliged to check on everybody who knew Major Rasim —”

“I did not know him! I never wished to know him!” Shaalan clenched his slender hands, and the stone of his signet ring was a red eye gleaming balefully in the electric light.

“Mr. Shaalan, do you know Khurrem the Dancer?”

The young man answered, “The question is indecently personal. I have tried to know her, but she turns her face from me and even sends back my gifts. A cabaret woman should divide her favors,” he added vindictively.

“Where were you when Rasim was killed?”

“At my table.” Mohammed Shaalan saw the dun-colored eyes of Inspector Chafik become suddenly brilliant, and moistening his lips said, “I cannot be sure. I do not know when he was killed. I left the booth when the girl danced and went to her dressing room.”

“Why?”

“Because no woman has ever refused me! Because —” He sprang to his feet with the silk of his undergown

rustling and shouted, "I refuse to be questioned by you! My father is powerful, and we of the Muntafiq are true Arabs who do not bow our heads to Baghdadis!"

Chafik did not stop him as he went out the door, but said as it slammed, "We are all Iraqs." The little man shrugged and voicing a thought, murmured, "A very difficult young man. He must be watched." Hearing his own voice he smiled, saying, "I have an unfortunate habit of speaking my thoughts, and you will forget what you heard, Mr. Hassoon. But you wish to speak?"

The proprietor of the Great Caliph was nervously walking the room hugging his clasped hands. "It is so awkward," he said. "So very awkward. But I realize I cannot withhold information."

"You are an excellent citizen, Mr. Hassoon. What is this information?"

"Mohammed Shaalan was not in Khurrem's room. I myself was there, Inspector. I was waiting to warn her that unless she withdrew her favors from Major Rasim, and conducted herself virtuously, I would break the contract and send her back to Damascus. As you so kindly said, I try to be a good citizen. I do not run a house of ill fame," he said between tight lips. "Vice shocks me." . . .

When Inspector Chafik was leaving the cabaret after checking the identities of the patrons, he stopped at the door of Khurrem's dressing room. The girl had been escorted to her hotel, and Chafik entered the room with

Abdullah and made a methodical search. The heavy perfume of jasmine made him press his handkerchief to his nose. "Perfume is dangerous," he said to the watchful sergeant. "The fact is well known to manufacturers in America, judging by the advertisements in their magazines."

"So long as there are women there will be perfume, sir."

"As a flower attracts the bees," said Chafik. He picked up the ash tray from the dressing table. "What do you see here, Abdullah?"

"Sir, I see a glass tray three inches square containing the stubs of five cigarettes. They are stained with lipstick and were therefore smoked by the girl." He gave a smile of triumph as he added, "I did not expect to see anything else. Mohammed Shaalan does not smoke."

The Inspector said, "That is true. I offered him a cigarette. Besides, we were told he was not here. What else do you see, Abdullah?"

"I see nothing, sir —"

"I also see nothing. You will note that carefully." And he left the room, followed by Sergeant Abdullah, who was fumbling for his notebook with a puzzled expression on his dark face.

In the morning Inspector Chafik sat on the edge of a chair in the office of the Chief Inspector. His superior, a burly Englishman who was a former Chief Inspector of Scotland Yard, held his present appointment from the Iraqi government. He was a man whose liver gave him an unpredictable

temper. He was also justly proud of his department, so when he roared, "A man murdered under your nose and nobody arrested!" Chafik nervously twisted his black *sidarah* and meekly bowed his head.

"There were three hundred guests," he said. "The killer was aided by the confusion. You yourself, Mr. Ellsworth, will be the first to understand my difficulties." He smiled ingratiatingly and went on, "If you will direct me on the basis of my report —"

Ellsworth said, "It's a very thorough report and a black one for Shaalan. My God, Chafik, there'll be the devil to pay if we pick him up for murder! A thing like that might well rouse the Muntafiq."

"I have handled him cautiously for that reason, sir. If only Mr. Hassoon had not been so observant —"

"He did his duty. Now we've got to do ours. And what's this damn fool paragraph in your report about Hassoon?" The Chief Inspector picked up the file and read, "Observes the full ritual of daily prayer, including *coubh*, *zhor*, *acr* and *magreb*. Unmarried —" He flung the file down. "His religious habits are his own affair. Tell me about the girl."

"Chief Inspector, she is undoubtedly the agent of a foreign power and used her charms on Major Rasim for obvious reasons. With your permission, I intend to retain her passport until the investigation is completed. And I will use her," Chafik added in a hard voice.

"Could she have killed Rasim?"

"She could — and she is an excellent actress."

"He may have threatened to denounce her." Ellsworth drummed the desk and then asked abruptly, "The knife's untraceable?"

"It could have been purchased anywhere. These knives are mass-produced in your country, sir."

"But they don't make 'em to kill people!" The Chief Inspector picked up Chafik's report again and reread the paragraph referring to the weapon. "A thin blade," he said. "External bleeding insufficient to stain the killer's hand. No fingerprints." He shrugged. "It's a tough case, Chafik, and I don't propose to muddle you with suggestions. You have your own methods and perhaps the less I know about 'em the better. I leave it to you."

The Inspector stood and bowed. He said, "Sir, I am honored by your trust and will do my best. But all is with God." He salaamed with the curved fingers of his right hand to his forehead, but when he was in the corridor and had closed Ellsworth's door he murmured, "I leave it to you. I leave it to you. How very nice to be the Chief Inspector!"

In his own office Chafik found the woman Khurrem waiting with Sergeant Abdullah in attendance. She was quietly dressed in the Western style, but a black shawl, like a Spanish mantilla, was draped over her head and from under the folds her great eyes looked out with suspicion and

alarm. The sergeant, who was hovering behind her chair, made a gesture as if pleading for clemency but the voice of the Inspector was cold as he said, "You have your passport?"

He took the passport, embossed with the arms of the Syrian Republic, and wrote out a receipt. Khurrem said, "This is outrageous!"

"It is a precaution," answered Chafik. "It does not suit my purpose that you should leave Iraq. You are accustomed to taking orders, Madame, and now I give them."

"You talk riddles. I am only a woman who sings and dances—"

"You do both delightfully!" He turned to a ponderous steel cabinet and took out a file. "The pattern of your life," said Inspector Chafik casually, "has the intricate weave of a Kirman carpet and the more one studies it the more one sees. Your father, who was a Syrian, gave you a Turkish name. You were born in Istanbul and taken to Damascus at the age of ten. You were orphaned four years later and there is a gap in your life until you reappear in Tabriz, Iran, as a cabaret entertainer in the last year of the war."

"Is that a crime?" She put a cigarette into a jeweled holder and Sergeant Abdullah hastened with a match.

Chafik said, "It is not a crime. And as I am a broad-minded man I think no evil of you because you lived with Mr. Ali Muzaffer, a very prominent member of the Left, or Tudeh party." There was a musical rattle of bracelets

as Khurrem's hand shook. The little man tapped the open file and continued in the same casual voice, "Here is where the pattern becomes very interesting. You crossed and recrossed the Middle East from Teheran to Cairo, and the men you charmed were military men and government officials, never any others. Those were your orders, Madame?"

"I refuse to answer such a question."

"And rightly so. Of course the connection of the Tudeh party with our very powerful northern neighbor—" Inspector Chafik paused. "Sergeant Abdullah, where are your manners? The lady's cigarette has gone out." He waited a moment and then said gently, "Madame, I am not interested in political matters this time. Only murder. I require a well-trained agent—one so charming as yourself, for instance."

"I? Work for you?" The woman was pale, trembling.

"I am a gentleman," Chafik said, "and it would distress me to retain your passport permanently. Mr. Hassoon might dismiss you from the Great Caliph and then perhaps you would find it difficult to find other work in Baghdad," he added sadly.

Khurrem picked up her long gloves and drew them carefully over her slender hands, the palms of which were touched with henna. "What are your orders?"

"You will continue to entertain at the cabaret, but you will be very kind to Mohammed Shaalan who has long

admired you. Other orders will be given later. And you will, of course, be discreetly silent about our talk."

"I think you are the Devil!"

Inspector Chafik rose to his feet and bowed. "That is with God," he said. . . .

Five days after the interview between Inspector Chafik and Khurrem the Dancer, a sandstorm spread a dirty canopy over the Baghdad sky. It was a day of oppressive heat and the air was filled with dust and stinging insects.

In the Nassah Quarter two men stabbed each other over a debt amounting to thirty *fil*s. A husband at Kadhimain, wearied of his wife, strangled her and dropped the body in the Tigris, and was caught by the police. In his headquarters on Al-Rashid Street, Inspector Chafik read the reports and said, "One regrets these things, but conditions are excellent for my little plan and tonight, Abdullah, we put it into action."

Shortly before ten o'clock, Khurrem, performing to a half-empty cabaret, received a note slipped into her hand as she left the stage for the booth occupied by Mohammed Shaalan. The Arabic characters which marched from right to left across the paper had a certain tidiness, and left her in no doubt of the writer, although the note was unsigned.

"In the name of God the Compassionate. You will invite Mr. Shaalan to your hotel and proceed there by arabana. You will leave

the carriage and enter the hotel ahead of him. Be assured that your virtue will be protected."

Khurrem tore the letter into shreds. Her fingernails were red daggers and her look was dangerous as she tossed her stormy hair and went slowly to the booth where Shaalan was awaiting. She passed Hassoon who said, "There are such few guests I am closing early. Please inform your new lover." Khurrem brushed him with her shoulder, a gesture of contempt.

When she passed through the gap in the flowering shrubs she found a smile for Shaalan, but it faded when the Arab said, "I saw a man speak to you! I saw you lean against him!"

The woman said in a husky voice, "Thou fool!" and her small teeth clenched on the stem of the jeweled cigarette holder. Then she opened her bag and took out her gloves. "We close early. I am weary. Will you see me to my hotel?" Partly closing her great eyes she looked at Shaalan through lashes thickened by kohl.

When they left the cabaret an arabana swung out of the waiting line and drew to the curb, and a man in a café across the street went quickly to the telephone. He dialed a number and shortly afterward Inspector Chafik, who was relaxing at his favorite cinema, rose as he felt Abdullah's touch on his shoulder.

The little man said, "Now I shall never know who put the body of the collector of Chinese jade in the parrot cage at the Central Park zoo." He

looked over his shoulder at the screen and shook his head regretfully.

The street was almost empty. Dust, weighted with moisture sucked from the river by the day's heat, fell softly and a blue haze obscured the lights. Sergeant Abdullah said, "One eats dust," and Chafik answered, "It is our lot." They walked under the pillared arcade to the top of Al-Rashid Street and turning at a sign which read, MA'MUN HOTEL, entered a dark passage. A door leading to a neglected garden opened and three officers of the Metropolitan Police, their tunics smudged of white in the darkness, saluted smartly.

The Inspector stationed himself behind the partly closed door and polished his nails with a handkerchief. Presently he raised his head as the clop-clop of horses' hoofs sounded up the street, but he did not speak until there was the double crack of a driver's whip. Then he put away the handkerchief, saying, "It is the signal."

As the carriage drew up, Mohammed Shaalan, muffled in his robes against the storm, jumped down and extended his hand to Khurrem. The woman said softly, "Follow me in a few minutes," and went up the passage to the hotel fumbling in her bag. When Shaalan had given money to the driver he waited until the carriage had disappeared into the haze of dust and then glided after Khurrem with the smooth step of the desert dweller.

At that moment a car came up the

road and pulled to the curb, and a man crossed the sidewalk with a single leap. The blade of an uplifted dagger darted like a serpent's tongue toward Shaalan's back.

Inspector Chafik threw back the garden door with a twist of his left shoulder and thrust out his arm in the same movement. He felt the burn of steel on his wrist as he wrapped his arm about the throat of the man and flung him violently against the wall of the passage. At the same time Sergeant Abdullah, crouching on the parapet above, descended with his full weight crying, "Thou dog of dogs!"

The three constables rushed from the garden, and the carriage driver, wheeling his horses, joined the confused huddle of struggling bodies.

In a quiet voice Chafik was heard to say, "The ferocity of a pack of wolves is not equal to that of a pack of men. Do not tear him to bits."

The steel jaws of handcuffs closed. Sergeant Abdullah rose from the huddle and said with wonder, "Sir, it is Hassoon!"

"He fitted the pattern," answered the Inspector, and went to look at the thin hollow-eyed man who was now helpless in the grip of the police.

Hassoon was crying, "In the name of God let me kill him as I killed the other lustful dog! The evil in the hearts of men! The honey of women!" And he began to quote from the Koran in a high voice, "By their tokens shall the sinners be known, and they shall be seized by their forelocks and their feet . . . Amid pestilential

winds and in scalding water . . .”

The voice changed to gibberish, and Sergeant Abdullah said, “God has touched him. He will not hang, for the madness has always been there. I cover my shamed face because I did not see the truth, that this man who never married and hated lust was himself filled with lust for the woman Khurrem, and so killed those she favored. Yet, sir, a fact and not a theory must have guided you to the truth.”

“I told you to note the fact. An ash tray in which we saw nothing but the stubs of cigarettes. You disappoint me, Abdullah!” Inspector Chafik dipped into the prisoner’s pockets and showed a handful of salted melon seeds. “As I smoke, so this one nibbles,” he said. “So strong the habit that he nibbled in the presence of Major Rasim’s corpse and placed the husks of the seeds in the tray on the table. And in his own office was a tray piled with husks. Yet in Khurrem’s dressing room, where he said he waited for her, were no husks. Therefore he was not in the room and therefore he lied when he said Shaalan was not there.”

“Such deduction has the clarity of a flawless crystal,” said Abdullah.

“It was clear because God made it so. And the rest of the story is a pattern of woven threads. Who else but Hassoon could have stolen behind Rasim and made the fatal thrust? He tried to claim another victim by putting suspicion on Shaalan, but that failed and he was again driven to

murder. Fortunately prevented,” Inspector Chafik added, turning to Mohammed Shaalan.

“By God’s mercy —” the young Arab said.

“And by my arm and the men who guarded you from the moment you left the Great Caliph! You will find the Muntafiq a safer place than the cabarets of Baghdad. Please give my compliments to the sheik, your father.” Chafik’s nod was a dismissal and Shaalan, wiping the perspiration from his face with the folds of his headcloth, murmured, “I bless your House,” and left meekly.

They took away the man Hassoon, who was now chanting from the Koran, “The beauteous ones with large dark eyeballs . . . whom man hath never touched, nor any jinn. . . .” Inspector Chafik turned to Khurrem who stood in the shadows with her shawl modestly veiling her face. The perfume of jasmine made the little man sigh as he took an envelope from his pocket and gave it to the woman.

“Your passport, Madame.” He paused and then said with a note of regret in his voice, “I took the liberty of enclosing a ticket for Damascus by the Nairn Trans-Desert Autobus.”

Khurrem said softly, a little laugh catching her throat, “Yes, you are surely the Devil!”

And with his most courteous bow, curved fingers hovering near his *sidarrah* in a salaam, Inspector Chafik answered, “But you will agree the Devil is a gentleman —”

A BIT OF BLOODHOUND BIBLIOGRAPHY

We predict that one of these days collectors of the detective story will place a fat premium on all first editions of Lillian de la Torre's Dr. Sam: Johnson short stories. At the time of this writing the public at large knows of only two books in which the Sage of Fleet Street devotes his prodigious learning to the detection of Eighteenth Century crime and chicanery. The first is

DR. SAM: JOHNSON, DETECTOR
New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946,
first edition, 12mo, russet cloth.

The second is Miss de la Torre's anthology of true crimes

VILLAINY DETECTED
New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1947,
first edition, 12mo, brown cloth

which contains a single short story about the Great Lexicographer titled "The Disappearing Servant Wench." But few readers — indeed, few collectors — are aware of the existence of a Dr. Sam: Johnson first edition which preceded the two volumes listed above. In 1945, as a special Christmas gift for her personal friends, Lillian de la Torre published

THE STOLEN CHRISTMAS BOX
New York: EQMM, 1945,
first edition, thin 12mo, white wrappers,
privately printed for the author
and limited to 200 copies.

We pass this bibliographical information on to collectors and would-be collectors realizing full well that it is in the nature of desiderata data only. We haven't the remotest idea where you can find a copy of THE STOLEN CHRISTMAS BOX, unless the author failed to distribute all 200 copies or you are able to persuade one of the original recipients to part with a book which will some day be a recognized rarity in the field of the modern detective story.

Now, to atone for our 'tec teasing, we bring you the latest Dr. Sam: Johnson short story — "The Tontine Curse." One of Miss de la Torre's finest efforts, "The Tontine Curse" won an Honorable Mention in EQMM's Third Annual Contest. Again you will dig into the hitherto secret career of the jovial, Jovian Dr. Sam: Johnson, aided and abetted by the Father of All Watsons, the immortal Bozzy; and although the tale is unfolded against the background of Eighteenth Century London, you will find "The Tontine Curse" Miss de la Torre's most modern story — in pure detective-story concept. It deals with the always fascinating theme of multiple murder.

THE TONTINE CURSE

by LILLIAN DE LA TORRE

(as related by James Boswell, November-December, 1779)

THERE'S a curse on the tontine," said the brewer's wife, and wept.

"Ma'am," says Dr. Sam: Johnson sourly, "there's a curse on every tontine."

Mr. Hosyer the portly brewer breathed hard through his jolly red nose. Mrs. Hosyer, buxom and motherly, buried hers in her kerchief and sobbed.

'Twas an unexpected prelude to what I had thought would be a purely legal confabulation. We sat in the inner room of Lloyd's Coffee-house, awaiting the other representatives of the members of the Hosyer tontine. At the head of the table, smiling to himself, sat Lawyer Theophilus Sedge, a pleasing little man, as rosy and round as a winter apple. He had endeared himself to me, a fellow-lawyer, by his candour, and when he desired my presence and that of my philosophical friend at the counsel-board, I was glad to make one, and prevailed upon my learned friend to do the same.

Dr. Sam: Johnson sat four-square by the little lawyer, wearing a plain brown suit of old-fashioned full cut and an out-moded grizzle wig, his cocked hat planted squarely upon it. His heavy scarred countenance bore

an expression of uncompromising common sense.

First to arrive of the Hosyer connexion had been the brewer and his wife. Dr. Johnson had lost no time in making clear his adverse philosophy of the tontine.

I struck in hastily:

"A curse on every tontine? How do you make that good?"

"Consider, Mr. Boswell. I say nothing to your Irish tontine; 'twill do as well, I suppose, as any other form of publick lottery. But permit me to characterize to you a private tontine such as this one."

Lawyer Sedge, who had drawn up the Hosyer tontine in the first place, raised his frosty thistledown brows, but his smile was as bland as ever.

"To make such a tontine," pursued Johnson, "you gather together ten or a dozen infants of tender years —"

"Twenty," said the brewer.

"Twenty infants of tender years. For each infant let the parent stake, say, one thousand pounds —"

"Five thousand," said the brewer.

Johnson whistled.

"You set the temptation high. Twenty infants at five thousand pounds — one hundred thousand

pounds. Invest it in the funds—”

“My brother has the handling of it.”

“Put it out at interest, and leave it there until nineteen of your twenty die. Then the whole sum becomes the property of the survivor. To the gouty, toothless, sapless, gustless twentieth old man falls a noble fortune, say eight hundred thousand pounds, if it be true as they say that money at interest doubles every twenty years.”

“My brother has already doubled the fund.”

“Bravo, Mr. Hosyer! In what business?”

“Ship insurance. My brother is one of the gentlemen yonder.”

The brewer nodded his head toward the outer room of the coffee-house, where the gentlemen of Lloyd's sat at the bare scrubbed tables and wrote insurance on the ships that ply out of London. Johnson looked at the lined faces, bent over their ciphering or frowning in close converse or just staring.

“A calling not without hazard,” he remarked, “especially with the reverses of the American war. Well, well, let your brother's luck still hold, sixty or eighty years hence, some old gaffer, his relation, will be enriched with a princely fortune he'll never live long enough to enjoy. And the medium of his enrichment will be death, Mr. Boswell—death to his brothers and sisters, death to his cousins, his neighbours, his friends. Between each child and that fortune stand nineteen lives.”

Mrs. Hosyer shuddered violently.

“And though no one of the twenty grow up so lost to virtue as to hasten his fortune by imbruing his hands in blood—yet consider what must be the effect of constantly wishing nineteen deaths? No, sir, there was never a private tontine but had a curse on it.”

“If we but had back our ten thousand pounds!” cried Mrs. Hosyer. “It would stand between us and present ruin.”

“No more o' that,” cried Hosyer roughly. “The brewery will be very well.”

“The tontine,” said Lawyer Sedge smoothly, “was made Michaelmas four years ago, at the house of Mr. Breed Hosyer the ship-broker at Bath. He having made a second marriage, desired thus to provide for the sons of his first. The families of the tontine . . .”

I own I lost the thread. The families of the tontine had had ill luck, being swept by the small-pox, the colick, and the like.

“Alack!” said Dr. Johnson, “how many of these little creatures perish in their innocence! They are but lent to us. If we can raise one in three, we may call ourselves fortunate. Of twelve, Brewer Thrale has but four surviving.”

“Of the tontine's twenty,” said Hosyer grimly, “but four survive.”

“But four!” cried Johnson aghast. “This is beyond the rule of nature! Who are the four?”

“My girl Sally, and Sister Macklin's Susan, and Mr. Sedge's boy, and my brother's heir.”

"Pray, how has this come about?"

"The curse," muttered Mrs. Hosyer, and wrung her fingers.

"Sir," her husband began, "the children, them that lived through the small-pox, went on merrily enough, till a year gone we lost our eldest girl."

"By what means?"

The Hosyers spoke together. He said:

"An accident."

"She destroyed herself," said the wife. "She destroyed herself for love. Her marriage portion was lost —" some hidden bitterness burst forth, "and when the match she desired was broken, so was her heart; she hanged herself in her garters."

"I had reverses," muttered Hosyer pitifully.

"I wish we had never heard of the tontine! I wish we had our ten thousand pounds back!"

Hosyer looked baited. I thought how many times before he must have heard that whine. Sedge, still smiling, pulled forth a handsome repeater watch and looked from it to the outer door. A line between his frosty brows denied the smile.

Mrs. Hosyer sniffed back old grief and took up what was clearly an oft-rehearsed tale:

"We lost poor Annie in June. In July we went to Bath, to brother-in-law's. Brother-in-law lives like a nabob. His wife is the relict of a lord — if he has the brass, she knows how to spend it — and high though she holds her head, he's good to his own,

and in the hot weather we were all there together."

JOHNSON: "All?"

HOSYER: "All — my wife and I, Sister Macklin, Lawyer Sedge, and brother-in-law and his new wife, and all the children. There was five in the school-room and the rest in the nursery —"

MRS. HOSYER: "And in the stables Bob Hosyer, who at sixteen has set up for a rake on the nabob's money, and if my Lady don't ruin brother-in-law Hosyer, 'tis my belief Bob will."

Hosyer rebuked her with a look and went on in his heavy voice:

"To be brief, sir, the schoolroom and the nursery had liberty to play in the grounds, and thence came the tragedy. They set sail on the mill-pond in a leaky old tub that foundered under them, and we were nigh to losing them all. My Sally, who is of intrepid mould, drew her cousin Susan to shore. Sedge's Clem was cadging sweetmeats in the buttery, and Bob Hosyer was lounging with the grooms. Sister Macklin thought it a mercy that she was dandling the littlest ones in the morning-room. But of that boatload of seven, five sank, and rose no more."

Mrs. Hosyer looked back on the tragedy:

"And we were like to lose Sally, for she lay like one dead till we nigh despaired of restoring her."

HOSYER: "T was that that saved her."

JOHNSON: "How mean you?"

MRS. HOSYER: "While the pond was dragging, the children got some spoiled food, it being very hot sum-

mer weather. They was taken with the gripes and the flux, and fast did it carry 'em off. Sally and Susan had none, being put to bed with a posset; Bob Hosyer lived, for he dined with his elders; and as to Sedge's Clem, 'tis my belief that nothing can kill him."

Sedge acknowledged this compliment with a radiant beam.

"Fourteen children," concluded Mrs. Hosyer solemnly, "went down to Bath in July. Four came back. Is not this a curse?"

"Ma'am," says Johnson, "I devoutly hope so. Better a supernatural than a human agent."

"Be easy, ma'am," says Sedge soothingly. "I grieve with the be-reaved, ma'am, in these horrid mishaps; but I see in them nothing more than the grief that flesh is heir to. As to the boat, ma'am, a leaking skiff will sink, and a child that cannot swim will sink with it; and as to the gripes and the flux, ma'am, 'tis my belief the little ones had somehow got at my Lady's white lead; for your sister-in-law's unnatural white, ma'am, to speak plainly, and past question 'tis paint, and will one day carry her off like the late lamented Countess of Coventry."

"Psst," hissed Hosyer, heralding by this undignified means the impressive entrance of Mr. Breed Hosyer and his consort, my Lady Rivers that was.

Mr. Breed Hosyer would have been impressive in any gathering. He wore the finest of sombre stuffs, set off at the throat with a fall of cobwebby lace; his buckles were set with

brilliants, and he wore a priceless ring on his finger. His face was thin and worn in an agreeable way, as unlike his brewer brother as possible. He handed his lady to an armed chair with studied courtliness.

The nabob's wife was an edged beauty, thin and very fair. Her unnaturally white skin was carmined over her sharp cheek-bones. She wore an enormous head, and patches. She arranged her laced ruffles, and inclined the towering wig a fraction off the vertical to the company in general.

"Now, then," said Breed Hosyer in a sharp voice that smacked of the City, "what's to do here? Where's Sister Macklin? If I can fetch my Lady from St. James's, surely she can on with her pattens and step hither on time. No matter, brother, what's the cause of this meeting?"

Hiram Hosyer looked mighty put about at this abruptness, but he answered bluntly:

"To break the tontine and part the money among the children."

I was surprised enough; I had never heard of the breaking a tontine once regularly entered into. But two of our members fairly rose from their places in horror—the lawyer and the broker.

"Impossible!" they cried as one man.

"Do," says my Lady languidly, "break the tontine, Mr. Hosyer, and then you may make such a settlement upon my daughter as is right and proper for the child of the late Lord Rivers; for a dowerless female may

hang herself these days, she can hope for no better fate."

"Unless she's the relict of a lord —" began Mrs. Hosyer angrily.

Breed Hosyer had recovered his suavity. Without paying the least mind to the glowering females, he leaned forward and addressed his brother patiently:

"Look you, brother, 'tis beyond possibility. It strikes at the very basis of the tontine, if it may be abrogated at will. Sedge will bear me out."

The lawyer nodded.

"As to parting the money, the loss will be extream, the blow to my credit worse, if in the present precarious state of affairs I must suddenly realize the funds of the tontine. Pray what is the urgent reason for this unreasonable request?"

"The curse — the curse on the tontine —"

"Tschah," said Breed Hosyer in disgust. "Who has started up this old wives' tale? I'll not be a party to breaking the tontine for so foolish a reason. Be content, brother; Sally may one day have all, if —" he offered his wrist to his lady, and smiled back over his shoulder as they withdrew, "— if she lives so long."

Hiram Hosyer, purple, turned to Lawyer Sedge to expostulate; but the lawyer was looking at his watch, and in another minute he was gone.

We found ourselves in the footway before Lloyd's Coffee-house with the Hosyers. I was ready to be off; but Johnson lingered.

"Ma'am," says he, "this is a dire tale, and a powerful argument against leaky row-boats and summer victuals. But why, when it happened in July, is this a reason to break the tontine suddenly in November? What has happened since, to rouse your apprehensions?"

The Hosyers exchanged glances. The brewer bit his lip.

"Last night," said Mrs. Hosyer in a low voice, "we had like to lost Sally with the gripes and the flux."

"And it not being summer," said Hosyer, his eyes on his shoes, "and Sally being new-returned from a sojourn with my Lady her Aunt Hosyer — sir, I'm at my wits' end. I cannot afford to break with my brother. What shall I do?"

Johnson was frowning now.

"The gripes and the flux are no uncommon ail. We must proceed with caution. I must know more of the summer tragedies. Who set the children on to so perilous a voyage? Who supped in the nursery, and upon what dish? I must talk with Sally at once."

"Sir, 'tis impossible. Dr. Catnach gave us powders to make a draught to quiet her, and now she sleeps like the dead . . ."

The last words seemed to linger on the air. The buxom wife turned pale. Her eyes and her husband's met in a like apprehension, and by common consent they urgently beckoned a passing hackney-coach. Johnson mounted without demur, and I followed.

As the Jehu plied his whip, a di-

shevelled dame clacked upon hurried pattens. She stood on the footway gesticulating after us.

"Cicely Mackin," said Mrs. Hosyer; and for all her drawn face she laughed.

Sally was sleeping unharmed. We looked down upon her in the shadow of the tester. She was a beautiful child, budding to a seductive sixteen. I admired her peaches-and-snow complexion, her perfect form beneath the counterpane. As we gazed the blue-veined lids fluttered and rose. Brilliant blue eyes scanned our faces, and for a flash a dimple shewed beside the pale, perfect lips.

Though not impervious to the appeal of femininity, Dr. Johnson dared not spare her. He questioned her gently.

"I found the boat launched," she whispered, "and when I could not dissuade the children from embarking, I went along for the preventing of mischief."

Her eyes darkened; she closed them.

"I do not know who set them on."

"We must ask Susan Macklin, who alone of that unlucky boat-load survives," said I.

Nor did Sally know aught of that misfortunate supper in the nursery, for she and Susan, bedded, had had posset from the nurse's own hand.

"We must ask the nurse," said I.

"The nurse is dead," whispered Sally. "Save for Clem, every soul who ate at that table died."

"And what did you eat yesterday, my dear, at your Aunt Hosyer's?"

"What the rest ate."

"No comfits?"

"I had a comfit of fat little Clem Sedge — but he ate thrice as many."

"No bit of marrow-fat for yourself, no posset to sleep on?"

"No, sir, Bob gets the tid-bits at my uncle's. Stay, there was milk brought to my bed-side by the serving-wench."

"Well, my dear, be a good girl, and rest, and all will be well."

"Yes, sir."

The girl turned her face to the wall, and tears began to stream from her eyes.

"I'm afraid."

The brewer's wife smoothed the wide brow. The blue eyes closed.

"Ma'am," says Johnson, "I'll talk with Susan in the morning."

"Tis Lord Mayor's Day," said Mrs. Hosyer. "Come the next day. Come to Mrs. Macklin's in the Poultry."

So the rendezvous was concerted.

The Lord Mayor's Show, and the humours of the mob, engrossed our interest on the morrow, and Sally Hosyer's no less, putting the rendezvous, for the nonce, from our minds.

Nevertheless we kept our rendezvous, and betimes. Dr. Johnson himself roused me at my lodgings. His face shocked me.

"We are summoned too late. Susan Macklin is dead, and Sally Hosyer despaired of."

We hastened down to the ancient street called the Poultry. In the dark old house of the widow Macklin a dreadful sight met our eyes. Smothered under the bed's fallen tester lay Susan Macklin. When the tangle of cloth and wooden frame was pushed aside, I gazed with pity on a peaked little face and half-open skinny hands.

Cicely Macklin had no gestures left. She stood like a snow statue by her daughter's bed and spoke without expression.

"Many's the time I've warned her and Sally, and her brother that's dead in the mill-pond, many's the time I've bade them swarm up the appletree if they must play at sailors, and not up the canopy, for all my gear's old and rotten —"

Dr. Johnson regarded the heavy frame where it had splintered away. The edge of the crack dated from the days of the sailor-play, it was old and grey, but the rest was white and fresh, where it had parted and fallen in the night. Dr. Johnson regarded it with a grave face.

"Who lay in the house last night?"

Widow Macklin brought her remote eyes to fasten on him.

"Susan that's dead, and Sally that's dying, and Brother and Sister Hosyer, and I. We were all here for the Lord Mayor's Show, for this house commands it, and after it I gave them a bed, and Sally loves to share Susan's. 'Twas an ill hour for Sister Hosyer when she yielded to Sally's entreaties, scarce recovered as she was from her indisposition."

"Who knew of the plan?"

"Why, all here. Mr. Sedge said 'twas indulging the chits, but my Lady bade us humour the child for God's sake —"

"Mr. Sedge? My Lady? Were they here?"

"I said so. They were all here for the Lord Mayor's Show."

"Pray, ma'am, who was here?" Dr. Johnson asked.

"Mr. Sedge and Clem — Mr. Breed Hosyer and my Lady and Bob — Brother Hiram Hosyer and his wife and daughter — I and Susan; no one else, for the wench was off making holiday."

Her gaze slid away again; she straightened a lock on her daughter's ice-cold brow.

"Sally?"

"Sally? — Sally. Sally lies in my bed."

She gestured down the passage, and we left her.

Sally Hosyer lay in such another canopied bed in such another dark chamber, as still and as white as her cousin; but a shallow thread of pulse gave hope of her recovery. Her mother was chafing her cold hands, her father setting hot bricks to her icy feet.

"We found her prone by the bedside in a tangle of bed-furniture," said the father sadly, "half-dead as you now see her. The crack of the breaking frame must have roused her, and she rolled aside an instant too late to be safe."

The purple-veined lids pulsed, and

the mother renewed her endeavours. She was rewarded a moment later; the lids slowly lifted, and closed again.

But though a languid consciousness returned, it brought only the scantiest of memories.

"I heard a crack," whispered the white lips at Dr. Johnson's ear, "and felt a blow, and I knew no more."

I thought Dr. Johnson looked mighty grim. He sent me, with strictest orders to be on my guard, to the ordinary for broth, and he fed it to the child with his own hand. When she fell into a fitful sleep, he spoke sternly to Brewer Hosyer.

"The tontine must end."

"It shall end, sir. But I own I'm loath to give up the money; I'm pinched, and that's cold truth. My wife shall carry the wench into the country out of reach; and I'll do what I can to get the tontine parted orderly."

Johnson shook his head.

"'Tis your child's life. Pray be on your guard. If there's a human agent behind these accidents, be sure I'll be a mill-stone round his neck!"

The tontine was long a-breaking. I at last persuaded Sedge that the tontine might be broken by consent; though he could never be brought to think that the mortality among its members was other than a strange series of strokes of fate. Of Hiram Hosyer's importunities, and his brother's procrastinations, I only heard by indirection. Meanwhile, Sally Hosyer

was gone out of London; Clem Sedge was at school and Bob Hosyer at the University. To all my enquiries after Breed Hosyer's affairs, I could have only one answer: that his credit stood high, his affairs were sound; men praised his prudence, that preserved his fortune in these adverse times, and the liberality of his lady, who had the spending of it.

The matter of the tontine was still in abeyance when Dr. Johnson and I went down to take the waters at Bath.

The well-known watering-place was thronged for the holidays. On every hand the Mall was crowded with gay duchesses, pretty pump-room girls, grande dames painted to the nines, and many a mincing macaroni with a nose-gay as big as a broom.

"Is not this pure, sir?" I addressed Dr. Johnson, unwontedly gay in mulberry and a new large grizzle wig. "Does not your heart bound to see so many pretty faces? Pray observe the fair sisters who approach us, attended by their court of beaux, and their duenna behind."

"I observe them," returned Dr. Johnson in a very particular voice. "They are not sisters, neither is she behind their duenna."

I looked again as they came closer. What was my surprize to see, handed each by an ogling gallant, Miss Sally Hosyer and my Lady her Aunt Hosyer! Stout Mrs. Hosyer scowled in the background.

It was the first time I had seen Miss

Sally Hosyer on her feet. The girl was a raving beauty. Her towering head, picked out with plumes, was a replica of her Aunt's; her ruffles, like the older woman's, were edged with silver lace. Her skin was milk-white and transparent, and the warm colour came and went at every whisper in her ear. She carried her slim form proudly.

We bent low before the ladies, and they curtsied in a froth of taffety under-coats.

"La, Dr. Johnson," drawled my Lady, bringing her lace fan into play, "welcome indeed to Bath. Pray, sir, lend me your influence to bend this stiff sister-in-law of mine. Never doubt me, sir, she keeps this radiant creature penned up in lodgings, though I have begged her upon my knees, I vow upon my very knees, to come to us at the Priory."

"Nay, sister —" began Mrs. Hosyer.

"Now pray, dear creature, let's hear no more of the mill-pond. Do but be perswaded, and bring my pretty niece to the Priory. Here's Bob down for the holidays, he affects her prodigiously, I vow; do pray have mercy upon his transports."

"I don't hold," said plain Mrs. Hosyer bluntly, "with making a match between cousins."

"Dear joy, a match, sister? A match with a dowerless wench? Zut, sister, who spoke of a match?"

Mrs. Hosyer turned a dusky pink, but Sally only tittered.

"Ah, well, let it pass, sister. You'll come before the holidays are out.

Only think, Dr. Johnson, that stubborn husband of mine has been brought to heel at last, and the tontine will be broke as fast as Lawyer Sedge can bring Clem to set his fat fist to it. But I daresay you will be by for the signing."

"At your service, my Lady."

"Your most oblig'd, sir. Do now, perswade my sister to bring her charmer to the Priory without delay. I vow Bob languishes; and cousins, you know, should love one another."

I regarded the painted blush on this unblushing creature with aversion.

"What is this painted bawd about," I cried angrily as the trio sailed off, "if it be not procuring for her own son in her own house! I never heard so infamous a proposal more plainly put."

"Infamous indeed," said Johnson, "and I could almost find it in my heart to wish her no worse than a procuress. But in two respects you wrong her — the boy is *not* her own son, and save for the crimson spots she is *not* painted."

"That white skin, not painted?"

"No, sir; this sunlight makes it plain, 'tis not white lead, but a substance even more noxious, to which the lady owes the whiteness of her swan-like neck."

I stared after the three ill-assorted Hosyer ladies. A bejewelled young rake had his arm about Sally's waist, the while he pinched her aunt's hand under her fall; Mrs. Hosyer's very back breathed helpless anger.

Who so willing as Miss Sally to compassionate a swain's transports? Some nights later I was wandering in the Spring Gardens with — but with whom forms no part of this history — suffice it to say, I was wandering in the Gardens at moon-rise. We were in shadow — I was in shadow as I rounded the hedge, and saw in the bright moonlight Sally Hosyer clasped in a close embrace by a tall young man. Unwilling to put them out of countenance, I stood silent. The embrace ended, the figures parted a little; when I saw that Miss Sally's innamorato was not only well-formed, but handsome and sentimental of face, richly clothed, and in his first youth. For a moon-struck moment he stared into her lovely lifted face, and suddenly his grasp tightened.

"Sally," he said thickly; caught his breath, and spoke clearly: "Sally, my charmer, come away with me and make me the happiest of men."

Sally spoke in a small voice; her aunt's barbs had gone home:

"Without a dowry?"

"Without a shift," cried the young man passionately. "No one need know; 'tis no one's affair."

As to that he was certainly right. I slipped back the way I had come.

Whatever favours Miss Sally bestowed upon her young Adonis, she forebore to flee with him. I saw her upon the Parade the next day, mantling in a storm of compliments, and the favoured swain was no more than one of many.

Mrs. Hosyer, Lady Rivers that was, proved to be right about the tontine. Lawyer Sedge at last came down. He carried us to the Priory in his coach, and I for the first time beheld young Master Sedge, whom in Mrs. Hosyer's opinion nothing could kill.

There was reason for her estimate. I assessed Master Sedge as he sat opposite me in the coach, eating a gilded tart from a hamper. He had a large red face, and arms and legs like blood-puddings. He was not improved by having jam on his chin. He was six years old; his mental powers seemed to be less than the age would warrant.

At the Priory we found Hosyer and his wife and Sally already established, and a high tea on the table. They were making marchpane below-stairs; you could smell the ground almonds all over the house. Sally was munching on a piece. Clem Sedge, with a look of dumb determination on his fat face, snatched the dainty from her very lips, and bolted it. Sally just shrugged.

As tea was pouring, I looked about the richly appointed chamber at the group who sat there. Present in the room, with one exception, were all the surviving members of the Hosyer tontine, backed by their parents. I looked at Breed Hosyer, tight-mouthed and suave, his poison-white wife, Lawyer Sedge, bland and smiling, Hiram Hosyer, wary and ill at ease, his wife tense, Sally like a child, flushed and laughing, sharing the marchpane in her pockets with Clem

Sedge. I thought of the mill-pond and the flux and the fallen tester, and a ripple ran along my nerve-ends. Where was Bob Hosyer?

Before I could ask the question, the door opened, and a beautiful youth in faultless buckskins strolled into the room. I had seen him before. 'Twas the importunate suitor of the Spring Gardens. Gracefully he saluted the company. A look of his eye, a private smile, brought the blood mantling to Sally's cheek.

Our number was complete. Lawyer Sedge proceeded to open the schema for the breaking of the tontine. In brief 'twas thus: the tontine to be broken, and each member and his heirs after him to take his fair third of the sum; but the capital still to be in the hands of Mr. Breed Hosyer, and to be withdrawn only upon long warning. How this was to advantage Mr. Hiram Hosyer in his present need I could not see; but of all then present, he was most eager that the thing be done. My Lady was languidly willing, Lawyer Sedge not contrary-minded, Mr. Breed Hosyer wishing to have done with the matter. Sally and Bob, whispering in the corner, smiled assent, while Clem Sedge, his mouth full of marchpane, nodded dumbly. Lawyer Sedge pocketed his notes, from which to draw up the agreement fair, and we parted, agreeing to sign on the morrow. The last I saw of Clem Sedge, he was still stuffing his mouth with marchpane. . . .

The marchpane was the death of Clem Sedge. This time the gripes and

the flux did his business. Mrs. Hosyer did her utmost, but in a frighteningly short time the child was dead.

Dr. Johnson strode angrily into my Lady's chamber. He found her eating marchpane while her maid did her head.

"Ma'am," says he without preamble, "you've poison on your toilette-table, and I beg you'll destroy it instanter."

She put down the marchpane hastily.

"I don't refer to the marchpane, ma'am, though indeed it serves as a handy disguise for a deadly dose; I refer to your complexion-water."

She did not pretend to misunderstand him, but handed him a little box of white powder.

"Let it be destroyed," she said, adding with a sigh, "though never had I had so many compliments on my white skin, till by the advice of my apothecary I began the use of arsenick —"

"Your apothecary!" cried Dr. Johnson. "Many a Borgia passes under this guise today, witting or unwitting!"

"I have had qualms," said my Lady calmly, "for sure I sometimes think it was at the bottom of the ill supper in the nursery; and sure Sally got a dose of it when she was here in November. It goes down fast; I think Sally uses it on the sly, or Hepzibah here — don't yank so, Hepzibah, you clumsy thing!"

"Clem Sedge has got such a dose of it," said Dr. Johnson bluntly, "as killed him."

My Lady quietly fainted, and not a lady-like swoon neither, for she slumped in a heap with her mouth open.

We left Hepzibah applying restoratives.

Dr. Johnson applied himself to tracing the history of the marchpane, but little enough did he learn. Every woman in the house had had a finger in it, even Sally and her mother; Bob Hosyer had been about the kitchen, exchanging banter for almonds; even Breed Hosyer, passing through, had paused to sample the confection. Dishes of comfits had stood in every room. Sally and Bob had filled their pockets. Poor Clem Sedge had been the only one to fill his maw.

These researches were cut short in mid-kitchen by loud screams of despair. We hurried towards their origin, and found the morning-room a scene of frenzy. Bob and Sally were missing.

No one had seen them since Clem had perished. My Lady was in a hideous taking, swearing 'twas all the fault of the little vixen, the — Her language astounded me. Mr. Hosyer said nothing, but he looked volumes. Mr. Breed Hosyer was cool as he ordered the grounds searched. The young people were not to be found.

"Then," says he, tight-lipped, "drag the mill-pond."

The brewer's wife upon this went into fits.

My friend looked unutterably grave. He was not content to lament

supinely, but himself instituted another kind of inquiry, which soon bore fruit. Master Bob, said the groom, was off in the light chariot; but whether alone or accompanied he could not say.

Upon this we left the servants to drag the mill-pond, and took horse, the two fathers with us.

At the cross-roads we had the luck to encounter a carter who had seen the chariot. He had been forced to take to the ditch as the vehicle passed him in a cloud of dust; it was pelting north as fast as the horses could gallop, and the driver had a companion. More the carter could not say.

Upon this intelligence we whipped up our horses and road Hell-for-leather out the highroad, Hiram Hosyer swearing he would horse-whip the whippersnapper to the parson, Breed Hosyer keeping his own counsel, Dr. Johnson galloping ever recklessly in front. 'Twas by good luck that when we encountered a rough lad clattering along on an old plug of a horse, we drew rein to question him. He carried a scrap of a note in his hat-band. 'Twas addressed to Dr. Sam: Johnson:

"He has carried me off against my will. I am mortally terrified. We have turned in at the Swan. For God's sake come before it is too late.

S. Hosyer"

"The lady said," said the stolid boy as we set spur, "that you'd give me a guinea."

"Here's your guinea, boy," cried Breed Hosyer, tossing it to him, "the child's life is cheap at the price."

With no further word said we pelted on to the old Swan Inn.

The landlord of the Swan suppressed a grin as he pointed to an inner room. Thither we all stormed, and burst in in the nick.

I shall never forget that tableau — the table on the hearth spread with untouched viands and an emptied decanter — Bob Hosyer swaying beside it with the carving-knife in his hand — and on the floor at his feet, her garments disarrayed and her white throat bared, in a swoon like death lay Sally Hosyer.

It was Breed Hosyer who pinioned his son's arms; I had not suspected the strength in his wiry frame. It was I who took the knife from the boy's slackened hand.

No effort could restore Miss Sally; she lay like the dead. In the end we were fain to wrap her in blankets and carry her to the landlord's covered cart. We found, when we spared him a glance, that we had Master Bob on our hands too; he snorted stertorously with his head on the table, and no exertion could rouse him.

Murderer and victim we laid them side by side in the cart, and father and uncle rode beside. The look on Breed Hosyer's face terrified me.

There was little left of the night. Bob Hosyer was lifted like a log to his bed. I noted that Breed Hosyer settled himself by it, his grim visage

never lightening; while a bewildered groom with a blunderbuss made his appearance beside the door.

Dr. Johnson never left Sally's side. Towards morning she came to herself and fell to screaming. Mrs. Hosyer fetched the sleeping-powders, but the box was empty; we were harrowed by the child's terror until she cried herself out and fell into a natural sleep.

By Dr. Johnson's desire we all met in the morning-room betimes. Tea and coffee was laid out, but truth to tell we had mighty little stomach to break our fast. My Lady looked haggard in the morning light; Mrs. Hosyer's eyes were red. Hiram Hosyer brought Sally in his arms; she lay on the sofa with her eyes closed. She wore a negligee garment of sky-blue silk richly laced. Clearly by giving her the garment my Lady had made her the best amends an empty head could conceive.

Last of all Bob Hosyer stumbled in, blood-shot of eye and heavy of head. His father stalked implacably behind him, and the groom and the blunderbuss made him look more than ever like a culprit approaching Tyburn.

Lawyer Sedge spoke. In twenty-four hours he had whitened and shrunk, and he spoke tonelessly.

"The document of the tontine can avail little now, but 'tis here, at your service."

Johnson shook his head.

"We must have signatures, and quickly. I have here a document that

will serve till a better can be engrossed."

He read from a single sheet:

"I do hereby renounce my right in and expectation from the Hosyer tontine. It is right that I do this, as I now confess that it was I who killed —"

Bob Hosyer lifted his heavy head.

"— it was I who killed my late twelve fellows of the tontine —"

Bob Hosyer stood to his full height and folded his arms on his breast. The groom levelled the blunderbuss, and I tightened my muscles for trouble.

"— and I had in train to kill my cousin at the Swan, which was only prevented by the premature arrival of my father and my uncle."

Dr. Johnson dipped the pen.

"I am innocent!" cried Bob Hosyer desperately. "Father! Uncle!"

"Quiet, boy," said Dr. Johnson; and extended the pen to Miss Sally Hosyer.

The girl on the sofa lifted her lids and looked Dr. Johnson full in the face. Suddenly she snatched the pen and flung it to the floor, where it stuck and quivered like a thrown poignard. Then she fell back and went off in a swoon. It brought her thunderstruck parents to her side.

"Let her swoon," said Dr. Johnson indifferently. "She has a pretty talent of swooning. She swooned so soon as she had tipped the boat and drowned her cousins; you thought her in a swoon when she mixed arsenick with the nursery victuals; she swooned

when the work of smothering her cousin and pulling down the tester was done; and she executed a very pretty swoon when we arrived at the Swan too soon for her plans, and her final victim, not yet completely subdued by the draught she had put in his wine, took the murderous knife from her hand."

"Will you believe this mad tale?" cried Mrs. Hosyer. "Who dosed the child with arsenick here at the Priory? Why should she first save Susan's life and then take it? How did she poison Clem, when they ate marchpane out of her pockets together? How could she hope to bring safely off the murder of a great strapping chap twice her size?"

"The child dosed herself with arsenick, in imitation of my Lady, for the complection; but being green at it got a swallow too much. She was well enough for the Lord Mayor's Show next day. As to Susan, 'twas her first venture; perhaps when the child clung to her, she lost her nerve. But it had to be done finally, lest Susan tell how Sally herself launched that unlucky voyage. The apothecary's sleeping draught that she had by her made it the easier. 'Twas the sleeping draught that was to put Bob in her power, once she had lured him away from prying eyes. As to sharing the marchpane with Clem, Miss Sally has *two* pockets; I think she never made a mistake as to which pocket *she* ate out of."

"But why? Why? Why? Is the child mad?"

She lay rigid as a statue. Dr. Johnson looked on her with regret.

"You may put it that way. These long and deep swoons are akin to what the learned call the catalepsy, to which misses at the age of the green-sickness are much subject. Sally was just of that age when her sister died, and dying impressed upon her the misery of being without dower in this heartless age. After that she heard from her mother naught but the tontine. To drown her cousins was a sudden quick impulse, a surge of the will so frightful that a catalepsy followed. When it succeeded, and its companion impulse to arsenick the nursery viands, her succeeding murders became easier and more calculating. That of Bob was the hardest, had he not made it easy by yielding to her new-found power of charming, and forming dishonourable designs upon her."

My Lady had the grace to look put about.

"You may convince yourselves," said Dr. Johnson with compassion to the distraught parents, "as I was convinced, by the missing apothecary's powders. You have but to search the girl's room, you will find

her hidden stock of both the sleeping and the complexion powders."

'Twas done. Hiram Hosyer looked pitifully on the packets in his hand, and then on the still rigid girl.

"What is to be done?"

"I know not," said my humane companion, distressed. "How can I bring so young a maid to the gallows? Yet if she lives, who is safe from her wrath?"

"Give me," said the brewer sadly, "twenty-four hours before you move."

I looked once more on the exquisite countenance as her father carried her away. In the afternoon she came out of her swoon, for again I heard her screaming. Then the apothecary's powders were brought into play, and the screams were stilled.

They were stilled forever. Her father's unaccustomed hand had mixed the dose too strong, and Sally Hosyer woke no more. Dr. Johnson grasped the brewer's steady hand, and looked into his tearless eyes.

"Sir, you are a Roman parent."

Bob Hosyer, who needed it not, had the tontine.

"Let uncle have his own again," he said. "I had liefer have had Sally."



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