

10¢

TEN

10  
STORIES  
10¢

# DETECTIVE ACES

## DEATH ON THE LAM

*Gripping Detective Novelet*  
By G.T. FLEMING-ROBERTS

*Also*

D.L. CHAMPION  
LAWRENCE TREAT  
B.B. FOWLER

*And Six Others*

JUNE





# LISTEN TO THEM PLAY!

*And They Never Took A Lesson From A Private Teacher In Their Lives!*



**Y**ES, thousands of people are now playing musical instruments without any private instruction at all! Many of them knew absolutely nothing about music, could not tell one note from another.

But you should hear them now! What a thrill they're getting out of playing their favorite musical instruments! Some of them have chosen the piano, others the guitar or violin or saxophone, and so on through the whole range of musical instruments.

But *all* of them learned to play by themselves, without a private teacher, in spare time at home. All used the same wonderful home-study method that makes music as easy as A-B-C. No tedious, old-fashioned drudgery with scales and exercises. By this modern short-cut method you learn to play *by playing*. You start right in, from the very first lessons, playing simple, familiar tunes. Soon you are surprising your friends with your skill.



**MAIL COUPON FOR FREE DEMONSTRATION LESSON**

## Name Your Favorite Instrument

*Here's Proof You Can Learn to Play it!*

Don't you want to see how easily *you* can learn to play your favorite musical instrument? Don't you want the fascinating free booklet and demonstration lesson that have started others on the way to untold pleasure, popularity and profit? Then mail the coupon at once. No cost, no obligation, no salesman will call. You'll get the proof by return mail that you can learn to play quickly, easily, at trifling cost. Write today. (Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit.) U. S. School of Music, 4346 Brunswick Bldg., New York, N. Y.

**U. S. School of Music**  
4346 Brunswick Bldg., New York, N. Y.

Without cost or obligation to me, please send me your free illustrated Booklet and Demonstration Lesson, showing how I can learn at home to play the instrument checked below. (Do you have instrument? .....

- |                 |          |          |                   |
|-----------------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| Piano           | Hawaiian | Trumpet  | Drums and         |
| Violin          | Guitar   | Harp     | Traps             |
| Guitar          | Banjo    | Clarinet | Organ             |
| Piano Accordion | Mandolin | Ukulele  | Modern Elementary |
| Plain Accordion | Trombone | Flute    | Harmony           |
| Saxophone       | Cornet   | Piccolo  | Voice Culture     |
| Cello           |          |          |                   |

Name .....

Address .....

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

# Calling All Cars!

A  
**MYSTERIOUS DISCOVERY**  
**SAVES UP TO 30%**  
**ON GASOLINE!**  
**OR COSTS NOTHING TO TRY**



Answer this call! Investigate this remarkable discovery that trims dollars off gasoline bills — gives you worthwhile gas savings — more power — greater speed — quicker pickup — faster acceleration. Proven so efficient, it is guaranteed to save up to 30% and give better performance or the trial costs you nothing.

**Automatic Supercharge Principle**

Vacu-matic is entirely different! It operates on the supercharge principle by automatically adding a charge of extra oxygen, drawn free from the outer air, into the heart of the gas mixture. It is entirely automatic and allows the motor to "breathe" at the correct time, opening and closing automatically as required to save dollars on gas costs.

**VACU-MATIC**  
**SETS NEW COAST-TO-CHICAGO**  
**RECORD**

*Scores Again*

**BOB MCKENZIE**  
 Manufacturer, Automobile Division  
 7017 N. State Street  
 Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

Dear Sirs:

Having just completed a new speed record between Los Angeles and Chicago, driving a Chevrolet equipped with a Vacu-matic supercharge for control, I thought you might be interested in knowing some of the facts and the important role Vacu-matic played in the success of the run.

The distance covered was 2825 miles in thirty-nine hours and forty-two minutes, critically tested with a Western Union, which gave me an average speed of 57.7 M.P.H. based on cleared time and with the Vacu-matic averaged 18-1/2 miles per gallon in gasoline.

Before leaving Los Angeles, we made comparative tests both with and without the Vacu-matic, and the tests proved that Vacu-matic increased my gas mileage 3-1/2 miles per gallon at the driving speed of 60 M.P.H. and also that a noticeable increase in both acceleration and power.

Yours very truly,  
*Bob McKenzie*

In addition to establishing new mileage records on cars in all sections of the country, the Vacu-matic has proven itself on thousands of road tests and on dynamometer tests which duplicate road conditions and record accurate mileage and horse power increases.

You, too, can make a road test with Vacu-matic on your car and prove its worthwhile gas savings to your entire satisfaction.

Learn all about this remarkable discovery. Get the facts NOW!

Fits All Cars

Easy To Install

Vacu-matic is constructed of six parts assembled and fused into one unit, adjusted and sealed at the factory. Nothing to regulate. Any motorist can install in ten minutes. The free offer coupon will bring all the facts. Mail it today!

The Vacu-matic Co. Wauwatosa, Wis.

**Sworn Proof of Gas Savings**

This certifies that I have carefully read 200 original letters received from Vacu-matic users testifying to gas savings up to 30%, easy re-purting added power, smoother running, and quicker pick-up. These letters are just a small part of the larger file of enthusiastic user letters that I saw at the company offices.

Signed *Walter J. Clark*  
 Motorist 12345

**AGENTS Get Yours FREE For Introducing**

Vacu-matic offers a splendid opportunity for unusual sales and profits. Every car, truck, tractor, and motorcycle owner a prospect. Valuable territories now being assigned. If you help us introduce it to a friend, you can obtain your own free. Check and mail coupon today.

SEND THIS COUPON TO THE VACU-MATIC COMPANY

THE VACU-MATIC COMPANY  
 7617- 439 W. State St., Wauwatosa, Wis.

Please send full particulars about VACU-MATIC, also how I may obtain one for my own car FREE. This does not obligate me in any way.

Name .....

Address .....

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

Check here if interested in Agency Proposition.

Please mention ACE FICTIOUS GROUP when answering advertisements

# 10 TEN 10 STORIES 10 DETECTIVE ACES

A. A. WYN  
Editor

HARRY WIDMER  
Managing Editor



JUNE, 1939

Vol. XXXV, No. 4

## ★ 3 Novelets—7 Short Stories ★

All New, Different Stories—No Serials!

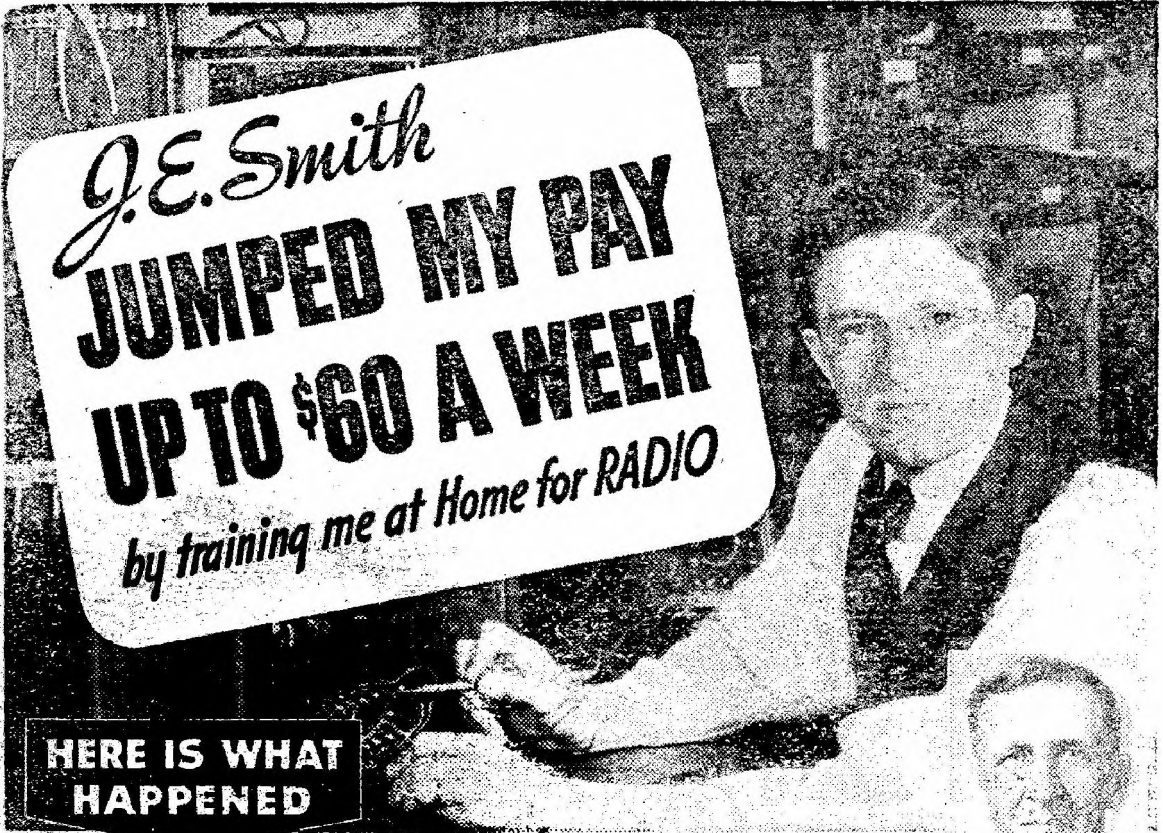
1. DEATH ON THE LAM (Novelet) . . . G. T. Fleming-Roberts 9  
*Detective Fred Ireland plays a corpse role for a murder performance.*
2. MOOD FOR MURDER . . . . . Lawrence Treat 33  
*Phil Declin tries to frame a framer.*
3. BULLET BETRAYAL (Novelet) . . . . D. L. Champion 45  
*He pays back a bullet loan—with hot-lead interest.*
4. DOUBLE-BLUFF ARTIST . . . . . Charles Fuller 59  
*A new wrinkle in the stick-up picture.*
5. VENGEANCE BAIT . . . . . Harold F. Sorensen 61  
*Doom's altar becomes a two-way ambush.*
6. CORPSE PARLAY . . . . . Arthur Watts Brown 68  
*The primrose path leads from the hot spot to the hot squat.*
7. EARMARKED FOR SLAUGHTER (Novelet) . . B. B. Fowler 77  
*Shamus Sam is slated to become the death's-head man.*
8. EXTINGUISHED VISITORS (Dizzy Duo" Yarn)  
Joe Archibald 91  
*Snooty Piper puts a stop to bargain-day assassinations.*
9. SLEUTH GIRL . . . . . Don George 99  
*The sinister park prowler meets a modern brain-gal.*
10. HELL'S HOTEL . . . . . Robert S. Fenton 101  
*Detective Leonard tries to turn a devil's den into a Garden of Eden.*

Cover by Norman Saunders

**This is an ACE MAGAZINE — See Page 6**

Published monthly by Magazine Publishers, Inc.; office of publication, 29 Worthington St., Springfield, Mass. A. A. Wyn, President; Editorial and executive offices, 57 W. 44th St., New York, N. Y. Entered as second-class matter Nov. 14, 1923, at Springfield, Mass., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1939, by Magazine Publishers, Inc. U. S. Pat. Off. Manuscripts will be handled with care, but this magazine assumes no responsibility for their safety. For advertising rates address Ace Fiction Group, 57 W. 44th St., New York City. Yearly Subscription, \$1.00; Single Copies, Ten Cents.





**HERE IS WHAT HAPPENED**

By H. W. SPANGLER  
26 1/2 S. Gay St., Knoxville, Tenn.

"When I first saw an N.R.I. advertisement I thought it was the bunk—I didn't believe that N.R.I. could train me at home to make good money in Radio.

Then I thought maybe it wasn't. Anyhow I decided I'd take a chance and place my trust in N.R.I. I worked hard and earnestly, depending upon their advice in my studies and in getting my start in Radio.

"It wasn't the bunk after all anything but! Soon I began earning \$5, \$10, \$15 a week in my spare time, even before I was half way through the Course. My income went up quickly. Now I am a successful businessman—enjoying the pleasures I had long dreamed for, but never expected to get.

"Each day I am more and more thankful for the help and encouragement N.R.I. gave me. I am making \$50 to \$60 a week on Radio service work alone, after all expenses are paid—and my income is still increasing. I have hired another serviceman, and an errand boy. I am my own boss, own and operate my own business—all due to the fact that I trained at home to be a RADIO EXPERT."

## I will Train You at Home for a Good Job in RADIO



J. E. SMITH, President, National Radio Institute  
Established 25 Years

### Many Make \$30, \$50, \$75 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, station managers and pay well for trained men. Fixing Radio sets in spare time pays many \$200 to \$300 a year—full time jobs with Radio jobbers, manufacturers and dealers as much as \$30, \$50, \$75 a week. Many Radio Experts open full or part time Radio sales and repair businesses. Radio manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen. In good-pay jobs with opportunities for advancement. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio, loudspeaker systems are newer fields offering good opportunities hereafter for the future. Television promises especially many good jobs soon. Many I trained have good jobs in these branches of Radio.

### Many Make \$5, \$10, \$15 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll, I start sending you Money Job Sheets; show you how to do it.

month jobs. Throughout your Training I send plans that made good spare time money—\$200 to \$500—for hundreds, while learning. I send you special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. I ALSO GIVE YOU A PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE ALL-PURPOSE RADIO SET, SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make good money while learning and equip you for full time jobs after graduation.

### Find Out What Radio Offers You

Get To-day MAIL the coupon now for "Rich Rewards in Radio." It's free to any fellow over 16 years old. It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those wanting in Television gets about my training in Radio and Television; shows you the best way to learn, telling what they are doing and earning. MAIL COUPON in an envelope or paste on a postcard—NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 9FA9  
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

## MAIL NOW - Get 64 page book FREE



J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 9FA9  
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith: Without bothering you, send "Rich Rewards in Radio" which points out the opportunities in Radio and explains your 64-page method of training men at home to become Radio Experts. (Please write plainly.)

NAME ..... AGE .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... STATE .....

# FREE TUBE Tires

GOODYEAR GOODRICH FIRESTONE ALL OTHER BRANDS

## GET MORE FOR YOUR MONEY

Save 10% buying from us under a positive LEGAL AGREEMENT to replace any tires that do not give 12 mos. service at a fixed price. We do this because STANDARD BRAND tires when reconditioned with Post's expert workmanship, finest material and new methods do the work as proven by thousands of satisfied users, all over the U. S. A. **CORPUS CHRISTI, ORDER NOW!**

**12 MONTHS FREE WARRANTY** with Each Tire

**BALLOON TIRES** **CORD TIRES**

Size Rim Tires Tubes Size Tires Tubes

20x4.40-21	\$2.15	\$1.00	20x3.50-22	\$3.51	.95
20x4.50-20	2.33	1.08	21x4	2.95	1.25
20x4.75-19	2.45	1.15	22x4	2.95	1.25
20x4.75-19	2.50	1.26	24x4	3.25	1.35
20x5.00-19	2.55	1.32	22x4 1/2	3.35	1.45
20x5.00-17	2.50	1.30	22x4 1/2	3.45	1.45
20x5.25-18	2.90	1.35	24x4 1/2	3.45	1.45
20x5.25-17	3.05	1.45	24x4 1/2	3.45	1.45
20x5.25-20	2.95	1.35	22x4 3/4	3.75	1.75
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.35	35x5 1/2	3.95	1.75

**H. D. TRUCKS**

Size Tires Tubes

8.00-19	2.40	1.40	30x8	\$4.25	1.95
8.00-17	2.40	1.40	34x5	2.25	2.25
30x16.00-19	4.40	1.40	32x6 1/2	7.95	2.85
31x19.00-19	3.40	1.45	32x10	10.95	2.85
32x19.00-20	3.40	1.45	34x7	10.95	4.65

**H. D. TRUCK BALLOONS**

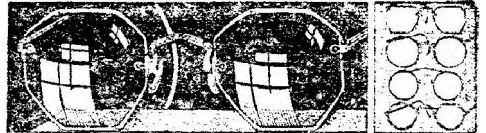
Size	Tires	Tubes	Size	Tires	Tubes
6.00-20	\$1.75	\$1.35	8.25-20	\$ 2.95	\$1.75
6.50-20	4.45	1.95	9.00-20	10.95	5.65
7.00-20	5.95	2.95	9.75-20	13.95	6.45
7.50-20	6.95	3.75			

## TUBES GUARANTEED BRAND NEW

Send \$1.00 deposit on each tire ordered. \$3.00 deposit on each Truck Tire. Balance C. O. D. If you send cash we full deduct 5%. If brand ordered is out of stock we ship equal value.

**POST TIRE & RUBBER CO., Dept. 1116**

4821-23 Cottage Grove Ave., CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



## 10 DAYS' TRIAL

SEND ONLY 20 CENTS with name, age and address, and by return mail RECEIVE a set of 14 TRIAL GLASSES to select from to fit your eyes **NOTHING MORE TO PAY** until you can see perfectly far and near. Then the above Beautiful Style will cost you only \$3.90, no more; other styles \$2.20 and up.

We only handle High Grade Single Vision and DOUBLE VISION or KRYPTOK BIFOCAL toric lenses, ground into ONE SOLID PIECE OF GLASS. DOCTOR H. E. BAKER, O.D., with over 30 years' experience, GUARANTEES to give you Perfect Fit or NO COST. Circular with latest styles and lowest prices FREE.

**MODERN SPECTACLE CO.**  
5125 Pensacola Ave., Dept. 96-BX, Chicago, Ill.

## FORTUNE TELLING CARDS



The world-famous fortune teller Madame Le Normand's own secret system and deck of cards in colors. Anyone knowing the key may read them at a glance. "TELL FORTUNES" at parties, bazaars, or in your home for your own amusement. Send 50 cents in coin, stamps or M. O. OCCULT DEPT. R-8 WHITESTON, N. Y.

## QUIT USING TOBACCO!

Write for Free Booklet and Learn How. Results Guaranteed or Money Refunded. **NEWELL PHARMACAL COMPANY**, 117 Clayton Station, St. Louis, Mo.

100,000 Satisfied Users

## WANTED ORIGINAL POEMS, SONGS

For immediate consideration send poems to **COLUMBIAN MUSIC PUBLISHERS LTD.**, Dept. 19, Toronto, Can.

## FOREST JOBS

available at \$125-\$175 per month, steady. Cabin. Hunt, trap, patrol. Qualify at once.

Get details immediately. **Rayson Service Bureau, B-55, Denver, Colo.**

## Sends Treatment for

# ASTHMA

## Paroxysms on Free Trial!

I will send any sufferer a regular \$1.25 bottle of Lane's Treatment by prepaid mail. Used by thousands and this bottle does not cost you a single penny until you are relieved then only \$1.25. If not your report cancels charge. D. J. LANE, 268 Lane Bldg., St. Marys, Kansas.

## CLOSE-OUT SALE - IMPORTED FIREARMS

**Police Special Model 66:** \$875

Swing-out cylinder, hand ejection, special front latch; 6 shot; double action. Sturdy construction; One blued steel; in \$3.52, 20 and 33 cal. 4" & 5" barrels; wt. 30 oz. Special price \$8.75.

Model 41—Finest Quality, with under-lug and locked cylinder (similar to Colts)—\$11.95. **AUTOMATICS:** 32 cal. 8 shot—\$7.95; 19 shot—\$8.95. Holsters: Automats—75c; Revolver—75c. **Flap—\$1.25. Shoulder—\$1.75. Ammunition:** 32 cal. auto 100 box; revolver cartridges—32 cal. \$1.85; 38 and 34 cal. \$1.50 per 50. Send M.O. \$2 Deposit if C.O.D. Give age, occupation and references.

Gargano Catalog, S. & W., Colts, Rifles, Police Goods, Knives, Air Gun, Firearms, Directories, Catalogs, etc. Send 5c for P. LEE SALES CO. (Dept. 6P) 35 West 32nd St., New York City

## OLD LEG TROUBLE

Easy to use Viscose Method heals many old leg sores caused by leg congestion, varicose veins, swollen legs and injuries or no cost for TRIAL. Describe your trouble and get FREE BOOK.

**M. P. VISCOSE METHOD COMPANY**, 140 N. Dearborn Street, Chicago, Illinois

## NOW! Real Performing RADIO

Beautiful—Plastic—Cabinet. Midget radio fits your pocket or purse. Weighs only 4 ozs. Smaller than cigarette case with clear natural tone. NO CRYSTALS to adjust—NO UPKEEP—only one moving part. "AUDIOPHONE" has superior performance. ENTIRELY NEW PATENTED DESIGN. Has enclosed veered luminous dial for perfect tuning.

Many owners report amazing reception and distance. **ONE YEAR GUARANTEE.**

Send complete reply to list with instructions for use in homes, offices, hotels, in bed, etc. **WANT ONLY A SECOND TO CON- NECT—NO ELECTRICITY NEEDED! SEND NO MONEY!** Pay postman only \$2.99 plus postage on arrival or send \$2.99 (Check, M.O., Cash) and yours will be sent complete postpaid. A most unusual value. **ORDER NOW! MIDGET RADIO CO., Dept. AF-8, Kearney, Neb.**

## Follow This Man!

**Secret Service Operator No. 38 Is On The Job!**



**FREE! The Confidential Reports**  
Earn a Regular Monthly Salary

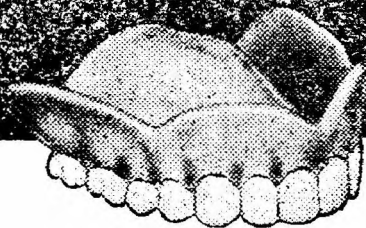
Write for reports and free "Play Book of Crime." Learn how YOU can become a Finger Print Expert at home, in your own city, at small cost. Our graduates receive 47% of all the Identification Bureaus in America! Send for list of over 60 Bureaus employing our graduates. Write today! Interviews only to persons over 21 years of age.

**INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE**  
1920 Sunnyside Avenue Dept. A-746, Chicago, Ill.



Enjoy **BEAUTIFUL**  
Natural-Looking  
**FALSE TEETH**

**LOWEST PRICES**  
**SEND NO**  
**MONEY**



**60**  
**Days'**  
**Trial**

*Let 1939 Bring You Mouth-Comfort!*

**FIT-RITE TEETH BY MAIL**

We make to measure, to fit you individually—BY MAIL the World's No. 1 FIT-RITE Dental Plates for men and women—from an impression of your mouth. We have thousands of enthusiastic, satisfied customers all over the country wearing high-grade teeth we made by mail at sensible prices.

**AT ROCK-BOTTOM PRICES**

We stick to depression's lowest prices. If you have ever bought false teeth before, or if you find out what others have paid for theirs, you will be astounded when you see how little ours will cost you! By reading our catalog, you will learn how to save half or more on dental plates for yourself. Try "A-1" teeth at prices that people not blessed with money can afford to pay. Monthly payments possible.

**ON 60 DAYS' TRIAL**

Make us prove you can't beat our fit, price, work or material. Wear our teeth on trial for as long as 60 days. Then, if you are not perfectly satisfied with them, they will not cost you a cent. But if you are delighted with the fit and your improved looks, tell your friends and relatives. We build our business on satisfied customers. We know no other way. And our business is steadily growing!

**WITH MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION**

No money need be risked. We guarantee that if you are not completely satisfied with any teeth we make for you; then, any time within 60 days, we will immediately refund every cent you have paid. We take your word.

**TO EAT WITH PLEASURE . . . TO LAUGH HEARTILY . . . TO LOOK YEARS YOUNGER . . . TO GUARD YOUR HEALTH . . . TO SPEAK DISTINCTLY . . . TO ENJOY LIFE!**

**QUIT** wearing teeth that clack; that constantly slip off your gums; that broadcast their glaring falseness to the world every time you open your mouth. Life is too short, health too precious, looks too important! For looks, health and comfort—PREFER FIT-RITE FALSE TEETH!

Our dentures are set with life-like, pearly-white, genuine, porcelain teeth; constructed from finest materials, with expert workmanship, to give life long service. We make all styles of plates. A dentist, who has had many years' experience in making and fitting dental plates, that look right and fit right, supervises all work.

MAIL THIS COUPON NOW

**FREE** UNITED STATES DENTAL COMPANY

1555 Milwaukee Ave., Dept. 692  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

Send, without obligation, your FREE impression material, catalog, and easy directions.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

(Print Clearly)



**PROOF!**

*Thousands of grateful letters come to us unsolicited*

**100% SATISFIED**

Gentlemen: "I am 100% satisfied with my teeth. They fit perfectly. I will at any time recommend your Company." A. J. Prizeman, Regina, Sask., Canada.

**FIT AND COMFORT**

Gentlemen: "I feel that I owe you a few lines of praise. This is the fourth plate I have worn in 37 years and must say it is the first one that I ever had that fits exactly. I never have them out of my mouth except while cleaning them." Mrs. P. L. Stevens, De Pauw, Indiana.

**A BEAUTIFUL SET**

Gentlemen: "Received my set . . . this morning . . . material is beautiful, workmanship excellent and a fine fit . . . very well satisfied. Success to you in the future." Ruel L. Hopkins, 10th Air Base, Rantoul, Ill.

**REMARKABLE WORK BY MAIL**

Gentlemen: "Received my dental plates. They could not fit any better . . . It is remarkable how you can make such fits through the mail." A. E. Clapp, Lipan, Texas.

Sirs: "A friend who has worked in a dental office for years looked at mine and said, 'You certainly have a good fit.'" G. E. Long, Noble, Okla.

Sirs: "It is the best-fitting set I have ever had and I have had several." H. M. Clark, Highland Park, N. J.

**FREE**

Impression material, catalog with new low prices and easy directions.  
CLIP COUPON OR WRITE—A one cent postal with your name and address will do.

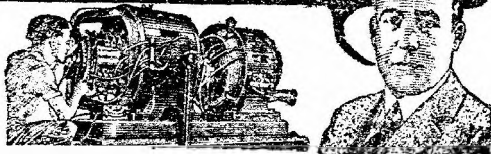
The only place you can obtain FIT-RITE FALSE TEETH

We also repair and reproduce old plates—48 hour service.

**UNITED STATES DENTAL COMPANY**  
Exclusive makers of FIT-RITE False Teeth—Dr. G. M. Collins, Chief of Staff.  
1555 MILWAUKEE AVENUE, Dept. 692 CHICAGO, ILL.  
*The World's Largest Laboratory Making Dental Plates Only*

Please mention ACE FICTION GROUP when answering advertisements

**TRAIN FOR ELECTRICITY**  
**12 WEEKS TRAINING**  
**THIS QUICK EASIER WAY**  
**ACTUAL SHOP WORK** NOT BOOKS



Have you ever dreamed of holding down a good pay job—that would give you all the things in life you wanted. If so, quit dreaming and prepare for such a job. Electricity offers you a real job and a real future if you will prepare yourself by training to take your place in this giant industry. Here at my school you are trained in 12 weeks for your start for a better job and a real future. You are trained on real electrical machinery and equipment. You work on generators, motors, dynamos, you wire houses, wind armatures, etc. You also get training in Diesel, Electric Refrigeration and Air Conditioning! plus an extra 4 weeks course in Radio. My methods make it easy to learn—First you are told how to do a thing—then you are shown how to do it—then you do the work yourself.

**I'LL FINANCE YOUR TRAINING**

You can get this training first—then pay for it after you graduate. If you need part time work to help with living expenses, we will help you get it. After graduation you get lifetime employment service. Send coupon today for free catalog and all details.

**I WILL INCLUDE AN EXTRA 4 WEEKS COURSE IN RADIO**

Mr. H. C. Lewis, President,  
**COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL**,  
 500 S. Paulina St., Dept. 69-51, Chicago

Dear Mr. Lewis:  
 Send me the book that tells the story of your training and your offer to help me get this training.

NAME.....  
 ADDRESS.....  
 CITY.....STATE.....

*See*  
**WOODSTOCK**  
 TYPEWRITERS

**SONG POEMS** WANTED AT ONCE!  
 Mother, Home, Love, Patriotic, Sacred, Comic or any subject. Don't delay—send us your original poem today for immediate consideration.  
**RICHARD BROS., 53 Woods Building, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

**CATHOLICS WANTED!**

If you are reliable, we will put you in business for yourself in your own locality. No red tape—we insist only that you be sincere...we don't want curiosity seekers. If you mean business, and want a business of your own—one which will bring lots of money to you quickly and continuously, write at once. The opportunity of your life may be in answering this advertisement...so write TODAY!

**THE BEDEVERE COMPANY**  
 Box 5, Sta. O, (Dept. 1) New York

Did You Ever Meet . . .

**MURDER ON THE MAKE**

*Private Detective Thorne did. He flirted with pretty girls—and death. They always seemed to go arm in arm. But this beauty carried a torch full of nitro-glycerine. And Thorne was the corpse candidate to touch off the spark.*

In This Gripping Detective Novellet

**Let RUSSELL BENDER**  
 creator of "Shag and Bones" take you on a sleuth ride



—ALSO—

Stories by  
**JAMES A. KIRCH**  
**HAROLD F. SORENSEN**  
**S. J. BAILEY**  
**DON CAMERON**  
 And Seven Others

**JUNE** **VARIETY DETECTIVE MAGAZINE** **Now on the Stands**



and the composition and balance of the ill-

**FREE WITH EVERY RING PAID FOR IN 1 YEAR**

**GUARANTEED ACCURATE**

**SHOCK PROOF**

**"Guarantee by \$1,000,000 Factory Enclosed"**

Send **NO MONEY** with order

... and prices which should at

**CURVED "shockproof" GOLD PLATE FRONT** watch with all the color and charm of natural yellow gold. Stainless back. Accurate. **GUARANTEE** by a famous \$1,000,000 **FACTORY** enclosed. Watch is yours **FREE** of extra charge with every ring ordered **NOW** and paid for within **ONE YEAR** on our easy two \$2 payment plan. (Total only \$4.) Remember . . . the cost of the watch is included in the price of the ring . . . You Pay Nothing Extra for the watch! No Charge for Credit . . . We trust you! No red tape. We'll ship at once. **TEN DAY FREE TRIAL.** Send No Money with order! Mail Postcard **NOW** . . . your package comes by **RETURN MAIL.**



**GLADIATOR RING DOUBLEHEAD SET IN LIFETIME STERLING SILVER DECORATED IN rich 1/30, 14-K GOLD.**

**GOLD STANDARD WATCH CO., Dept. X-176, Newton, Mass.**

**BE A PASSENGER Traffic Inspector**

A Real Job—at Good Pay—Can Be Taken. Get the Story of Railway and Bus Traffic Inspection. Short, home-study course trains you and upon completion we place you at up to \$125 per month, plus expenses. No night or weekend duty. Men—19 to 50. Free booklet. Standard Business Training Institute, Rm. 8306, Buffalo, N. Y.



**THE TRUTH ABOUT**

**Stomach Ulcers**  
Caused by Gastric Hyperacidity

**FREE** Booklet on simple home treatment. Hundreds report they were saved from expensive operations. Learn all about this amazing, inexpensive home treatment. Pain relieved from the start. No rigid or liquid diet. This valuable booklet sent **FREE** with information as to guaranteed trial offer. **TWIN CITY VON CO., Dept. 206, Saint Paul, Minnesota.**

**All Your Snapshots in Natural Colors! AMAZINGLY BEAUTIFUL!**

Any size roll developed and 8 prints **25c** Natural Color Roll in **NATURAL COLORS** for only **25c** prints 2c each

Natural Color Photo Service, Dept. G-113, Janesville, Wis.

**FALSE TEETH**

**LOWEST PRICES** **90 DAYS' TRIAL BEAUTIFUL WORLD FAMOUS TRU-FIT Dental Plates**

WEAR THEM. TEST THEM. EXAMINE THEM for BEAUTY, FIT and COMFORT. You MUST BE 100% SATISFIED or I will refund every cent you have paid me. I am a dentist of 30 YEARS' EXPERIENCE. I supervise the making of your plates from start to finish.

**SEND NO MONEY**

Write **TODAY** for **FREE** Booklet and Material.

**DR. CLEVELAND DENTAL LABORATORY**  
Dept. 62-H9, 503-05 Missouri Avenue, East St. Louis, Ill.



**"I Won \$100 the Day I Got My Rabbit's Foot"**

writes F. T. of Pa. "The PRAYER you sent me with my RABBIT'S FOOT has helped me wonderfully" says Mrs. L. C. of Ohio. "Results have been amazing", reports S. G. of Florida.

Letters like these coming from grateful men and women all over the country make me very happy. I sell only as a curio, so it may be coincidence or the psychological effect, but these people believe I have helped them—and I would like to include YOU, too!

No matter what your Hard Luck is, Poor Health, No Job, Unlucky in Numbers, Games, Races, etc., in love, Lonely, Worried, or the like—you may bless the day you send for one of my alleged Genuine **LUCKY RABBITS FEET** and the **SPECIAL PRAYER** for You and Your Loved Ones which I enclose in every order.

Thousands of people say that the mysterious "**LUCKY**" POWER of a real **RABBIT'S FOOT** brings Good Fortune and Protection from Harm. Almost every living soul on earth has **FAITH** in the Tremendous, Mighty, Never-Failing **POWER OF PRAYER**. If you haven't tried the combination of these two alleged Great **POWERS**, don't delay! Some people say they may easily Change Your Luck Overnight! So please hurry! Clip this message and mail with only 25c (coin). Please print your name and address clearly. I want to help you if possible as fast as I can. Your Sincere Friend, **LADY HOPE, 274 Post Road, Norton, Conn.**

**I WANT MEN**

**FORDS GIVEN** National company needs UP TO more men at once to make regular calls on local routes. No experience needed. Operate on our **\$45 IN A WEEK** capital. I give producers brand-new Ford cars as bonus. Rush name on postcard for **FREE** facts.

**E. J. MILLS, 9423 Monmouth Ave., CINCINNATI, OHIO**



**WORK FOR THE**

**RAILWAY POSTAL CLERKS** **CLERKS** **CITY CARRIERS**

**GOVERNMENT START**

**\$1260 to \$2900 YEAR**

34051 appointments in 1938 government year.  
Many appointments every year.

**MEN—WOMEN**

File Clerks  
Postoffice Clerks, Carriers  
Railway Postal Clerks  
Stenographers—Typists  
Many Other Jobs

**Franklin Institute**  
Dept. K232  
**ROCHESTER, N. Y.**

**GET READY IMMEDIATELY**  
Common Education Usually Sufficient

Gentlemen: Rush to me, **FREE** of charge, list of U. S. Government big pay jobs. Send **FREE** 32-page book describing salaries, vacations, hours, work. Tell me how to qualify for one of these jobs.

Mail **Coupon TODAY**

Name .....

Address .....



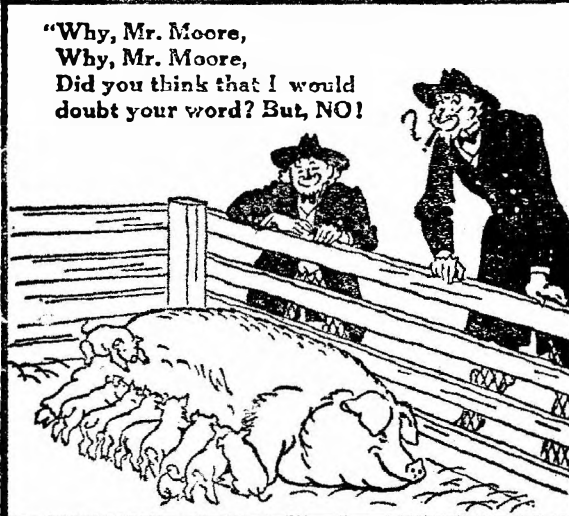
# Mr. Mattingly & Mr. Moore agree on a truly great whiskey!



"Oh, Mr. Mattingly,  
Oh, Mr. Mattingly,  
M & M's a famous hit,  
I do declare ..."



"And I practice no deception  
When I say that its reception  
is a royal, rousing welcome  
everywhere!"



"Why, Mr. Moore,  
Why, Mr. Moore,  
Did you think that I would  
doubt your word? But, NO!"



"It is slow-distilled, and therefore  
It's the whiskey millions care for,  
With its smooth and mellow flavor  
... and its price so wondrous low!"

**D**O you like whiskey with that  
good, old-fashioned flavor?  
Then you will like Mattingly &  
Moore!

You see, M & M is ALL whis-  
key ... every drop *slow-distilled*.  
More ... M & M is a *blend of*  
*straight whiskies* ... the kind of

whiskey we think is best of all!  
Ask for M & M, today ... at  
your favorite bar or package  
store. Get acquainted *now* with  
the delightful goodness of a *really*  
*mellow* whiskey! And remember  
... the price of M & M is amaz-  
ingly *LOW!*

## Mattingly & Moore

**Long on Quality—Short on Price!**

*A blend of straight whiskies—90 proof. Every drop is whiskey:  
Frankfort Distilleries, Incorporated, Louisville & Baltimore.*





# Death on the Lam

By

G. T. Fleming-Roberts

Author of "The Mayor of Hell," etc.



*Detective Fred Ireland was no sucker for women, but he was this particular damsel's prize palooka. For Death took a run-out powder when Ireland played the corpse role for a one-night murder performance—with the Grim Reaper as back-stage director.*

## CHAPTER I

### MYSTERY HOUSE

FRED IRELAND didn't like the house. It was a tall, sprawling thing of red brick, a farmhouse that the growth of the city had caught

up with. On the south side of it was a municipal playground cut off from the street with a high board fence, where now in the cold darkness dead leaves played. On the north side was a not very successful four-story apartment building. It was the kind of a house you'd

expect to find in front of a family burial lot. There wasn't a lighted window in the place.

Fred Ireland wouldn't have liked it no matter what it looked like because it belonged to John Bourke. He didn't like anything that belonged to John Bourke. He had been in love with John Bourke's wife, when she had been Miriam Rose, the stenographer in the detective agency office. But that was over, he hoped.

If any of the neighbors thought it was queer, his going to the dark old house at this time of night, that was all right because he thought it was queer himself. He didn't know how to explain it unless it was that he was still in love with Miriam.

It was hard for him to picture Miriam any other way than as he had seen her that last time—tall, lovely, self-possessed.

it had been. The high cheekbones, the proud and aristocratic nose were still the same. But a spotlight couldn't have driven the blue shadows from beneath her eyes.

She looked up from the lamp she had lighted, eyes searching his face, trying to find the old Fred Ireland there—the Fred Ireland she could depend on to see her through. The old Fred Ireland was there, though maybe it didn't show on his face. He wouldn't have come at all if he hadn't intended to help her.

He was a tall, lean man with tightly brushed waves of black hair, a large nose, flat, black brows that made his eyes seem narrow. He had a close-clipped black mustache that dropped a little at the ends, lending an expression of hardness to his thin lips. He didn't look like a man who hurt easily.



She hadn't been angry, but her blue eyes reflected his own anger in a cold sort of way, and her lips had thinned when she said:

"I'm sorry if I've hurt you, Fred. I didn't mean to. I didn't want it to end like this. You know we can never be happy. . . ."

Her apology had twice the sting of an insult, because it admitted that she had known all the while there was to be an end. She had just been playing with him until something else came along.

Something else had come along. She had grasped at it, got it. Its name was John Bourke. Ireland could have told her that Bourke was a swine. Now, he guessed, she didn't have to be told. He thought possibly Miriam's frantic phone call had something to do with Bourke.

**S**HE HARDLY knew her even after she had turned on the dim light in the central hall of the house. Her brown hair wasn't the unapproachable coiffure

Miriam said: "Thank heavens you're here, Fred!"

He leaned back against the door and looked at her. "Long time no see, Miriam. How's the husband?"

She looked away quickly and he saw her eyes were bright because there were tears in them. "All right, thanks." She came to him and put out her hand. "You don't know what it means, seeing you walk in like this."

He thought he could guess. He was a good guy to have around in a jam. He reached into his overcoat pocket and took a vanilla caramel from the paper bag there. He put the caramel in his mouth deliberately. He'd bought the candy on the way to the Bourke house, just to see if Miriam would remember how she and Fred used to take walks in the evening and ate candy from a sack in his pocket. She didn't seem to notice the candy.

"Let's have it, lady. Maybe when you talk it out, it won't be so tough. I guess when you were working at the agency



with me we cracked worse cases than this, didn't we?"

She clasped her hands tightly. "No, not like this . . . Fred, I need money desperately. John hasn't been too careful of the Bourke money, you know."

"I know he's been investing it in sclerosis of the liver, if that's what you mean. I always said he could drink his way through the mint. Well, how much?" He reached for his check book.

Miriam shook her head. "No, I don't want your money. I want your brain."

He smiled, said lightly: "It's a medical academy you want to start. You got my heart and now you want my brain. What a gal. That's mayhem and murder!"

Her blue eyes looked frightened. She bit her lower lip.

Ireland frowned. "You didn't kill him, did you?"

"Kill who?" Her whisper shrieked.

"John Bourke, the grand prize husband."

"No. John isn't here. He—he went to Chicago."

Ireland thought that meant Bourke had an ice bag on his head.

As if divining his thoughts, she said: "The first thing you've got to do is believe me."

He smiled slightly. "You gave me a new philosophy that last time we were together two years ago; no one can lie better than a woman except a blue-eyed woman."

MIRIAM clutched his arm. "Fred, don't. Don't try to hurt me now. Don't be vindictive. This is horrible . . . horrible." Standing close to him, her shudder was transmitted to his body. She got control of herself quickly, as she always did. He had always thought that the iron in her blood was cold steel. She said:

"Remember my uncle, Luther Rose? He's dead."

He frowned, puzzled. "When? Where is he?"

"He's here," she choked out. "I came in at seven o'clock this evening. I've

been here all this time, with him sitting there in the living room—dead."

"Good Lord!" he said. "And you didn't know he was dead until just now?"

She shivered. "I knew. I knew the moment I saw him. I knew he'd been"—she swallowed—"murdered."

He jerked a glance at his wrist watch. "Nearly ten o'clock. You mean you didn't tell anybody?"

"Nobody," she said. "I couldn't. You don't understand."

"No," keeping his voice flat, "I guess I don't understand. I guess you're insane."

"Fred, I'll explain. I'll tell you everything—"

"Not now." He looked about the hall. "I want to see the body. Where is it?"

She jerked a frightened glance at one of two large doorways on opposite sides of the hall. "In the living room."

He started toward the living room, but she snatched at the sleeve of his overcoat. "Don't turn on the lights in there. The shades are up. Some one passing might see. He—he's sitting there in the chair facing the south window."

He wanted to ask her how long she thought she could keep a thing like this quiet. But he kept his mouth shut, went into the dark living room. He tripped over a small table in the dark and cursed.

He stood still a moment until he was used to the gray night glow passing through the windows. When he could make out the articles of furniture, he went toward the south window. He could see that the huddled shadow in that square-backed overstuffed chair was a man. He consciously detoured the corpse, pulled down all the shades.

"Where's the light switch?"

He struck a match and saw the switch even before she said that it was on the left side of the doorway. He went to the switch, pushed it on. Then he went over to the square-backed chair and looked at the body of Luther Rose.

Ireland had met Miriam's uncle frequently, and he couldn't say that death had made a lot of change in him. His hair was the same untrimmed shag of

gray. His clothes needed pressing. He looked poor and a little dumb with his mouth hanging open and his eyes half closed. Luther Rose had always been poor and a little dumb.

Ireland stooped over and took hold of the hanging wrist. It was cold and stony. He bent over the body. The suit coat was open, the collar of the shirt open. The collar was about the only visible part of the shirt that was white.

The rest was covered with a dry stain of blood. The stain was centered by a turned wood handle, like the butt of a chisel. Only the weapon wasn't a chisel. A wood-handled rat-tail file had been thrust deep into the man's chest.

The dead man's left hand was lying in his lap. Clenched in his fingers was an open cardboard box containing twenty or so capsules.

**I**RELAND straightened, turned swiftly. His lips were tight, his eyes crinkled, as though he was looking at the sun. Miriam stood in the doorway, her smooth cheek pressed against the cool, dark wood of the door frame.

"Why in the name of hell didn't you call the police?"

"Don't swear at me, Fred, please—"

"Don't swear— Listen, lady, you don't know what you've done. And I don't know why you did it. But we've got to get out of this house. We'll go somewhere and pick up some friends, pretend we're out having ourselves a time. Then we'll bring the friends back here, supposedly for a party, and you'll discover your uncle's body all over again, call the cops—"

Miriam had been shaking her head. She was still shaking it when he stopped speaking. "You—you don't understand."

She moved limply across the room to the north end where a davenport faced a bay window. "I can't stand up any longer," she said. "We've got to talk."

"Yeah. We've got to talk. Her uncle murdered in one end of the room and the lady wants to sit down and talk. What do you think of the political situation?"

He went over to the davenport and put both hands down on the back of it, bending over her, eyes grave and unblinking, mouth hard. His sarcasm had always infuriated Miriam. Now it didn't seem to. Her mind was too busy lining up her crazy, incredible story.

"I came home about seven this evening, unlocked the door, found Uncle Luther just as you saw him. I screamed. Not very loud though. I thought the murderer was still in the house. I couldn't think what to do. I went into John's study to get a gun. There are lots of weapons there."

"Are, huh?" He was thinking, why kill Uncle Luther with a rat-tail file when the study contains lots of weapons.

"I got a gun and searched all over the house. It was empty."

"I presume Uncle Luther had a key to the house?"

"No," she said, thinking hard; he couldn't tell what about. "Then I came down and sat in the hall, wondering what I should do. I was alone. John gone to Chicago. I must have sat there for nearly an hour when the phone rang. That frightened me. When I got up the nerve to answer it, it was Aunt Edna's doctor—"

"Who's Aunt Edna? That rich old dame, widow of the late Hamilton Carmody?"

"Yes. She had been sick for a long time. The doctor said she died at seventy-three." Miriam took out her handkerchief and used it for a toy for taut fingers. "You see, Fred, it can't have happened the way it did."

He seowled. "You mean two people in the same family can't die so close together? That's happened often enough before."

**M**IRIAM shook her head. "Please wait. You'll see why it can't, it *mustn't* be like that. You noticed the box of pills in Uncle Luther's hand? That's some kind of heart medicine. He was in poor health. He'd get these spells of strangling where he'd have to open a window to get the cold fresh air to keep himself from being blotted out.



"Aunt Edna, that's Uncle Luther's sister, knew that her brother might die any minute, but if he should outlive her, she wanted him to have the Carmody fortune."

Ireland nodded. "Which is worth having."

"But if anything happened that Luther died before she did, Aunt Edna wanted all her money to go to my brother, Carl Rose." Miriam put a hand on Ireland's knee. "You know, Fred, that Carl doesn't need that money. Not like I do. Carl's quite well off."

"If death had waited for Uncle Luther until after Aunt Edna was gone?" Ireland asked, watching the girl narrowly.

"Uncle Luther had been able to save a little money when he was working as repairman with the teletype company. What he had saved he had willed to me, and he always boasted that he was going to outlive his sister so as to save the Carmody money for me."

Ireland nodded. "Nice motive for Brother Carl, isn't it? Aunt Edna dying, Carl knows that unless Uncle Luther dies before Aunt Edna, he'll miss out on the Carmody money. So he follows Uncle Luther and kills him."

Ireland took a rown, all-tobacco cigarette from a case and lighted it. "After you got the death message concerning your aunt, I can't see why you didn't call the cops about Uncle Luther. What the hell were you doing in the hour before you got that death message from Aunt Edna's doctor?"

"I've told you, Fred. Can't you believe me?"

He stood up, faced her, hands on his hips, the delicate blue-gray spiral of cigarette smoke waving back and forth in front of his face. "I'm damned if I know, Miriam. We'll let that go for now. What you think you can do is conceal the time of your uncle's death so that the cops will say he died *after* your aunt died, so you'll get the Carmody money."

She nodded eagerly. "And I didn't know how. So I sent for you."

He nodded slowly. "Lady, you let yourself in for plenty of trouble. You're in

trouble up to your gills right now. There's more to follow. There's no way on earth you could fool the cops into thinking Luther Rose died after Edna Carmody did.

"You see, they've got the rigor to check on, body temperature drop, contents of the stomach. Suppose your uncle took one of his heart pills just before he was killed. They'll be able to check almost to the minute when your uncle died by the progress of that medicine through his system."

"Then there's no way—"

"One way," Ireland said, "and it's damn dangerous. If we could prove to some disinterested party that Luther Rose is still alive, and then if his body were to be found a long time later, so far decayed that the cops couldn't check the time of death closely, we could get by with it.

"That means we risk a murder charge ourselves. We'd certainly be accessories after the fact. And that's too damned dangerous for money. Somebody else can have the job, not me."

Miriam stood up, her hands flat against her sides. She raised her head slowly. Her misty eyes met his. "Would you do it for me, Fred?"

Puffs of smoke from his lips quickened. "Do you still love John Bourke?"

"I guess—I guess you know the answer to that, Fred."

He knew then he could have taken her in his arms and tasted again the sweetness of her lips. He puffed harder on his cigarette. He said: "Okay, lady. I'll take the job."

## CHAPTER II

### NIGHT VISITOR



**S**OUND is sometimes a tangible force, striking a blow that dazes. For instance, when there's a murdered body in a house and you don't want anybody to know about the murder, and the sound

that strikes is the ringing of a doorbell.

Ireland thought for a moment that Miriam was going to faint. But the steel in her blood stiffened that lovely frail-looking body of hers. She looked at Ireland wide-eyed.

His hands closed on her slight shoulders. "Lady, whoever that is, you've got to face it as though nothing has happened. Go to the door now, but take your time. I'll get Luther into the den, huh?"

She nodded. Her blue eyes indicated a door in the west wall of the room. "In there. Quickly, Fred!"

He strode to the south end of the room, took a good look at the corpse, drew in a breath, stooped, lifted the stiffly curved dead form into his arms. Some of the capsules from the open box in the hand of the corpse dropped into the seat of the chair. He noted, though, that there was no blood anywhere but on the body itself.

He took swift strides to the door of the den and kicked it open. He could hear Miriam walking swiftly into the hall.

At the side of the den door was a couch on which was a rumpled blanket and a lumpy white-cased pillow. Ireland put the body down on the couch, turned swiftly to close the door quietly. He listened at the door.

A man had come into the living room with Miriam. Miriam was acting well, laughing. Her laughter faltered only when the man's voice said:

"I thought I'd drop in and see Luther Rose. I saw him pass the apartment just about dusk and guessed he was paying you a visit."

The man's voice was familiar. Ireland stooped to the keyhole, saw Paul Hasner sitting on the davenport with Miriam. Hasner was a big man, about five feet and ten inches, weighing close to two hundred pounds. His face looked wider than long, was flaming red.

Hasner published some sort of a news sheet called the *Sporting Review*. Evidently he lived in the apartment building on the north side of the Bourke house.

Miriam was saying: "Uncle Luther

just left. Fred Ireland was here. You know Fred?"

Hasner nodded. "Sure. Great guy. I'd like to see Fred again."

"He'll be back in a little while. He had to go down to the drugstore for something. He said he would walk that far with Uncle Luther."

"Where's John?" Hasner asked.

Miriam laughed uneasily. "In Chicago."

Ireland straightened and the voices in the next room became less distinct. He looked around the den. He didn't like it. It was John Bourke's room, definitely.

The walls were plastered with all sorts of knives, daggers, and short swords. There were long bows of yew and lemon-wood, leather quivers of arrows, a cabinet of trophies next to the fireplace—silver trophies Bourke had won at archery contests.

**T**HERE was a handful of glowing coals in the fireplace, and the whole room was laden with an unpleasant smoky odor that was neither tobacco nor wood smoke. Something animal. A small table was drawn up to the couch on which the corpse lay. On it was a glass half filled with seltzer water poured from the bottle beside it. There was also a glass coffee pot with maybe half a cup of cold, strong coffee in the bottom of it.

Stretching across the legs of the table was a shelf for magazines. There was a book on top of it—a thin, dark volume bearing the title: "Hunting the White Tails with Bow and Arrow."

The author of the book was John Bourke. Since when, Ireland thought, was John Bourke a man of letters. He picked up the book, opened it. It was dedicated to M. P. H., whoever that was, and it purported to be a treatise on the subject of hunting deer with bow and arrow.

He leaved through the pages, put the book back where he had found it. Then he walked to the one window of the room, found that he could twist the



latch silently. The window sash was loose in the frame, and when he tried to raise it, it rattled loud enough to be heard in the next room.

Ireland heard Hasner say: "What was that, Miriam?"

Miriam laughed. "I didn't hear anything. Might have been Fred Ireland knocking at the door. Will you go see, Paul?"

Ireland heard Hasner get to his feet, heard his heavy tread as he went out into the hall. Then radio music blasted into the living room. Miriam was using her head. The sound would cover Fred's exit via the window.

Ireland opened the window, went through, dropped to the frozen ground. He couldn't reach up to close the window from where he now stood, so he left it open.

He walked swiftly along the edge of the drive which passed close to the side of the house, connecting the garage at the rear with the street. He heard the front door close, knew that Hasner had closed it. He waited at the corner of the house and then walked swiftly to the door. He knocked.

Hasner evidently hadn't got any farther than the end of the hall, because he opened the door almost immediately. His wide mouth split in a grin that showed gold teeth.

"Well, well, Freddie Ireland!" He stuck out his hand. "Miriam said you'd be back in a little while, so I braved the breach of convention and waited for you. Haven't seen you for a dog's age."

Ireland shook hands with Hasner. Hasner's stuffy fingers had the crushing power of a hydraulic press. He said: "I just walked down to the corner with Luther Rose. Know him?"

"Miriam's uncle? Sure. Great old bird. Still as chipper as ever, is he? These thin men who can keep their youthful figures never seem to age much."

They walked together through the hall, Hasner pausing at the door because it was scarcely wide enough for his bulky torso and Ireland's thin body at the same time.

Miriam was on the davenport, legs tucked under her. Her face had small, strained muscles under the flawless skin. Her eyes looked haggard. She said: "Have a successful trip to the drugstore, Fred?"

He said he did, and to prove it he took out the bag of caramels he had been carrying all evening. He passed the candy to Miriam, who took one, and then to Hasner, who shook his head.

"What time will John be back?" Hasner asked.

"He's in Chicago," Miriam explained again. "He may get back late tonight or maybe not until tomorrow night."

HASNER caught Ireland's eye and winked. Ireland didn't know why he did that unless it was because Hasner knew that Miriam was ashamed of her husband's hangovers. Ireland still wasn't sure that John wasn't upstairs in a bedroom, sleeping off a big head.

Hasner said: "John was here late this evening, wasn't he?"

Miriam took another caramel. "No. He left early this morning before anybody was up."

Hasner scratched what hair he had. "Say, do you leave your house unlocked all the time?"

"Why, no," she said, looking quickly at Ireland. There was panic in her eyes. "You can't leave a house unlocked in this neighborhood."

Hasner nodded. "I was just wondering how Luther Rose got in this evening. You weren't here. I thought John let him in."

"Uncle Luther has a key," Miriam said, her eyes meeting Hasner's squarely. "He comes so frequently we gave him a key. That lodging house he lives in is enough to make him want to see the inside of a decent house pretty often."

"I'd think so."

Ireland stood up and started to button his overcoat. "I've got to run along," he said. "It looks like your neighbors keep pretty close tab on what goes on

here, if they're all old gossips like Paul. It wouldn't do for us to hang around very late."

Hasner took the hint. He got up, too, and reached for his coat.

Ireland said: "Can I drop you off somewhere? I got my car outside."

Hasner shook his head. "Thanks, but I live right next door."

Miriam saw them to the door. Hasner and Ireland walked down to the sidewalk together. Hasner said he'd see Ireland again. Ireland said he hoped so. Then Ireland got into his car, started it, drove off up the street.

He drove for three blocks, which would have given Hasner ample time to get back into the apartment building. Then he rounded the corner, entered the alley which ran back of the Bourke house. He turned out the lights of the car and braked it down to a quiet crawl.

When he came to the Bourke garage, he saw that the back door of it was open. It was so arranged that you could drive into the garage from the back and out again by the front drive which ran past the side of the house to the street in front.

The garage was empty. Evidently John Bourke was away. Bourke wasn't the sort of a man who would walk to the corner mail box.

Ireland slid his car into the garage, got out, hurried across the backyard. The window of the den was still open. He went to it, jumped up, grabbed the sill, climbed over into the room that belonged to John Bourke—and the dead man.

IN THE living room, he heard the sharp click of a phone receiver being replaced on the hook. He stepped to the door of the den and opened it. Miriam uttered a frightened little sound, turned around from the table where the phone stood. Her face was paper white.

Ireland grinned: "Scare you, lady?"

"Almost to death!"

"Who were you calling?"

"I was trying to get hold of Harry MacGray, Aunt Edna's lawyer. He wasn't there."

Ireland frowned. "Why?"

"I thought he ought to know of my aunt's death."

Ireland shook his head. "Leave that to somebody else." He went over to where she stood, still holding the phone. He took the phone from her hand and put it back on the table. "You run upstairs and get your makeup stuff. Cold cream, eye-brow pencil, powder—the whole business."

"Why?" She knotted her fingers nervously.

"Because I'm going to step into Luther Rose's shoes. I'm going to prove that Uncle Luther is still alive. I'm no actor, so if I can get any help from your makeup stuff, the impersonation will be easier."

"All right," she said eagerly. "All right. Anything you say goes." She gave him her smile, raised her hand caressingly to his cheek for a moment, then turned swiftly and ran from the room.

For a moment, Fred Ireland stood there, touching the spot on his cheek that she had touched. His eyes were fixed vacantly on the table in front of him. Light fell aslant on the black phone dial and he saw the little smudges her fingers had made on the edges of five of the numbered holes.

She had been eating the caramels Ireland had passed when Paul Hasner was there—eating them to help appear as though nothing had happened. It was stickiness on her forefinger from the caramels that had smudged the telephone dial, recording clearly the numbers she had used—four, five, seven, zero, two.

Ireland's mind recorded the figures in that order, though Miriam might have used them in any combination. There was something familiar about those numbers—an old address, safe combination, telephone number that he had once known was scrambled up in them somewhere.



TDA

## CHAPTER III

## CORPSE IMPERSONATION



IRELAND'S impersonation of Luther Rose could not be called flawless. It originated in the study of the Bourke house where he undressed, put on the dead man's clothes.

Two shaggy gray locks from the head of the corpse he fixed to his temples with a little of Miriam's nail polish. Cold cream and white dusting powder enabled him to whiten his eyebrows. Miriam's eyebrow pencil drew wrinkles in his forehead.

The lower half of his face got no attention at all, for he trusted to Luther Rose's gray wool muffler to cover him to his nose. In the dead man's overcoat and hat, his shoulders stooped to fit the contours of the baggy clothes he wore, Miriam looked at him from across the Bourke living room.

"You don't look like Uncle Luther," she whispered. "But you don't look like Fred Ireland, either. Not my Fred Ireland."

He said harshly: "You needn't emphasize that possessive pronoun." Then he went upstairs, found a traveling bag and bed sheet.

He returned to the study, packed his own clothes into the bag, carefully wrapped the nude corpse in a sheet. Teeth set, he cursed himself for a fool. He was taking a chance that might well warrant his own death.

He felt like a ghoul, carrying the stiff, crooked body of the old man up the quaint stairway, his shadow and that of his burden gliding gloomily beside him.

Downstairs again, he and Miriam knelt on the floor, the bag containing his clothes between them as he attempted to fasten its clasps.

"Remember now," he said, his voice sounding like a ghost of its former self coming through the thick muffler, "I'll be back about three-thirty in the morning. I'll take the body to Borden's Marsh

and leave it there. This time of year, no one goes near the place."

"Where are you going now?" she whispered.

"To your uncle's lodging. You tell me the address and any other particulars. I'll let somebody see me—not too close, proving that Luther Rose was still alive at this hour, some time after his sister's death. I'll take off the dead man's clothes—"

Miriam shuddered.

"And get into the dead man's bed. I'll stay there long enough to muss up the bed. Only one way to give the impression that a man has slept in a bed, and that's to sleep in it. Though I won't be able to do much sleeping. Then I'll get up, put on my own clothes.

"I'll leave the dead man's clothes there, and when the police get on the trail, it'll probably just be a crazy mystery of how a man can be missing, running around town without any clothes on. It shouldn't be a murder chase for some time, understand?"

She nodded. Their hands met across the handle of the traveling bag. He crushed her slender fingers in his grasp. "Be a brave girl. I'll be back at three-thirty."

She smiled quickly. "Fred, darling, you're wonderful."

Nobody else pronounced darling quite as she did. He stood up quickly, picking up the bag. He strode to the front door, let himself out.

ONCE in the street, he moved at an old man's gait, carried his body stooped. At Oak Street, he waited for a taxi, asking himself why the hell he was doing this, and hating the answer he got. That the taxi driver helped him into the cab gave him confidence in his disguise. Seven blocks farther east, he got out of the cab, paid his fare from Luther Rose's wallet, entered a gray-frame lodging house.

Miriam had told him that her uncle had leased a room on the top floor, and he climbed the steps in the dark, not trying to be quiet about it, shuffling, as he fancied he would if he ever lived to be

seventy-five. Fat chance of him living that long if he continually stuck his neck out as he had tonight.

At the top of the steps, two closed doors presented themselves. The one which seeped light at the bottom was certainly not that of Luther Rose. He went to it nevertheless, took out keys, found one that felt like it fitted a skeleton lock.

He made two ineffectual stabs at the keyhole before the door was opened by an irate young man who was keeping himself warm with a woolen bathrobe pulled on over his clothes.

"Hell, Mr. Rose, isn't it tough enough to have to study at this time of the night without being interrupted?" the young man cried in a shrill voice. "Haven't you learned which room is yours and which is mine?"

He stepped in close to Ireland, and Ireland turned his head. The young man put his hand on Ireland's shoulder and turned him around. "That's your door!" He gave Ireland a little shove.

Ireland entered the room the young man had indicated, satisfied with the alibi he had manufactured for a corpse. It was a barren, green-walled room with one window. His first move was to shade the window.

Then he began removing Luther Rose's clothes and piling them on the single chair. As he did so, he examined the contents of the pockets. The usual miscellany which included a well-stocked wallet and a savings account bank book. He looked inside the bank book and scarcely suppressed a whistle.

The balance was five thousand dollars, and the book indicated that for five months the old man had deposited a thousand dollars at the first of every month. He didn't get that repairing teletype machines.

Going through the contents of the wallet, he came across what appeared to be a short piece of ticker tape, badly soiled. On it was typed in caps:

SUNB. PL. 3RD 5:1

Ireland did not replace this piece of paper in the wallet, but opened the

traveling bag he had brought with him and inserted it in the pocket of his own vest. Then he continued to disrobe to the raw. He turned down the neatly made brass bed, turned out the light, got into bed, pulled the blankets to his chin.

He didn't sleep. The impersonation of a corpse doesn't invite any sort of relaxation. At three o'clock he was up again and dressed, this time in his own clothes. Then, without overcoat or hat and carrying the empty bag, he left the room, descended the steps and went out into the dark.

THE cold spurred his steps and he covered the eight blocks to the Bourke house in twenty minutes. He went straight to the garage at the back, started his car, drove through the front door and down the drive toward the street, stopping at the end of the porch. Then he got out, hurried to the front door of the house which he found unlocked.

Miriam was sitting in the hall, waiting for him. He asked: "John come back yet?"

She shook her head.

"He isn't in Chicago," Ireland told her. "He'd have taken a traveling bag, wouldn't he? This bag is his." He waved the now empty bag at her.

Miriam said faintly: "He took a suitcase."

"All right. We won't argue. I forgot to add that when I took this little job of concealing Luther Rose's death, I also told myself I'd find out who killed him and why."

She winced.

Ireland said, as he went up the steps after the body: "I hope the killer is John Bourke."

"I hope so, too," she whispered.

He looked at her sharply out of the corner of his eyes. Then he went on up the steps.

He was always to remember that short cold drive past the outskirts of the city with the corpse of Luther Rose falling over on his shoulder every now and then. And he was to remember Borden's Marsh with its water-stunted trees, its

hummocks of frozen grass as he carried the corpse into the center of the desolate area.

Going back to his car, he gathered his coat tightly about him, walked with head lowered against the wind. He got into his parked car, started it, drove on to the next crossroads.

As he turned the corner, lights of a car suddenly appeared in the heretofore dark rear-view mirror. It was as though a car, parked on the road behind him, had suddenly turned on its lights. It was too damned cold for roadside necking.

He drove on uneasily, but at the next turn, the car did not follow him. Once back in town, he drove swiftly to his apartment, put his car in the garage, entered, took the automatic elevator to the fifth floor where his rooms were.

He did not turn in immediately, tired though he was. He got out a piece of paper and jotted down the numbers 4, 5, 7, 0, 2. He left the paper on his writing desk, went to the bathroom, removed the makeup from his forehead and eyebrows. The gray burn-sides were firmly fixed to his temples by the fingernail polish and he had some time getting them off.

Then he went back, took another look at the numbers he had written on the paper. They stuck in his mind. He went to the telephone, picked up the directory, looked up the phone number of Harry MacGray, the attorney Miriam had tried to contact. Neither the number of Mac-Gray's residence nor his office matched the number Miriam had dialed.

Finally, he took out his notebook, looked through a list of old telephone numbers listed on one worn page. 70254 slapped him in the face. It was simply another combination of the numbers he had noted and it formed the telephone number of a professional stool pigeon by the name of Fisher Hart.

"Old Fishy," Ireland mused. "I'll be damned!"

Miriam would have known that number, having worked in Ireland's office for several years. Of course, she might not have used that exact combination of those numbers. But why had she lied?

And how in hell could he ever tell when Miriam Rose Bourke lied?

He went to bed with a bitter taste in his mouth. What a colossal ass he had been made! Up to now he had been a fit patient for the psychopathic ward. From now on, though, he was going to use his head.

From his bed, he looked at his alarm clock. It had stopped. "No need winding it," he told himself. "The cops will wake you early in the morning, for you're to be queen of the May. Or king of the hot seat."

## CHAPTER IV

### ON THE LAM



IT WAS not the knocking of official knuckles on Fred Ireland's door that awakened him. It was somebody whistling tunelessly in Ireland's own bath-

room. He raised himself on one elbow and looked at his watch. Three o'clock, and that had to be afternoon. He had pounded off nine hours of sleep.

The whistler came to the door of the bathroom, leaned against the frame and looked at Ireland. He was a short, heavy-set man, who looked like Cupid, except that he had a blue serge suit on and was about forty-five years old. In his fingers he had a whisp of gray hair that had come from the head of a corpse—the imitation burn-sides Ireland had made from some of Luther Rose's hair.

Ireland smiled slowly. "Got it all doped out, Pat?"

Pat Larkin, sergeant of the homicide squad, stopped whistling. "Do you sleep in the raw, Ireland?"

Ireland looked down at his exposed chest. He nodded. "Am I shocking you, sweetheart? What do you expect, coming into my bedroom unannounced?"

Larkin said: "I knocked. Anyway, you shouldn't leave your door unlocked. Do you know what these are?" He held up the tufts of white hair.

Ireland shook his head. "Couldn't be



bristles from my tooth brush, could it?"

Larkin said: "It was very smart, but I got it doped out. That wasn't Luther Rose who went into Luther Rose's room last night about one-thirty A.M. That was you."

Ireland said he didn't get it. Larkin said that early that morning they had picked up Luther Rose's body from Borden's Marsh. Rose had been stabbed with a rat-tail file. Larkin asked:

"Who do you think we're looking for as the guy who did that?"

Ireland shrugged. "Probably a rat that's lost its tail. How should I know? What was the police force doing out in the middle of Borden's Marsh early this morning—having a sunrise tea, or an ice carnival?"

"We got a tip," Larkin said.

"From whom?"

Larkin didn't answer.

"Fisher Hart?"

"First lesson a detective gets is not to inform on his informers," Larkin said.

"That's a good enough answer for me. What time did Rose die?"

Larkin shook his head. "I got no report from the coroner's medic yet. What do you want to know for—so you can arrange an alibi?"

"I got two alibis, one which probably won't hold water, and the other one which will, providing Rose was killed at about the time I think he was."

"It's a very damn good thing we got in on the corpse end of the case," Larkin said. "Otherwise, if it had been reported to Missing Persons, we'd have gone nuts trying to find a guy running around town without any clothes on. That was a smart trick you pulled—sleeping in the dead man's bed."

"Why pick me?" Ireland stuck his left hand under his pillow.

"These tufts of hair. I could see where they were cut out of the hair of the corpse. I find what was cut out here. Think you can get out of bed now and come down to headquarters?"

"I could, but I'm not going to get dressed in front of you, Pat. And I don't suppose you'd care to take me out in the street this way."

Larkin frowned and tramped heavily to the bed. "I guess we cracked wise long enough. I'm pinching you."

FRED IRELAND'S thin lips curled. "Just because I sleep in the raw is no sign I'm totally unprotected." He pulled out the gun that was under his pillow and poked Larkin's belly with its muzzle. Larkin backed a step and his fingers itched for his own gun.

Ireland's eyes stopped laughing. "If I got to fry for a murder, I'd rather fry for one I did than one I didn't do. So don't go for the gun." He got out of bed, kept the gun on Larkin.

Larkin looked Ireland's body up and down. He said: "Hell, but you're skinny!" And then he proved his guts by kicking at Ireland and trying to rush Ireland's gun.

Ireland flicked the gun to the side of Larkin's head. The blow had a couple of feet to travel, and it picked up plenty of momentum. Larkin's eyes started rolling back before he hit the floor.

Ireland put his gun down, looked around for his clothes. He took his time dressing. After that was done, he took off Larkin's pants and shorts and threw them into his own closet, which he locked. He cuffed the dick up with his own bracelets, wrapped a towel around Larkin's mouth and knotted the cord of his bathrobe around Larkin's ankles.

He found a ham sandwich wrapped up in oil paper in the side pocket of Larkin's coat. He ate it ravenously. Then he put on overcoat and hat, shoved his gun into his pocket, went out of the door of his apartment and locked it after him.

Because he didn't know what might be waiting for him in front, he went down the stairway at the rear, walked up the alley. On the street, a newsboy was yelling: "Read all about it! Private Dee-etective sought in Borden's Marsh murder mystery!"

Ireland walked up to the boy, got a paper. The picture of Ireland on the front page was the one which had been taken when he applied for his private investigator's license eight years ago. It wasn't very good.

He said to the newsy: "That guy's face is familiar."

The kid shook his head dismally. "I been sellin' papers with killers' pictures on them for three years now, and I got yet to ever see any of the wanted guys. 'Specially, if there's any ree-ward out for them."

Ireland tucked the paper into his coat pocket and went on down the street. It hadn't warmed up much since the day before and a gray sky hinted at snow. No day for walking, but Ireland knew every cop in town would be looking for his auto plates.

He went down to the taxi stand on the corner, got in a cab, gave the driver an address on East Tenth Street—the address of attorney MacGray, who was handling the Carmody estate. He had never met MacGray and he felt certain MacGray would never recognize him by the picture in the papers.

The cab stopped in front of a two-story business block. MacGray's office was clearly marked in gold leaf on a door glass. There was a funny smell in the air, an unpleasant animal odor. He asked the driver what it was.

The driver shrugged as he took Ireland's money. "Lots of stinks around here, but maybe you mean the East End Poultry Company across the street."

Ireland said he guessed that was it. The last time he had noticed that smell was last night in the study of the Bourke house. It had been fainter then.

He told the driver to wait for him. Then he crossed the sidewalk to the door marked with the name of MacGray, opened it, went up worn wood steps, shoved open the door of the office itself.

**T**HERE were two men sitting at a desk. One of them, pompous and paunchy, he knew must be MacGray, because the other man Ireland knew. The other man was Miriam's brother, Carl Rose. Older than Miriam, Carl had some of the facial characteristics of his sister—the same straight, proud nose, the same high cheekbones, the same blue eyes.

"Good afternoon, sir," MacGray rumbled, getting up. "Good afternoon!"

Carl Rose looked sideways at Ireland, ducked his head, looked again. He turned white. "Good heavens!" he said. "Ireland!"

Ireland walked over to the desk.

Carl Rose jumped to his feet. "It's the killer, MacGray!"

MacGray made noises in his throat that sounded like, "Erp-erp-erpah." He pulled the top drawer of his desk out until it met his paunch and then thrust his hand inside.

Ireland recognized the move as MacGray's conception of a gun draw. So he put one hand against the desk, shoved it. The end of the drawer being against the lawyer's belly, MacGray's hand was pinched inside the drawer.

Ireland eased up on the desk. "Take your hand out, MacGray. And leave the gun where it is. I've got one of those things, too, and I keep it oiled. You probably haven't used a gun since you were in the Boy Scouts."

Ireland watched MacGray slowly withdraw his hand and rub his mashed wrist. Then he pulled up a chair and sat down, taking a brown cigarette from his case as he did so. He asked Carl Rose for a light and Carl finally got a match going in his shaking fingers.

"It would have been tough to call a guy like you brother-in-law," Ireland said.

The match burned Carl's fingers and he dropped it. He didn't even venture an ouch. Nobody said anything.

Ireland looked from Carl Rose to MacGray. "I suppose you're keeping the telephone lines hot between here and the morgue, trying to find out which died first—Edna Carmody or her brother, Luther Rose."

"Erp-erpah," MacGray said. "what makes you think that, you, you vagabond."

Ireland smiled. "That's not a good name for me, I could write a check in six figures and have it honored. I guess you could too, but it would be somebody else's money. It must be I'm not using the right razor blade. I just thought I'd

ask if you weren't interested in what time Luther Rose died, is all. If I'm the guy who killed him, you ought to ask me."

"I'm not at all interested in the sensational details of a newspaper murder story," MacGray said.

"Carl ought to be," Ireland said. "If I told you, Carl, that Luther Rose was killed *after* your aunt Edna Carmody died, wouldn't that make you feel good?"

"I—I don't know why," Carl said.

Ireland thumbed at Carl and looked at MacGray. "The guy doesn't want money. Isn't it a fact that if Luther Rose outlived Edna Carmody that the Carmody money now belongs to Carl's sister, Miriam Bourke? And if Luther Rose died before Edna Carmody, which I can assure you he did, doesn't Carl Rose get the Carmody dough?"

"I fail to understand you, sir," MacGray said. "There was no such stipulation in Mrs. Carmody's will. All of her money was left to her brother, with the exception of a small bequest to her church. In the event that Luther Rose should be dead at the time of the probate of the will, the estate was to be divided equally between Mrs. Carmody's niece and nephew—Miriam Bourke and Carl Rose."

"Giving both Miriam and Carl a nice motive to kill Luther Rose," Ireland said, standing up. "And inasmuch as he had run out of funds before he had consumed all the liquor in the state, it is a very swell motive for John Bourke to have killed Luther Rose."

"What the devil do you mean, sir?" MacGray demanded.

Ireland held up his finger. "And I forgot about you, MacGray. Killing off Luther Rose might make it more convenient for you to get yourself a nice piece of the Carmody money, too. I've met naughty lawyers before, and would you believe it, they always said 'er-erp-erpah!'"

"Murdering upstart!" MacGray belated.

Ireland shook his head. "I ought to enlighten you. I didn't kill Luther Rose. I didn't happen to have any motive for

knocking off that particular member of the family."

Ireland backed to the door, closed it behind him. He took the steep stairs at dangerous strides, bounded across the sidewalk to his cab. Carl Rose was leaning out of the law office window shouting to the world to stop that murderer. Ireland sprang into the taxi, got his gun out as soon as he had slammed the door.

The driver turned part way around in his seat. "If he means you're a killer, it's against the law for me to transport a fugitive from justice."

Ireland jammed the gun into the driver's neck. "Consult the law of self-preservation and get moving!"

## CHAPTER V

### BLACKOUT



**D**OWNTOWN on Illinois street a few blocks off the main shopping district, Ireland left the cab. He got out in the middle of a traffic tangle and the driver

mustn't have known about it until some time later. He went into the tap room of a second-rate hotel where he had once seen John Bourke.

Bourke wasn't there. Probably his present financial condition would not have permitted him anything more elaborate than a third-rate tap room. From a phone booth, Ireland called the Bourke house. Miriam answered and Ireland whispered into the phone:

"I can't speak loud, dear. Is it safe to come home?"

Ireland had always figured that one man's whisper sounded about the same as another's.

"Yes, Jo—" Miriam checked herself and took a long breath, audible over the phone. Then she hung up.

Ireland hung up slowly, smiling. Miriam had worked with him long enough in the agency to recognize that whisper gag. But she hadn't recognized



it soon enough. John Bourke hadn't gone to Chicago. He was in town, hiding, while his wife shielded him.

Ireland consulted the telephone directory, found the number of the Linden Baths, just around the corner. That was where John Bourke usually went to stem the alcohol out of his system. The thick Greek voice of the proprietor informed him that John Bourke was there; did he want to speak with him? Ireland said he didn't and hung up.

Ireland went out into the early dusk, sauntered by the entrance of the Linden Baths, located in the basement of an office building. He crossed the street to a cheap café which offered a good view of the entrance to the baths.

He took a table up in the front window, ordered coffee, waffles, and sausage. He ate slowly, not seeing what he put in his mouth for watching across the street. He was not quite finished with his meal when a tall man in a derby, a white scarf, and a Chesterfield coat came out of the bath subway.

Ireland got up, took check and a bill to the cashier's counter, went out, putting on his coat as he walked. The derby and white scarf were easy to follow, even in the gloom which dulled the light from the shop windows. Bourke wasn't going very far, Ireland knew; the guy thought walking was vulgar.

Bourke entered an old flat-iron shaped building at the end of the avenue, and Ireland watched from the door to see him get into an elevator. Ireland went in, waited for the elevator to come down. He got in and said to the operator:

"That bird in the derby dropped his pocketbook down the street a little way. I'd like to return it to him. Where'd he go?"

"Barber shop up on the second floor," the operator said. He eyed Ireland closely.

The elevator went up as though its cables were made of rubber bands which would break any moment. Ireland thought the second floor was a queer place for a barber shop inasmuch as he knew the greater part of the offices in the building were vacant.

But there was very little on the second floor except the barber shop, as far as he could see. Doors of adjoining offices were closed and the names of individuals and companies once occupying them had been scratched off. The barber shop was a three-chair establishment, with one barber and one customer who was getting shaved. The customer was not John Bourke.

Ireland said to the barber: "I'm looking for a guy wearing a derby hat. He dropped his—"

The barber indicated a door behind him. "Shooting pool."

Ireland went into the back room indicated by the barber. There was a pool table in the room and a man sitting at the side of a closed door. The man was not John Bourke. The room was quiet, but just beyond the closed door, Ireland heard the murmur of voices.

He started for the door and the man in the chair got up. Getting up, he hitched up his trousers, blew out his chest, extended his chin an inch or so. He stood in front of Ireland. What he said did not correspond with what he looked like he was going to say. He said, "I beg your pardon," and planted the flat of his hand on Ireland's chest.

Ireland looked the guy up and down. "What do they call you—a mastiff?"

"What they call me shouldn't interest you any. We ain't going to be intimate. This is a private office."

Ireland nodded at the door behind the man. "I want to go in there. It sounds like a crap game is going on inside. I like crap games."

He pulled his gun and stuck it against the man's belt buckle. The man jumped back a pace, kicked the door with the heel of his shoe as he did so. Voices inside the room hushed.

Ireland cracked a left to the jaw the guardian was inviting with. As the man reeled sideways, Ireland got hold of the knob of the door, twisted it, entered the room.

He saw that the room was going through some speedy remodeling. A window dropped down in front of what

looked like a cashier's cage in the wall. A couple of men were turning over a blackboard that had an oil painting on the other side of it. Another man jerked a loudspeaker connection from a jack in the wall, picked up the loudspeaker and then didn't know what to do with it.

There were over a score of men in the room. Some of them looked like they would like to start a scrap. Others looked like husbands who had been caught kissing the maid.

Ireland said: "Here, here, boys!" He put his gun back into his pocket. "I'm not pinching this joint. What we got here—a little booky game? You place your bets and the racing dope comes in over the loudspeaker. Well, that's good clean fun. I'm looking for a guy in a derby hat. I'm not a cop. I'm just—"

Somebody behind Ireland said: "Take him, boys."

Ireland wheeled, met a three-legged stool with his head. He went down, eyes closed for a second. It seemed to him as many men as could stay on the area limited by his prostrate form jumped on him at once.

Somebody yelled: "Knock him out."

Ireland guessed that was what they did.

FRED IRELAND peeled back lids from aching eyes. He was in an office, unfurnished except for a small straight chair, nearly hidden by the immense body of Paul Hasner. He thought Hasner's face a little like Buddha's, except that it was red from the circle of short black hairs at the top down to his collar.

On the floor of the office—well, Fred Ireland was on the floor, and nothing else.

Ireland said: "I thought you were the guy wielding the stool."

Hasner nodded gravely. "I had to. I thought you were going to make trouble, barging in there with a gun."

"Your joint?" Ireland asked, sitting up.

Hasner nodded. "One of them. You're a broadminded guy."

"Yes. Anyway, I didn't see how you

could make a living off that weekly sheet you call a sports review. It's just a blind for the racing dope that comes in on your wires, huh?"

Hasner nodded. "Only we're not here to talk about me and my business. I want to know who killed Luther Rose."

Ireland smiled crookedly. "They say I did."

"But you didn't. You might kill me or John Bourke or anybody like that if you had a damned good reason, but you wouldn't stick an old man with a rat-tailed file. Or anything else. Who did kill him? I've got to find out."

Ireland shrugged. He looked around the walls, barren except for a clock. The clock read ten minutes of eight. He looked at Hasner who was looking at the clock, too. Hasner said: "I'll give you until a quarter past eight to think up an answer. That's how badly I want to know who killed Luther Rose."

"If I knew, I'd tell the cops and save my own hide."

Hasner shook his head. "I guess you'd give your skin for Miriam Bourke. Who did it—John or Miriam?"

Ireland said he didn't know.

"Well, I'm going to find out. If you don't come across inside of twenty-five minutes, I'm going to town on you. You're lean and tough, but you're in no shape to take the sort of punches I can hand out."

"I guess not," Ireland said. "And I guess you won't get tough, because now I know who runs the gambling in this town. I could make things hot for you. Unless you killed me. And you've got to think what a damned unhandy thing my corpse would be. Ever try to get rid of a corpse?"

Hasner shook his head.

"Well, I did. Don't try it, because it can't be done."

Hasner took one elephantine knee in both clasped hands and rocked back and forth on his chair. He said: "Give, guy."

"Nuts! I killed him. I never liked the old man's eyes. He was good to me, but I didn't like his eyes. So I stuck him with a rat-tailed file and buried

him out under the pavement on College Avenue. That bump you get driving down College at about 34th is the old man's tell-tale heart. And—"

Hasner stood up. "For hell's sake, shut up!" He stooped his big body over Ireland and his face purpled.

Ireland asked: "What's it to you, anyway?"

"I thought a lot of that old man," Hasner said. "I know if the cops get hold of you there's going to be a great miscarriage of justice. I want to find the real killer before they fry you."

"I appreciate that. It's now a quarter after. Are you going to chastise me and say it hurts you worse than it does me? Because if it's to come to blows, I think it is going to hurt you worse than it does me. I think I can knock you flat."

"One more thing. Why did you come here?"

"I was following John Bourke. I saw him come into this building. The elevator boy told me he went into the barber shop."

**H**ASNER scowled. "Bourke? I haven't seen Bourke in a week. He wasn't here. He's never been in here. You sure you were following the right guy?"

"He had on a derby and a white scarf. Sure it was John Bourke."

"The guy in the derby—that was Duke Mays. He's a pony player."

"I didn't see him in with the rest of the horse boys."

Hasner laughed. "I don't think you had time to call the roll. It was Duke Mays."

Somebody knocked at the door of the room. A woman's voice called: "Merwin!"

Hasner looked at the door. "The wife," he said. "Excuse me a minute, Fred." Hasner took a flask from his hip pocket and handed it to Ireland. "Have a drink while I pacify the lady."

Ireland took the flask, and when Hasner was gone he opened it and took a drink.

He felt better. Except for the ache in his chest, he felt good. The ache was where some of the horse boys had kicked

him. He stood up, staggered to the door, took hold of the knob, twisted it. The door wasn't locked.

He opened it and looked out into the hall. There was nobody there. He walked out and to the elevator shaft where he leaned against the call button. Now he wasn't feeling so good. His knees felt like they were hinged both ways.

The elevator came up. He staggered inside, nearly knocking the operator off his stool. "Let's go down," he said.

He thought it took the elevator an hour to descend. He got out, went to the revolving door in the small end of the flat-iron which the building resembled. He leaned against a glass and metal segment of the door. It didn't move for a while. It took all the strength out of him to move it. He knew what the matter was. He was sleepy. He wanted to go home and go to bed. He wanted to go to bed anyway.

He went out on the sidewalk and had trouble getting his directions. He'd been knocked out before and hadn't felt like this. Maybe they had jarred something loose in his brain.

He looked up and down the street. He saw a car pull up and park double fifty feet from where he stood. A man got out and ran down the sidewalk toward him. Ireland knew the guy. It was Larkin, the fat dick from the homicide office. Ireland saw Larkin had a gun in his hand. He heard Larkin yell something at him.

Ireland knew he ought to run, or put up his hands, or do something. He pivoted slowly. He started to run, but he felt as though a big feather mattress was glued to each foot. A feather mattress would be a swell thing. It would be nice to lay down on a feather mattress in the middle of the avenue and watch the street cars run over him.

"There's a dick chasing you," he told himself. But his self wasn't interested. He fell down flat on his face, made a half-hearted effort to get up. Somebody grabbed at his shoulder. He brushed at the hand as though it was a fly, pillowed his face against the concrete, closed his eyes.



## CHAPTER VI

## TWO-WAY ALIBI



**I**RELAND was drowning. It was a funny sensation. He kept coming to the surface and blowing bubbles. He wasn't exerting himself to live, which was

queer, too, because he had always enjoyed living. Cold water drenched his face, chilled him to the spine. He blew bubbles again and opened his eyes.

His brain buzzed. Water trickled down his nose, made him sneeze. When he got over that, he looked around the room. He was in a white-washed basement, sitting in a chair. Pat Larkin was standing in front of him with a pitcher of water in one hand. Ireland's shirt front was soaked with water. His overcoat, hat, suit coat were piled on a plain oak-topped table.

"You fall out of that chair again, I'll nail you to the back of it," Pat Larkin grumbled. "Somebody slipped you a Micky."

Ireland nodded. "I take a Micky and wake up with a Pat. Once there were two Irishmen named Pat and Mike—"

Pat put down the pitcher on the table. "Don't act funny."

"I don't feel funny. For a sweat room, this is the damndest cold place I was ever in. What do you want with me?"

"What do we want with you," Larkin repeated. "You killed Luther Rose. I think you'd save yourself a lot of trouble signing a confession. Say the word and I'll have the stooge in here to take it down."

Ireland blinked. He looked at his wrist watch to see what time it was, but he discovered he didn't have a wrist watch. He asked: "What'd you do with my watch?"

"You didn't have a watch. Don't stall, because as soon as you're far enough awake to know what hurts you, I'm going to start in hurting you."

"I want to ask a question," Ireland

persisted. "What time did Luther Rose die?"

"You ought to know, but it was close to five thirty yesterday evening," Larkin said. "The medico is sure of that because the old man was taking some digitalis compound for his heart three times a day after meals. We found out the restaurant where he ate a little before five. Then the medic traced the progress of the medicine as well as his dinner. Luther Rose died about five thirty."

"Then I mustn't have killed him," Ireland said.

"The hell you didn't! We got a witness who saw you dispose of the body in Borden's Marsh."

Ireland nodded. "I know. Fisher Hart tipped you off about that. Guys like Fisher Hart come at five bucks a dozen. I told you before I had an alibi. Call up Miriam Bourke. She'll alibi me."

Larkin looked at Ireland a moment. Then he went over to the oak table and picked up the phone. He called the desk upstairs. "Put me through to the John Bourke residence. I want to talk to Mrs. Bourke."

He stuck the transmitter of the phone against the front of his vest. "Remember, Fred, I'm doing this because we used to be pals. I know anybody can fix alibis. I just want to satisfy myself you did the killing. Then I'm going to open up on you."

Ireland said: "Anybody can buy stool pigeons, too."

Larkin raised the phone. "Hello. Mrs. Bourke? This is police headquarters speaking. We've got a man down here by the name of Ireland. . . . Yeah, Fred Ireland. He says you'll square him."

Larkin listened for a moment. He hung up. "She said she hadn't seen you in two years," Larkin said.

Ireland smiled. "I picked the wrong alibi. Call up Judge Aaron Bachman. Ask him if I wasn't playing badminton with him at the Athletic Club yesterday at five thirty."

Larkin scowled. "You—you mean—" He took the receiver from the phone. "By damn, if that's true and you've been giving me a chase and stealing my pants

and all the time—honest to hell, I'll do some murdering myself, Fred."

Ireland shrugged. "Nobody told me until now when Luther Rose died. I told you I thought I had two alibis, one of which would leak. I had to swipe your pants and make a getaway, because I didn't care to waste a lot of time sitting around your jail while you checked on the time of Luther Rose's death. I had things to find out."

**L**ARKIN called Judge Bachman's home. That didn't take long. Bachman and Ireland had been playing badminton at five thirty. And a judge of the probate court as a witness sort of knocked Larkin's case in the head. The detective put down the phone.

"I'm not sorry, Fred," he said. "Not a bit sorry. I guess maybe I'd better look for a new lead. I'm going out to see Mrs. Bourke."

Ireland got up and went over for his coat. "Would you give me a little head start, Pat? The lady did her best to frame me for a murder. I know damned well she had a talk with Fisher Hart before Hart tipped you off."

Larkin's mouth opened. "Say, a hundred and five pound frail like her couldn't have stuck a file into her old uncle."

"Maybe she didn't. Maybe John Bourke did it," Ireland said. "Anyway, give me a head start with the lady. This is a personal matter. I won't hold out a thing on you."

"Okay," Larkin said. "We'll forget about you stealing my pants. But say, if you didn't lug that body out to Borden's Marsh, who did?"

"I don't know who did it if I didn't," Ireland said. . . .

There was a man sitting on the steps of the Bourke front porch, leaning his back against a post. He had on a sporty looking topcoat, a shaggy hat and spats. Ireland knew as he went up the approach walk that the man was John Bourke.

"Dead drunk, huh?" Ireland said. "When I get through with you, you'll probably be just dead."

John Bourke didn't say anything.

Ireland went up two of the front

steps and stooped over. He took in John Bourke's get-up carefully. It wasn't like John to wear spats with a sports outfit. He took hold of Bourke's shoulder and gave him a little shove. Bourke's back slid along the side of the post and he flopped back on the floor of the porch, arms spread out. After that, he didn't move.

Ireland cursed softly, took out his cigarette lighter, flicked it into flame. The back of Bourke's left hand was bruised and swollen. The crystal on his wrist watch was smashed and the cracked glass had stopped the hands at eight o'clock.

John Bourke's hat had rolled off and his sleek, marceled hair was gummy and not all black. Somebody had mashed in the top of Bourke's head. Ireland had never seen anybody quite as dead.

**H**E KNOCKED at the dead man's door. Carl Rose opened it a moment later. Rose looked as though he might close it again quickly, but he saw the body on the floor of the porch and was shocked into inactivity.

Ireland put a hand on Carl's chest and shoved him back into the hall. Then he went through the door, put his finger on his lips. "Your sister mustn't know," he whispered. "Not yet. I'm going to call the police."

He went into the living room, Carl Rose silently trailing him. Two men's overcoats were piled on the davenport. The study door was closed. Ireland went to the phone and dialed quickly.

He said: "This is Fred Ireland. Tell Pat Larkin to come out to the Bourke place. John Bourke has been killed." He hung up, turned to Carl.

"I want to talk to Miriam," he said, "alone. And stop looking scared to death. I'm not a killer. You don't think I'd have called the cops if I was a killer."

Carl Rose gestured helplessly toward the study. "She-she's in there. We were talking with Attorney MacGray."

"Send her out." Ireland shoved a cigarette between his lips. "You stay in there with MacGray."

"You—you're going to leave that—it—out there on the porch?" Rose shuddered.

Ireland nodded. "For the cops. Send Miriam out."

He went over and sat down in the chair facing the south window—the same chair that Luther Rose had been sitting in when he died, and lighted his cigarette. The window looked out upon the playground when there was light enough to see. Now the window was a black mirror, reflecting Ireland's face, shadowy with twenty-four hours of beard stubble on it.

He heard the door of the study open and close and Miriam's footsteps. For the first time there was hesitancy in her steps—no decisive click of high-heeled shoes.

"Fred—I—I'm terribly sorry," she said. "A policeman called up here and wanted to know about you. I said I hadn't seen you—"

Ireland turned his head and looked at her. She was lovely. And she was afraid—afraid of him and what he might do to her for what she had done to him.

"I know," he said. "Sit down. I want to talk. The police will be here, and I've got quite a lot to say before they do."

"The police! Fred, you mustn't turn yourself in. For my sake you mustn't do that. Promise you won't." She dropped on a stool beside him.

"No, for your sake I'm supposed to run around like a hunted animal until finally the police shoot me down. That wouldn't be quite as tough on you as if I stood trial and your conscience deviled you for not coming into court and testifying in my behalf. You've got a conscience, haven't you?"

She didn't answer. Her head drooped. Light through her hair found warm metallic fire.

"You'd let me go to the chair to save John Bourke."

"No, Fred! No. Fred, you don't understand. When you're married to a man, you've got to stand by him. I've always loved you, Fred. Always and always."

"THAT'S what you used to say when you broke dates with me to go out with John Bourke. Well, it doesn't matter. The thing that matters is the truth. And I know what that is. When you came home last night, you found your uncle sitting in this chair, murdered. And John was here, too. John was drunk.

"You thought John had killed your uncle and you were deathly afraid, because you love John better than anything else in the world—better than yourself, John was too drunk to be responsible for his own actions, so you got John into the study, made him lie down. You fixed strong coffee and got him a bottle of seltzer water. You poured coffee and seltzer water into John, trying to get him so he could navigate under his own power.

"And when John was sobered a little, you told him to get out of the house. He got out, the yellow rat, and you set about planning to save John by framing me. You had got word that your aunt had just died, so on the spur of the moment you cooked up that story about the time element entering into the division of Edna Carmody's money.

"You said that unless you could show that Luther Rose died after Edna Carmody, you wouldn't get any of the Carmody money. You said all that, because you knew there was only one way to falsify the time of death—and that was for me to dispose of the body some way.

"And when I was disposing of the body, you planned to have Fisher Hart follow me. And the sole purpose of that was to frame me for the murder. You wanted to frame me without my knowing it or even guessing that that was your purpose. All because you thought John Bourke killed Luther Rose. Isn't that the truth?"

She looked at him, eyes level as always. "You'll never see it any other way anyway, Fred."

"Which is as near as I'll ever come to getting an affirmative answer," he said. "You never thought of the possibility that John Bourke might not have killed

Luther Rose, did you? You never thought that you were framing me for the chair in order to shield somebody you didn't give a damn about. You were so damned deep in love with John Bourke you were blind to the possibility that I might have been able to prove some one else did the killing."

Eyes wide, lips quivering, she asked: "What do you mean?"

"I mean that the exact manner in which Luther Rose was killed pointed clearly to John Bourke—or that's what you thought." Ireland pointed at the window he faced. "Was that window open when you found the body?"

"No," she whispered. "Fred, if I was certain you could prove John didn't kill him, I'd—but I don't know. You're trying to trap me. I know your methods."

"Was that window open? It was, wasn't it? Luther Rose had come to the house. John let him in. Somebody had to let him in because the door was locked and Luther Rose didn't have a key. John let him in. Luther Rose was having a heart attack. He couldn't get much help from John because John was too drunk.

"Luther Rose came to this window, opened it to let air in, sat down in this chair, took out his box of capsules, took one to see if he could check the attack. All the time the window was open, wasn't it?"

"I don't know," she breathed. "All I know is that when I came in John was closing the window and he was mumbling something I couldn't understand. He was crazy drunk, John was. And Uncle Luther was dead—"

"With an arrow sticking in his chest."

"With a—" She checked herself.

"And you thought it was John who had killed your uncle."

IRELAND stood up. "Because an arrow was the weapon used, you thought John was the killer. Yet John was so drunk he couldn't have hit the side of a barn with bow and arrow. True, he might have held an arrow in his hand and thrust it into your Uncle's chest, except for the fact that the study is filled with small knives which would have

done the job a lot better than an arrow.

"Still you thought John had done it, because you weren't using your head, Miriam. It's a pretty head, but it always did give out some crummy ideas. As soon as you had John far enough out of his stew to get him out of the house, you went to the corpse.

"And you—the woman with steel in her blood—pulled out the arrow and burned it in the study fireplace. The smell of the feathers burning was still noticeable when I went in there last night. Smelled like a poultry shop after they've been burning chicken feathers.

"And it was you, Miriam, who went down the basement, found that rat-tail file which was about the same diameter as an arrow, and thrust it into the wound the arrow had made. You did all that because you thought that the arrow in Luther Rose's chest was one of John Bourke's arrows. And then you tell me you didn't love John Bourke."

Miriam stood up slowly, not taking her eyes off Ireland's face. "Then you can prove that John didn't kill Uncle Luther?"

"I don't know. I am afraid that in destroying the arrow you destroyed the evidence. But I may be able to point out the real killer—the man who had the best motive for killing Luther and killing—" he stopped.

"Fred!" she said sharply. "If John didn't do it, then John must have known who did. When I came in and found John closing this window, he was mumbling something about getting money out of some one for this. I thought—Fred, you're keeping something back. I can see it in your eyes. Your eyes don't lie well. Fred, tell me—" Her body swayed forward into his arms.

Ireland held her. "I guess I don't have to tell you about John. I think you've guessed. He knew too much."

Sobs convulsed her. Ireland held her close, smoothed her hair, whispered to her in comforting monosyllables that said nothing. She let him lead her into the hall, up the steps and into her bedroom.

He told her she must lie down and rest a bit, because there was only one



way they could catch the criminal and that was through her. She was going to have to be strong.

"I will be, Fred. I'll do anything. I'll be all right in a little while," she sobbed.

He sat down on the edge of the bed with her, told her she must listen closely because he wanted her to do just as he instructed. She mustn't forget it and she must do exactly what he told her to do.

By the time he had finished, he heard a knock at the door. It sounded like Pat Larkin's knock. He went out of Miriam's room and closed the door. He went downstairs and admitted Pat Larkin.

## CHAPTER VII

### HUSH-MONEY SHOW DOWN



**A**S SOON as the police and coroner's physician had examined the body of John Bourke on the porch, Ireland took Pat Larkin to one side and told him all there was to tell—Miriam's deception,

his own impersonation of Luther Rose, the trip to the marsh with the body.

Then they went into the study where Carl Rose and MacGray were sitting looking like a couple of frightened boys. Ireland spoke briefly to Larkin, and then the homicide man sent one of his subordinates on an important errand. Then Ireland and Larkin got down on their knees in front of the fireplace, sifted the ashes, found the head of an arrow.

It was a long, cruel barb of steel. They carefully compared the head with the heads of arrows found in the study.

It was identical to the heads of deer-hunting arrows with one exception. Where the head was joined to the shaft of the arrows found in the study, the metal of the head had crimped into the wood to hold it into place, the crimped mark running around the circumference. But on the head found in the fireplace,

the crimp marks ran lengthwise or parallel to the wood shaft which had been burned.

"And if the killer has destroyed his bow and arrow, we won't be able to prove anything unless we can find some of the arrow heads in the ashes of his incinerator," Larkin said.

Ireland nodded. "That's true, but there are other ways. Let's have a talk with the killer, shall we?"

They went out into the hall. MacGray, Carl Rose and some of Larkin's dicks were there together with Paul Hasner.

Hasner stepped forward and took hold of Larkin's lapel. "What's this about arrows? One of your men was over at my apartment hunting for arrows. Do I look like cupid?"

Larkin regarded Hasner coldly. "No, but you sure as hell look like a killer to me. Let's go into the study and talk this over."

Hasner shrugged heavy shoulders. He went with the others into the study and Larkin closed the door. Hasner's round, red face was challenging, defiant. Larkin nodded at Ireland.

"The floor is yours, Fred."

"I'll make it short," Ireland said. He took from his pocket the piece of paper he had removed from Luther Rose's wallet. He looked a moment at its cryptic typing:

SUNB. PL. 3RD 5:1

He said: "That's teletype tape. I think it reads: 'Sunnyboy to place in the third race with the odds five to one.' Something like that anyway. It came off one of the teletype machines you have in the office of your sporting paper, Hasner.

"Luther Rose was a teletype repair expert. It was when he was fixing your teletype machines that he got the idea you were using that racing dope to run the gambling joints in town. You piped the dope through a loudspeaker system into the room where the betting pools were. Luther Rose was blackmailing you to the tune of a grand a month to keep quiet about your gambling joints."

Hasner didn't say anything. His expression revealed nothing.

"So after about five months of this blackmailing, you decided to get rid of Luther Rose," Ireland went on. "You watched for him to come here to the Bourke house yesterday evening, because you thought it would be safer if you killed him here, inasmuch as John Bourke and Miriam had a pretty good motive for killing the old man, because Luther Rose's wealthy sister was at death's door."

**I**RELAND took a deep breath. "What you did was walk around the house, probably looking for a way to get in. You saw that living room window open and Luther Rose sitting in that chair, trying to get his breath. An arrow is swift and silent. You could have stood in the playground next door and that high wood fence would have concealed you from the street. Luther Rose, sitting in front of a window in a lighted room would have made a perfect target. So you killed him.

"But you didn't think that anyone was in the house who might have seen the shooting. So later, when I was here talking to Miriam, you came in to ask where John was. Furthermore, you asked if Luther Rose had a key to the house, and Miriam said he didn't have. That told you that some one must have let Luther Rose in—and that some one had to be John. If you had known where John was at that time, you would have gone out to kill John."

Hasner put his hand in his pocket, and Ireland stiffened, edged forward. Larkin, too, stepped closer. But Hasner took out a cigarette and Ireland continued:

"But John Bourke sought you out this afternoon, as soon as he had enough of the liquor steamed out of him to think straight. John was wearing a derby and a white scarf, and I followed him to that flat-iron building where you've got a gambling joint. As soon as John came in you socked him or maybe gave him a micky in some whisky as you did me. By the time I had got there, you had concealed John in one of the empty offices, I think.

"John was really hunting you in order to put the screws on you for killing Luther Rose. He wanted blackmail for keeping quiet about it. He could afford to keep quiet, though the killing occurred in his own house, simply because I was being framed for the killing.

"I could fry for the murder and as long as John was getting plenty of hush money from you, everything would have been okay.

"But you had had enough blackmailing. You were going to kill John, too. This time, you wanted an alibi for yourself. So when I barged into your gambling joint, you knocked me out. You took me into a room in the building and set the clock on the wall quite a ways ahead. When I came to, it was about ten minutes of eight.

"You pretended to give me your idea of a third degree, but that was simply an excuse for you and me being together for half an hour—the half hour indicated by that clock which you had set ahead. Then you gave me a Micky. And since you had swiped my watch right after the knockout, I had no way of knowing the time except by that clock on the wall of the room.

"When I staggered out of the building and flopped on the street to be picked up by Larkin some time later, the alibi was set. For you were going to kill John Bourke at eight o'clock by the correct time, and you were going to do it so that the cops couldn't miss that point.

"But you had denied that John Bourke had come to the gambling joint, though I had followed him. You said the man in the derby was somebody else. So before you killed John, you dressed him in another coat and hat, to give me the idea I hadn't followed John to your joint.

"Killing John was simple. You could carry him out to a car unconscious and if anybody saw you, what was the difference; John was always being carried out of places, dead drunk. All you did was slug him on the head, mash his wrist watch so that the hands stopped at eight o'clock.

"Under cover of darkness, you drove John home and dumped him on the

porch. If anyone saw that, they would simply think John Bourke was coming home drunk again."

**H**ASNER stood up. "Are you through?" he asked. It seemed his body filled the room, overshadowed them all. "Because if you are, I'm starting in. Nobody saw me bring John's body here because I didn't. And another part of your story that won't hold water is my shooting Luther Rose with a bow and arrow. I never had a bow and arrow. Larkin's dick didn't find any bows and arrows around my apartment, did he?"

Larkin said: "Wait till we sift the ashes in your incinerator, big boy."

Ireland stepped to the table beside the couch, picked up the thin volume titled: "Hunting the White Tails With Bow and Arrow." He leafed through it.

"John Bourke wrote this book," Ireland said. "There is one reference in here to the bow with the sixty-pound pull that Hasner used when he shot a six point buck."

"Hasner isn't a very uncommon name," the big man said.

Ireland nodded. "Another reference to 'the superb marksmanship of Hasner.' In fact, the book is dedicated to M. P. H. What's that your wife calls you, Hasner? Isn't it Mervin? You'd rather be called Paul, but your full name is Mervin Paul Hasner."

Hasner sneered, shrugged, even as Ireland knew he would. "A coincidence. Sorry to disappoint you gentlemen, but I don't think you can hold me."

The door of the study burst open. Miriam stood there, her tall, reedlike body quivering, her blue eyes blazing.

"You killed him," she snarled. "You killed my husband and my uncle. I know you killed my uncle, because before John

left the house last night, he told me about it."

That was a lie—a lie that Ireland had told through Miriam's lips. But it was the spark that exploded latent dynamite. Carl Rose and Pat Larkin both sprang at Hasner, tried to force him into a chair.

Hasner dragged them a couple of feet, snatched out a gun. He felled Larkin with a blow on the head. Carl Rose shrank back in turn, fell over MacGray. Paul Hasner lumbered forward toward Ireland.

Ireland flattened himself in front of Miriam. His hand was in the pocket of his coat. A shot roared. Gunsmoke clouded Ireland's pocket. Hasner came down to his knees, a bullet through his thigh. Teeth clenched, face purple, he said:

"Damn you to hell, Ireland! Get away from that door. I'm going out of here alive if I have to kill everybody in the house."

Ireland didn't move. He said: "Bluff, Paul. Just bluff." And then when he saw it wasn't bluff, he shot again. Hasner flattened on his face. The house trembled.

Larkin's police came piling into the room. Pat Larkin groggy on his feet, issued orders for an ambulance because it looked as though Hasner was dying.

In all the confusion, Ireland led Miriam from the room. He stood facing her, lifted her tired face with its blue-shadowed eyes, looked into it a long time.

"Be brave, lady," he said. "Good-bye."

He walked to the hall, across the hall to the front door. He opened the door.

"Fred! Fred!" he heard her sob when he went out in the street.

He kept on walking.



# Mood For Murder

*By Lawrence Treat*  
Author of "Murder Isn't for Sissies"



*When his boss told him, "No guns, no fights, no jails," Detective Devlin vowed this was one case he'd solve like a gentleman. But the first day out he ran into a fight, got clapped into jail—and discovered that murder isn't for gentlemen.*

**G**ARVEY HARRIS, of the Harris Security and Investigation Agency, stared hard at Phil Devlin. Clever enough, and in some ways the best man Harris had ever had. But—Harris sighed. If there were some way of taking the recklessness out of Devlin and making him a good plug horse, he'd be all right.

Harris pursed his lips. "Phil," he said, "I'm not a bit sure I ought to give you this case, but you're the only man available and time's short."



"Always is," replied Devlin, with a gleam in his dark eyes. He liked the chief, but he liked to kid him too. "I try to make up for it by taking an occasional short cut. We spoke about that the other day, didn't we?"

The chief grunted. "That's your whole damn trouble. Short cuts, chances, fireworks every time. And don't argue with me, either. Listen—last month I sent you out to recover some stolen jewelry, and did you get it? Hell no! You came back grinning—with three gunmen in an ambulance!"

"They told you how the gold had been melted down and the stones broken up, didn't they? I nabbed three thugs and brought them to the bar of justice, which was more than the police could do. As for the jewelry—"

"Clients," interrupted the chief, "are interested in their property and not in abstract justice."

Phil Devlin bristled. His shock of black hair stood up and accentuated his long, pointed face with the prominent chin. "So you think Two Gun Murray's abstract, do you? I wish to hell he'd started firing at you instead of me. You'd have thought about your clients then. Sure! You're just the type!"

"Listen," said Harris patiently. "I'm merely trying to give you some advice. What I want is a nice quiet investigation, something in the pastoral mood. Don't blow the roof off anything. No guns, no fights, no jails. If anybody acts nasty, pretend he's too tough for you and that you got a wife and family to think about. Pretend you'll lose your job if you pull any rough stuff or scandal, because that's just what will happen. Get it?"

"Pretend you're not the boss and that I don't need you for a weekly paycheck, will you?" pleaded Devlin. "Pretend it just for a minute."

"I've been pretending it ever since the day you walked in here and announced you were working for me. Let's see your gun."

Devlin frowned. "In my desk drawer."

THE chief picked up the phone. "Miss Ramsey? Take Mr. Devlin's gun from his desk drawer and put it in the safe. And lock it up." He put down the phone. "This case hasn't any thugs or gunmen or danger in it. It concerns men who fight each other with printer's ink, political influence and publicity campaigns."

"You'll use your wits and your personality and nothing else. You'll get a trip south to a little town named Bowling Green where they don't have blizzards. Just a nice warm climate and a juicy expense account. It's practically a vacation."

Phil sniffed vaguely. "Smells like a rat around somewhere."

"Exactly. A rat. All you do is find him." Harris handed Phil Devlin a sheet of printed material.

It was headed *The Gresham Company*. Devlin read the first sentence and skimmed over the rest. "The management has for a long time felt that the interests of the stockholders are best served by concentrating power in the hands of those who are on the scene of operations and are actively conducting the business of the corporation . . . Rumors . . . certain directors in New York . . . questionable loyalty . . . sharp practices . . . undeserving of your confidence . . . annual election of officers in February . . . the capable management which is now in charge . . ."

Devlin glanced up and his sharp, saturnine features seemed amused. "Who wrote this little masterpiece and why didn't he learn English? You know—go to school and hear about the simple words?"

"That's precisely what you're to find out. Who wrote it. The Gresham Company has executive offices here in New York, but the plant and business are in the South. Van Ness is the general manager down there. Our clients—Brooke and Taylor, on the board of directors—want to find out whether van Ness is behind this attack, and if so, why. They mistrust him but they don't control the company and they have nothing specific

against him. And only three weeks to get to the bottom of this."

"Why the rush?"

"Stockholders' meeting and election. If van Ness is on the level, our clients don't dare oppose him; if he isn't, they need the facts in order to boot him out. Therefore—tact. Persuasiveness, finesse and tact. Understand?"

Devlin grinned. "I heard of those words somewhere. They're what you use after you tell the other guy you're licked, aren't they?"

"They're what you use when you work for me," retorted the chief.

He was right about that. Devlin admitted it a couple of days later, as he crossed the dirt yard of the Gresham Company plant and headed for the little brick building marked OFFICE. All he had to do was walk in on van Ness and get his permission to help with an investigation against himself.

The trouble was that people thought a detective agency employed a string of magicians who could stare into a crystal ball or pull crooks out of a hat. And this time nobody even knew whether there was a crook to pull. The whole affair might be on the level, for all they knew.

Tact. It was a good word.

The office was working at top speed. A lot of girls checking and filing and typing, and too busy to pay any attention to Devlin from the North. The girl at the switchboard turned and said: "Can I help you?" She had glasses and too much nose and didn't say you-all, which was a real disappointment.

Devlin looked around the room and asked: "Mr. van Ness's secretary? Which one is she?"

"In the corner, near the door marked Private."

**D**EVLIN said, "Thanks," and headed for the girl in the green dress. He walked slower and slower until he was standing alongside her desk. She blushed and bit her lips and pretended she wasn't aware of him. She had long curved lashes and light hair, and he wondered what her voice would sound like.

After a while he said: "Hello, Arabella. The boss busy?"

When she looked at him she had deep blue eyes that made him feel stupid and unworthy. "Quite," she answered decisively. "Quite busy."

"Tell him the private shamus is here," he grinned. "That'll hold him."

"He has the road commissioner there now, and the governor's on the phone."

"I thought this was a business and it turns out to be just another political conference. Tell him I'm here, Arabella."

She glanced at a sheet of paper. He'd heard about southern belles all his life, but he never thought he'd find one sitting in front of a typewriter disguised as a private secretary. He liked the South now; a good place to settle down and live in.

"What is a shamus?" she asked sweetly. "And what does he want?"

And he retorted: "Me, and I want the boss."

Nevertheless it took him a half hour before he got into van Ness's private office. A half hour during which he sat on the edge of her desk and made a nuisance of himself, and told her his name was Phil Devlin and learnt that hers was Anne Fortier and that they had a lot of tastes in common.

It was hard to keep things from her. There was something about the shifting lights in her eyes that made you talk straight, and although he didn't exactly blurt out why he was here, she had a pretty good idea of it.

He suspected, however, that the chief reason he got to van Ness was that Arabella—or Anne—wanted to get him off the corner of her desk. He felt hurt at the explanation, because after you've traveled a thousand miles in a Pullman and found a girl that makes you just want to sit quietly and look at her, she ought to do the same to you. Still, Devlin had her to thank for an interview.

Van Ness was a rugged, sunburnt man who looked as if he spent plenty of time in the open during the hunting season and who obviously could take care of himself and maybe a half dozen besides. He gave Devlin a quick glance, took in

that triangular face with the sharp chin, and cracked:

"Well? What's your business?"

"The New York office sent me down and asked you to help me out on an investigation."

"Investigation? Of what?"

Devlin pushed a letter across the desk. "Read it," he said, "and don't let the big words bother you."

Van Ness glanced at Brooke's letter of introduction and then tore it up. "Brooke and Taylor," he stated crisply, "ought to mind their own affairs. They're getting their profits, and I'm running the business. I asked you before—what do you want to investigate?"

"I want to make a report of how things are going. A general business survey, sort of. I don't like to bother you with it. Suppose you just turn me over to your secretary and let her help."

"I'm busy right now, Mr. Devlin, but I can see you after dinner tonight. What hotel are you stopping at?"

"The Spartan."

Van Ness shook his head. "You should be at the Beaugard. Best food in town. I'll call up the manager and tell him to take care of you."

Devlin smelt onions underneath all the honey. He'd had people threaten and oppose and argue and take a poke at him, but this was the first time anybody had ever tried to kiss him out of an investigation. Van Ness, he concluded, needed looking into.

Around five o'clock, as Phil Devlin crossed the lobby of the Beaugard, the manager came over and suggested Devlin visit the bar. It was a good suggestion and Devlin adopted it at once. He could hear laughter and a high tenor voice behind the closed door, but he was unprepared for what he saw.

CONSERVATIVELY, the man weighed about two hundred and seventy-five. An unlined cheerful face was concealed somewhere behind the rolls of fat that billowed out from the cheeks and almost concealed the eyes. A trip around him could have been measured in yards. His enormous stomach protruded

like a balcony and was encased in a voluminous checked vest. The vest was shaking like a model-T going fifty miles an hour over a rough road, and the reason was that the fat man was laughing.

"Upsy-downsy," he tittered, watching the gyrations of his belly. "Five bucks on it to anyone, and then drinks on the house!"

As Devlin came in, the fat man turned from the group of four or five people standing next to him. "A stranger!" he cried. "When the local talent won't do, we turn to a stranger from the North."

That should have given him away. How the hell did the fat man know Phil Devlin came from the North? Devlin should have guessed it was a put-up job and been careful, but the words went through his mind without registering.

"Upsy-downsy!" tittered the fat man, gazing at his wiggling paunch. "Five bucks if you can hit me in the stomach hard enough to make me grunt."

Devlin smiled. "Brother," he said, "let's have a drink first, because after I hit you you won't be able to drink. Not for a long, long while."

The fat man laughed again and the great jelly-like mass of his paunch trembled and shook. Devlin took a deep breath, said, "Okay—don't forget you're asking for it," and stepped forward.

His fist shot out from the chest and stabbed like a rapier. He seemed to bury it to the forearm. The fat man gave a grunt and a gasp and staggered backwards. He lost his balance and crashed heavily to the floor. Devlin looked sad and wondered what the trick was.

He knew when somebody dropped a hand on his shoulder and he whirled to see a face with a long droopy mustache, and a coat with a deputy sheriff's badge on it.

"Fella, we don't go in for that sort of stuff down here. You hit him and that's breaking the law."

"He asked for it," declared Devlin. "Gave me permission, on a bet."

The deputy sheriff frowned. "Fella, I seen you hit him, and so you're coming along with me."

Devlin held back. "Ask him!" he

snapped. "It was a friendly poke, for a bet."

The fat man looked up dizzily. "He—hit me!" he gasped. "I didn't do nothing, and he hit me! Arrest that man!"

And so Devlin went to jail. He went quietly, obediently, perplexedly and tactfully. But above all, he went thoughtfully. Because, as he stepped from the bar to the lobby, he saw Arabella, née Anne Fortier, standing at the clerk's desk.

As she saw him, she exclaimed: "Oh, never mind—there he is now!" She started towards him, then turned and marched over to the cigar stand.

Devlin stopped short. The deputy sheriff pushed him and said: "Come on, fella. We don't do no sightseeing on the way."

Devlin shrugged. She was buying a package of chewing gum for the obvious purpose of avoiding him. But what had brought her here in the first place? The fat man, the challenge in the bar, the sudden appearance of the deputy sheriff—a put-up job, of course. But why should Arabella come to the hotel and ask for him? Part of the frame? And why the deputy, and not the sheriff, himself? The sheriff was probably too honest to take part in van Ness's handiwork.

It was not a nice jail. It had a wooden bench and a teeming population. Of vermin. For supper, the deputy served a sandwich of fatty meat and a cup of tinted hot water, reminiscent of coffee. Devlin thought about southern fried chicken and corn bread. Then he heard voices outside and the steel gate slid back and he stared through the bars of his door.

"Hello, Arabella," he said. "Come to keep me company?"

She smiled at him. "I heard you were here and I wondered whether there was anything I could do." She stopped suddenly and looked embarrassed. The deputy was standing a few feet behind her, leaning against the wall and slowly chewing on a wad of tobacco.

Devlin said: "Mind if I speak to the lady alone, Deputy? We got important things to talk about."

THE deputy didn't answer and didn't move; he merely pulled on his droopy mustache. Anne Fortier said: "I don't know what there is to say. I merely stopped here because I thought Mr. van Ness might want me to."

"Just like you thought he might want you to stop at the hotel?"

Her eyes got big and there was a surprised expression on her face. "Maybe you think it's part of my job to haul bums and drunks out of jail."

Devlin shrugged. "Get 'em out—put 'em in. Bums—drunks—you seem to know all about it."

She frowned in irritation. Devlin thought of how she'd turned her back on him at the hotel and he wondered what her game was. Van Ness's little messenger, he decided bitterly. Van Ness sent her around, and that was one score against van Ness and marked him for all the attention Brooke and Taylor could afford on an expense account.

"I didn't come here to be insulted," she remarked coldly, and turned away.

Devlin yelled: "Hey—Arabella! I didn't mean that! Listen—come on back! I—"

Her heels rang solidly on the concrete corridor. Holding her head high, she marched through the steel gate, reached the wooden floor of the office and tapped out. Phil slapped his cell door with his open hand and listened to the clank of iron.

The deputy said: "I wouldn't make no rumpus, son."

"I haven't started to make a rumpus," bellowed Devlin. "But when I get out of here you better rip off that badge of yours and hotfoot it out of the state . . . Where's the sheriff? He'll let me out. Of all the phony stuff I ever came across—what the hell country you think this is, anyhow?"

The deputy kept chewing slowly. "Sheriff's on vacation . . . Picking a fat guy like that, and knocking him down for no reason—ought to be ashamed of yourself, fella."

"I'd get a lot more fun slapping you down. And any time you want to take your chances—"



The deputy turned slowly and ambled back to his office. "I want a lawyer!" yelled Devlin. "You got no right holding me—no charge, no bail, no counsel. How much you getting paid for this, huh?"

Devlin sat down heavily on the bench. Arabella's visit had him stumped—and worried. The rest of it was making sense in a vague, general way. Van Ness, of course. He couldn't stand an investigation and he was fighting it with local political pull—now that the sheriff was away, and the deputy was his tool.

Van Ness had urged him to change his hotel. And at that hotel the manager had steered Devlin into a bar, where a fat man tricked him into an assault and the deputy was waiting to pounce. Everything planted. But how did Arabella fit in?

Devlin glared at the concrete wall of his cell. The old man had said: "No guns, no fights, no jails." Well, Devlin was in jail and charged with fighting. But at least he had no gun, and he hadn't shot anybody—yet.

Around eight o'clock the gate to the cell block clicked, and Devlin jumped up to see van Ness hurry through. He waved at sight of Devlin.

"There you are, Mr. Devlin. I heard you'd got into trouble and I rushed right down. My secretary told me, but I couldn't believe it at first."

He approached the iron door to the cell and lowered his voice. "The deputy just told me how it happened, and I think I can make a deal with him."

"What kind of a deal?"

"To get you out. You don't understand how people feel down here. Bowling Green's just a small town. They distrust outsiders and—well, you see what happened."

"All I want is to get out of here and get hold of a lawyer. Of all the crude frameups I ever came across—"

"You don't understand, I tell you! They've pulled this sort of thing before. The best I can do for you is to get you released on your promise you'll leave town."

"No reason in the world why I should

leave. And every reason to stay and fight it out."

VAN NESS coughed. "If you do that, you'll stay here till your case comes up. Then you'll appear before a judge who's a close friend of the deputy's. The deputy and the fat man will take the stand and testify, the jury—if you're able to get a jury trial—will believe the local people and you'll get a few months on the chain gang. You may as well face it, Mr. Devlin. There's very little you can do about it."

Devlin took it as a threat, but the factory manager held all the cards in the deck. Devlin shrugged. "Okay. When do we go?"

"Now. There's a train north in about a half hour. I can drive you down to the station, if you like."

"A pleasure," answered Devlin. "Hey, deputy! Unlock this damn gate, will you? I'm going places."

The railroad station was about a half mile from town. Devlin, sitting next to van Ness, was glum. And angry with himself. Watching the path of the headlights, his hand grasping the slender chromium of the door handle, he kept telling himself that Garvey Harris had given him good advice.

If Phil Devlin hadn't yielded to the temptation of socking the fat guy, he'd have been all right. He remembered now the tell-tale words that should have warned him. "Stranger from the North."

He had a sudden impulse to turn and sock van Ness. He glanced at the big dark silhouette of the man who'd tricked him so neatly. Railroaded him out of town and fixing it so that he couldn't come back. Show up on the streets again, and he'd be clapped right back in jail. And van Ness was probably telling the truth about the sort of trial that could be expected.

Devlin restrained his desire to grab van Ness and throttle a confession out of him. It was hard holding himself back, too. He flexed his muscles. His hand, holding the door knob, tugged with every ounce of his strength. He had to work off that impulse somehow, in the clen-

ing of his teeth, the stiffening of his body, the pull on the door handle.

There was a click and the delicate handle swung and came loose in Devlin's hand. He'd broken the thing clean off. A new car, too. He pushed carefully, found that it still gripped the catch even though he could have lifted up the chromium bar and put it in his pocket.

He leaned back thoughtfully, wondering again how Arabella fitted in. She worked at the Gresham place and she had to take orders from van Ness. Still, a girl like that—you'd think she'd tell him where to get off. Somehow, it was hard to believe she was on the wrong side of the fence.

Van Ness stopped at right angles to the long platform. "We'll get your ticket," he said crisply, "and I'll call up the hotel and have your baggage sent down. There's just about time."

He got out on the left hand side of the car. Devlin pushed his door open and the knob came off in his hand. The hell with it! Van Ness could find out about it for himself. Devlin stuck the metal bar in his pocket and followed the factory executive.

Ten minutes later the deputy arrived. "Just want to make sure you go out on that train," he explained. "Some fellas like to play tricks."

"Not me," observed Devlin dryly. "I'm the soul of tact. Rather be the goat, every time."

The deputy chewed placidly on his plug of tobacco and didn't have an answer. Van Ness put a hand on Devlin's shoulder.

"I'm sorry about this, Devlin. You might tell Brooke and Taylor that if there's anything in particular they want to know, they might write me."

"Sure. No hurry, is there?"

"Glad you see things that way. I was afraid you might draw the wrong conclusions."

"About what?"

Van Ness shrugged. "About Bowling Green."

Then the train roared in, a screaming thunder of lights and noise and activity. Baggage, mail, porters, conductor, pas-

sengers. The deputy took Devlin's arm and escorted him to a Pullman car, but he stopped when he reached the conductor, an old, red-faced man with a high beaked nose.

"This is Mr. Devlin," he stated. "He's going up to New York. If he changes his mind on the way, you send me a wire about it, see? To Deputy Sheriff Valmont of Green County."

Old Nosey nodded. "Sure will. Come on, Mr. Devlin. Next car."

Devlin watched the station slide by as the train pulled slowly out. Nobody could prevent him from jumping off the train or pulling the emergency cord or getting out at the next stop. But if he did any of those things, Deputy Sheriff Valmont would hear about it immediately.

TACT. The chief had insisted on it, had he? Well, Phil Devlin was going to need plenty of it to get back to Bowling Green without anybody objecting. He leaned forward, chin in hand. After about ten minutes he rose and told the porter to make up his berth.

"And don't wake me in the morning," added Devlin. "I feel as if I could sleep the clock around, and maybe I'll do just that." He threaded his way back to the day coach and stood in the doorway.

The blond youngster sitting alone and already beginning to doze looked as if he might have some wits. And he had a couple of suitcases, which meant a long trip. Too bad he was blond, but Phil Devlin would rather have him clever than dark.

The private detective ambled to the empty seat and sat down. The boy woke up. He had clear blue eyes, a bit sleepy now, but there was quickness and intelligence in them. He was about twenty.

Devlin said: "Sorry to wake you. Got a long ride ahead?"

"Clear through to New York."

"How'd you like to take it in a Pullman? Sleep in a berth and eat on an expense account."

"You kidding me?"

"If I'm kidding anybody, I'm kidding myself. Ever have to be in two places at the same time?"

He felt the boy studying him, his darkness, his repressed energy, his long pointed chin. Probably trying to decide whether he was drunk or trying to put over some sort of a trick.

Devlin grinned. "I'll be honest with you, because there's no sense trying anything else." He took out his wallet and spread his license and identification card. "Take a good look at it so you're sure it's me. And ask any questions you want. This is on the level, and you have to satisfy yourself."

Devlin explained his predicament, with variations. He was trailing a crook and had a good chance of nabbing his man in the act of pulling a job if the man thought Devlin was on his way to New York. Devlin was frank about why the conductor would wire if Devlin left the train.

"It's the old fellow. Old Nosey. Red cheeks and gray eyes and big nose and a stain on his lapel. Don't let him see you. If he doesn't ride the train all the way to New York, you're okay. But if he does, you have to keep out of his way at the same time that you keep him believing I'm still on board.

"The night's easy. Sleep till twelve, one o'clock tomorrow, and then use your head, and keep your hat on. Spend your time in the diner or the smoking compartment, but let the passengers and the porter know you're still traveling. Here's ten dollars to cover any extra expenses. And a note to my boss to pay you fifty if you get away with it." Devlin scribbled a few lines to Harris explaining what had happened. "If you get by, drop in and collect the fifty. But if you're found out and you try to collect anyhow, he'll know about it ahead of time, and he'll beat hell out of you. Any questions?"

"How about baggage?"

"Deliver mine to Harris and use part of the ten to express yours from somewhere along the line. Anything else?"

"I guess not. I'll do my best, Mr. Devlin. And—thanks for it."

"The best is no good. You got to get away with it, regardless. Luck to you." Devlin stood up and strolled towards the rear car.

A HALF hour later when the train stopped again, Devlin dropped off the rear car and stepped into the shadows. Old Nosey would be looking for him on the station, but he wouldn't think of examining the occupant of the berth. The kid had been snoring lightly when Devlin had woke him up. As long as he snored through the morning, the conductor would assume Devlin was where he belonged.

At worst, Devlin should have until early tomorrow afternoon before any discovery by Old Nosey. At best, he'd have until he chose to show himself.

The southbound local pulled into Bowling Green shortly after eleven. Just in case, Devlin made a wide detour of the lighted portion of the station and took the road towards town. It was deserted at this hour of the night.

He supposed everybody would be in bed. He could look for a tourist sign and wake somebody up. Tomorrow he'd get hold of Arabella. He had a blind faith that she'd play his game. Remembering her visit to the jail, he felt certain that she'd come to help him out on her own hook, and that she'd done nothing merely because Deputy Valmont had stood around listening, pulling at his mustache and keeping his greasy ears open.

It was the craziest chance Devlin had ever taken, that a girl who didn't even know him would deliberately work against her boss. But, somehow, it was a test of faith. When he'd looked at her and spoken to her, he'd felt something he'd never experienced before. If she hadn't felt it too—well, he'd be a little different as long as he lived.

He stepped off the highway when the shine of the moon glistened on a car's mudguards a hundred yards or so ahead. There was one chance in a thousand that somebody would recognize him, but he wasn't taking chances tonight. He was too determined in a cold, precise way to risk ruin because of a piece of carelessness. Besides, the car's lights were out, and that always spelled warning.

He couldn't have crouched there more than a minute or two, his eyes peering through the lacework of the bushes, when

he saw a figure step from the fringe of the road, open the car door quickly and jump inside. Then the headlights flashed on, and for a moment Devlin thought the lights were prying for him through the bushes.

But the car did not come toward him. It turned around, sped off in the direction Devlin had been walking—toward town. For about a minute after the car had roared away, Devlin didn't move. He didn't see anything, didn't hear anything. But he knew something was wrong. He crouched lower, feeling his heart hammer away at his ribs. You get a sixth sense for some things, after you've been at it a while.

After a time he felt it was safe to go forward. He went on ahead, slowly hugging the edge of the road, to where he judged the car had stopped. Then he started looking around.

A couple of broken twigs. That didn't mean anything. A path he was standing on. That didn't make any difference. A small clearing beyond. That didn't bother him.

Nevertheless he stared at the bent twigs and stepped stealthily down the path as far as the clearing. It was pretty dark and all he saw was the dark hump lying near a tree. It looked like a rock. He walked over to it slowly.

The night was cool and there weren't many insects around. Come the sun and the flies would start buzzing, the slow process of decay would set in. Flies and worms and a circling vulture or two. By and by somebody would walk down the road and get a whiff. Then he'd step inside here and see the fat man.

Phil Devlin stooped down and felt the flabby cheeks of the guy that had been giggling "Upsy-downsy" a few hours ago. The flesh was cool, moist. Phil shivered despite himself as he touched the dead face. Then he stepped back and put his hands in his pockets.

He wondered whether the fat man's part in the frameup had had anything to do with his death. Maybe. When you get mixed up in stuff like that, there's no telling where it will lead you. He might

have learnt the reason for his part in it. Good blackmail material, that.

Devlin's hand was touching the chromium door knob that he'd yanked from van Ness's car on the ride to the station. It was funny. Funny sticking it in his pocket because he didn't want van Ness to know he'd broken a gadget. And funny leaving it there all this time.

Devlin took it out, stared at the curved gleaming bar of metal, and then stooped down. The fat man lay on his side. One hand was stretched out and open, the other was clawing at the ground. Devlin lit his flashlight. The fingers were clenched, the thumbnail was grimy with earth.

In the light of the torch, the spattering of blood showed up like ink stains. A little too thick, maybe, but dark and dirty. You could see the wound, too. A big bullet hole. And he hadn't died easy.

**P**URSING his lips and studying the position of the body, Devlin nodded. Then he bent down again and slipped the door handle between the thick, clenched fingers. It was difficult. They were stiff and inelastic, and the handle was a little big. Devlin had to hold the dead hand and wedge the chromium bar, forcing it slowly. But there was just enough give, because of the fat, to make it possible.

Devlin wiped off his fingerprints with a handkerchief, wheeled and paced back to the road. He thought he saw a way now. A handle with which to pull his case wide open. He chuckled mirthlessly. A handle to it.

There was a light burning in van Ness's big house and Devlin marched boldly up the front porch and rang the bell. After a minute or so, the door opened.

Van Ness started when he saw Devlin. "So you came back!" he exclaimed. "I was afraid of that, Devlin. But I explained how things stood, and I can't help you out."

"I didn't come for help. At least not that sort."

"Why then?"

"Maybe we'd better go inside first. This is going to be a long talk and you



have a couple of jolts coming. You might want to take them sitting down."

"Are you crazy?"

"You can answer that one all by yourself, after you've heard me."

Van Ness licked his lips and then turned hesitantly. But when he faced back, he had made up his mind. "Come on," he said.

The door at the far end of the hallway was partly open and showed a slice of yellow light. Van Ness remarked, "Wait here a minute, please," and stepped down the corridor.

He entered the room where the light showed and closed the door behind him. A few moments later he emerged and shut the door again. The light was still burning; Devlin assumed that some one was in there.

"Now," said van Ness, with a satisfied manner. "We'll sit in here."

He led Devlin into a small sitting room near the front of the house. The porch lamp was still burning, and through the window Devlin could see a slice of the driveway.

Van Ness motioned him into a chair and said: "Well?"

"It was a little transparent," remarked Phil, "getting me to change my hotel. Then the manager ushering me into the bar and the fat man waiting there and knowing ahead of time that I came from the North—and the deputy sheriff planted near the door. The trouble was that the only person who could have arranged it was yourself. You see, nobody else in town knew me."

"And why the hell do you think I went to all this trouble?"

"Because you were pulling something crooked. If—"

"You cheap liar!" stormed van Ness, leaping to his feet. "Who do you think you are, anyhow?"

Devlin sighed. "Skip it," he said, "and let's stick to the point. Brooke and Taylor thought you were behind that printed letter, but they thought it was just an attack to discredit them and win you the board of directors. My mind works much more simply. I'm used to crooks, and when I see a man taking unnecessary

chances, I assume he has something criminal to conceal.

"I could have checked up on the paper and found the printer and discovered you'd ordered and distributed it—which was what Brooke and Taylor were trying to find out—but then where would I have been? No place."

"Where are you now?"

"You got the deputy sheriff and this fat man to pull an act so that I'd be run out of town. You must have had good reasons to take all that trouble. And reasons also that made it necessary that Brooke and Taylor should lose their positions on the board of directors and hence wouldn't be able to check up on how you were running the business down here.

"The only explanation I could think of was something crooked. Falsifying books, embezzlement—you don't look clever enough to have done anything particularly brilliant or original. And since you've sent your false reports up to New York, I'll have a Federal charge, too. Illegal use of the mails."

Van Ness smiled. "And what do you expect to do about these fanciful accusations?"

"Get your signed confession and take it back to New York."

"You think an innocent man will sign himself a criminal just for the asking?"

"You're not innocent, and either you admit it or you face a murder charge."

VAN NESS didn't answer, but his jaw tightened and his eyes grew small and angry. Devlin kept on talking. He wished he had some real evidence instead of a planted door handle.

"On my way up," he said steadily, "I found the fat man's body."

"Greenleaf—dead?"

"Murdered. If that's his name. Murdered about two hours ago, while I was on the train. Exactly where were you?"

"I don't have to answer a question as crazy as that."

"But you'll have to give a damn good explanation of why he was holding your door handle in his fingers."

Van Ness said, "Wha-at!" and stood up slowly.

Devlin said, "Frame for a frame," but van Ness didn't hear him. Van Ness reached for a handkerchief to wipe off his forehead, but he never brought the handkerchief out of his pocket. He took out a gun instead.

Devlin muttered: "Guns! That's all the chief needs!" He gulped, and then the realization struck him.

He'd framed van Ness and built up a flimsy, shaky case of motivation. And all the time van Ness had actually done it, committed murder to stop the fat man from either talking or getting blackmail. Van Ness couldn't stand accusations and an investigation, and apparently he couldn't or wouldn't pay Greenleaf's price.

That changed matters. That and the gun.

Van Ness sneered: "Made a lot of good guesses, didn't you? Well, guess what's going to happen next!"

"Next thing," answered Devlin hoarsely, "you walk out of here, get in your car and beat it."

Van Ness shook his head. "Wrong this time. Next thing, you go back to jail!" He walked to the side of the room and picked up the telephone. His eyes were still on Devlin, the revolver was still leveled.

"Hello? Give me the sheriff's office." Van Ness was smiling now, a thin ruthless determined smile. "Hello, Valmont? This fellow you jailed this afternoon—this Devlin—he's back in town . . . Yeah, at my house. I'll hold him here till you come over and pick him up. And, Valmont—he's dangerous. *He might try to escape!*"

Devlin understood then. An old story. Prisoner shot while trying to escape. And there wouldn't be any witnesses. Just the deputy sheriff, van Ness's man. And van Ness, who apparently dominated local politics.

Devlin thought of old Garvey Harris reading about it in the paper. "Damn fool!" he'd say. "I told him to lay off that stuff. So first he gets in a fight, then he lands in jail and then he tries to escape. Too damned reckless!"

But the chief would be all wrong. What

Devlin lacked this time was brains. He hadn't been clever enough to know when he was right. Blurting out his evidence because he thought it was phony. And all the time he was tipping his hand and warning a murderer that he'd been discovered.

Devlin didn't move. The barrel of the gun was too menacingly close, the eyes of the man who held it were too scared and determined. That was the kind you had to be careful of. A man with his mind made up, and who was scared at the same time. Scared you had him, and thinking he'd be okay once he'd rubbed you out.

Devlin tried to swallow. What had the old man called this case? Something in the pastoral mood. Pastoral, hell!

He wondered what Arabella could do. Say it was too bad, maybe, and ask what he'd done. And all the time Devlin kept staring and watching for an opening to rush the gun. But there was no opening and he began to feel pretty sure there wasn't going to be one.

**I**F HE yelled now, van Ness would shoot and claim Phil had broken into the house. Van Ness might or might not get away with it, but Devlin wouldn't be around to see. Maybe he could yell when the deputy sheriff came along. Van Ness wouldn't dare shoot, then. And there was somebody else in the house. Devlin wondered how he could attract the attention of whoever it was.

Then the beam of headlights flashed into the room, but van Ness had his back to them. The only blinding they did was in Phil's eyes.

Through the window he could see the car. The special sheriff's plaque, just above the license plate. He'd ring the bell and van Ness would have to answer it. Maybe that would be Devlin's chance. He waited tensely for the sound.

He didn't hear it. The door opened instead. He could hear the creak of hinges. There was a heavy step and the front door slammed shut. Some one rapped on the panel of the sitting room door. Van Ness said, "Come in," and lowered his gun as he started to turn.

Devlin had his hands resting on the

side of the chair. He used them to fling himself forward as he leaped. His right hand reached out and slapped the gun aside while his fingers closed over the barrel. He managed to wedge his pinky against the trigger guard.

Van Ness yelled: "Shoot him! He's trying to—"

Then he heard the self-starter whir outside. The motor of an engine caught and roared. Van Ness looked startled and tried to yell. Devlin's fist boomed on his jaw, drew back and crashed again. After the third blow he let van Ness's body sag back into the chair. Carefully he pried van Ness's fingers loose from the gun. Devlin pocketed it and said: "Arabella, you're a brick!"

"Anne," she answered. She was panting and her face was chalk white and her words tumbled out breathlessly. "Anne Fortier, and I'm not a brick. I was listening at the door, and when the deputy got here I sent him away. Told him you'd left.

"Mr. van Ness had asked me over this evening to do some work. I'd suspected for a long time that he was doctoring up the books and I wanted to tell you. First at the hotel, but then the deputy was taking you away. And later on at the jail, but the deputy was listening and I knew he'd repeat it all to van Ness."

"Arabella!" said Phil.

She sat down suddenly and he rushed over to her, took her in his arms. "Arabella!" he repeated again, and couldn't think of any other words.

Until the next day, when he sent a telegram to the chief.

CASE CLOSED THROUGH USE OF EXTRAORDINARY TACT PERSUASIVENESS FINESSE. VAN NESS IN JAIL CHARGED WITH MURDER. FORGERY EMBEZZLEMENT CRIMINAL LIBEL ILLEGAL USE OF MAILS AND VARIOUS MINOR COUNTS. AM TEMPORARILY DETAINED BY PERSONAL MATTERS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE. IN PASTORAL MOOD AS ORDERED. NO KIDDING. DEVLIN.



**W**HETHER you take photography seriously, or snap pictures just for fun—get the most out of this great hobby by reading

## EVERYDAY PHOTOGRAPHY MAGAZINE

Hundreds of new ideas—striking pictures—kinks—departments, and feature articles by outstanding authorities. The new May issue contains:

**HAVE YOU PULLED THESE BONERS, TOO?** by Kenneth Murray  
**BACK TO FLASH POWDER** by Bill Seaman  
**WHEN AND HOW TO USE FILTERS** by John Cornwall, III  
**GET THE MOST FROM YOUR CAMERA** by Mario and Mabel Scacheri  
**NEEDED—AN IMAGINATION DEVELOPER** by E. R. Bennett  
**HOW TO MAKE A RANGE FINDER** by R. J. Griffith

**PLUS—**Dozens of other new and helpful articles—amateur pictures—camera kinks and departments. A treasure chest of practical camera information.



**15¢** At All Newsstands



# Bullet Betrayal

*Headquarters Novelet*

*By D. L. Champion*

Author of "Brother Death"



When a mastermind's ruse placed H. Q. Detective MacLean in the heat of a murder spotlight, MacLean drew a lease from death to pay back a bullet loan with—hot-lead interest.

I WAS sitting in the Detectives' Room working on a report when the door opened suddenly and Harry Murdock walked in. A grin split his face from ear to ear. There was unpleasant mockery in his eyes.

"Hi, MacLean," he said to me. "You're the guy I'm looking for."

I looked at him with a jaundiced and unfavorable eye.

"Murdock," I said, "since you're a private dick in the employ of an insurance

company, you've no business in this room. If you're here socially, you can execute a smart about-turn and get the hell out again."

Three plainclothes men and Lieutenant Wylie were in the room. They nodded their agreement. They liked Murdock as lild as did I.

Murdock's grin grew broader. "I just thought you'd like to know I've bust the Hartley bond robbery wide open," he said. "I thought—"

I was on my feet now. "The Hartley case?" I said. "What have you got?"

"You can read the papers," he said. "They'll have the whole story with, of course, the name of Harry Murdock prominently displayed."

"That much I believe," I told him. "Have you recovered the bonds?"

"I'll have them," he said confidently. "For further details consult your morning newspaper."

I was annoyed and made no effort to conceal it. It was bad enough that Murdock had cracked half a dozen bond robberies before we had. But as long as he was doing some of our work for us, I didn't mind it so much.

**W**HAT had myself and every other detective on the force so damned sore at Murdock was the fact that from time to time he dropped into the precinct house and jeered at us. Now he stood there, mocking and triumphant. He lit a huge cigar and looked around at us with infinite contempt.

"You boys leave the big stuff to me," he said. "You guys bring in the book-makers and traffic violators. I'll take care of the felonies."

That was too much for me. I walked over to him, stood glaring at him, my face a foot from his.

"Murdock," I said, "get out of here—and fast."

He didn't move, but some of the mockery died in his eyes. In its place came a bright glint of anger.

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Sore because I outthink the police department?"

"You don't outthink them," I told him.

"You outbid them. You can pass out a fortune in rewards. Your company's only interested in recovery. You make it tougher for us because you won't prosecute until you have to. Sometimes I think you're as big a crook yourself as the guys you recover from."

I shouldn't have said that. But I was sore as hell. Murdock's smile contracted.

"MacLean," he said. "Another crack like that and I'll break your jaw."

"Murdock," I said, "get out of here. Stay out. If I ever find you in here again, I'll pound your fat ugly face to a pulp."

There was no smile on his face now. His beady little eyes blazed with black rage. He took the cigar from his lips and placed it carefully in an ash tray on the table. He unbuttoned his double-breasted coat. I was too excited myself at the moment to realize the significance of the gesture.

"Do you care to take back that last remark?" he asked in a quiet, hoarse tone.

I laughed in his face at that one. He uttered a single profane epithet. His right hand moved like a conjurer's toward the inside of his coat.

I cracked a hard left against his jaw. He reeled backwards as he jerked his automatic from his shoulder holster. Then, every man in the room was on him. Wylie, strong as an ox, who had won the heavyweight championship in the intercity police finals last year, wrenched Murdock's gun from his hand.

I stood stock-still, shocked and amazed. I'd been in enough fights in my day; and I'd even faced guns before. I'd been expecting Murdock to belt me, but I never figured he was going to draw. In the department we don't settle personal differences that way.

Wylie gripped Murdock's collar and looked at me. "Shall I take him downstairs, Mac?"

The anger inside me was bubbling like boiling oil. With an effort I kept it under control.

"No," I said. "Give him back his gun and let him go."

The boys moved back, leaving Murdock standing alone near the door.

"Get out," I said for the third time.



"And I warn you, Murdock, the next time I have trouble with you, I'll have my gun out before you can get your coat unbuttoned."

Of course, that was another thing I shouldn't have said. And although I didn't know it at the moment, I was going to live to wish heartily that I hadn't.

Murdock got out. The back of his neck was red. I knew that I had made a dangerous and implacable enemy. I knew, further, that when Murdock cracked the Hartley case in the morning, I was going to get some acid hell from the commissioner for not doing it myself. That fact put me in no sunny Shirley Temple mood.

**A**BOUT a half an hour later the telephone jangled. I picked it up to hear the Lieutenant's voice.

"Mac, this is Wylie, you'd better take this call. It's a guy who says he's got something on the Hartley bonds."

"Put him through," I said. "I'm clutching at straws now."

A voice, clear and matter of fact, came crisply over the wire. "My name is Simmonds," it said. "1426 East Ninety-third Street. I have important information regarding the Hartley bonds. Can you send a plainclothes man up to my place immediately?"

"I'm *en route*," I told him as I hung up.

I dashed outside to my coupé and headed uptown, murmuring a desperate prayer that my lead would get me to the end of the Hartley trail before Murdock arrived there himself.

The house on Ninety-third Street was a private three-story dwelling. The architecture was rococo and early McKinley. However, it still looked like money to me. I rang the bell and found myself confronting an imposingly deferential butler.

"Are you the gentleman from the police department?" he inquired with a stirring British accent.

"That's me," I told him.

He looked as if my grammar outraged his ears. Then he said with measured gravity: "Mr. Simmonds will see you di-

rectly. He is engaged at the moment. Will you please wait in here?"

"Here" proved to be a magnificent drawing room. The furniture was as modern as the exterior of the house was dated. Built-in mahogany bookcases lined the walls. I noted the odd fact that they were empty. I noted further that the huge ebony desk was bare, and the table top held nothing more than a pile of old newspapers. Despite the elegance of the furniture there were no ornaments of any kind. It resembled a room that is little used.

The butler waved me to an armchair. "I shall bring you some refreshment," he said.

"Brandy," I told him, "with soda."

He bowed and left me. I smoked a cigarette and waited impatiently for Simmonds. The butler returned, bearing a tall glass upon a silver tray. I reached for it when the butler coughed violently. The tray slid off his hand. It slapped wetly against my coat and deposited itself in my lap.

I sprang up while the butler regarded me with all the horror of a bishop taken in a simony rap. As I wiped my coat with a handkerchief, he dripped apology.

"You must come with me, sir," he said. "I'll lend you some things of Mr. Simmonds. I'll have your clothes dried in a few minutes."

"Forget it," I told him. "I'm all right."

"But your coat, sir. Let me press it for you. I'll get you a smoking jacket."

I gave him the coat rather than argue. He took it, and returned a moment later with a purple smoking jacket. I put it on, sat down again and smoked a second cigarette. There was still no sign of Simmonds. I was getting impatient when I heard the sound of a bell. The pompous butler moved down the hall and opened the door.

I heard him say: "Why yes, sir. Mr. Simmonds is in. Right this way, sir."

**H**E USHERED two men into the bare drawing room. My eyes narrowed as I recognized one of them as Jules Garson. I'd seen his face more than once on a dodger. He'd served at least two

terms for larceny and escaped at least two more. His companion was a hard-faced young hoodlum, recently recruited from a corner pool room.

I changed my position slightly in order to be able to reach my shoulder holster in a hurry. I took heart, too. With Garson on deck, I really began to believe that the mysterious Mr. Simmonds actually had something.

Then the elegant butler bowed in my direction and almost knocked me off my chair with his next remark.

"That is Mr. Simmonds, gentlemen," he said, indicating me with a genteel wave of his white hand.

Garson and his hoodlum walked slowly across the room toward me. There was an ugly automatic in Garson's hand. There was an uglier expression on his thick, large-pored face.

The muzzle of his automatic prodded against my smoking jacket.

"Get up, rat," said Garson. "You're coming with us."

"You're putting your head in a noose," I told him. "I'm not Simmonds."

"Of course not," he said with heavy irony. "You're his twin brother. That's why the butler thinks you're Simmonds himself. Furthermore, you're a decent upright citizen who violently disapproves of your brother's ratlike activities. All right, get up and come along."

"You're crazy," I said. "The butler's crazy. I'm not Simmonds. I—"

"Sure," said Garson. "We're all crazy. I've got a car outside. We'll all go along to my place. Then we'll have a nice cosy chat. Stand up and get going."

His automatic pressed hard into my side as I stood up. "Listen, Garson," I said utterly bewildered. "I—"

"So," said Garson, "you're not Simmonds, eh? Yet you know damned well who I am. From now on shut up. You'll have plenty of chance to talk later."

The young gunman fell into step at my side and with Garson's gun jammed against my flesh, the three of us marched from the house. We entered a chauffeur-driven car at the curb outside. Garson kept the gun on me as the car shot forward. He nodded to his henchman.

"Frankie," he said. "Roll him."

Frankie proceeded to roll me with dexterous fingers. He took the thirty-eight from my shoulder holster. He neatly picked the pockets of Simmonds' smoking jacket and passed the contents over to Garson. Garson looked them over carefully. He smiled unpleasantly.

"So," he said, "and you're not Simmonds. I suppose you're just the guy who carries his mail, his driving license, and his steamship circulars for him."

For the first time in fifteen minutes my mind began to function.

"What steamship circulars?" I asked quickly.

"This one, for instance," said Garson mockingly. He took a multi-colored pamphlet and a letter from a long envelope which bore Simmonds' name and address.

"'Dear sir,'" he read. "*If you are contemplating a trip abroad this season, may we suggest the beautiful Balkans—*" He broke off and looked at me, an ugly sneer on his lips. "The beautiful Balkans," he said jeeringly. "So you were taking a powder to the beautiful Balkans? Well, you're a damned sight more likely to finish in beautiful Woodlawn Cemetery, Mr. Simmonds."

I didn't bother answering him this time. I was busily engaged in examining the angles. There was no doubt of the fact that the mysterious Mr. Simmonds and his butler had played me for a complete sucker. They had been expecting this snatch and had maneuvered me into playing fall guy for them.

Their neatest touch had been the spilt highball and the manner in which I had been whisked into Simmonds' coat, thus into his identity. I was minus my own badge, my wallet and every thing else that I customarily carried in the breast pocket of my own coat.

AS THE car pulled up before a two-story frame house in Brooklyn, the problem remained bewildering. But I was aware of one bright lining to the cloud of mystery which hung over me. Undoubtedly the blind trail I followed led to the missing Hartley bonds. If I kept my head

TDA

—and my life—I might, after all, gain a decision over Murdock.

Garson and Frankie led me into a plainly furnished living room. There were two windows on the east side of the room. The shades were tightly drawn. A closed door stood directly opposite me. Garson waved toward a straight-backed chair. He dropped his automatic in his pocket. But Frankie kept me covered.

"All right," said Garson, "you seemed damned anxious to talk a little while ago. You can start now."

I considered this for a moment. Before I again denied that I was Simmonds, it would be well to find out what it was that Garson wanted to know.

"Talk?" I said. "Talk about what?"

"The Hartley bonds. Are you going to pay for them?"

"Pay for them?" I repeated, stalling for time.

Garson sighed heavily. "I'll put it this way," he said quietly. "Do you intend to pay for them with money? Cold cash. Or with your life?"

"Garson," I said. "I haven't got the Hartley bonds. I've never had them."

"You're a liar," said Garson. "You said that once before. You sent word that Milton never took them to you. That he took it on the lam with the stuff himself. For a while I was inclined to believe you. Then I decided to check up."

"So," I said. "And what did you find out?"

Garson sighed again. He wore the air of a man whose patience is sorely tried. "Listen, Simmonds," he said wearily. "I've got all the facts. You can't get away with a bluff now. In case you doubt me, I'll give you a short outline. We gave the Hartley stuff to Milton, your own messenger. Twenty-four hours later, you called up asking where the stuff was. You told me you hadn't seen Milton. The inference then being that he'd taken a powder with the stuff."

"Can I have a cigarette?" I said.

He handed me one and continued. "After a while I got to thinking. I decided to check up on you. I located young Milton. He swore he had delivered the stuff to you. Since I had a gun against

his head and the lighted end of a cigar against his bare foot, I was more inclined to believe him than you."

He paused, sighed again and lighted a cigar.

"You've been fencing hot bonds under cover for years, Simmonds. Milton was your man, the man you chose to carry the hot stuff to you, to carry the cash back to the mob. He was loyal enough to you, until the combination of your trying to cross him up and the heat of my cigar persuaded him to sell you down the river. He gave me your address. I came and got you. And now do you care to talk?"

I crushed out my cigarette and met his eye squarely.

"Sure," I said. "Now, I'll talk, Garson. I'll tell you the only thing you should be interested in. I'm not Simmonds."

His eyes glinted angrily. "All right," he said. "If you're going to stick to that story, I'll stop talking and resort to more direct methods." He turned to the young gunman who still held an automatic on me. "Take his shoes off, Frankie."

**F**RANKIE handed the automatic over to Garson. He bent down and began unlacing my shoes. I drew a deep breath. I watched the glowing end of Garson's cigar and knew that this was not going to be pleasant.

But I was eternally damned if I could see a way out. Even if it had been possible for me to establish my identity now, it was a cinch that Garson would deal no less drastically with Second Grade Detective Richard MacLean than he would with the genuine Simmonds.

I sat with my bare feet on the floor. Garson handed the gun back to Frankie. He drew deeply on his cigar. I bit my lip and watched him.

"Now," he said, "what have you done with those bonds?"

"I'm still not Simmonds," I said, "so I wouldn't know."

"All right," said Garson, "you're asking for it." He raised his voice. "Joe," he called. "Come in here."

I heard heavy footfalls. The door at the far side of the room opened and a

huge lumbering individual walked into the room. Garson looked at him inquiringly.

"How's our friend?" he asked.

"Still out," said Joe. "What are we going to do with him?"

"I'll attend to that later," said Garson. "Hold this rat."

Joe shuffled across the room toward me. He sat on my lap with the full weight of his two hundred odd pounds. He held up my leg and stretched my bare foot out toward Garson.

Garson took the cigar from his mouth. He bent slightly forward. He said: "And you're still not Simmonds."

The muzzle of Frankie's automatic was pressed hard against my temple. Big Joe had a viselike grip on my leg. Garson leaned toward me, his eyes and his cigar smouldering with evil light. I bit my lip and inhaled deeply.

"I'm not Simmonds," I said tensely. "And if you burn my foot off to my knee, I'm still not Simmonds."

I was suddenly shod with torture. Little devils of agony bit deeply into the sole of my foot, seemed to run up into my ankle. My teeth sunk into my lower lip. Then when I believed I must cry out in agony, there came the sound of footsteps and the door was flung open.

Garson sat back in his chair. Big Joe stretched himself and stood up. Frankie alone did not move. A short swarthy man stood on the threshold. Roughly he gripped the sleeve of a white-faced youth. There was terror in the younger man's eyes. His mouth was distorted with dread.

"For the love of heaven," he said, "I didn't do it. I didn't take the bonds. I delivered them to Simmonds. I did. I swear I did."

Garson puffed at his cigar. "All right, Milton," he said. "Take it easy." He turned to me. "You heard that, Simmonds."

I didn't have to answer him this time. Milton stared at me with bewildered eyes. He blinked, then spoke in a hoarse whisper.

"Simmonds?" he said. "But that's not Simmonds, Mr. Garson."

Garson stood up. "Then who the hell is it?" he roared.

Milton shook his head. "I don't know. I never saw him before."

I nursed my aching foot. "Well, my thick-headed thug," I said bitterly, "now do you believe me?"

"You were in Simmonds' house," said Garson. "You had papers of his in your coat. The butler—"

"You've got a quick mind," I told him. "We've both been played for suckers. The difference is, that I knew it a half hour ago. It's just beginning to dawn on you."

Garson took a deep breath and laid his cigar down in an ash tray. Frankie looked at me uncertainly.

"What'll we do with him, boss?" he asked. "He knows too damned much now."

That was another pleasant angle for me to consider.

Big Joe licked his thick lips. "Put him in with the other mug," he said. "Let them both have it."

"Wait a minute," said Garson slowly. "I've got an idea."

**H**E TURNED and walked from the room. The rest of us remained silent. After a long pause I heard six staccato shots in rapid succession. I saw the swarthy man who held Milton, Frankie and Big Joe exchange swift, significant glances.

A moment later, Garson returned. He nodded to the squat swarthy man. "Let that punk go," he said. "Scram, Milton."

Angelo released the youth's sleeve. Milton turned and sped through the door which led to the street. I stared around the room trying not to look as puzzled as I actually was.

"All right," said Garson. "we're taking a powder out of here. I don't want to be picked up with anyone's rod on me."

He thrust his hand in his pocket and produced my thirty-eight. He laid it casually upon the table. And it was there and then that I made the most idiotic mistake of my life. When I saw that gun, I stopped thinking. I stopped figuring the angles and was possessed of but a single thought.

I wanted to get my hands on that thirty-eight. I wanted it so much that I ceased to consider anything else. I cast a swift glance around the room. Frankie, Angelo and Big Joe had moved toward the street door. Garson had moved over to my side on his way to join them.

I gauged the distance to the table carefully. Despite my aching foot, I figured I could make it before they could interfere. I sprang up and leaped toward the table. I stretched out my hand. My heart jumped as I closed it about the reassuring butt of the gun. Then before I could swing around the lights went out.

Something swung out of the darkness and crashed against my left ear. I swung the thirty-eight around and pressed the trigger. The only result was a dull clicking sound. Again a fist belted me at the side of the head. I was roughly propelled across the room.

Something metallic struck me at the base of the skull. I fell heavily to the floor. Dimly I was aware of receding footsteps behind me.

I was almost out for a few moments. Then I came painfully to my feet. A door was open behind me; but the room in which I stood was in darkness. In a minute I had oriented myself. I had been pushed from the living room through the door at the far side. I groped for the electric light switch on the wall. As my fingers touched it I heard the howling sirens of a police car outside.

I thanked heavens for that and flicked the light switch. I stood there for a moment blinking at the sudden light, staring into the opposite corner of the room. A body lay on the floor, a riddled bloody body. I advanced toward it as I heard heavy boots pounding through the front door.

As the police entered the room behind me, I stood over the dead man, staring down into his bloody face. Stupefied horror crawled up my spine. I glanced quickly over my shoulder to see a pair of uniformed policemen, with guns drawn, behind me.

I turned my gaze back to the corpse and my stomach turned slowly over. My empty gun was in my hand. Six slugs were in

the body on the floor; and the body was that of the man that I had threatened to kill less than two hours ago.

It was Harry Murdock!

I HAD known George Wylie for fifteen years. He was the squarest and huskiest copper on the force. I had never known him to lose either a fight or a friend. For a decade I had considered him the one man in all the world to whom I could turn for aid and advice.

But now we looked at each other across the desk as if we had been utter strangers. In silence, he listened to the droning words of the uniformed policeman who stood at my side. Then he picked up his fountain pen and made an entry on the blotter.

My thirty-eight, carefully placed in a box to preserve my fingerprints, lay at the side of the book. Wylie put down his pen and his eyes met mine.

"Your badge, MacLean," he said without expression in his voice.

"I haven't got it, sir," I told him. "I—" I broke off, suddenly realizing the complete futility of the weird story I had to tell. Emotionally and intellectually, I was numb. The events of the day had flowed into the stream of my life with such confusing rapidity that my senses refused to function.

Of course, I was fully aware of the fact that Simmonds and Garson, acting independently, had maneuvered me into a position which might well cost me my life. The setup was absolutely perfect. Six slugs fired from my gun were in Murdock's corpse. My own fingerprints were on that gun. I had publicly threatened Murdock. And I was stuck with an explanation that only a doting mother would believe.

Wylie addressed the policeman. "Put him in that little reception room, next to the lockers. Leave him there. I'll take him to the cells myself."

The patrolman led me away and locked me in the room. I was alone for some five minutes before Wylie came in. He looked at me, sighed and sat down.

"Mac," he said, "there's just one question I have to ask."



"The answer is no," I told him. "I didn't kill Murdock."

Wylie looked at me for a long time. Then he nodded his head slowly. "All right," he said at last. "I believe you."

"You believe me?" I said with unreasonable bitterness. "That's just dandy. Unfortunately, you're not the Grand Jury. You're not the D.A. You're not Murdock's insurance company. They'll never believe me. In three months I'll be as dead as Murdock is."

"Take it easy," said Wylie. "Now what happened?"

I lit a cigarette with a shaking hand and told him. He scrawled thoughtful curlicues on a piece of paper as I was talking. When I had finished my incredible story he remained silent for a long while.

"All right," he said finally. "How do you figure it?"

"It's as easy to figure as it's hard to prove," I said. "Garson's mob pulled the Hartley job. Simmonds is a high-class fence. He's a smart operator who, apparently, has successfully kept his identity under cover for years. This guy Milton, was his emissary; the go-between between himself and his clients."

Wylie grunted agreement. "And this time," he said, "the haul was so big that Simmonds decided to cross up Garson and take a powder with the bonds?"

"Right. Furthermore, he figured he could tie it on Milton. He pretended to Garson that he never got the stuff. He figured that would hold the mob until he made his getaway. But Garson became suspicious. He called on Milton. They believed his story. While there they must have plotted to snatch Simmonds, to recover the bonds from him. But Milton apparently had enough loyalty left to tip off his boss."

"And so," said Wylie, "Simmonds evolves the nervy idea of having a copper snatched in his place, stalling for time to get out on the lam?"

"**R**IGHT again," I said bitterly. "Somehow Murdock had traced the stuff to Garson. He went up there. There must have been a brawl. Murdock

lost. They had him knocked cold in the back room wondering how to kill him safely. Then I came along and they had all the answers. Even luck was against me. The fact that I'd had a fight with Murdock earlier makes Garson's frame foolproof."

I jammed out my cigarette butt and became aware of an overpowering sensation of futility.

"Garson disposes of me and Murdock at one swoop. He calls the cops. Empties my revolver into Murdock. Shills me into grabbing my own gun and takes it on the lam just before the radio cars arrive."

Wylie regarded me thoughtfully. "He didn't know you were a cop?"

"He didn't know I was a cop," I said. "Simmonds had already swiped my shield. Furthermore, he didn't know I'd threatened Murdock this afternoon. He gets that break free. If he has any sense of humor, he'll be slightly hysterical on the night I burn."

"Easy," said Wylie. "You're not dead yet. Now, is there any way we can get hold of this Simmonds? Shall I try his house?"

"You'll find it empty," I told him. "He's well on his way by now."

"Any idea where he planned to go?"

"No," I said. Then slowly a thought came to me. "My stars, Wylie, the beautiful Balkans!" I stood up and banged my fist on the table. "The Balkans. That's it. Find out what ship sails for the Mediterranean tonight. It's even money you'll find Simmonds aboard."

I lit another cigarette and told Wylie the story of the travel folder Garson had found in my borrowed smoking jacket. Wylie sat there thoughtfully smoking. He looked at his wrist watch.

"It's a little after ten," he observed. "Most of those big ships sail at midnight. We have time to check the boats. If we can find Simmonds, we should be able to find Garson."

"And Milton," I said, fresh hope surging in my heart. "The law may want the other two, but I want Milton. Badly."

"Right," said Wylie gravely. "You'll need him, Mac. He's your only witness."

The only guy who could testify that you were in another room when those six shots were heard."

I stood up and chain-lit another cigarette. "All right, Wylie," I said. "For heaven's sake, get going. I'm practically in the death cell now. Send for the best man you've got."

He did not answer immediately. He smoked slowly and regarded me with deep thoughtful eyes. Then he nodded his head.

"I'll do that, Mac," he said. "I'll send the best man I've got."

"Who? Riley? Manning?"

Wylie put out his cigarette with deliberation. He answered me without looking up.

"Why, no, Mac," he drawled. "I've got a better man for this case than Riley or Manning."

"All right," I said impatiently. "But for the love of heaven, hurry. Who's your man?"

He sighed, lifted his head and faced me.

"Well, Mac," he said slowly. "You are."

I stared at him. "Wylie," I said, "you're crazy. I'm under arrest. You've got my gun. I have no shield. How can I go?"

"If you want to be technical," he said, "you can consider it an order."

For a moment the warmth of friendship that welled up inside me drove the chilling apprehension from my heart.

"Wylie," I said, "you mean you'll gamble on my coming back?"

"Well," he drawled, and an odd smile flickered on his lips, "I've known you for fifteen years, Mac. I guess you won't let me down now. Just get back before the eight o'clock wagon leaves for the Tombs. I'll have to send you down on that if you don't crack the case."

"But my badge?" I said. "My gun?"

He took something gold and glittering from his pocket. He handed it to me. "You can use my shield," he said. "You can use my gun, too. I'm afraid we'll have to hold yours for prints, Mac."

I dropped the badge into my pocket. I thrust the gun into my shoulder hol-

ster. I took a step forward and held out my hand. My voice was husky as I spoke.

"Wylie," I began, "I can't tell you—"

He shook my hand quickly and interrupted.

"Forget it," he said. "I know you're no murderer, Mac. Now get going. I'm off at midnight. If you need me, get in touch with me at home. You know the address? The phone number?"

"Lend me your pencil," I said. "And if I ever forget this night, Wylie, I'm a lower louse than I've ever suspected."

I FOUND Simmonds on the *Megantic*. The fact that he was listed under his right name did not surprise me. After all, when he had booked passage, when he had obtained his passport, he had had no idea of what would occur. He had figured on an easy getaway. The fact that it had now become somewhat complicated was certainly no fault of his.

I slipped Wylie's revolver from my holster to my pocket as I stood before the stateroom door. I kept my hand on its butt as I cracked my knuckles against the panel.

The door was opened cautiously. A voice, none too assured, said: "Who's there?"

I didn't bother answering. I slammed my shoulder against the panel and forced my way into the room. I shut the door behind me, stood there, gun in hand. Its muzzle drew a bead on a stooped gray man on the far side of the cabin.

His face was pale and there was fear in his eyes. He blinked at the gun for a bewildered moment, then spoke in a tremulous voice.

"Who—who are you? What do you want?"

"I want three things," I told him. "I want the Hartley bonds. I want Milton's address. I want my coat back, Simmonds."

"I—I'm not Simmonds," he said weakly.

"I said that same thing several times tonight," I told him. "Nobody believed me, either."

He looked around the cabin with fearful eyes as if seeking some miraculous avenue of escape. Finally, his gaze came reluctantly back to the muzzle of Wylie's gun.

"Listen, Simmonds," I said, and it was not histrionics that made my voice hard and menacing, "I've no time to give you all the details now. But you got me into a murder rap and you're going to get me out. I'm fighting for my future, for my life. Only the Hartley bonds and Milton can save me. You can tell me where to find both. I'm desperate. I have nothing to lose. I have no compunction about blowing your brains out. One more corpse in this case'll make little difference."

I walked toward him until the barrel of my gun prodded into his thin chest. His gaunt face was gray now. His lower lip trembled uncontrollably. His hands shook. I pressed the revolver harder into his flesh.

"Well," I said, "do you talk and live? Or—?"

"I'll talk," he quavered. "For heaven's sake take that gun away."

I took it away some six inches. "Well," I said again.

"The bonds," he mumbled through dry lips, "are in that grip there. Milton lives at 567 East 103rd Street. Now, for the love of heaven, take that gun away."

I took it farther away as I moved toward the suitcase he had indicated. I kept the sights lined on him as I opened the bag with my free hand. The Hartley bonds tumbled out on to the table. I mentally registered Milton's address and breathed a sigh of relief that came from the very soles of my feet.

The recovery of the bonds and Milton's testimony would extricate me from the toughest spot I had ever been in. The sharply etched vision of the Sing Sing walls which had been in my mind for the past hour receded. Life, as I saw it now, was a beautiful Dale Carnegie dream.

**A** GENTLE tapping at the stateroom door broke my reverie short. With a gesture I ordered Simmonds to answer

it. I stepped back in the bathroom doorway as he obeyed. The door was pushed roughly open. Then slammed again. A voice, quite familiar to me, said: "You rat! So you thought you'd get away with this?"

I moved forward quickly. "Drop that gun, Garson," I said. "Drop it and put up your hands."

He looked at me in stark amazement. He blinked. His mouth opened but no words came.

"The gun," I said again. "Drop it."

The fingers of his right hand relaxed. There was a soft thud as the weapon fell to the carpeted desk. He uttered an astonished oath.

"Cripes," he said, "and how did you get here?"

"I'm on leave from the Tombs," I told him. "And, incidentally, very glad to see you, Garson."

He looked slowly around the room. A sudden glint came into his eyes as he saw the bonds on the table. That glint turned to a cruel hardness as he looked at Simmonds. Then his gaze settled upon me. He spoke in a quiet conciliatory voice.

"I don't know who you are," he said. "But it seems to me that we can make a deal. We have certain things in common."

"I wish you'd thought of that when you were brushing your cigar on my feet," I told him.

He shrugged and smiled. "We both have a squawk at Simmonds here," he explained. "After all it was he who framed you. It was he who took my bonds."

I raised an eyebrow at that. "Your bonds?" I said.

Garson shrugged again. "Let's talk this over intelligently. I don't know how you escaped the law. But Murdock is dead. Dead with lead from your gun. The D. A.'ll be interested in that. He might even be interested in the testimony of myself and my friends."

"Inasmuch as it would be arrant perjury," I told him, "I quite agree with you."

"Perjury or not," he said, "it's the only testimony there is. Now put up your rod. Let me take those bonds. There'll be a couple of grand in it for you. There'll be no witnesses against you. All you have to do is to dispose of that gun of yours. The one that killed Murdock."

"It's a beautiful thought, Garson," I told him. "But you overlook one thing. I don't need to play ball with you. I've got a witness and a fact."

"What are they?"

"The fact is that Murdock was killed while I was in another room. The witness is Milton."

Garson grunted. "Milton," he muttered slowly.

"Milton," I said again. "You didn't worry about him. First, because you figured you had me perfectly framed. Second, you figured Milton was too scared of your mob ever to talk. Well, he'll talk since I've guaranteed him protection."

There was a mocking smile on Garson's lips then. "Protection?" he said. "And who the hell are you to guarantee him protection?"

Simmonds shuffled uneasily on his feet. He spoke for the first time since Garson had entered the room.

"Garson," he said, "you're a fool. Haven't you realized yet that this man is a detective?"

Garson's eyes opened wide. "A dick?" he said incredulously. "Do you mean to tell me you had the colossal nerve to frame me into snatching a dick?"

"A dick," I told him. "A dick who'll send you to the chair. On my own and Milton's testimony."

"What makes you so certain of Milton's testimony?"

"We'll discuss that at headquarters," I told him. "Come on, both of you. We're leaving."

"Wait a minute," said Garson. "Suppose you can't find Milton?" He raised his voice excitedly. "Suppose Milton's already dead? Suppose Milton is killed before you get to him? In the next few minutes. Suppose my men kill him immediately? Suppose—?"

HE WAS shouting now. He had been shouting in a high clear voice for the last three sentences. I heard the scurrying of feet in the hall outside. Then it suddenly dawned on me what was happening.

Garson had his mob with him!

He had left them outside and come in here to settle with Simmonds alone. Now he instructed them to kill Milton. His deliberately loud voice could easily be heard through the door. And from the sound of the receding footfalls, I gathered that his henchmen had already picked up their cue. They were already on their way to kill my witness.

I dashed past Simmonds and Garson to the door. I stood on one side of it, keeping Garson covered as I glanced quickly up the corridor. I was certain I recognized Big Joe's back disappear up a companionway some fifteen feet ahead.

My mind functioned swiftly then. I would take my prisoners to the dock, hand them over to the first policeman I saw; then phone for a radio car to beat Garson's mob to Milton's place. I still had the upper hand despite Garson's ingenious message to his men.

It was Simmonds who botched things beautifully. With that desperate courage which the arrant coward finds in his blackest moment, he decided that this was the moment on which to stake his freedom and his fortune.

Realizing that my chief concern was keeping Garson covered, he snatched the bonds up from the table and made a wild dash for the door before I succeeded in closing it. He crossed the room at top speed and butted my chest with his head. I reeled backward against the wall. The muzzle of my revolver no longer threatened Garson.

Simmonds jerked at the door knob. As I fell I threw out a hand and grabbed his coat-tail. I tugged with all my strength. Simmonds thudded to the desk beside me. The Hartley bonds scattered about the room.

Simmonds was lying on my gun hand. Frantically, I tried to wrench it loose.

Then Garson's unemotional voice drilled into my ears.

"Leave it lay, copper," he said. "One gun at a time."

I looked up into both defeat and an automatic. Garson had retrieved his own weapon from the floor while I had been grappling with Simmonds.

I stood up slowly. I dropped my own gun. Garson picked it up. Simmonds stood sniveling near the door while Garson, never taking his eyes off us, circled the cabin and picked up the bonds.

Now my hopes were in the gutter again. With an effort I kept a bland, confident expression upon my face. Garson's men were already racing through the city streets on their mission of murder. In a short time Milton would be dead. Somehow I *had* to save him.

Garson smiled expansively. "You've both caused me a lot of trouble," he said. "But it's all right now. Copper or no copper, you'll keep your mouth shut. Without Milton your evidence isn't worth a damn. Pin me for these bonds and I'll pin you right back for murder."

I smiled back at him. "What makes you think you'll kill Milton?" I asked.

"He'll be dead in an hour," said Garson. "Big Joe likes those sort of jobs."

I took a deep breath and shot my final bolt. "What makes you so certain that they'll find Milton at home?"

Garson's eyes narrowed. "What do you mean by that?"

"Do you think I was fool enough to leave him there?" I asked mockingly. "Do you think I didn't hide him out until I was ready for him to see the D. A.? Neither you nor the cops can find Milton until I give the word."

**T**HERE was a long silence. Garson looked at me with thoughtful eyes. "Maybe you're telling the truth," he said slowly. He paused, then added: "Maybe you've got the address of Milton's hideout on you."

I sighed heavily. I looked as glum as I felt.

"Forget it," I said. "You won, Garson. I'll make a deal with you."

Again there was a long silence. I could

hear the excited beating of my own heart. Then I spoke again. "Is it all right if I smoke a cigarette?"

Garson's eyes glinted swiftly. "Go ahead," he said. "But be careful."

He watched me with lynx-like eyes as I thrust my hand into my coat pocket and extracted a smoke. As I put the cigarette in my mouth there was a little slip of paper palmed in my hand. I lit the match and moved casually over toward the porthole. The scrap of paper was still in my hand. My hand was very close to the open port. Garson watched me like a hawk.

"What's that in your hand?" he snapped. "Drop it and get away from that window."

I stood stock still. "There's nothing in my hand," I said. "You're getting jittery, Garson. It's only a fragment of paper that had stuck to my deck of cigarettes."

"Maybe," said Garson. He took a step toward me and snatched it from my hand. He read the writing on it and an expression of triumph crossed his face.

"So," he said, "an address, eh? An address that you were trying to toss through the port. An address you were afraid I'd find if I decided to frisk you. All of which indicates it's the place where Milton is hiding out. All right, I'll play it that way. If Milton's at home the boys'll get him. If he's at this address, I'll get him myself."

I registered doleful defeat. But my heart beat like a kettle-drum. My pulse was high.

"All right, you guys," said Garson. "Get in that bathroom."

He herded us across the threshold of the small bathroom. He slammed the door and locked it. I heard his hasty footfalls as he raced out of the cabin. I looked around the little room desperately. Whatever I did had to be done at once. Five minutes more delay and I would be too late to save Milton's life.

There was no porthole in the bathroom. There was nothing that offered any means of swift escape. Then I looked at the door again and noticed with a bounding heart that it possessed a



mortised lock. I bent down and peered through the keyhole. Garson had left the key in the lock on the far side.

"Simmonds," I said. "Hand me some of that paper."

He handed me a thick wad of tissue. I bent down again and thrust the paper beneath the crack at the bottom of the door. It lay spread out on the floor of the cabin beyond.

I stood up and took a knife from my pocket. It took an effort to keep my fingers steady as I probed the lock with the blade. It was not difficult to turn the brass key, to push it out so that it fell onto the paper which I had thrust beneath the door into the cabin.

Gently I drew the paper back into the bathroom. The key which had fallen upon it came slowly into my hands underneath the door. I snatched it up, inserted it into the lock. I seized the collar of Simmonds' coat, yelled, "Come on," and ran like a madman from the stateroom, dragging the astounded Simmonds after me.

I ran into a big Irish policeman at the foot of the gangplank. I flashed Wylie's badge on him and pushed Simmonds into his arm.

"Book him," I said, "at the Fourth Precinct. Receiving stolen goods. Where's a telephone?"

"At the end of the dock," he said. "I—"

I didn't wait to hear the rest of it. I raced madly down the dock. Then as I gained the street I got the first lucky break I'd had in twenty-four hours.

**A** RADIO car was parked amid the taxicabs at the entrance to the dock. I leaped on the running board, waving Wylie's gold shield in my hand like a flag. I gave them Milton's address, and as the car sped shrieking through the streets, I gasped out my story.

As I estimated it, Garson's killers had a good ten-minute edge on us. On our side we had the right of way. We sped through red lights and traffic like a streamlined juggernaut. The siren howled like a warning banshee. Still, I

was by no means sure that we could make it in time.

We spun around the 103rd Street corner on screaming tires. Parked in the center of the block was a dark limousine. Then, as our brakes took hold, I saw three familiar dark figures emerge from a brownstone house. A limp fourth figure was in their midst.

I snatched the riot gun from the car. The two officers drew their revolvers. We leaped to the curb and charged down the street.

Big Joe was the only one of Garson's men with enough guts to put up a fight. He jerked a revolver from his hip as soon as he saw us. Two bullets howled over my head. The copper at my side fired once and accurately. Big Joe sprawled, red and helpless, upon the stoop.

Frankie's fearful voice shrilled into my ears.

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot! We surrender."

He threw his gun into the gutter. Angelo, beside him, followed suit. In another instant the pair of them were handcuffed together. I helped Milton, white-faced and trembling, off the steps.

"My lord," he said. "In another ten minutes I'd have been dead. What are you going to do with me?"

"Put you in a nice safe cell," I told him. "I need your evidence."

"But you haven't got Garson," he said. "Garson will still kill me if I testify."

"Don't worry about Garson," I said. "You'll be out of jail a long, long time before he will."

I took him down the steps to the radio car. We packed Frankie, Angelo and the unconscious Big Joe in with the two policemen. I took Milton, personally, into a taxicab. I was taking no chances on anything happening to him now.

**T**HE first person I saw when I escorted Milton into the station house was Garson. He was a sorry sight. His eye was purple. His nose was mashed to a pulp. Blood streaked freely down his face. He was sitting on a wooden bench at the side of the desk.

In front of him was George Wylie. He was talking to an interested group from the detectives' room.

"It was the weirdest break that ever happened," he was saying. "There's Maclean, combing the town for Garson. I sent out an alarm for him myself. Well, I'm sitting at home reading the evening paper, smoking a pipe, when the door-bell rings. I answered it, and who do you think's standing there?"

"Garson," I said, pushing my way through the group toward him. "Garson with a gun in his hand."

Wylie looked at me and blinked. "Right," he said. "Right at my own front door is the very guy we're looking for. Calling on me with a gun in his hand."

"Well," I said, "and what did you do about it?"

"Why," drawled Wylie slowly, "I took the gun away from him and brought him in."

I chuckled. "I figured you'd do that," I told him. "Did you have any trouble?"

Wylie looked at the battered face of Garson. "Not as much as he had. But can you imagine him calling on me?"

"Quite easily," I said. "I sent him."

"How?" said Wylie. "Why?"

"Garson figured along the same lines as myself," I told him. "He also remembered that travel circular about the beautiful Balkans. He came down to the ship

searching for Simmonds. He found him and me. He sent his men out to kill Milton. I, then, was forced to put on an act which would convince Garson that Milton was hiding out somewhere else."

Wylie grinned. "So you gave him my address?"

"He took it from me," I said. "I pretended I was trying to get rid of that piece of paper that I had written your address on earlier this evening. Garson was convinced then that it was the place where Milton was. Anyway, he figured he had nothing to lose. Milton was probably at one place or another. If he missed him, his men would get him instead."

Wylie laughed. "You've got a nerve," he said. "Breaking up a peaceful evening at home by sending up some mug with a gun."

I grinned at him. "I've got a lot of faith in you, boy," I said. "I knew you'd take it away from him."

"Okay," said Wylie. "We'll book these boys. I guess you're all cleaned up now, Mac?"

"There's one thing more," I told him. "I want to see Simmonds. He's got something of mine."

"What?"

"My coat," I said. "There's a notebook in it. I've been collecting addresses for years. I'm not going to start all over again at my age."



# Double-Bluff Artist

By Charles Fuller

|| This heist artist discovers a new wrinkle in the stick-up picture—with a double-bluff frame. || B



Y'ASK me, pal, it was one of the slickest stickup jobs I ever pulled. Yes, sir! When you can heist twenty grand from a jug in broad daylight without flashing a rod, and then walk out

knowing the teller won't yodel a beef till you're miles away, you're good!

Sure I did it. How? Easy!

First, I do a little figuring and call on an employment agency. Naw, I didn't want to get no job in a bank. I wanted to hire some guys to help me with the job, see?

Sure, sure, I know it *sounds* goofy—but it worked!

I'd cased this Ranchers' Bank and I knew that at noon the streets were pretty empty. You see, it's located out on the desert, and everybody holes up when it's hot.

Well, that morning I call at this employment agency in the city. I pose as a rancher owning a big layout near the tank town of Braden where this bank's located, which is about forty miles away. In two shakes I've hired four hombres and we're on our way to my "ranch."

By driving careful, I figure on arriving at the jug about fifteen minutes after noon. For even though there's a big payroll on hand, I know the president and his steno go home to chow and leave only a runt of a teller to snooze through the heat. Besides, the jug ain't never been touched off—and it's wired, so the hicks think it's safe, see?

What are the four guys for? I'm com-

ing to that. There ain't no use to cut the take five ways, so I'm just planning to use these dumb bunnies as a bluff.

I tell 'em I'm gonna collect my payroll, that they can wait in the bank where it's cool while I run a coupla other errands, and then I'll be back and pick 'em up.

It's smooth as soap. The dim-wits are so tickled over getting a job that they're all acting like they've been sniffing happy-dust. All except one—a rat-faced guy, sitting next to me.

Oh, he swallows the guff okay, but somehow I don't like his looks. I wish now I hadn't picked him. It's possible this bird has a little more than air between his ears. But I don't worry too much about him.

We arrive on time and pedal into the jug. The runt teller cocks an eye but relaxes when he sees my four "ranch hands" park on a wall bench. Besides, who'd ever figure a heist with-

out cannons, and nobody's even got a hand in a pocket. That shows how wrong a guy can be. Yes, sir! Don't never trust in appearances. They're deceitful as hell!

The runt damn near faints when he reads the note I shoved into his cage.

What'd it say? Oh, not much. Just that all of us were well-heeled and ready to blast his pants off unless he acted natural—you know, to fool any customer that might happen in. It also told him to dish out the payroll, and that my men would stay behind to see he pulled no monkeyshines until I got out with the dough and got our getaway plane ready for a fast takeoff.





Naw, of course we didn't have no plane—but *he* didn't know that. You think I was gonna wait when I got the dough? Hell, mister, I figured on being back in the big city before anyone tumbled to the phony setup. Let the dummies worry along. They didn't know *my* address.

**W**ELL, the old geezer damn near chokes when he sees how nice he's out on a limb. I reach for my pocket casually, and he throws dough into the briefcase I'd handed him, so fast it'd put you in stitches.

I told him then that while my lugs, who was sitting and chewing the fat like old women—while they didn't look and act like heistmen, all he had to do to prove different was to try and kick off the alarm or raise a fuss. He'd find out, but what the hell good would it do him after he was holding lilies that he couldn't smell?

He seemed to get the idea all right. So I walk back to my untrained dim-wits, keeping an eye on the teller all the time to show him I'm wide awake. In a voice that he can't hear, I tell 'em to wait there until I get back from ordering ranch supplies.

I say the old guy's jittery because he's got a payroll on hand and is afraid of stick-ups, but that they shouldn't pay too much attention to him just because he said they looked like the worst crooks he'd ever seen.

Why tell 'em that? Hell, pal, did you ever walk up and tell an Honest John—or a crook—that he looked like a yegg? They did just what I figured. Instead of not looking at him, they scowl like they want to chew the old dodo's ears off. And my rat-faced helper looks sorest of all, like he really resented being called a crook.

Honest, it's as funny as a comedy! There's the old coot staring at them, scared to death, and they're scowling right back at him. And nobody but me knows what it's all about. I'd like to bust a gut laughing at the double bluff I'm pulling. It's all I can do to keep my pan straight.

I walk out, around the corner to where I've parked my car, and let my tickled insides have their way. The streets are still as empty as a stiff-yard at midnight. So away I go, high-tailing it for the big town where I can bury myself. It was a cinch they wouldn't wake up, or get things straightened out before I was well in the clear.

And just like I said, there ain't been a rod flashed, and I got twenty grand in cash. I'm telling you it was the smoothest and slickest heist that I ever pulled.

Sure, sure, I know I got thirty years for it. But I ask you, how could I know I'd picked a dirty crook to help me?

Yeah. That rat-faced guy was once a dip. When we were riding out, damn if he didn't lift my wallet with my address in it!



# Vengeance

## Bait

By **Harold F. Sorensen**

Author of "Poison-Pen Sway," etc.

*Private Detective Rudbeck placed himself on death's altar to avenge an ex-sweetheart's murder. But a shakedown payoff forced Destiny's hand—and changed the altar into a two-way ambush.*



**H**IS strong brown hands pressed the newspaper down like a living thing that was trying to escape, and he read the story of the Ludlow Street

murder again. His black brows were clamped down, his eyes had a smoky-hot glow. He got up and stood gripping the corner of his desk.

Gertrude Young was a page in the book of his life, a vivid passage. He'd never understood her. Even yet he felt some distrustful confusion—like a boy abruptly parted from the lady who has been so nice, treated by her as an equal in age and intelligence—and then he's yanked from her, gets his ears boxed, and through the ringing in his head, hears that she's a bad woman.

Rudbeck rubbed his hands in lonely embarrassment. She hadn't wanted him. Still, he was about to make her this last gift, the richest a man can give, the ripest fruits of his experience as a pri-



vate detective. He would find her murderer.



The door opened, and a man in faded brown suit and hat came in.

"Hello, Bannock," Rudbeck greeted. "Something?"

Bannock came towards the desk. He acted casual, but his alert steps belied him.

Bannock shied his eyes off the newspaper lying on the desk, put a match to his cigar stump.

"Bet you were up late last night."

"I get it." Rudbeck's brow clouded; he ordered hoarsely: "Go on, the police have arrived, the inquisition is in session."

"Where were you last night?" Bannock asked.

Rudbeck stood his ground. He equalled Bannock's six feet of height, but he was without Bannock's girth. His black hair was coarse and dry; his dark face had the muscularity and color of just having come through, or just entering, a high passion. In dress, he favored blue suits, tan shoes, white shirts and maroon ties, and he was wearing this combination now.

His hobby was collecting finely grained briar pipes, which he never smoked. And he had a gift for blending tobaccos, knowing them only by their odors and appearance, and he never smoked these either, though he had several offers of well-paying jobs, if he would devote himself to blending tobaccos.

**B**ANNOCK tilted his weight against him, subtly tried to topple him over or make him step back. Rudbeck resisted and they stood chest to chest. Bannock's suspicious eyes narrowed, the veins at his brown-grayed temples stood out and his coarse red hands moved as though he could scarcely refrain from shoving with them.

"Stand on your own feet."

Bannock settled heavily on his heels, strode to the desk and sat on it.

"I wasn't anywhere," Rudbeck declared.

"Wasn't anywhere," Bannock echoed, like a man entering it in a notebook. "Emory Hango must be an awful liar.

He says you were in his place. That's Ludlow Street, right across from the house where Gert Young got killed."

"That was midnight when I was in Hango's."

"Midnight! Why did you say midnight? I got you cornered now, Rudbeck. The papers don't say when she died. What's the midnight about?"

"You make me sick. I mean there's no one to vouch for me earlier than midnight, so I guess Hango doesn't count. I'm not trying to alibi myself." His voice trailed off, he was thinking hard about Hango. "I'm telling you I can't."

"Yeah?" Bannock tossed the cigar away. "We know she was strangled at ten o'clock. This midnight stuff sounds like you're trying to prove you wouldn't be around the house two hours after you made a kill, Rudbeck."

"Forget it, Bannock. I made a strong play for Gert. We were just at the 'I do' stage. She called it off. Just"—he started a gesture—"like that."

"You don't act like you called it off. When I came here you were broken-up."

"What about it?" Rudbeck shouted. "You can't stop caring for a woman when she stops. I can't. But I never went near her again. I never would have. I knew it was all over, except for my own feelings. I got into the habit of having a drink in Hango's, while I was waiting for her to dress or to come back from shopping. I still go to Hango's. Make something out of it."

"Okay," Bannock grunted, with the look of a man coming out of a storm shelter. "You're not the sort to take a break-up easily. Still, that isn't murder. I know, I know, I was tough. But I had to show you you're in the squeeze. Now you'll talk, see? If I came in here cold, and asked you who was the guy she threw you over for—"

"I'd say I didn't know."

Bannock's eyes frosted, his lips without the smile looked like meat. He forced a grin.

"Sure, that's what you would, Rudbeck, but now . . . ."

Rudbeck's shiny coal-chip eyes flicked over him. "I don't know."

His face red with anger, Bannock stamped out.

Rudbeck grabbed his hat, and went out, too.

In Hango's, three men sat at a table with drinks and cards. Besides them there was only the barkeep. Rudbeck drank half a beer and asked: "Hango get down yet?"

The barman's hand started up to gesture with the rag, left it, closed on it again. He gestured with his head.

"He's in the office."

Rudbeck pushed back the chromium and black-leather door.

Hango glanced up from the papers on his desk with the concern of business in his little eyes. Staring at Rudbeck, his stout face lighted up and he exclaimed fulsomely: "Hello, Rudbeck."

"Hi, Hango," the detective said flatly, deliberately contrasting it with Hango's high-flown greeting, before sinking into a chair. "You said something to me last night, Hango."

Hango blinked, rubbed a palm over his bald head and smiled till his small mouth was lost in creases.

"I thought I talked to you quite a lot, Rudbeck. But you know how it is with me, I talk to so many."

"No," Rudbeck shook his head decisively, "you haven't forgotten this. Hango, you said Cornelius Warburton—"

**H**ANGO had a startled look. "You— Yeah, I said I saw Warburton about eight o'clock. I was teasing you, Rudbeck. Sure, Warburton passed here about eight o'clock as I was coming in. He went on down the street."

"Last night you said nine-thirty. And you said he went into the house across the street. You gave me the razz because Warburton dished me out with Gert Young. What are you changing your story for? Did you tell the cops you saw him?" He grunted at Hango's excuse. "You didn't forget to tell I was here."

Hango hitched his stomach up, his fat face agleam with perspiration.

"Are you trying to put me on the spot, Rudbeck? What do you want me to do? I saw a man go past here and up the street and turn the corner. I thought he was Warburton. I couldn't be sure in that light. There's a tie between you and Gert Young, the cops were sure to find out. You were here, she was murdered. Can I help it? The cops were bound to come to you, everybody knows there's a tie between—"

"There's a tie between her and Warburton. Since you saw him go into the house."

"Wait a minute!" Hango pointed a finger at him, and the perspiration came out more thickly on Hango's face. "I never any time saw him go into that house, not once. I put that in to rib you. And if I did—that's an apartment house. You figure yourself, how many people could he know over there."

Rudbeck slid down in the chair. Hango hadn't seen Warburton go into the house, not once, not any time . . .

"Anyway," Hango brightened, "Warburton's married. Gert Young wouldn't have tossed you over—" He left it in the air.

"He was married, he got a divorce," Rudbeck corrected carelessly. "Hango, I think Bannock is tailing me. Go out and get me a glass of beer and see if he is, will you?"

Before the door closed behind Hango, Rudbeck had skipped across the office, out the other door and into the corridor. In the kitchen, the cook had his head in the icebox. Rudbeck sauntered past him, but the cook didn't take his head out of the refrigerator.

Rudbeck learned, when he telephoned, that Warburton was not in the office. The detective drew his fingernail along under the residence address, and took a cab out to the house. It cost over four dollars.

He stood at the open gates and looked up the long drive that went up to the house, looped about a tear-shaped grass plot and came back on itself. If Warburton had stayed from business, he would not want visitors. That would make it hard getting past the butler.

Near the house he turned off the flagged path and went round the side, mopping his forehead. Comfortable in the shade of a big, colorful umbrella, Warburton slouched in a beach chair. Beside him, in a circular pool, water plumed up in a fountain.

"Hello, Warburton," Rudbeck said.

The beach chair creaked and swayed as Warburton turned on his hip and looked up at him.

"I don't remember you," Warburton replied.

"We met at some party. I'm Mark Rudbeck."

They seemed to understand each other at once, at least to realize that they had not met for friendship. Warburton was the sort to come to the point of anything at once. He might have been holding something in his teeth, the way he kept his jaw clenched, while his big, blood-shot eyes glared at Rudbeck, ordering, daring him to continue.

Rudbeck sat on the rim of the pool. "I came about Gert Young."

"I don't know her," Warburton said at once.

Rudbeck grimaced, dipped his hand into the water.

"I suppose you never know people who are in a scandal."

"That about sums up my attitude."

"This is murder."

**R**UDBECK glanced at the man for whom Gert had cut him off. Warburton was older than himself by twenty years, gray-haired, his face red and white, and it looked as though it had weathered every experience a man of strong desire and supreme egotism was liable to get himself in for. He held his head as though he knew he would always come out on top.

"Your attitude doesn't count," Rudbeck continued. "It's a matter of what you can prove for yourself as against what others can prove against you. Last night you went to see Gert."

"I was at home all last night," Warburton stiffened. He tacked on as if he did not have to: "I can prove it."

A wisp of Warburton's cigarette smoke stranded under Rudbeck's nose.

"I blended that cigarette for Gert. You could not have obtained the recipe anywhere else."

Warburton convulsively flung the cigarette away.

"But it doesn't matter," Rudbeck shrugged, "so much as that you were seen. Warburton, Gert and I— But I guess she's told you more about me and her than I know myself. I think you killed her."

Warburton's heavy nose went up in a sneer. "Vindictive!"

"The hell I— Well, whatever it is."

"You're wasting your time." Warburton composed himself for a nap.

"We'll see. You take the high road, and I'll take the low. We'll see who gets there first."

Warburton snapped his eyes open. "Where?"

Rudbeck strolled away over the grass, answering without turning his head: "The electric chair."

There was no cab about, no likelihood of one turning up. It meant asking to use Warburton's phone, or . . . Rudbeck toiled through the dust of the hot afternoon. After a mile he could not think any more, the heat and his extreme thirst overcome his brain. He felt only irritation. He was glad to get to the bus station.

He expected it, and that was the way it was. Bannock was waiting at his office, his face looking like a piece of too-long uncooked cube steak. He opened the door, and Bannock shut it.

"Where you been?" Bannock demanded.

"Walking."

Bannock glared at his dusty shoes and trousers, at his sweat-streaked face and the touch of sunburn that looked like heightened color.

"You were walking all right. Where?"

The newspaper was still on his desk. Rudbeck sat down wearily, turning the pages, running his finger from top to bottom of each column, scanning the items.

TDA

His finger stopped, and he glanced up at Bannock.

"You think we could forget this cat and dog act?" Rudbeck asked. "I'd like a straight answer to a simple question."

Bannock moved his hand as if suspiciously smoothing the air in front of him.

"Have you got anything in the Young case, Bannock?"

Bannock laughed brittlely. "Getting nervous? I'll tell you what I got. You! I only got to prove it on you, Rudbeck. It may take me—"

Rudbeck stopped listening and resumed tracing down the columns. He found a small notice: Mrs. Cornelius Warburton was coming east. That was as much as he got till he turned to the gossip. That contained an enigmatical blurb; a certain couple rued their divorce. No names; the columnist hinted broadly that the husband missed his wife's money, and that the wife missed the classy crowd that her husband had made it possible for her to mix in.

Bannock was still talking: "You just try that running out on me again." He growled through his teeth and went to the door. "I don't care if it gets me put back in uniform, I'll have you in, worked over, and shifted from precinct to precinct till you're stir-simple."

Bannock banged the door behind him.

**I**T WAS no longer possible to see the newsprint. Rudbeck strode over to the darkening windows and consulted the nearby tower clock. It was nearly seven. The ringing of the phone startled him.

He grabbed it up and shouted: "What do you want?"

"Rudbeck, this is Hango." The voice was tight, Hango put it out cautiously, like a sore foot that might be stepped on. "I've been trying to get you, Rudbeck."

"Something up?"

"I'll say, but I can't tell it over the phone. Rudbeck, you're not sore? You know, the talk we had, it was kind of like an argument, and you walked out without getting your beer."

"No, no," Rudbeck replied bluffly. "Was Bannock there?"

"Sure he was. And sore! That's what I want to know. Can you dodge him? If you can, I'll play along with you. I got something, but I don't want police trouble, Rudbeck. I've been thinking all afternoon. It's been on my conscience. I don't want enemies, Rudbeck. I never did. But there's some things . . . But I'd rather you handled this than Bannock. Can you duck him?"

"Easily. I phone a friend in the next building. Then I go up to the roof, and he opens the roof door of his building. I come out around the corner. But not at your place, Hango, that's where Bannock will look first if he misses me. You wait in your car, about a half dozen blocks north along Ludlow Street."

Rudbeck went downstairs and out the front. He waited at the curb till a cab dipped in towards him. He got in.

Getting out of the cab, he walked till he came to Hango's bottle-green car. Hango sat with his arms resting on the wheel, staring straight ahead at headlights as they gleamed towards him.

"Geez!" Hango jumped.

Rudbeck waited till the car was moving. "Well, what happened, Hango?" he asked then.

Hango drove slowly but with elaborate care, and his voice was light.

"I told you a damn lot of things in my office this afternoon."

"Sure, I know."

"But what could I do?" Hango protested, the dashlight gleaming on his sweaty, full face. "I didn't want to finger a man for murder. Then, there's the cops. If I started a thing like this, and couldn't go all the way, the cops would say the case flopped on account of me, and you know what a life I'd have after that. When you were gone, I got to thinking. Suppose Warburton did do it. I was protecting a lousy woman-killer. It began to work on me, finally I couldn't stand it. I went out to a dial phone and I called Warburton."

Rudbeck whistled.

"Yeah!" Hango puffed. "I figured if he was clean, it wouldn't do any harm. If he wasn't. . . . Rudbeck, he's dirty."

Rudbeck made a noise in his throat.

"I said to him," Hango related excitedly, "this is the man who knows you went to see Gert Young last night." I changed my voice of course."

"Sure."

"And he says—this will knock you over," Hango wheezed, "he says, 'You don't have to pretend, Rudbeck, what do you want?' He thought it was *you*."

"What time?"

"Around five."

"I left him at three. I told him I knew he had been there last night. I made it strong."

"That's why, then," Hango bounced, holding the wheel. "So I thought I better see what he says. I told him I wanted dough, lots of it. He has two thousand dollars. I said, when do I get more. He says when his wife comes back to live with him. I said okay, the two thousand will do for a starter. And he said, come out to the same place we were talking at, it will be on the ground."

Rudbeck ordered curtly: "Take Northampton Avenue out to the Old Mill Road. We'll go to his house."

Hango turned the car sharply right, blurting: "You going to take the money? Rudbeck, I didn't do this for that. I—"

"You've been swell about this, Hango. But we have to get that money, and then we have him for paying to have information suppressed."

Hango nodded and stepped on the gas.

**A**FTER a few minutes, Rudbeck said: "You realize how this works out, Hango? If you hadn't ribbed me about Warburton last night, you'd be in a first-class seat for milking him to death."

"I don't want money like that."

"That's why I think more of you. I know things aren't good. You could use money."

"Well, maybe. Say, you ain't accusing me?"

"What the hell?" Rudbeck snorted. "Why, right now you could be going to get that dough yourself."

Hango shrugged a burden off his shoulders.

Rudbeck murmured: "Only you wouldn't know where to go."

"Gee whiz!" Hango exclaimed. "I never thought of that."

"As a matter of fact, I was talking to him alongside his fountain," Rudbeck said. "That's where the money will be. We'll get that first."

The house was dark, but the night was somewhat misty and that afforded fair visibility.

"It's right there," Rudbeck pointed.

"All right, you know where it is, you go get it, Rudbeck. I'll cover you, in case of anything."

"Hell," Rudbeck replied, "I'm going to look around first. I'm not walking into anything. You think I'm dopey?"

"Never mind what I think," Hango piped. "Just mind what I tell you."

"I suppose that's a gun digging in my back. Hango, you gone nuts?"

"You walk straight for that fountain." Hango took Rudbeck's gun and prodded the two weapons into Rudbeck's back. "I'm staying behind you. You're taking anything that comes our way. I could have cut my tongue out for telling you about Warburton."

Rudbeck moved ahead slowly, grumbling: "You want to kill me because you told me. And Warburton probably wants to kill me because he thinks I'm the one pressing him. You phoned Warburton for nothing but to blackmail him, and he surprised you by thinking you were me. You thought you saw a chance to collect from him. And you figured you had to get rid of me because I might catch up with both him and you sometime. Besides, you didn't know where he meant the money would be."

Hango dug the guns into his back. A few feet from the pool Rudbeck heard the play of the water, felt the cool moist breeze that blew from it.

The chair was about where it had been; he felt the ground all about it.

Hango was breathing noisily. "Don't do anything. I could kill you here and it would be that much more on Warburton's head. . . . Nothing on me. . . . Don't excite me. I'm nervous, I'm warning you."



Rudbeck's fingers traced the outline of an envelope.

"Hango!"

"You got it!" Hango ejaculated. "Hand it over."

Rudbeck got a grip on the envelope and sprang into the pool. He felt a slight drag on the envelope. Before he hit the water, a big light flashed on, flooding bright and merciless on the pool.

The water was shallow; he hit his chest a crack on the bottom and lost his breath.

Hango screeched: "Wait, wait!"

Rudbeck stuck his head up. Hango was petrified, the two guns pointed towards the light, his face dead white.

Recovering himself Hango started to shoot towards the light, turned and ran. From behind the light a gun spat at Hango.

**H**ANGO managed to get out of the fierce light. A dim shadow, he paused, fired quickly and the light went out. Flames leaped from Hango's gun into the darkness, were caught on another gun and hurled back at him. They exchanged five shots. Some one screamed, choked into silence. Hango ran on. It was not he that had got it.

From down the driveway, the fire started again, poking and hissing at the running Hango. He was running right into it. Hango raced back towards the pool, firing down the drive as he came.

Rudbeck clambered out, heavy with water. He dashed at Hango. The flame of Hango's gun was almost in his face, then he had Hango's legs. They thrashed about, Hango cursing, beating at him with the gun.

"Stop it!"

Rudbeck knew Bannock's voice when he heard it. He rolled clear of Hango and got up.

"What's this all about?" Bannock demanded. "Hey, Rudbeck?"

"Better see who's behind that spotlight and what happened to him," Rudbeck suggested to the man alongside Bannock.

Bannock nodded confirmation, and the man ran off.

"I think you'll find it's Warburton," Rudbeck sighed. "He killed Gert, Bannock."

The words ripped out of Bannock. "How do you know?"

Rudbeck hauled Hango to his feet. "Hango saw Warburton go into the house last night and told me. After the murder story came out, Hango realized he had lost a chance to squeeze Warburton. He asked Warburton for money, and Warburton thought he was I. Hango brought me out here to locate the money—and to get me killed.

"He didn't care if Warburton killed me, or if he had to kill me himself, and leave my body for Warburton to get rid of. With me dead, Hango would have Warburton for my murder, besides Gert's. And this was a trap. The moment I picked up the envelope, that searchlight went on. Warburton was surprised to see Hango, and didn't fire till Hango did."

"You fool," Bannock raged. "Why didn't you tell me? The way you came out of your building in plain sight, I almost didn't bother to follow you. Why didn't you give me this, let me get after Warburton?"

"Because we had nothing on Warburton. Besides, Hango refused to repeat he'd seen Warburton last night. There's no evidence now against Warburton. It's just that his guilty conscience is so bad, he doesn't know how much was seen of him. Okay, don't argue with me. I did my best. I came out here, put my life up as bait, to see if anything would happen. Well, whatever Warburton got is as much as he'll ever get."

The detective came running back, holstered at Bannock: "He's dead. Cornelius Warburton. Cripes, Bannock, will there be a stink about this!"

Hango writhed in Rudbeck's grip, screamed: "Let me go! You can't prove I tried to shake him down. You got nothing on me."

Rudbeck shoved Hango into Bannock's arms.

"You got anything against Hango?"

"No," Bannock replied heavily, "nothing but Warburton's murder."

# Corpse Parlay



*By Arthur Watts Brown*



**I**T'S about three o'clock in the morning when I get back to the hotel. Rodney, the night clerk, who is quite gray-haired and wears glasses, has a newspaper spread out in front of him.

"Ha, ha," he says, looking up from the horse page. "Your cousin must be lost again as he is not in as yet."

I reply: "What is it to you whether my cousin Clarence from Kalamazoo is out or whether he is in?"

Cousin Clarence is the eleventh relative to visit me since the World's Fair started and he gives me a great many headaches. When Clarence showed up in town to spend a week with me, his scratch amounted to three dollars and a return trip ticket back to Kalamazoo. The return trip ticket, he tells me, has become lost. This is now going on the

*The World's Fair brought this country hick to town to see the sights. But he hadn't seen anything until the world's fairest showed him the primrose path from the hot spot to the hot squat.*

third week that I have had Clarence to feed, water and keep in spending money. It now seems he is about to get me mixed up with murder but I don't know this yet.

"Make believe I did not mention your cousin," Rodney, the night clerk apologizes. "Who do you like in the big Diamond Horseshoe Handicap tomorrow?"

I look over the horse entries and Rodney and I pick a couple of winners out at Belmont Park. This is a very tough thing to do, as Belmont Park is a very highbrow place which caters to high society and as soon as a horse gets into high society it develops the old inferiority complex and will most likely run a bad fifth.

It is some time later when a taxi-jockey comes into the lobby. It is only an ordinary looking jockey but it turns out to be the start of me tangling with the Dosesanto mobsters who are very bad environment. The jockey walks up to Rodney, the night clerk and says, to wit:

"I have a guy out in my cab by name of Clarence Whistlebottom without any clothes on. He claims he lives in your joint here with his cousin Herbert Pop-off. Is this true?"

I cut in and say: "I am Herbert Pop-off, right here. And if you have cousin Clarence outside without any clothes on, one of you should be arrested as this is against the law, and furthermore, what did you do with his clothes?"

"Mister," the jockey says, "I don't know nothing about the gent's hand-me-downs. I only know I pick him up down on Fourteenth Street where he gives me the whistle from a doorway. At the time he is in the raw which he still continues to be. For a cab bill of a dollar six-bits you can have him. Otherwise he goes with me to the precinct station."

"Don't he have any money of his own?" I ask, remembering the sawbuck I handed Clarence only yesterday.

"No, buddy," the jock replies. "When the burglar steals your cousin's clothes he steals the pockets, too."

"Okay," I say. "I'll bail Clarence out—although I have come from Fourteenth Street to here many times for a dollar even. You must have had Clarence for a ride around Central Park."

The jockey hands me back my change. "I bet you never come from Fourteenth Street up here for a dollar in the raw," he says. And I have to admit he is right.

Rodney, the night clerk, digs up a flea-bitten topcoat from some place and we go outside. Sure enough, it is like the jockey says. Clarence is snuggled up over in a corner of the taxi seat looking like something that might have been pinched out of the Metropolitan Museum but not so classy. I open up the door of the jalopy and throw the coat over Clarence but he don't show any signs of knowing what it is all about.

I shake him and say: "Don't play the dummy, Clarence. I know you're not asleep because you ain't making funny noises. But," I add, "I never see you so quiet when you was awake, either."

I see he is passed out. There is a large egg over his left ear and also a mouse under one eye. After a bit the jockey, I and Rodney manage to get Clarence upstairs to my room.

When I snap the light on I look at the rug on the floor of the room. It looks like somebody had entertained the whole Atlantic Ocean. There is a dampness all about, and here and there are little puddles of water.

"Oh, yes," Rodney, the night clerk, explains. "I forgot to tell you that your cousin went out and left the water running into the bath tub. It flowed over and disconnected all the plaster from the ceiling of the room below. The manager has had me put a charge of sixty-nine dollars on your bill for damages."

I pour a slug of my best Scotch over Clarence's tonsils and we toss him onto

the bed. I also give the jockey and Rodney a jolt of same, making a mental note to hide the bottle in a different place when Rodney leaves as of course he has a pass key.

It is right after I crawl into the hay that the phone starts fighting itself. I let it ring, figuring that it's Rodney looking for another hooker of my Scotch, but after about the fourth ring somebody starts belting away on the door from the hall like it was a drum in Benny Goodman's band. This burns me. I slide out of the sheets and make the door in two bounds, figuring to pin Rodney's ears back. But I don't pin anybody's ears back.

When I swing the door a couple of very hefty coppers are standing there. Each has got a roscoe in hand and both roscoes are pointed right at my pantry. I am very astonished at this and, before I can duck, the copper on my right has swung a haymaker and I find myself on the floor quite far back from where I was. At least I know afterward it is the floor although at the time I would lay seven to five that I am riding on Joe Piscatti's Dipsy-doodle at Coney Island.

**P**RESENTLY I open my peepers and find that the room has quit playing hop-squat, and all but two of the coppers have gone. One of them, which I afterwards learn is named McGutluck, has a ham around Clarence's ear and Clarence is sitting up on the edge of the bed looking pretty teetery. McGutluck's paw has just come away from my cousin's face and Clarence is trying to stop his nose-bleed with a section of pillow case. I think to myself that Clarence's chums back in Kalamazoo are going to notice quite a change in Clarence when he gets back home if this keeps up. So I say:

"What the hell is coming off here?"

This draws another pitch from the flatfoot who is standing near me, but I see this one coming and roll under the bed. After I am hauled out by one leg and my elbows get all skinned up from being dragged across the floor I am somewhat burned up.

"What is the meaning of this?" I say. "Also, what is the reason you are working on my cousin Clarence's pan in this manner?"

"If this is your cousin," McGutluck says, "he is wanted for murder. Not because he is your cousin, but because Gracie Goldfinch was scragged tonight and your cousin's leather wallet with papers belonging to him was found in her apartment down on Fourteenth Street. The wallet was found on the floor there, next to which Gracie is lying in a pool of blood with a shiv sticking out of one rib. Your cousin's wallet is covered by stains from this blood. There was no money in the wallet," the copper adds, regretfully, I think.

I blink my eyes and say: "Are you speaking of the tomato who I read in the papers is to be exhibit A witness for District Attorney Thomson Dewar against "Reefer" Dosesanto, the marijuana king?"

"She was going to be," McGutluck says, "until your cousin scragged her."

"Copper, this cannot be true," I state. "If you have the idea that Clarence was maybe paid to rub the witness for the state of New York by the Dosesanto mob, you are mistaken. Clarence is a native son of Kalamazoo, Michigan, and the chances are he has never heard of Reefer Dosesanto or any of his mob."

At this point the copper asks Clarence is this true, and if so what is he doing in New York and what is his business in Kalamazoo, if any.

"I have come to New York to see the World's Fair," Clarence mumbles. "And back in Kalamazoo I am in the blood business."

This statement fetches another belt from McGutluck and also puzzles me until I happen to think that I hear the only job Clarence is able to land for some time back in the old home town, is to sell a few gills of blood to a hospital now and then.

"He means he gives blood transfusions to any takers," I explain. "But I wish to know more about this, Clarence. Were you in Gracie Goldfinch's place tonight,

and if so what were you doing there? It looked like you was maybe playing house," I say, recalling the state he showed up at the hotel in.

"I don't know anything about playing house," Clarence admits. "All I know is as follows: I go down to a dance hall where I see they advertise the most beautiful dancing partners in the city, and I meet up with a doll by name of Esmeralda La Carmen and she is very nice and I date her up. After the dance joint closes I blow her to sinkers and java and then I take her home to her flat. She is very beautiful, too, just like the ad says."

"These janes are a dime a dozen in New York here," I tell Clarence.

"Maybe," he said. "The best I could do is get twenty dances for a dollar. Anyway, we are sitting in her place when something hits me on the noggin and that is all I know for a spell. When I come to, it is dark in the apartment and I am laying on the floor and I am stripped. I do not find anything of Esmeralda or my clothes at once.

"At length," Clarence says, "I find a paper of matches on a table. I light one and see Esmeralda with this knife sticking out of her on the floor, but I still don't locate my clothes. I had them on before the brick fell on my skull," he explains, "but now they are gone. I am very startled to see that Esmeralda is pretty well dead and I think, clothes or no clothes, I must be going.

"So I let myself out the door and go downstairs and mark time in the entrance of the building until I see a taxi and on the way back to the hotel I pass out again. And now, if you do not mind," Clarence says, "I should very much like to get some sleep."

"You will maybe sleep," says McGutluck, the copper, "but not here. It is plain to see that this Esmeralda jane you speak of is none other than Gracie Goldfinch and you and this other guy are coming to headquarters," meaning me.

"I will go to your headquarters," I say. "But only to give the captain a piece

of my mind as I can establish an alibi for my time between two o'clock this afternoon and right now."

CLARENCE and I get dressed and I am surprised to note that Clarence has still got, and puts on, the only suit of clothes he came to New York with. But I don't think much about this until later. Downstairs the coppers ask Rodney is it true that I get in about three o'clock like I have told them.

Rodney says this is the case. He also says we have figured that the winner of the Diamond Horseshoe Handicap will be a nag by name of Garden of Eden. Afterwards I hear McGutluck puts a fin on this beetle which turns out to run seventh, and I am very glad of this on account of the way my jaw still feels tomorrow night from the sock he hung on it tonight.

Well, we finally wind up at police headquarters and after more nonsense than I wish to tell about, the alibi I speak for myself gets across and I am let go. This is maybe on account I work for the New York *Looking Glass* which is an administration paper. However, Clarence is required to stay in clink for a time.

I leave and go back to the hotel and get a few hours shut-eye. When the operator leans on the telephone bell to wake me up at noon I am in the middle of a dream about a horse by name of Copper Kettle. Copper Kettle, I recall after I answer the phone and say yes, dearie, I am up, to the operator, is a plug that has never won a heat and so far as my handicapping goes never will win one.

But for some reason or other the owner of this Copper Kettle has paid the entrance fee and elected to run this turtle in the big race which I am going to attend. I lay my dreams to the fact that the title "Copper" has got into my topper from last night's shenanigans and let it go at that.

I pick up the phone and after a few wrong pitches I get hold of a guy by name of Sidney Prince who has a honey

of a Buick and Sidney says it is apple pie if I wish to ride out to Belmont Park with him. Also I get hold of a lawyer I know and tell him to go down to the cooler and do what he can to spring Clarence but not to make it before six P. M., as this is the time I figure to be back to the city after the races are over.

This Sidney Prince is not bad companionship. If I would know I will be the reason Sidney winds up in Mercy Hospital some hours later I will feel bad. But I don't.

"Chum," Sidney says, after the fourth race of the day and we have guessed wrong four times, "the next race is the Diamond Horseshoe, and what do you like in same?"

"It is not a question what I like," I tell him. "It is a question what is going to win. Garden of Eden," I say, "will make the rest of those stiffies think they are doing a pause for station announcement and when they get through pausing, Garden of Eden will have won the race."

"This may be true," Sidney admits. "But the way those chiselers of bookies handle matters, I doubt if you will get better than seven to ten on your selection. However," he says, "I will wager a sawbuck on this Garden of Eden. You place the bet."

With this he hands me the money. I also have a ten which Rodney has asked me to place for him on this favorite.

I look at the bookie's boards which lists the odds on each nag and I see the best price on Garden of Eden is nine to ten, which is a very lousy price on any horse running against fourteen others. Copper Kettle is listed at twenty to one, which is also a tightwad lay for all the form this beetle has ever displayed.

I think, what to hell, if I do not put in this bet on Garden of Eden and he does win I am only eighteen bucks out and probably I can make this amount up on the last two races of the day, maybe. On the other hand, Copper Kettle and my dream about the same. . . .

I find a book that will give me twenty-

five to one on my dough—mine and Sidney's—and I put this thirty bob on Copper Kettle. I say nothing to Sidney about this, of course, when I go back to where he is leaning on the rail waiting for the starter to get the horses away.

WELL, this turns out to be the only boat race which I am ever in on. Copper Kettle takes the lead at the start and is never headed. I am so excited when this dog comes under the finish wire three lengths to the good that I start yelling like I don't know what—that is until Sidney looks at me funny and says:

"What are you so frenzied about? Garden of Eden, which we wager on, has finished so far in the ruck that his owner will have to post a reward for the horse's safe return."

"I am sorry, Sidney," I say, wiping the grin off my pan. "I am yelling to think I am still alive, as I know if any horse we pick will win I would have a heart failure and very likely will pass out."

"I only wish that Reefer Dosesanto, the owner of this Copper Kettle steed which has just stole this race, will get the electric chair when his trial comes up," Sidney grumbles. "If there ever was a boat race, I have just seen one."

It is seen at this point that the name Dosesanto is connecting with my life again.

"I did not know that this Copper Kettle was owned by Reefer Dosesanto," I say, "or I would not have put down a small bet on the beetle to show, which I did. However, Sidney," I excuse myself, "I may as well go and collect what I have coming to me."

There are not many in the payoff line, but there is a dark-complexioned guy in a gray, pin-stripe suit which has a familiar look—the suit, I mean. The guy wearing it is about my own build and on his pan he has a very sneaky expression.

He is standing just ahead of me, and the more I study the back of this gent's coat the more thoughtful I seem to grow. This pin-stripe suit reminds me of



things. It reminds me that this is exactly the same model which I myself buy over at Hogans the Hatters on Broadway just before Easter.

I recall that cousin Clarence only brought one suit of clothing to New York with him, and I also recall that when the coppers run him in last night it is that suit which Clarence puts on to go to headquarters, although some burglar stole it away from him and sent him home naked.

Now I know that Clarence has no Houdini in him, whatever else he may have, but I also know that he has been helping himself to my neckties, socks, underwear and shirts ever since he came to visit me. I take a look down at the pants of this pin-stripe model, and I know that Clarence has finally borrowed my best suit—and lost it to this burglar who is standing just ahead of me in the payoff line.

I am hip to this as the right cuff of the pants has a large burned spot on it. The reason for this scorch is on account of the boys down at Dunigan's Pool Parlor giving me a hot-foot a couple of weeks back and setting fire to these pants by their foolishness. I collect my winnings and go back to where Sidney is standing down on the rail, and I am very thoughtful, indeed.

"Sidney," I say, "I have very much of a problem staring at me."

"Friend," Sidney tells me, "it is no problem. I have just figured where in this next race there is a beetle by name of Honey Child which cannot lose. Put a finif on this and you will recoup your losses, as I have heard some one say someplace or other."

"I do not wish to recoup my losses, Sidney," I tell him. "But I will enjoy recouping my suit of clothes which I buy over at Hogans the Hatters, and which was pinched off my cousin Clarence."

I explain the set up to Sidney, and I point out the dark-complexioned guy. He is standing not far away from Sidney and I, and he is talking with the side of his mouth to a large gorilla in a check suit and a Hitler mustache.

"THIS is very strange," Sidney says. "The goon who you say has on your clothing is Bo Peep Ferandus and he is talking to Pollock Joe Dvorinsky. I do not doubt that Bo Peep is the one who himself scragged Gracie Goldfinch as he is one of Reefer Dosesanto's mob. I am only surprised," Sidney says, "that he did not also slide a shiv into your cousin instead of only whacking him on the noggin like you say."

"I am inclined to wish he did," I own up, "although it would probably spoil the suit. But what do I do now, I wish to know?"

"This will require a thought," Sidney admits. "You cannot holler copper, because anyone who hollers copper on one of the Dosesanto mob will usually find himself in such a state as Gracie Goldfinch is found. Furthermore, the chances are he will not find himself at all and neither will anybody else except maybe the fishes in the East River."

"This is all very well," I say, "but what is to be done about my suit of clothes which this Bo Peep guy has attached?"

He tells me: "We cannot very well do anything about the matter here and now, but it is possible that if we tag this Bo Peep to where he lives something will turn up."

"Probably my toes," I think aloud.

"The chances are," Sidney points out, "that he and Pollock Joe drove out here. If this proves to be the case we will tail them back to the city and see where Bo Peep is holing in."

We do this, and after losing them in traffic and finding them again numerous times we wind up down on West Fourth Street in Greenwich Village. It is Pollock Joe's car and he parks it near a fire hydrant in front of a sad-looking tenement house. Bo Peep and Pollock Joe get out and let themselves into this house with a key.

After a few minutes' thought and conversation, I say:

"Sidney, I have no wish to get mixed in with any of the Dosesanto mob, but I will like to get my suit back which I

lay out a nice price for at Hogans the Hatters. Suppose you leave me here, where I can watch this joint, and you go uptown and get hold of McGutluck, the copper, and steer him back with you."

This is agreeable to Sidney, so he pushes off and I fade into a doorway of a building right next door to the joint where Bo Peep and Polock Joe have entered and gone into. This building, I remember, is where Johnny Gardinos used to have a speak during prohibition, but at present is a very deserted looking structure.

Presently it starts to rain and I turn up the collar of my coat and snuggle back against the door of the place out of the weather. I get a surprise when this door against which I am leaning swings in and I swing with it.

I look around but see nobody there. It is too soon for Sidney to have told his tale to McGutluck, the copper, and get back here again with him, so I think it will be a good idea to take shelter inside this old speakeasy a bit.

The idea was maybe good but the result was terrible. Suddenly something hits me like a ton of earth and I see any number of strange lights dancing around in front of my eyes. When I come to, I am upstairs in this building which must have a connecting door to Bo Peep's tenement home. Bo Peep, Polock Joe and another big guy with three chins who is probably King Kong are standing over me.

"I have notice you putting the eye on me out at the track today," this Bo Peep speaks out, "and me an' Joe are wise that you and your pal fellow follow us home. If you are a stealth it is just too bad as we do not care to have our business pried into."

My head is swirling around somewhat or I probably will not make the following mistake, but I make it. I say:

"I do not like to lay out my cash for a suit of clothes at Hogans the Hatters and then have it stole away from me either, which has been done by you. If you wish to return my property I shall

be glad to take it and go away, although," I say, "I have no idea how my cousin Clarence who is being held for the scragging of Gracie Goldfinch will get out of hock. However, Officer McGutluck will be here soon and I will let him attend to this matter."

WITH this Polock Joe gives me a most peculiar look, after which he takes a belt at my jaw. I fall over and make believe I am out again but I hear the following conversation.

Polock Joe says: "I have told you, Bo Peep, that you are very simple to wear this suit today even if you do say there are several thousand of this same model being worn along Broadway right now."

"I suppose," answers Bo Peep, "that you should rather I would wear a suit of my own which has got red stains from top to tail all over it. It is only a queer bit of bad luck," Bo Peep says, "that this guy should run into me."

King Kong puts in: "It is his own bad luck, I guess, for we shall have to shut his mouth in the only sure way I have experience in shutting mouths."

This remark and the way it is stated makes a queer tingle go up my backbone. It is still tingling when I find myself being lifted up and carried down the stairway and hoisted into Polock Joe's sedan. Bo Peep gets in front with Polock Joe and King Kong is in the back seat with me, although I am not on the seat but on the floor still playing dummy as I am at a loss what else to do in this company.

Just as we pull out from the curb I hear the squeal of a siren horn which the coppers always blow when they wish to sneak up on somebody quietly. King Kong gives a gander out the back window and tells Polock Joe to step on the gas as he fears the police jalopy may contain copper McGutluck of which I spoke.

I wish to say I have traveled around this town behind a lot of daffy auto-jockeys, but I have never experienced such a ride as this turns out to be. I am still on the floor of the car and the way I slide from one side to the other each

time we round a corner I know we are making remarkable speed.

Traffic coppers yell and whistles blow as we burn up the streets which is a result of Pollock Joe passing red lights like they were only a joke put up there by the city. From what I can guess, we are battling along Sixth Avenue. They have just finished tearing down the old Elevated and carting it away and the street is bumpy in spots where the pillars have been removed from the pavement.

The car hits one of these holes and I get quite a jolt when something on the floor next to where I am lying bounces over and kisses me on the cheek. I reach out and find this to be an automobile jack.

In the meantime King Kong keeps twisting around in his seat and looking out the back window and advising Pollock Joe that the police jalopy is gaining on us.

"Swing west and get onto the Express Highway," Bo Peep tells Joe. "Here we will be able to make time and most likely give the prowler car the shake. Then," he adds, "we will take care of this dope."

By this last he means me.

Now I have no wish to be taken care of in the manner on which I know he plans. I get a grip on the jack which I have come across, and just as King Kong gives another stare out the back window, I raise up and bring the jack down on King Kong's noggin. He lets go a groan and sinks over on his side. At the same time there is a holler from Bo Peep and he shakes out a Betsy from his sleeve.

I slam the jack in his direction but my aim turns out to be not so good on account of the car lurching about. The jack misses Bo Peep completely and brings up against the side of Pollock Joe's head. With this Joe sinks over across the steering wheel.

**B**EGINNING now there is a great deal of confusion. Also a terrible bumping feeling and I hear screams and yelling all around as the car jounces up over a curb and bats across the sidewalk at the side of the street.

I am knocked back onto the floor again and then comes a most terrific crash as the front of the car's radiator wades into a big plate-glass store window. The car settles to a stop and I scramble out just as the police jalopy hauls up at the scene.

McGutluck and another copper pile out.

I see Sidney get out from his own car with which he has joined the parade. Sidney is out and comes rushing up just as Bo Peep gets his heater up and starts zinging away and Sidney stops a slug from this and falls to the pavement.

By now McGutluck knows that Bo Peep is not just kidding, so the copper blasts a series of slugs from his own gun, at which Bo Peep sits down on the sidewalk in a very silly way and gives up and starts to leak blood all over. I start over to where Sidney is all curled up on the ground when somebody slams into me. It is King Kong who has come to and is trying to lam away from the scene.

We tangle and he gives me a considerable belt which flattens my nose and gives it the bleed, but I have him tackled around the legs now and I hang on for dear life. McGutluck puts an end to this struggle by pasting King Kong with a sap on his topper.

While we are waiting for the ambulance to come and take charge of Bo Peep and Sidney, who turns out to be in very bad shape, I look about and see where we have brought up. It is on the corner of Broadway, and when I glance at the sign over the place which Pollock Joe's sedan has demolished I am astonished to see that it is Hogans the Hatters store and the front of it looks pretty sick. So does Pollock Joe, who I hear afterwards serves a piece in the cooler for reckless driving.

I follow along to the hospital after Sidney, and when the sawbones has located and removed the slug out of Bo Peep's heater from Sidney's chest, he is weak but conscious.

"I wish to say, Sidney," I tell him, trying to make him feel better, "that I

have two hundred and sixty dollars which belongs to you on account I put your sawbuck on Copper Kettle this aft instead of Garden of Eden. I did not tell you this before," I say, "as it slipped my mind although I also had a ten of my own on the beetle myself."

Sidney looks at me very whitely, and says: "This is very fine as I was worried about how my hospital rent would get paid."

I tell Sidney not to worry about this. "The dough I win is also yours," I say, "except maybe enough out of it to get myself a new outfit which I shall have to do as McGutluck, the copper, drilled several holes into Bo Peep. And of course for every hole which Bo Peep has in him my suit will have two holes in it on account of the slugs going in one side of Bo Peep and coming out the other."

I leave and go down to police headquarters. Here I learn that King Kong and Polock Joe are in the cooler and Bo Peep has quietly passed away. Before the latter turned in his checks it seems he

confessed the scragging of Gracie Goldfinch which will do Reefer Dosesanto no good at all when his trial comes up. Also, I meet up with cousin Clarence who the coppers are about to release.

"I would greatly like," cousin Clarence says, "to have back my wallet which was being held as a bit of evidence. The wallet was presented to me by a very nice doll in Kalamazoo and has a sentimental value."

After a bit of a huddle the coppers return the wallet. Clarence puts out his hand to receive it, but still being a bit nervous from the pushing around he has had the leather slides through his fingers and falls to the floor. I lean over to pick it up for him and notice a bit of paper which has spilled out.

"Clarence," I say, giving this paper a bit of a scan, "I am very pleased to find that you have lied to me, and if I am not altogether daffy you will be back home very soon as this bit of paper you have just dropped from your wallet seems to be the return trip ticket to Kalamazoo which you lost."

*A Gripping, All-Star Lineup*

## **ME—CORPSE**

*"Shag and Bones" Novelet*

**By Russell Bender**

## **LEAGUE of the LIARS**

*Stirring Crime Novelet*

**By R. B. S. Davis**

*. . . also . . .*

**"Dizzy Duo" Yarn by Joe Archibald  
Lawrence Treat Harold F. Sorensen  
And Five Others**

**JULY**



**Out April 28**

# Earmarked for Slaughter

*Detective Action Novelet*

*By B. B. Fowler*

Author of "Hell-Bent for a Funeral," etc.



*Jovial Sam Cantwell, detective of detectives, never bit off more than he could chew—yet. But that was because he had never run atoul of Turkey-head Krantz and his crime horde. And now Turkey-head was all primed to make Shamus Sam the death's-head man.*

**J**OE DUVEEN, manager of the Penguins, kept his eyes averted as he said: "I guess there's no doubt about it, Cliff. We've given it plenty of show. So you might as well face the facts. You've pitched your last ball game. The old arm is dead."

Cliff Borden said easily: "Don't take it too hard, boss. It's all in a lifetime."

He got to his feet, a tall, loose-jointed man with straw-colored hair and a wide mouth that smiled easily. He looked as though the word he had just received

from Joe Duveen didn't bother him much. The arm had served its turn before it went dead. Years before it had lifted him as a tough little slum mug into a chance to make money. It had pitched him through four years of college and two of law school. The arm had done its part.

He was smiling easily as he went out through the office toward the street. He was remembering his talk with Andy Gracey, the dynamic young district attorney; the talk they had made just two days ago. There was a job waiting for Cliff in Andy Gracey's office.

Gracey had been jubilant as he talked. He saw the first real break coming. He had come to Philadelphia to dig up some evidence that would finish once and for all the career of Turkey-head Krantz. Philadelphia was the end of a long trail that Gracey had been following for six months. In Philadelphia, Gracey had said, was the evidence that would send Turkey-head to the chair.

Gracey had come to Philadelphia himself because he would trust no one else with this last move. There were few among the staff that Gracey had inherited from an old corrupt machine gang who could be trusted. There were too many on the staff who were still on Turkey-head's payroll.

All these things were going through Cliff's mind as he stepped into the sunshine on the street in front of the ball park. He didn't notice the little fat man till he discovered that he was not alone; that the little fat man was swinging along in step with him.

**T**HE little man was something to look at. He had round, guileless blue eyes in a perfectly round, chubby face. He smiled and the rosy cheeks bunched and the blue eyes twinkled. His voice was like his face, round and guileless.

"Well, the news you got in there didn't seem to hit you very hard."

Cliff said: "What in hell are you talking about?"

"Tut, tut, my boy," the little fat man said as he smiled blandly. "I saw you start that game yesterday. They tell me you've tried a half dozen starts just like

it this season. When Duveen took you into his office this morning it was obvious what the call meant."

Cliff frowned. "Just what does that mean to you?"

The little man chuckled. "You'll learn that. I'm Sam Cantwell. Sam, to you, my boy. I go hither and yon and pick up a lot of information that I find useful in my business. A little job I have attempted brings me into your life. You'll like me, my boy, old Sam Cantwell, full of the milk of human kindness, without a hard thought in the world for anyone, unless you included Turkey-head Krantz."

He pursed his lips and a thoughtful gleam took away some of the guilelessness of the blue eyes. "When I think of Turkey-head, my boy, I am moved to thoughts of violence. My better nature is submerged in a desire to take Turkey-head apart piece by piece and feed the pieces to the sharks."

The thoughts of the cherubic little man, who called himself Sam Cantwell, taking Turkey-head Krantz apart piece by piece was somehow so incongruous that it brought the easy grin back to Cliff's face.

The little man grinned also. Then he grew very sober. "But now to the matter that brings me into your life. You took little grief from what Duveen had to tell you. That was because you had something else looming on your horizon. If you'd read this morning's paper you would now feel quite differently. Oh, yes, quite differently."

He put his head on one side, made a lump in his cheek with his tongue and studied Cliff with bright blue eyes. "You should read the morning papers. You really should. It's a great habit to cultivate."

Cliff began to feel a little anger tighten his mouth. His voice was sharp and edgy as he asked: "Will you stop talking in riddles and get down to brass tacks. Just what do you want with me?"

Sam Cantwell slapped the paper in his pocket and said brightly: "All in good time, my boy. All in good time. I see a bar across the street. You'll need a good stiff drink when you read the morning headlines. Let's go."



Cliff shook his head slowly. It was all crazy. But he did want a drink. There were no training rules for him to follow now. He was a professional baseball player no longer. So he crossed the street with Sam Cantwell making chirping sounds through his teeth as he strutted jauntily along.

When the bartender had served the two drinks, Sam pushed them carefully back toward the far edge of the bar saying: "Take headlines first, my boy, then you'll appreciate the drink."

The story screamed in black letters across the page. Last night on the road between Philadelphia and New York, Andy Gracey had been held up and shot. Returning from an important trip to Philadelphia, the story ran, his car was overtaken by gunmen and Gracey was shot.

CLIFF reached blindly for the drink and downed it in one gulp. At his elbow Sam Cantwell said softly: "Exactly as I felt myself, my boy. The news has all the finesse of a kick in the belly."

He tossed his own drink down with a flick of his wrist and went on in his bright, round voice. "However, Andy Gracey is not dead. They've taken him to the hospital and he has a slim chance of pulling through. If you'll read farther down the column you will notice some pertinent facts.

"One, Gracey's car was torn apart. They pulled up the floor boards; ripped off the upholstery. Which means that the men who shot him were looking for something. They were so intent on what they wanted that they omitted to make sure that Gracey was dead. Which oversight means that they were thrown off their mental balance by the failure to find what they sought."

The bright voice made Cliff a little sore. "You're pretty damned sure of yourself, aren't you, Cantwell?" he said sourly.

"Sam to you. Sam to you, my boy," Cantwell corrected. "Yes, indeed, I'm sure. I have to be in my business. One mistake and they carry poor old Sam to the morgue. I get by and stay alive by never making mistakes."

"I wish to hell you'd cut out this mystery," Cliff snapped, "and tell me just where you come in on this. What's your racket?"

"A fair question," Sam chirped. "A very fair question indeed. I, my boy, am one of the poor down-trodden offshoots of the law. As a shamus, a private investigator to you, I work in more devious channels than do the minions of the law. I have clients, my boy, who wish most heartily to see Turkey-head settled snugly in the embrace of the electric chair.

"These clients have been paying tribute to a racket controlled by our friend Turkey-head. And they wish to get out from under. Oh, yes, indeed, they do.

"So they retained old Sam to do something about it. I, knowing that Gracey was hot on a trail that would finish Turkey-head completely and finally, eased along on Gracey's trail. If I had been wise I would have trailed Andy Gracey more closely. In which case I might have taken a hand in the little affair on the highway."

Cliff started to repeat: "You're damned sure of yourself." But he only got part way through in a bitter voice when Sam put a hand on his shoulder and a foot behind his heels and sent him hurtling to the far end of the bar.

He caught a blurred glimpse of Sam hitting the floor with his shoulder and flipping over behind the far end of the bar. As he flipped, a gun seemed to have materialized out of thin air and gotten into the chubby man's fist.

Rolling over, Cliff Borden got a flashing glimpse of a man in the doorway of the saloon; a tall, stoop-shouldered man with a hat pulled low on his bony face. He had a sub-machine gun in his hand that filled the room with rippling thunder and tore splinters out of the bar.

The gun in Sam Cantwell's hand made hard, smashing sounds, and the man with the machine gun bent over slowly. The gun made a thud as it fell to the floor, then the tall man fell across it on his face.

There was another door at the far side of the room; a door that opened on the side street. There was a man there,

too; a man with a big automatic pistol who threw three quick shots at Sam, then turned and ran.

Sam Cantwell got to his feet and made the door in a rush. He was not the jovial little man who had stepped up jauntily in the street. The bunched cheeks had flattened out and the roundness of his cheeks was pulled down straight by the hard angle of the jaw. The eyes were like points of blue flame. The knuckles of the gun hand were bone white.

As Cliff got to his feet he could see the running man reach the opposite curb. The man whirled and threw another shot at Sam, who stood squarely in front of the door, his legs spread wide, the gun in his hand coming down swiftly.

**T**HE big gun made Cantwell's arm jerk back. The gunman across the street rose high on his toes as though he were reaching for something. He turned completely around while Sam watched him with the big gun poised; he swayed on the edge of the curb, made another half turn, then fell backward, his heels up on the sidewalk, his head in the street, arms flung wide.

As Cliff got to the door he heard Sam Cantwell say: "Tch, tch, dead center and I only wanted to wing him. You're slipping, Sam."

Sam walked across the street, stared down at the dead man, then walked back to the saloon, slipping fresh shells into the big gun. He gave a flip of his wrist and the gun disappeared just as a police whistle shrilled insistently on the next block.

The barkeep came up slowly from behind the bar. Fright had turned his ruddy face a muddy yellow. He opened and closed his mouth like a gasping fish, then reached for a bottle with a shaking hand.

"This," he said, in a shaky treble, "is on the house. And I guess I rate one myself."

"A man of quick wit and resourcefulness," Sam said brightly. "A man after my own heart. Barkeep, make mine a very stiff one."

Cliff Borden stared at Sam Cantwell with dawning respect. The blinding speed

with which the little man had moved was incredible. In that one flashing instant it was as though another man had appeared. Now Sam Cantwell was back. His cheeks were rosy and round and jovial again. His blue eyes twinkled cherubically as he met Cliff's stare.

His voice was like his smile, round and guileless, as he said: "Old Sam has eyes in the back of his head, my boy. The lean gent draped across the doorsill is one Hack Getliffe, a cold-blooded killer. The one across the street is Detroit Benny. I can smell killers like those a half block away."

He continued to smile genially as he went on: "It all goes to prove my contention is right. Turkey-head's men failed to find what they were after last night. Now Turkey-head is jittery. Quite logically he turns from Gracey to his old friend Sam. But he should have known better than send such punks after me. He really should."

Cliff gulped, tossed down the drink, then said in an altered voice: "I still fail to see why you've come after me."

Sam said brightly: "At last we get down to cases." He stopped, put his head on one side and said: "The local gendarmes are on the way. A few words to put them right and then we talk."

The saloon began to fill up with blue uniforms and the plainclothes of the homicide squad.

Sam began to talk in his jovial voice to the crag-jawed sergeant with the icy eyes. "Look the two boys over and the answer becomes plain. Our good host, the barkeep, will tell you that we were having a peaceful drink when the two ambitious boys came in throwing lead."

He paused, smiled cherubically. "Why? My dear men, these are crooks, and crooks hate Sam Cantwell. If you'll examine the one across the street you'll find he is Detroit Benny. Look in your files and you will find that there is a reward of five hundred dollars offered by the state of Illinois for his body. I hand him over to you. Collect the reward and give it to the police pension fund with Sam Cantwell's compliments."

He jerked out the big gun and showed

TDA

it to the sergeant. "All in order, you'll find. I have a permit to carry it in this state. I also have a license to operate in this state. When you add everything up I'll be glad to accept your thanks."

After much more talk the cops left, taking the two dead gunmen with them. Sam put his elbows on the bar and said: "Now to business. You and I are about to enter into a partnership dedicated to the confusion and ultimate disaster of the career of Turkey-head."

"But why me?" Cliff asked.

"For various reasons," Sam answered. "I take you in with me and offer you a chance to clinch that job in the D.A.'s office. In return you get certain information that only you can get."

**H**E PUT his head to one side in a characteristic gesture and said: "Besides being in line for a job with Andy Gracey, you were also a close personal friend of his. You were his roommate in college. You've visited his home and met his family. Do you begin to see?"

As Cliff shook his head slowly, Sam said: "I still fail to make sense so I'll get straight to the point. According to the report in the paper, Andy Gracey did some incoherent muttering in his delirium. It probably meant nothing to those who heard him. Now, it is almost certain that his sister, Dorothy, would be at his bedside. You know her very well.

"Your job is to call her up long distance and see if Andy said anything that makes sense to us. I have an idea that Andy would talk about the thing that was heaviest on his mind; which is the hiding place of the stuff Turkey-head seeks so frantically."

"I begin to get it," Cliff said slowly. "Okay, I'll call Dorothy Gracey. But, remember, I'm in on this thing now. I'm in to stay till the payoff."

"Certainly, certainly, my boy," Sam said brightly. "Old Sam Cantwell's word is his bond. You're in. I cut you in on all plays till the payoff."

It took the better part of an hour to locate Dorothy Gracey in New York. When Cliff finally reached her she sounded weary and broken. Andy still was given

an outside chance of recovery. Dorothy had been at his side almost continually since he was brought in. He had talked. Most of what he had said had been incoherent babbling.

Only one thing was intelligible. He kept muttering: "Third on the left as you enter. Third on the left."

Sam Cantwell's name meant nothing to her. But when Cliff told her they were working to find out what Andy had discovered in Philadelphia, she declared her intention of coming to that city.

"I've got to do something," she declared passionately. "There is little I can do here. If I could only do something to help carry through the work that Andy started, I'd feel better."

Cliff tried to persuade her to stay with her brother, and finally left the telephone with the feeling that he had not convinced her.

Sam Cantwell listened to him in silence. When Cliff told him of Dorothy's desire to come to Philadelphia, Sam shook his head slowly. "She'd better stay out of this. If she comes she'll only complicate matters. Remember the two boys who tried to cut us down. There'll be more like them on the trail. Turkey-head is jittery. He'll stay jittery until he finds what he wants. A girl would be excess baggage. Old Sam has his hands full now."

He kept repeating the words that Andy Gracey had babbled. "Third on the left as you enter. Third on the left." He looked almost sober for an instant, then smiled his cherubic smile. "That's a lead, my boy; a definite lead. You let old Sam mull it over for a while and I'll give you odds he bobs up with an answer."

Two hours later Sam had failed to bob up with the answer. They had combed the city. Somewhere there was an undercover man who had worked for Andy Gracey. They found him finally—in the city morgue. He had a broken arm, his face beaten out of shape and three bullets in his chest.

Sam looked at him and sighed gently: "Another trail broken off."

He walked with Cliff slowly up the street. Three times he stopped and

studied his reflection in store windows. He seemed to be turning over something in his mind. Finally he said: "My boy, old Sam begins to see a ray of light. You now have a job to do.

"You walk straight ahead for six blocks. Turn to the left then and walk another five blocks and you'll come to the Ambassador Hotel. Check in there. You'll find a room reserved for you. Stay in your room till I come for you. Now, remember, do just as I say and Sam will have news for you."

CLIFF watched the little fat man clamber into a taxi and drive away, then turned and walked slowly along the street. There was something about this strange little man with the cherubic face that inspired confidence. He was almost comical in his pink and white chubbiness.

But Cliff had seen the steel core in the little man when the killers had invaded the bar. He could never quite forget that.

The Ambassador was large and quiet and unobtrusive. Cliff found the room registered in his name and followed the bellboy up to 312. As he sat down in an easy chair he thought he heard some one move in 314. He got up, tried the connecting door, found it was locked and sat down again.

He had waited half an hour when some one knocked at the door. That, he thought, would be Sam Cantwell. Without moving he called: "Come in."

The man who came in was a little like Detroit Benny. He had the same slit of a mouth, the same pale, cold eyes. He spoke from behind the gun he had lined on Cliff's stomach. "Back right up, Nosey. You and I are going to have a quiet little chat."

When the back of Cliff's legs touched the chair the man with the gun put a hand on his chest and gave him a push that slammed him back in the chair. As Cliff jerked forward the barrel of the gun slammed across his jaw and made red lights explode in front of his eyes.

The voice of the man with the gun said harshly: "That for a nosey guy. And there's plenty more where that came

from. You'll get it till you make up your mind to spill what you know about Sam Cantwell and the stuff that Gracey cashed somewhere in town before he pulled out."

The round cheery voice across the room said: "Why not ask Sam yourself, my boy?"

The gunman jerked around, and stared with his mouth gaping slack. Cliff turned in his chair and saw Sam standing in the open door that connected the room with 314. Sam rocked on his heels and smiled cherubically as he said brightly:

"Drop the cannon, Sig. Drop it or I send you to the morgue to join Benny and Getliffe."

The gun made a thud on the rug, and Sig's arms came up slowly. His mouth worked as if he were trying to talk. But no words came.

Sam came across the room. "Always trust old Sam to bob up at the right time," he said cheerfully to Cliff. "But I'm really sorry I didn't get here in time to stop that gun slap you got on the jaw. You see, my boy, I figured this out all by myself.

"I spotted Sig here trailing us and conceived the bright idea of having him walk into a trap. After I left you I came to the Ambassador and made your reservation, taking the next room for myself. I knew that a punk as dumb as Sig would try to walk in and make you talk."

He chuckled and his red cheeks bunched. "Old Sam knows all the tricks, my boy. You can always figure on old Sam. Now we'll do a little chatting, with me asking the questions."

He smiled his cherubic smile. "Quite a coincidence, isn't it, Sig? You come to talk to Cliff and find old Sam waiting to talk to you."

He walked across the room and kicked the gun off the rug under the bed. He flipped his own gun into a holster under his arm and removed his coat, laying it carefully over the edge of the bed. Methodically and slowly he unstrapped his shoulder harness and hung that on the bedpost. He rolled up his sleeves from round, thick arms and said:

"Now, Sig, you and I have a little session. I'm not going to coax you to talk.

I always hate to coax guys to talk. Just tell me when you're ready to talk and we'll start."

He took a swift step forward and his left arm made a blur as he hooked his fist to Sig's jaw. Sig tried to roll and cover as Sam's right snapped to his mouth.

Sam smiled as he stepped in, driving snappy, smashing blows to Sig's face. "Any time you feel like talking, Sig, just say the word."

**S**IG was slobbering when he got slowly to his feet after going down under a flurry of punches. Blood trickled down from one corner of his mouth and his eyes looked scared and desperate.

Cliff watched Sam's face without moving from the chair. All joviality had flown out of it again, leaving it hard and flat with deep lines around the lips. His eyes were bright with a metallic brightness.

Sig got to his feet and made a blundering dash for the gun that hung on the bedpost. Sam's right caught him when he was halfway across the room and slammed him back into the corner.

"Bright boy, Sig," Sam said, "going after that gun. There it is, my boy, help yourself. But you've got to get past old Sam to get it. So just keep trying."

The fourth time Sig went down he got slowly to his knees and stood there panting. Cliff watched him and felt a little sick to his stomach. But the sight of Sig didn't seem to bother Sam. He caught the cowering thug by the collar, jerked him to his feet and slammed him against the wall with a left hook.

He held him there while he smashed him again, saying in his bright voice: "Now, Sig, you know you don't have to talk. I don't care if you do or don't. I enjoy this much more than you can imagine."

Sig began to talk in a choked voice: "I've had enough. Gimme a chance and I'll talk. What do you want to know?"

Sam chuckled. "Ah, Siggie, I see you have a lot of sense. Just begin at the beginning and tell me the whole story without omitting any details. You came with your pals to Philadelphia on

Gracey's trail. You followed him out of town. One of you shot him. Maybe it was you." He jerked his left fist back and held it poised.

"No, no, it wasn't me," Sig babbled. "It was Detroit Benny put the slug on him. Gimme a chance. I'll talk."

"Sure you'll talk, Siggie," Sam said gently. "Just begin when you started trailing Gracey out of Philadelphia and follow through."

"We trailed him. We had orders, see?"

"Precisely," Sam said. "Orders from Turkey-head. Go on, Siggie."

"We tailed him outta Philly," Sig sobbed. "We tailed him till he stopped at a joint out on the pike and got something to eat."

Sam said, "Ah!" deep down in his throat. "Just where did Gracey stop to get a bite to eat?"

"Way out the road, about thirty miles outside Philly. It was a little roadside dump. It's a dump with a filling station next door. It's got kinda red curtains on the window and a big sign that says, 'Bob's Place. Bob In.'"

Sam shook his head as though he were very pleased with the information. "And you waited till he came out and tailed him again. Right?"

Sig said, "Right," and gulped. "We tailed him till we got well into Jersey. When we got to a stretch of the road where there wasn't no traffic Detroit Benny said, 'This is the place, run him into the ditch.'"

He paused, looked at Sam with terror-filled eyes and went on: "A lug named Arnstine was driving. He edged Gracey into the ditch and Benny gave it to him. Then we went through Gracey to get the dope that Tur—that we wanted."

"Quite right, Siggie, the stuff that Turkey-head wanted. Go on."

"But we couldn't find nothing," Sig said. "So we ripped the damned crate apart. And still we couldn't find nothing. So Benny got on the wire and told the chief and he raised hell. Then he heard you were on the job and he sends us after you. He thought sure as hell you had a lead to where the stuff was."

"Sure as hell we have now, Siggie,"

Sam said gently. "You've told me what I wanted to know. If you weren't so dumb you'd have got wise yourself. You tell Turkey-head for me that he ought to get some really smart help. Lugs like you can't do anything but pull triggers, and you don't do that so damned well."

**H**E RELEASED Sig's collar and stepped back toward the bedpost where the gun hung. Sig slid down the wall and squatted on his haunches staring at Sam. Sam jerked his head at the door.

"Now, Siggie, you can beat it. We've got all we want from you."

Sig got to his feet and sidled toward the door. The fear had gone out of his eyes, leaving nothing but venomous hatred there.

Sam said smoothly: "Give my best to Turkey-head and tell him that he'd better make his peace with his Maker. Because old Sam is on his trail and isn't going to stop this time till he's fixed his clock so it'll never run again."

Sig got his hand on the doorknob and jerked the door open. "I'll tell him," he snarled. "I'll tell him plenty, you damned, fat little slob. I'll tell him and he'll tear your fat belly out and throw it in your face. I'll see you in hell for this."

As the door slammed, Sam sighed: "Oh, the nasty vindictiveness of human nature. Boys like Siggie almost make me lose my faith in mankind."

He turned to Cliff and his smile was back, wreathed around his mouth, bunching his rosy cheeks, making his eyes sparkle.

Cliff Borden shook his head. "I'll be damned if I can see what you got out of Sig. He only told you what we already know."

Sam made clucking noises with his tongue. "Tut, tut, my boy. Sig told me many things. Think back. We know that Gracey had plenty on Turkey-head. He picked up the evidence here in Philadelphia. He had something on him when he left for New York. Benny and his pals didn't get it. So what? So where did he stop on the way? Siggie told us. We'll

go there and see what we can see."

"You mean," Cliff gasped, "that you think Gracey got wise to being tailed and left the stuff at Bob's place?"

"You begin to see, my boy. That is precisely what I do think. He certainly had something when he left Philadelphia. He told you himself it was enough to send Turkey-head to the chair.

"Gracey was nobody's fool. I don't believe that lugs like Benny and Siggie could trail him far without his getting wise. So he stops at Bob's place. And he babbles in his delirium about the third on the left as you enter. My boy, let us start for Bob's place."

It was getting dark when they rolled the car slowly past Bob's place. Fifty yards beyond, Sam found a narrow road that angled through some bushes. He carefully pulled the car off the road until it was screened by the bushes, then switched the lights off.

"In this business," Sam told Cliff, "you never advertise. Maybe Turkey-head will get the same idea we did and come visiting. In that case our car is all set for a getaway."

They walked back and entered Bob's Place. A bald-headed man put his hands on a narrow counter and said: "Come right in. Supper's about ready."

"Now that's swell," Sam said cheerily. "We could do with some supper. But, before we eat, we'd like to ask a few friendly questions. I suppose you'd remember anybody who stopped here last night?"

The bald head bobbed. "I sure would, mister. We don't do such a rushing business that I forget customers."

Sam described Gracey. "He must have come in just before dark. Maybe he was nervous. He might even have asked some questions about the State Police?"

"Sure I remember him," Bob said eagerly. "He did ask about the State Police. I told him about when they came through on their rounds and all that stuff. He was as jumpy as a cat. He sat right there and kept glancing through the window while he ate."

Sam jerked his head at the table designated by the proprietor and said gently:



"Third on the left as you come in, my boy. It would seem that we really did have something."

CLIFF walked over to the table and felt disappointment tug at him briefly. There was no place there where anything could be hidden. The table sat in a bare alcove with a seat along either side. The table itself was only a slab of some black, shiny composition resting on four bare legs.

He slid into one of the seats beside the table and rested his hands on the blank top while his eyes probed the alcove. More than ever he was sure that there was no hiding place there.

He turned his head toward Sam and saw the strained, listening look on the fat little man's face. He was looking toward the door, straining his ears.

Listening, Cliff could hear the throb of a powerful motor, coming fast. Sam turned his head and said: "Is there a back door outta this place?"

The bald-headed proprietor gulped and answered: "Yeah, out through that door behind the counter into the kitchen and out. Why?"

"Because," Sam said briskly, "we are about to have some very nasty guests unless I'm greatly mistaken."

Wheels slid in the gravel and brakes screamed as the car came to a quick halt.

Sam jerked his head toward a light switch beside the door. "Get your hand on that, my boy. When Sam yells, douse the light. Then run like hell for the back door."

As Cliff slid out from behind the table Sam slid in at the other side.

With his hand on the light switch Cliff heard feet pounding across the yard toward the door. He heard Sam say: "Damn, a hen couldn't hide an egg here." Then the table went over with a crash and Sam yelled, "Out," just as the first man plunged through the door.

Cliff snapped the switch and darkness dropped like a blanket over the room. He whirled, saw a shadow loom between himself and the light from the Neon sign that still burned outside. Then he felt as if the roof had fallen on him and carried

him down into darkness where there was no ray of light at all.

As he went down he heard the smashing roar of a gun. Some one yelled in a high, shrill voice, then broke abruptly as the darkness enfolded him.

He lay for a long time without stirring. He came back to consciousness with the hoarse rumble of voices rasping through his aching head. He was lying half on his side, arms outflung.

Gradually his eyes began to function. The lights were back on. Five men had come in the big car. Four of them were standing at the far end of the counter. The fifth one lay on his face, a trickle of black sliding away from his head across the floor. The bald-headed proprietor was lying on his back in front of the counter, his eyes staring sightlessly up at the ceiling.

One of the four men was a tall, peak-shouldered and gangling specimen. His face was wedged-shaped with a thin gash of a mouth and a huge, beaked nose. His voice was like the rasp of a file on iron.

"Drag that dead punk out the back door. The boss will be here pretty soon and we don't want a lot of stiffs layin' around."

As two of the men got hold of the dead proprietor, the man with the beaked nose stared at the dead gangster and began to swear in his thick, rasping voice. "That damned fat little slob. The boss is going to raise particular hell about this. The little fat louse plugged Rannie and got clean away. And the boss wants that little punk. He wants him and nobody else."

The two men hauled out the bald-headed man. One of them snickered and said: "For a skinny guy this bird weighs plenty. He must be loaded with lead."

Beak-nose snarled: "Get going and don't try to be so damned funny. And then drag Rannie out. The boss is due any minute. He said he'd be here right behind us."

He walked across the room and stared at the table that Sam had overturned. The black slab that had served for a top was flat on the floor. The four legs, fastened together with a thin frame, were pointing at the ceiling.

Beak-nose said: "What the hell. Now where could that slob have hidden anything? And why the hell did fat Sam turn that table over?"

**H**E GLANCED toward the door and swore again thickly. "By damn, I'd like to get one squint at that fat slug. I'd fill his round belly full of lead. The dirty little slicker."

He turned as the two men came back into the room. One of them said: "Well, we ditched them, Oscar. We laid them out nice and neat in the backyard."

Oscar snarled, "Shut up," and turned toward the door.

A car was slowing down outside. Without turning his head Oscar snapped: "You, Clinch, get out there and give anybody the run that tries to come in. But do it smooth. Don't let anybody get suspicious. Afterward find the switch for the damned sign and douse it."

Clinch was blond and smiling and smooth. He sauntered to the door and stood with one shoulder leaning against the frame and said in a voice that sounded as if he were smiling: "Sorry, folks, but Bob's not on the job tonight. We've just started a little alteration job here and the place will be closed for a few days."

Some one outside grumbled thickly. There was a grind of gears and a quick, angry slither of wheels in loose gravel as the car got under way.

Clinch continued to stand in the door and said thinly: "Now ain't that gratitude. I suppose the poor hophead woulda felt better if we'd let him come in with the frau so they'd both get their damned heads cracked in."

He went down the steps slowly and walked along the side of the house. A few minutes later the neon sign went black and Clinch came back. "I guess we're outta business right now," he said cheerfully.

He went back to the door, stood listening, then said without turning his head. "There's a big car coming down the road like a bat outta hell. I bet that's the boss."

Beak-nose Oscar threw a glance at Cliff

and grumbled: "Well, he took long enough to get here."

The car slid twice its length in the loose gravel and a door slammed. The other men crowded behind Oscar, staring out toward the road.

A current of air blew on the back of Cliff's neck as a door was opened somewhere behind him. He heard a scuffling, slithering noise and waited, heart in his throat. He almost jumped when fingers closed like a clamp about his ankle, then he felt himself being jerked back through the open door.

The men at the door heard the scraping of his clothes on the floor and jerked around. One of them yelled hoarsely. A gun blasted and lead slammed into the floor so close to Cliff's head that splinters slapped stingingly into his face.

He jerked around and said: "I'm okay, I was playing possum."

He heard Sam's soft chuckle, then his bright voice. "A very smart idea, my boy. And now let's get the hell outta this."

Cliff followed him on the run across the backyard and plunged through the bushes. Lead clipped the branches about his head, then he felt himself being pulled down behind the bole of a tree.

Sam's voice came to him in a hoarse whisper. "That's our friend, Turkey-head, with some more of his mugs. I never saw one of them I liked yet. So let's put a hell of a lot of distance between them. Old Sam now has a few little surprises he wants to live to spring on Turkey-head."

Cliff started to move, then froze as he heard a voice that was as thin and bitter as sleet say: "Take it easy, sister. Don't try to break away. Because if you do one of the boys will put some slugs through your pretty legs. There are some questions I want you to answer."

Cliff felt cold trickle along his spine. There was only one girl who could be concerned in this. There was only one girl Turkey-head Krantz would be bringing to this place to question. He thought of Dorothy Gracey in Turkey-head's hands and shivered.

**I**N THE yard some one spoke with disgust: "He got clean away. Damn that fat little slob. He pulled that one. Why, I thought I'd smacked that guy hard enough to put him away for half the night. Hell, he must have a tough head."

Another voice said: "You'll need a tougher one when the boss hears about this. Damn, everything seems to be going haywire tonight. First, the fat guy gets away. Now we let the other one get snaked from under our noses."

Some one at the back door said something in an unintelligible murmur.

He was answered by a plaintive snarl: "I tell you they're both clean gone. Trust that little grease ball for a slick get-away."

The voice at the door rasped: "Well, you let them get away. So come on in and tell the boss that and see how you like it."

Cliff started back through the bushes. Sam caught at his arm and tried to pull him back but Cliff jerked angrily and pushed on. He circled the yard and found a driveway that went past the side of the roadhouse.

He was on the far side of the driveway when he saw Dorothy in the lighted window. She was seated on the side of a table in an alcove. There was terror in every line of her body. It was there in the clenched hands at the table's edge. It was in her eyes as she stared at the man across the alcove. Cliff felt a pulse beat heavily in his throat as he watched.

The man across the alcove was Turkey-head Krantz. The profile that the light emphasized explained his nickname. His head was totally bald and shone like polished bone under the lights. His cheeks sagged, the loose skin hanging under each jaw like the wattles on a turkey. His nose was like a beak, his forehead slanting back from the little black eyes.

He was leaning forward across the table, his eyes on the girl, his gash of a mouth distorted in a snarl.

Cliff squatted on his heels and let his hands explore the ground. He found the stone he wanted, round and smooth and about the weight of a baseball.

He curled his fingers around it as he

stood up. He felt cold and very sure of himself as he fixed his eyes on Turkey-head's bald dome. At least he could bean the boss of the gang and throw them once more into temporary confusion. He had to do something. Because he knew that Turkey-head, being desperate, would use any force to make Dorothy talk.

His arm was going back slowly when he froze. Across the driveway a shadow moved and a voice said: "Hold it just like that, buddy. Now, put those hands slowly where I can see them and do it easy or I blast your guts out."

Cliff lifted his arms slowly. His long fingers pressed the rock against his wrist, then let it slide down his coat sleeve as he lifted his arms.

The voice went on: "Now, just like that, walk slowly across toward me. And, remember, I've got a gun on you. One funny move and I blast your liver."

The man came around and prodded a gun into his back. "Now, smart guy, march. We'll go in and see what the boss has to say to you."

As Cliff came through the door Turkey-head stood up. The man behind Cliff said in a pleased voice: "See what I found looking in the window, boss."

**B**ESIDES Turkey-head there were eight men in the room. Turkey-head had brought four more with him. Cliff thought of Sam, that genial bundle of T.N.T. and thought dismally that this time the odds were too great for even his unerring gun arm.

Turkey-head snarled: "Well, it's about time one of you guys did something besides gum things up. Now if you'd only bring in that damned little butter ball I'd feel better. Why the hell don't you do that?"

The men with the gun prodded Cliff across the room till he stood at the end of the table looking into the alcove.

Dorothy saw him and her eyes widened and her lips trembled. She opened her mouth to speak and Turkey-head snarled: "Shut up, you. I'll tell you when to talk, and what I want to hear."

He turned the glare of his red-rimmed eyes on Cliff and said in the same vicious

snarl: "So you're the wise guy who walked into this with Sam Cantwell. Well, you asked for it, and now you're going to get it."

He paused, his mouth twisting, eyes venomous. "A lot of guys have tried to cross me up and they all landed behind the eight ball. So you listen to me. Gracey was a smart dope. He got ambitious. see. He goes to the hospital full of lead. He's still alive because a punk with a gun slipped on his job. But I'll fix that. As soon as I get my hands on the dope I want I'll finish that job."

"Then that little fat slob of a Cantwell butts in. So his number is up. But first I want that dope. Gracey had it. He ditched it here. He couldn't have ditched it anywhere else. Then you and Cantwell come bulling in so now I know it's here. And you're going to tell me where it is."

Cliff felt his tongue sticking drily to the roof of his mouth. He had come with Cantwell and found nothing. But he knew that the man beside the table would never believe that.

He licked his lips to speak when everyone in the room froze. Outside somewhere a motor roared into life. It raced, then wheels spun and gears ground. Turning, Cliff could see across the room through the window the white beam of headlights creep out of the bushes into the road, then turn. A red tail-light blinked as the car shot away down the road.

Turkey-head's voice got high and shrill as he asked: "Who was that? Come on. Who was it?"

He jerked a gun from under his arm and trained it on Cliff's belt line. "I'll give you five seconds to spill before I throw a slug into your belly."

Cliff felt cold, bitter disappointment rise in him. It was in his voice as he said thickly: "That was Sam Cantwell, the dirty little quitter. He had his car parked up the road. He got to it now and made his getaway. He's quit me cold."

Turkey-head snapped. "You, Oscar, take those three mugs of yours and go after that guy. And don't come back without him. Bring him back here, dead or alive. Go on, get going!"

He stayed, staring at the door until the motor of the big car roared and it went rocketing along the road in the direction taken by Sam Cantwell. Then he turned to Cliff and smiled wolfishly.

"That was a dumb move for Sam to make. I'll get him this time. He wouldn't be driving a crate fast enough to keep ahead of the boys."

Cliff knew that was true. They had come in Sam's car, a medium-sized sedan with a stock motor. The cars driven by Turkey-head's mob were special jobs, with motors geared for high speeds, driven by men who could almost qualify as racing drivers.

Then he forgot about Sam as Turkey-head turned to the girl, and said: "Now we get down to business. We can let the boys take care of Cantwell. But I still want to know where the stuff is that you came to get."

He threw a glance at Cliff and said: "You wouldn't have come if you hadn't got a tip. So talk."

CLIFF stared for a long moment at Dorothy. If she hadn't been there he would tell Turkey-head to go to hell and take all that he could hand out. But he knew he couldn't stand there and see Turkey-head torture the girl and not do something about it. And the hell of it was Turkey-head would never believe his story about the third table on the left and that they had found nothing.

As though reading his mind Turkey-head smiled viciously. "You'll talk, big boy. You'll talk or see the dame get pulled apart. And I know you won't like that."

Without taking his eyes from the girl he snapped: "Haney, come here. And you, Latzo."

Haney was a big, thick-shouldered gorilla. Latzo was short and squat and hairy. His mop of black, greasy hair began a scant inch above the wide smear of eyebrows. There were little patches of hair on either cheekbone. He licked his lips as he came forward and his black eyes glittered almost feverishly.

"Haney," Turkey-head rasped, "pull that dame outta that seat."

Haney reached in a huge paw, caught

Dorothy by the shoulder and hurled her out to stand at the end of the table.

"Now, Latzo, I'm going to let you do your stuff," Turkey-head said.

He turned to Cliff. "I guess you've never seen Latzo work. He's a bone buster. He likes to work on dames because they crack easier. A few minutes with Latzo and the girl will be a cripple for life. So you'd better talk."

Cliff didn't know his own voice. It was thick and unnatural and seemed to tear at his throat. "You're crazy, Turkey-head. I came on a tip."

He glanced at Dorothy. "We knew that Gracey stopped here for something to eat. We figured he must have gotten wise to his tailers. We figured he had cached something here. Then he raved in his delirium about the third table on the left. But there was nothing there. That's all I know."

Turkey-head snarled: "So you want to be stubborn. Okay, wise guy, have it your own way. Latzo, get busy."

Cliff took two more steps backward and ran into the prod of a gun and heard some one behind him say: "That's far enough, bud."

Latzo reached for Dorothy's arm. Turkey-head leaned across the table, his eyes gleaming. Cliff felt himself go tense and taut. He had to do something but there was nothing he could do.

He let the stone roll out of his sleeve into the palm of his hand, his eyes fixed on Turkey-head's face. He had to do what he was going to do. And he knew that the man behind him would blast him when he moved. But there was nothing else for it. He felt the muscles ripple along his arms as Latzo's hairy paw touched Dorothy's shoulder and his fingers curled around the stone.

He started to pull his arm back and stiffened. There was a voice to his right, beyond Turkey-head's back. It was round and jovial and cheery as it said: "My, my, my, what a very nasty situation. So, boys, be very careful. Not a move out of anyone or old Sam will have to go bang, bang."

Then Cliff saw him as he stepped into the light, smiling, his blue eyes twin-

bling, the big gun in his hand very steady.

He kept on talking in his cheerful voice. "Not that I would mind knocking you all off. I could cut loose and burn you all down and it would be a positive pleasure. If you don't believe me make a funny move and hear the twanging of harps."

Then Cliff saw something else. Turkey-head had crouched low behind the alcove partition at the first sound of Sam's voice. Still crouched he slid forward, a gun in his hand. Sam couldn't see him. Sam wouldn't see him either, Cliff thought, till he started to blast.

WITH the thought the arm that had started to come back jerked farther in the same direction. He threw the stone with a flip of the wrist and the snap of his forearm muscles behind it.

The stone struck Turkey-head squarely on the top of the bald dome with a dull thwack and bounced off to roll across the table.

Turkey-head pitched forward out of the alcove. His gun thudded to the floor, then Turkey-head fell across it.

Sam said, "Tch, tch, tch," and smiled cherubically. He glanced at the three men who had frozen like statues and said: "You see, boys, you never know from which direction we're going to smack you."

Cliff took a step forward and caught Dorothy as she began to crumble. As he did the man behind him threw a quick shot at Sam. Sam's gun roared once and the gunner went over backwards as though some one had kicked him in the chest.

"Boys, boys," Sam's voice was sorrowful. "Why won't you learn? As gunmen you'd make good clay pigeons."

Dorothy, sobbing, clung to Cliff. Cliff half turned and smiled wryly at Sam. "And I thought you'd run out on us."

"Think nothing of it at all, my boy," Sam chuckled. "I'm sure it did look very bad. But you can always trust old Sam to out-fox these dumb bunnies. I just started the car. Maybe you noticed I made a hell of a racket doing it. I drove up the road and ducked in behind some more

bushes and stayed there till the boys roared past looking for me. That cut the odds down enough so it was duck soup for me. Then I toddled back and here we are."

His smile became broader and more beatific. "And what a really nice party we have. It's almost a shame to bust it up."

From a back pocket he hauled a pair of handcuffs and shackled Latzo and Haney together. When Haney growled under his breath, Sam said brightly: "Think nothing of it, my boy. They'll soon separate you. They'll have to because they only burn you one at a time."

He went over them expertly and lifted guns. One of the guns he gave to Cliff with the advice: "If anyone even so much as looks cross-eyed, put a nice fat slug where it will do the most good."

He went down on one knee beside Turkey-head and said, "Dear, dear, how unfortunate, he isn't dead."

Cliff said harshly: "If I'd had a chance to wind up I'd have taken his head clean off his shoulders, dead arm or no dead arm."

"You did very well, indeed," Sam praised. "You did very well, my boy. I never heard a sweeter sound in my life than that rock bouncing off Turkey-head's skull."

Then Cliff remembered. "And now where are we?" he asked bitterly. "We got nothing here so we'll have to turn Turkey-head loose. He wasn't in on the kill when they bumped off the proprietor."

"Trust old Sam," Cantwell said. "I got plenty, my boy. I dumped the table over and got the nicest little piece of paper you ever saw. It was slid between the top and the little rail that supports it. It's a slip on a Philadelphia safety de-

posit box. Evidently our friend Gracey had a good head. He wouldn't trust the evidence with anyone. He wouldn't even risk taking it back to New York himself. So he just put it snugly in a safety deposit box and started to trundle home with the slip."

He got up and smiled down at the unconscious Turkey-head. "Oh, yes indeed, we have plenty. So let's get going before the other boys get back and start ructions. Although I'll bet they'll go a damned long way before they get wise to the fact that old Sam slipped a fast one over on them."

He picked up Turkey-head with what seemed effortless ease and started for the door with Haney and Latzo in front of him. At the car he threw Turkey-head on the floor of the rear and said to the other two:

"Jump right in, boys. And if you step on your dear boss' face, I don't give a tinker's damn."

He turned to Cliff and said: "My, my, but this is going to be cozy. Three of us in the front seat and three in the rear. You drive, my boy, and I'll just keep an eye on the boys in the rear in case they have ideas."

He smiled at Dorothy and patted her shoulder and she smiled back wanly.

"That's the stuff, my dear. You've got a very swell brother. And the boy chauffeur is worth cultivating. You could go farther and fare worse, my dear."

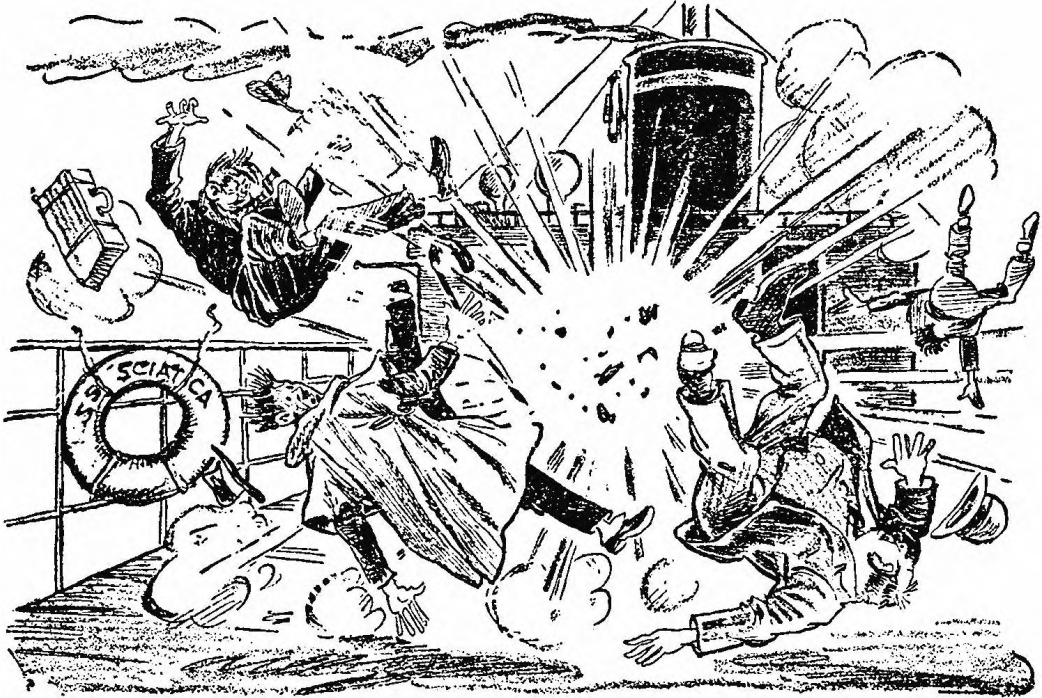
He climbed into the seat and slammed the door, then said: "But enough of this tittle-tattle. To the nearest state police station and spare not the cylinders. You may have a dead arm, my boy, but it has done yeoman service this evening. You never pitched a better ball in all your career."





# Extinguished Visitors

"Dizzy Duo" Yarn



By Joe Archibald

Author of "Madame Hex," etc.

Being around Crown Prince Fzog of Slatvia is as safe as walking through a colony of tsetse flies, Snooty Piper learns. And when the crown prince gets rubbed out twice in Beantown, Snooty figures it's time he put a stop to the bargain-day assassinations.

"YOU two oafs," Dogface Woolsey says to me and Snooty Piper one very fine morning when we report for work, "have got quite an assignment today. Mr. Guppy must be getting a touch of paresis. That is softening of the brain. You are going to represent the *Evening Star* this A. M. at ten o'clock when the newspaper boys meet Crown Prince Boris Fzog of Slatvia. Now please do not start a war, will you? And for heaven's sake, Piper, get that green bur-lap you are wearing pressed!"

"Fzog?" I query. "Where are the bullet-proof vests, Dogface? Being around that Slatvian prince is not as healthy as walking naked through a jungle filled with tse-tse flies. Why, they say that the whole front of the palace in Yurapest looks like it has smallpox the way pro assassins have fired lead at Boris."

"There is a possibility of violence," Dogface admits, nodding. "Perhaps that is why Mr. Guppy does not care to risk his favorite international news expert. Of course, you both know why Fzog is

coming here? There is a very large rock worth at least a quarter of a million bucks that a Back Bay social lioness owns.

"During her visit in Slatvia four years ago, Fzog got a gander at it and he has been quite fretful ever since. Now that the doll has taken a beating in the State Street stock stalls, she is willing to part with the dazzling dornick that is called The Last Hope Diamond.

"Fzog is taking no chances of getting a hunk of paste palmed off on him, so he has come to America to negotiate the purchase of the bauble himself. But don't tell everybody you see as that is supposed to be known only to a few citizens. Everybody thinks he is coming over here to swing a loan."

"Oh, a one-man band, huh?" Snooty chirps.

It took me nearly five minutes to get that one. I pulled him toward the elevator then and pushed him in. We go over to Hanover Street and get our suits pressed, and it is a half hour later that we reach the docks where the tub that brought Fzog across the pond is just dropping her gangplank.

It is not a very big packet, and when we step out of our cab we see it listing quite earnestly to port. The skipper is on the bridge waving his flippers and yelling something terrible.

"There," I says, "they've torpedoed him already, Snooty!"

"Don't be silly," the crackpot says. "Look over there at the rail. It is Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy. No wonder the ship's beginning to capsize. Somebody better move him or—"

We get on the deck of the *S.S. Sciatica*, and there is quite a to-do aboard. Six very husky mariners are pulling Iron Jaw away from the port side and we can see they are up to their ankles in sea water.

"Who told you this was a whale boat?" Snooty yelps at Iron Jaw. "What're you here for anyway?"

"You shut up, Piper, or I'll throw you into a smokestack!" O'Shaughnessy snaps testily.

**W**ELL, everybody gets set to welcome Fzog, and it is a half hour later that he comes up on deck and there are three big burly Balkan bulls with him. Fzog is a character wearing a black slouch hat and a cape draped over his civvies which has a Persian lamb collar.

Fzog's face reminds us in a way of a certain paper hanger who jabbed himself with a needle and then stole Austria and cancelled the Czechs. Fzog, however, has a spot of alfalfa under his lower lip as well as one over his upper kisser and he looks as if somebody painted a big semicolon under his nose.

The newspaper boys take a lot of pictures of the foreign citizen, and then me and Snooty crowd him to get an interview.

"Meet any assassins on the way over?" Snooty says and I step on the halfwit's foot.

"You fathead, Snooty—of all the—!"

"Nyah-h-h! I com' by seeccratly. I tak' heem boat at zey zink I ham not on yat. Fzog he cares zat for his hanemies!" The character snaps his fingers and then puts a cigarette as long as a stick of spaghetti into his mouth.

"How is she—t'eengs in Yurapest?" Snooty shoots at Fzog.

"Confidential, my fran', zey are lousy! Lak what you call heem ze Brooklyns bazeballers, n-yah? Now I go. I hate questions an' anyway, my fran's, I mak' eet a wary nize target too moch here, wouldn't I? Kallemeff! Yabetsky! We go now! Ah-h-h, Amar-r-rica! Tonight we have heem what you call ze blow-hup!"

Bla-a-a-am! That is how it sounded. I see Iron Jaw's derby, a dozen pieces of baggage and a part of a ventilator pass me as I head for the rail. I bounce off a life preserver that is hanging there and slide to the other side of the tub again.

Then I sit up and look around in quite a daze. There is Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy sitting in a life boat patting fire out of his locks. The Crown Prince and Snooty Piper are moving around on their hands and knees over by a bulkhead as if both of them have lost their collar buttons.

It is quite a scene. The skipper of the *Sciatica* crawls out of a companionway

and hollers for everybody to prepare to abandon ship.

"Ma-a-a-an the lifeboats!" he bellows. "Send out an S.O.S.!"

The passengers stampede and walk all over Fzog and everybody else and we are quite a sight when the last citizen deserts the tub. One sleeve and a pants leg are missing from Snooty's green burlap as he helps Fzog up.

"Somewan I bat you he try for keel me, yah?"

"If he was not tryin'," Snooty gasps, "I do not want to be here when he means it. It was a bomb, Scoop!"

"You don't say?" I says. "I thought it was a bottle of beer explodin'."

Right then and there a pair of big burly stewards come up dragging a foreign-looking little voyager between them. They claim they are sure he is the dishonest character who carried the bomb.

"I am watching eet ze baggage whan 'pouf' op she goes!" orates the flunkey. "I t'eenk ze bomb she was in ze beeg zoot-case what sounds lak' she's tickeeng whan I put her down, Your Highness. He ees maybe assassin, yah?"

Fzog looks at the culprit and his mouth snaps open. The little alien shakes all over like a twenty-year-old jalopy and he looks quite as guilty as Iron Jaw looks stupid.

"Arrest heem!" Fzog bawls. "Averywhere eet geeves bombs weet' rewolwers. Nyatting all the time but bang-bang-bang! Sometime I t'eenk I don't want to be King of Slatvia."

"Have patience," Snooty says. "It doesn't look like you ever will be. Well, there is the assassin and Fzog is still not liquidated. We must hurry and 'phone Dogface, Scoop."

"Give him to me," Iron Jaw bays and he grabs the little assassin and drags him toward the gangplank. He throws him at a couple of flatfeet and says for them to lock him up. "I am personally goin' to escort the Crown Prince to his hotel," he says. "He is not safe no place."

"You will be his bodyguard, hub?" Snooty chirps. Then he grabs Fzog's hand and shakes it. "Good-bye, Your

Highness," he says. "If I don't ever see you ag'in. Scoop, we must hurry and get his obit set up."

IRON JAW growls like a lion at meal time and takes the Prince by the arm. "Don't pay no 'tention to newspaper clucks, Prince," he says in a voice you could hear all the way to Providence. "Stick with me and I'll get that diamond for you and put you back on a boat to Slavia an'—"

"Oh-h-h!" Snooty groans. "Did you hear that porpoise? Now every dishonest character in Boston knows—ugh, that flatfoot! Compared to him the presidents of all the Ladies' Aids are deaf mutes. Scoop, Fzog is about as safe right now as a canary inside of a cat. Why, even a war might start. If anything happens to Fzog over here—well, I will phone Dogface."

Snooty goes into a booth in a tough looking tavern on the waterfront. "Hello—hello," he says. "Get a rewrite man and give him this, Dogface. Lead—Slatvia's African dodger, Prince Boris Fzog, missed liquidation by the thickness of the film on his molars when the *Sciatica* docked this A. M. A bomb went off and the Balkan-Boston Ferry did a Susy-Q and shagged on down.

"A passenger on the packet was tagged and towed to the icebox by the alleged Detective O'Shaughnessy of the local force. He owned up to being Alexandrovitch Alkaline, dealer in Turkish towels, rugs and caviar. Fzog has just Cunninghammed to the Ripley-Plaza paced by the aforesaid O'Shaughnessy. More later. Goombye, please."

When he comes out of the booth Snooty says he cannot understand Dogface. "He asked me to come over myself and write it in English, Scoop, can you imagine? Well, that is all for now. Until Fzog goes after the rock that the Back Bay doll has got on the block. Let's go to the Greek's. Did I tell you about the new Jill I have got over in South Boston? She's—"

The papers come out later and tell the public how Fzog was nearly rubbed out, and there seems to be quite a case of jitters in the U. S. State Department by

high noon. G-men are on their way to Beantown to chaperon the Slatvian, and half the cops in the Hub begin to prow around the swanky Back Bay hostelry.

Me and Snooty Piper journey to Back Bay also, but we case the residence of Mrs. Percival Nearleigh-Dunne, the owner of the Last Hope dazzler. At about three in the P. M. a sartorially perfect citizen, surrounded by two flatfeet, enters the domicile of the upper crust's social tipster and remains inside the place for nearly an hour.

When he comes out, still surrounded, me and Snooty dog him toward the Ripley-Plaza in the event that dishonest citizens should spring at them from ambush.

"That citizen with the striped pants is a sparkler specialist, Scoop," Snooty tells me. "He is no doubt the agent acting for the doll. A quarter of a million smackers he is carrying! There are rough persons in this town who would slit a throat for only a seven-jewel ticker. Something is going to happen, Scoop Binney!"

"You would just die if it didn't, wouldn't you?" I snarl at him as we dog the three characters to the Ripley-Plaza.

We follow them up in the elevator and they go into a big suite of rooms on the tenth floor and who is sitting outside on guard but Iron Jaw.

"Well," I says, "that is that, Snooty. It looks like the criminal element is having an off day. Let's go have lunch."

Just then we hear a terrible yelp and the citizen wearing the striped pants runs out and calls to Iron Jaw for help.

"Oh-h-h-h! Something terrible has happened. The Prince has been k-killed! Call the police, call the G-men, call all the citizens to war on the under—ha-a-ah!"

Iron Jaw hurries into the swanky suite with me and Snooty at his heels. There is Fzog stretched out on the Axminster and some unlawful character has pushed the sharp blade of a knife into his brisket. It is quite apparent that the Slatvian Prince has played his last game of hide and seek with assassins.

"And you sitting outside there all the time, tsk, tsk," Snooty chides Iron Jaw. "I knew it—I knew it! Now you've start-

ed a world war. You should be ashamed. It is very plain to see that Fzog was not killed by U. S. thugs as they did not wait until the sparkler was in his hands."

"I don't understand it," Iron Jaw wails. "Fzog has not been out of this room. Nobody went into it. I would swear—"

"I should think you would, the mess you made of things," Snooty torments him and we all sit down and wait for half the cops in Beantown to get there. The commissioner, six lieutenants and four captains, five sergeants and twenty plainclothes men arrive. The medical examiner can hardly get in to view the shell of Fzog, the room is that crowded. When he does, he tells us that the Slatvian has been stabbed.

"I was wondering," Snooty pipes up with sarcasm. "I wasn't quite sure."

THE commissioner is too upset to have Snooty thrown out. The crackpot takes a wad of gum out of his mouth and sticks it on the sole of his shoes. Then he gets up and walks to a dresser, but Iron Jaw gives him a push that almost sends him through an open window. Snooty hangs over the sill for several seconds before I haul him in by the feet.

"I have just found out, thanks to Iron Jaw, how the criminal character got in here," he chirps to the commissioner. "There is a ledge running along the wall about three feet below the window."

"Where were the Prince's bodyguards?" I ask Iron Jaw politely.

"They—er—Fzog let 'em go down to eat as he knew I was right outside all the time."

"Well, he sure was an optimist," Snooty says and the commissioner wants to know who is investigating the rubout, Mr. Guppy's reporters or the police force? Iron Jaw is losing his temper, too.

A real detective wraps the knife up in a handkerchief and puts it in his pocket. The commissioner suggests that all of Fzog's caretakers be put in the jug just in case. Then he calls for the manager of the hotel and says he wants the names of the occupants of all the rooms that run along the same side of the building. He sends a flock of dicks down to the lobby

with instructions to pick them all up and ask for their keys as they come in.

"One of them is the killer," the commissioner says. "We'll grab him before dark."

"He might have checked out," Snooty points out. "It has been done, ha, ha! Half of Slatvia must have been tagging Fzog across the drink." He peels a piece of paper off his shoe. "One of the rough boys finally caught up with him. They—"

The phone rings and the commissioner picks it up. Somebody downstairs tells him something that throws him into a faint. When we revive the boss of the criminal catching machine, he says very weakly:

"The Prince of Slatvia is on his way to headquarters. He says to arrest this Fzog here as he is an impostor. All his bodyguards are impostors, too. He says to lock them all up. Somebody get me some smelling salts. Oh-h-h!"

It is not surprising that The Hub gets into quite a whirl after that. The dead wagon takes the Fzog that got off the *Sciatica* down to the morgue and the policemen toss the three Balkan bodyguards into the hoosegow with Alexanderovitch Alkeline. It is quite a roomy cell the foreign delegation has. The little rug peddler looks scared out of his skivvies when he gets company.

"Here is a second, third and fourth for pinochle, Alex," Snooty says to the bomb-thrower.

The real Prince Fzog walks into the LaGrange Street bastille a half hour later and takes a look at the defunct citizen who had been giving him a run-around. Me and Snooty gape at the character and we have to look at what is on the slab in the morgue to be sure we are not seeing double.

"Th-they must've been twins," Snooty gulps. "Scoop, did you ever see—?"

"He ees wan big impostor, my fran's," Fzog says. "I am ze rightful heir to ze t'rone of Slatvia. Look, I tak' eet off hees false moostache an' goatee and zere we haff eet ze tr-r-aitor, Vladimir Plotz. In Slatvia he is one of my doubles, my fran's. Zey coom in handy whan some-

wan he wants to keel Fzog. I have eet four of thees doubles, yah.

"Thees wan, thees peeg een ze grass, I say he com weet' me to America joost in case. Before we geet on ze bo't he heets me on the h'ad an' t'rows me in the Danube. Zo he ees Fzog, naw? But thees Fzog he ees good swimmair. He com out of Danube an' geet anoizzer bo't afterward to Amar-r-rica! A faster bo't. We gat here almost same time. Zo!"

"I get it," Snooty says, scratching his dome. "He has stooges to draw the slugs. One got an idea he wanted to be Fzog."

"There, you see, my fran's. Here ees eet the real gold ring of the Prince of Slatvia. You weel see if you exa-r-rmine eet zat the wan on zees peeg's fingair is not gol'. I have eet alzo ze birt'mark on ze shoulder to tall you I am ze real Prince Fzog. I show you, yah!"

He strips to his silk undershirt and there on an angel bone is a little pink crescent.

The commissioner sits down and paws at his face. "Wh-e-e-ew! This is a relief, Your Highness. I was worried for a while there. Better let me take you to the hotel in my car, Prince. In the morning the diamond will be placed in your hands. Must call Washington—"

"Let's get out of here, Scoop," Snooty says. "I got to get me a double decker. Even if I am sick of foreigners for awhile I must go to the Greek's."

**H**ALF an hour later Snooty is sitting next to me gazing at a piece of paper. It is the one that stuck to his shoe in the ritzy Ripley-Plaza. "It didn't stick by accident," he says to me. "I saw it on the floor and knew somebody had dropped it. Look what it says here, Scoop. Ivan Ivanovitch, Karlgrad. It is torn right there, Scoop. But up in the corner here it says *S.S. Skavinsky-skavar*—"

"Don't tell me you are master-minding, you numbskull! Don't you know everything is cleared up?"

"I wonder," the crackpot ruminates. "I think I will go down and see the little rug peddler they locked up for carrying

the bomb. This piece of paper came off a boat. The name of the ship—"

"I will have none of it, Snooty Piper," I says. "You can go alone. At last I've got some will power, I think."

It is three hours before I see Snooty Piper again. He comes to my room and his eyes look as if they have been steeped in belladonna for a week. He has got a look on his pan that is a fair warning to me.

"Well, Scoop," he begins, "I have been moseyin' around. I called on every guest of the Ripley-Plaza who has a room on the same side of the corridor as Fzog's suite. Four of 'em were in their rooms during the time Fzog was supposed to have been rubbed off the tax list. They said if a citizen walked along the ledge outside the windows they would have seen him.

"Now, in a room next to the Fzog suite, is a character that has been boiled to the scalp since he registered so he would not have seen anybody. But next door to him—well, a guest checked out half an hour before they found Fzog, or whoever he was at the time, as dead as you please. Catch on?"

"Snooty, will you please shut up?" I says in a pleading voice. "The real Fzog showed up. Who cares who murdered the fake one?"

"I called in to talk to the little rug, turkish towel and caviar drummer who hails from the banks of the Danube," the crackpot goes on. "Nobody else could make him talk. Neither could I, but I never saw a character so scared. I saw something, though, that seemed quite screwy to me in that hoosegow. If I am wrong, they can sue me, Scoop, ha, ha! All of those countries over there—Slatvia, Bulldozia, Ozonia—they are pretty close to Russia. It is hard to tell one of the characters from another."

"I wouldn't know. Look, it says here that the new pitcher that the Red Sox have got is goin' great guns down in— and here is where they've arrested another—" I talk fast but Snooty has a one-track mind and it is rusty to boot.

"Let's go over to South Boston, Scoop,"

he says. "I have a doll there who is a real Russian—a white one."

"If she is white, how did she happen to speak to you?" I sniff. "All right. But you call her up and ask her to get a friend. Anything to take your mind off Fzog."

**WE MEET** the dolls over on C Street. Snooty's latest torch is not bad on the eyes but the blind date I drew is something else again. If she was any homelier, I would not believe it. We go over to a tavern and start sipping Bock. Snooty does what he calls a dance with Natacha and when she comes back to the booth, she tells him five years of balancing blue plates had never inflicted quite so much torture on her puppies.

"I am getting a little stale on the gallops," Snooty admits airily. Then: "Ah—er—look at this piece of paper. What does it mean to you?"

"Oh, forget it!" I hoot. "Will you stop thinkin' about—"

"Wh-why, where did you gat thees?" the Russian frill gasps. "Thees ees off from a Soviet warsheep. I have brodder on the *Skavinskyskavar*, Ivan Ivanovitch? In Russian, Snooty, thees ees lak John Johnson, Karlgrad. Hee hee, some-wan he jokes, yas?"

"I don't see anything funny about any of it," I says irritably.

"Zat ees Charlestown in Angleesh, my fran'," Natacha says. "Karl is Charles an' grad is town in Russian. Meex them op an'—!"

"Wha-a-a?" Snooty yelps and grabs the paper from her. "Come on, Scoop. I knew it! I've been thinking about s-something ever since I saw Fzog. The last one, I mean. Oh-h, well, we will see you again, girls. Hurry, Scoop."

"You come back here, you cheap skater!" Natacha howls. "Ze beel she ees not paid. Bumski!"

"There's too many foreigners around here, isn't there, Scoop?" Snooty says between breaths. We hop a cab and Snooty says to the very rough looking driver: "Take us to the Navy Yard!"

"Are you goin' to enlist in the navy?" I inquire as I lie back gasping for air.



TDA

"I hope so. Get on a leaky sub, will you, you half wit?"

When we get to Charlestown, Snooty yells for the cab driver to stop. "We will get out here," he says. "There are some sailors over there. Pay him, Scoop!"

"How can I?" I yelp. "I'm short a nickel on the fare. Snooty, hand over—"

"Aw, scram, mug!" the taxi citizen says. "I'm tippin' you instead."

He starts up quick and knocks me off my pins and I roll halfway across the street before I can pick myself up. Being with Fzog is quite a lot safer than being with Snooty Piper, I can tell you that.

"Hiya, sailor?" Snooty says to one of three very salty-looking hammock stretchers. "Ship ahoy!"

"Why, good evenin', fishface! Whatta ya want?"

"Why—I—was thinkin' of—ha ha—gettin' a mermaid or somethin' tattooed on me," the crackpot says and I sit down on the curb and make believe I am not with him.

"No kiddin'? I bet you're a reg'lar devil, ain'tcha?"

"Well—er—you should see me at parties when I put a lampshade on my head," Snooty says. "It would kill you. All right, let's stop clownin'. Where is there a citizen named John Johnson?"

"Oh, him? Best guy with a needle in this burg. Ya go down that street there, then turn to the left. Ya'll see his sign."

I follow Snooty down to a little hole in the wall where there is a tall thin character sitting in a chair. On the walls there are samples of pictures his clientele can pick from if they want to have them needled onto their epidermis. John Johnson is in his shirt sleeves, and what you can see of his arms are all covered with pink and purple cherubs, very nude dolls and other strange characters.

"What'll ya have, boys?"

"Nothin'," I says and go out. "I got in the wrong place by mistake. I am very sorry. Put a mermaid on Piper's throat and let the needle slip!"

I leave Snooty in there and wait outside. He comes out ten minutes later and he says that he is going to break the town wide open.

"I thought that was a tattooin' joint," I says. "Not a coke den. How many needles full of hop did he jab into you, huh?"

"I am calling the policemen right away, Scoop. I want a squad car filled with them to join me out in front of the Ripley-Plaza in just forty-five minutes. Scoop, I would not be surprised if the Prince of Slatvia got impatient about waiting for Mrs. Nearleigh-Dunne's diamond and is negotiating the deal even while I speak. We must make haste."

**T**HE police do not stand Snooty up. When we arrive at the Ripley-Plaza. Iron Jaw and five gendarmes pile out and they tell Snooty they will give him ten years if he is kidding.

"Just follow me," the crackpot says jauntily.

We do—right up to the door of Prince Fzog's suite and make him knock on the door. The foreign character opens the door and he is very impatient. He says for us to hurry our business, whatever it is, as he expects a caller.

"I am sure you do," Snooty says. Then he reaches out and pulls Fzog's goatee right off. The Slatvian lets out a roar and tries to slam the door, but Snooty is in the way and gets an awful buffet on the noggin. Iron Jaw walks right over Snooty, and Fzog or whoever he is parts the big flatfoot's hair on the side with a slug from a roscoe.

We all pile over Iron Jaw and Snooty and corner the foreign character in a bathroom after he has emptied the cannon all over the suite. It is quite a help to us all, his marksmanship. He could not hit an elephant with a handful of oranges at ten paces.

"Give up!" Iron Jaw howls as he gets his marbles back.

"Don't shoot, my fran's. I geeve op!" squawks the alien.

"Please somebody," I plead, "tell me who is Fzog an' who ain't?"

"It is all very simple," Snooty says. "The real crown prince is down in a cell in LaGrange Street. When you show him two Fzogs—one dead and one booked for the hot squat—I bet he will start talking.

The last time I saw him, I looked at his finger and there is a big ridge on his pinky that was made from a ring, but he was not wearing one.

"This criminal character has it on his finger right now.

"Take it off as I bet it does not fit and I bet he hasn't worn it long enough to make much of a dent in the meat of his finger. The real Fzog will tell us the rest. That tattoo mark on him is a fake. He had it done over in Charlestown when he landed. A Russky sailor gave him the address back in Slatvia, I bet. The Fzog he killed was the fake Fzog, I bet, that the real Fzog knew about. You wait and see."

Snooty was right. When the police let Alexanderovitch Alkeline out of his cell and promised him protection, he turned out to be the real Fzog of Slatvia. He told us that he shaved off his alfalfa and came to America incognito to get the sparkler and had the first Fzog act for him at his permission. He did not know anything about the bomb that blew up on the boat.

"An assassin he most have put heem zere, my fran's. It blew op. I start to run an' they chase me. Zen I am in jailhouse. When I hear of assassination of my fran', I do not dare speak as who do I recognize in one of ze t'ree bodyguards zat are put in ze same sall weet' me as the bigges' assassins in all ze Balkans, yah. He ees after me too so I do not dare say who ees thees I am. I bat you he carry beeg knife if you look."

"Oh-h-h, cripes!" I groan. "What a mess. Who is this character that killed the first Fzog?"

"Heem? Serge Petrovitch! He ees wan of my doubles. He follow us to thees coun-tree, yah. I have maybe wan-two—t'ree—"

"He-e-ey, lootenant," the desk sergeant says. "It's that joolery man on the phone. He says he is at the Ripley-Plaza with the fifty carat rock but that Fzog ain't there. He wants to know—"

"Tell him to stay there until we bring another Fzog and not to move. Tell him to lock himself in. We are coming over there with two hundred cops and the real Fzog. If this one is a fake, I don't care.

Let him have the rock and then buy passage for the next boat going out tomorrow. We're goin' nuts. I got a good mind to resign and lose my pension!"

Snooty Piper goes into another room and we do not see him until after the real Prince of Slatvia proves beyond doubt that he is the real McCoy. The fat-head is wearing the clothes of the fake Fzog that they just locked up. He has got the phony alfalfa on his upper lip and on his chin.

"Snooty!" I yelp. "What're you up to now?"

"Since the Prince has no more stand-ins left in the U. S., he is still in danger, isn't he?" the crackpot says. "It is the duty of a U. S. citizen to protect foreign royalty. I will precede Fzog to the Ripley-Plaza to see if the coast is clear. Somebody take the prisoner in there a wrap or somethin' as he is almost nude. I will go out and get into the car—"

Snooty wraps his cape around him and goes out of the police station. *Bang! Bang! Bang!* Snooty dives back in through the door, slides right up to the desk and stops. He sits up and pokes a finger into a bullet hole that is in his black felt hat.

"Call an armored car company an' hire one," he gulps. "Put Fzog in a safe before you put him in the steel buggy. I never knew of a citizen with so many enemies, did any of you?"

For once everybody agreed with Snooty Piper. The next day fifty policemen and a company of U. S. Infantry put Prince Fzog on a tub that was bound back to Slatvia. Every passenger and everyone of the crew were searched quite thoroughly before the *S.S. Vertigo* shoved off. Late that night me and Snooty were in the Greek's listening to the last minute news come out of the radio.

"Flash! The *S.S. Vertigo* is reported in distress three hundred miles out to sea. Radio calls from the ship say that an explosion took place in her hold. Sinking rapidly—Tanker John J. Doe speeding to rescue—"

Snooty sighs and puts down his beer. "Why don't Fzog just give up, Scoop?" he says.

*The sinister park prowler plays his murder game with a . . . .*

# Sleuth Girl

*By Don George*

Author of "Eyes of Doom," etc.

**T**HE stage props were perfect. Twilight settling like shopworn star dust over distant towers; clipped-winged mallards rafting on a shadowy pond; muted city sounds over-toning pastoral stillness; a lone park bench screened by fragrant bushes; a soft-throated girl . . . .

Yet Detective Wilcy Whittaker was annoyed.

"Hey, call off this damned squirrel," he whispered huskily, shaking one bulging coat pocket until an inquisitive nose showed, then two bright eyes and a furry, reddish-brown head.

The girl sighed and stirred. She took a peanut from a paper bag. "Here, Red." The squirrel leaped from blue serge to flowered print. "You're jittery," she accused in an undertone. "On such a night."

"Damn right I'm jittery. Of all the dopey assignments, waiting for a killer to get the drop on you."

"Then that boy the other night died?"

"Yeah, and the girl's still hysterical."

"Do you think he'll find us here?"

The pride of the Twentieth Precinct hinged his thick red neck a point to port and eyed the rhododendrons cautiously.

"No sign. Maybe he's wise this is a plant."

"You'd better make it look real—Wilcy." She leaned closer until her hair obscured his view. "And lower that stage whisper. He's smart, the Prowler is."

"All right. Ease over then. But keep your lamps peeled. And don't park on my gat," he whispered fiercely.

He shifted his holster, then settled down and surveyed the close-up skyline

of her profiled face regretfully.

"Jeez, if that guy wasn't waiting to horn in." He shook his craggy head, pushed his hat back off his brow. "It gets me how you ever made the force."

"Brains, mister, brains." She released the restive squirrel and smoothed her skirt. "But don't let that scare you off. Duty's duty."

"Sh-h-h." He scanned the dim path, drew one square-toed boot underneath the seat in readiness.

"It's only Red."

Detective Whittaker glared at the darting shadow on the grass. "I'd like to drill the beast."

"Don't you dare," she flared, then guiltily resumed her careful undertone. "I've raised him since he was a pup."

"Why you brought it along beats me."

"Atmosphere. This pitching-woo act's got to look real, hasn't it? This is the third night and the Prowler doesn't tumble, Why?" She looked at Whittaker accusingly. "Corny technique, that's why. Here, Red, nuts!"

Red high-tailed up as Detective Whittaker scratched his slow-speed brain. "Why, damn it, you've been yapping duty, duty all the time. You high-heeled rookies give me a pain. Corny, eh? I'll show you."

The girl slid away and Detective Whittaker's hand descended heavily on the nuts which Red was about to claim.

"Ouch! You little devil!" Whittaker bellowed, past all discretion. "Bite me, will you? I'll bat your ears in."

"Don't!" The girl waved the peanut bag frantically. "I think— Oh-h-h!"



The ducks had long since bedded down. The distant street lights winked indifferently. The park was silent now . . . deadly silent. And the girl and the man, too. For directly in front of them a shape had loomed, indistinct, motionless.

"Hold it, tough guy, or you'll get bit again—with lead."

Detective Wilcy Whittaker held it.

"Now, sister, frisk him. Toss me his gun."

Whittaker's mind began to move again. "Whaddaya mean, gun? We're just looking at the scenery. Beat it. Scram!"

"Nuts," said the intruder.

The girl tensed. "Look," she urged, "if I give you his gun and my purse and— and rings, will you go?"

"You catch on fast, sister. I ain't on the make like him. You streamlined dames oughta steer clear of made-over flatfeet."

"Smart, eh, Prowler?"

"Naw, ya gave yourself away yelling like a traffic cop. Toss, kid."

She withdrew Whittaker's gun and tossed it to the path just beyond Red's frisking tail.

"Now what?" Her jaw was tense.

"The bag. Not the paper one. The one with the dough. And don't go monkeying with it."

The girl gave up trying to extricate the pearl-handled persuader from her purse and tossed.

"Now the ice on your mitts."

"Shall I throw them too?" Her voice was edged with strain. "They're valuable."

"Bring 'em."

**S**HE advanced carefully, removing an imitation emerald ring from one hand, and then, transferring the peanut bag so clumsily that several peanuts spilled, tugging loose the nice glass diamond from the other.

"Slip 'em in my pocket."

She hesitated, spoke clearly and firmly. "Nuts."

"Step on it!" His gun hand moved almost imperceptibly.

She stepped. Then, stepping back again, she leaped sideways suddenly,

threw herself onto the grass and screamed.

"Get him, Wilcy! Get him!"

Detective Wilcy Whittaker pulled in his neck, hunched up his shoulders and launched his massive body even as he cursed her for a fool and himself for a bigger one.

Then, in mid-air, his small eyes bulged. The Prowler wasn't throwing lead. The Prowler was dancing around on the path like a jitterbug. He was clutching his side as if he were shot. And his gun was gone!

Even as the blurred scene exploded in his brain, Detective Whittaker was living up to the Twentieth Precinct's pride in him. He was smashing his quarry down with a bearlike paw, down and out. The bracelets did the rest.

"You've killed him. I'm sure you have," the girl cried, crawling to the unconscious gunman and pawing at him.

"I hope so." Detective Whittaker breathed heavily, half in conscious pride, half in anger. "And I'd like to wring your neck. What's the idea, trying to get me plugged?" His voice rose another octave as he watched the girl. "Get away from his pockets! That's our evidence in there."

"It isn't, it's Red."

"Huh?"

Detective Whittaker stared unbelievably at the inert ball of fur she held.

"You squashed. . . . Oh, Wilcy, he's alive!"

Wilcy Whittaker looked from the Prowler to the girl to the squirrel. He curried the back of his neck. "You long-haired cops sure have wrecked the force. Come on, we got to book this guy." When she made no move, he raised his voice defensively. "Well, it got in the way, didn't it? Just like you did when I was going to make the pinch."

She stroked the soft red fur and sniffed scornfully. "You make the pinch!"

"I suppose you did it, rolling on the grass. Brains—hell."

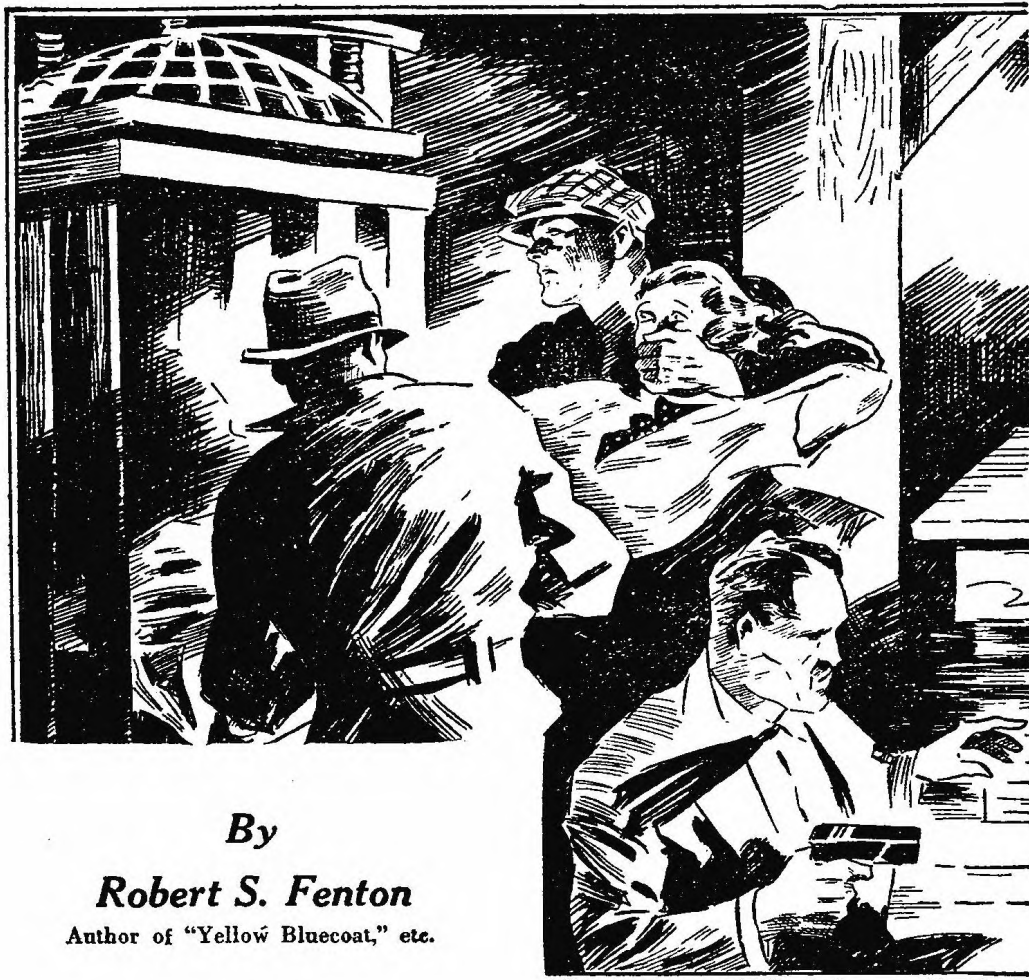
"Red helped."

"Nuts."

"Exactly. Nuts. I slipped some in the Prowler's pocket with my rings."

*Plain-clothes man Mike Leonard tried to make a Garden of Eden out of . . .*

# Hell's Hotel



By

**Robert S. Fenton**

Author of "Yellow Bluecoat," etc.

**T**HE day young Mike Leonard doffed his blue and brass buttons and put on plain clothes, he went out of headquarters with a solemn warning ringing in his ears and orders to break up an epidemic of robberies that had been taking place on the South Side. The South Side was tough. The Merlonis made it tough. The solemn warning had been: "Never trust a Merloni."

Old Pat Deming had coined that slogan. Deming was the commissioner now, but there had been days when he pound-

ed a South Side beat, when he battled with Merlonis.

"Watch out for them hellions," Old Pat had told Mike Leonard. "The new crop of Merlonis is ripe for crime. They was born with hate for cops in their hearts. Frankie is the oldest. He's Angelo's son and he's already done a stretch in the reformatory. Then there's Tony and a few others. If there's a gang workin' that South Side, you'll find the black Merloni hand in it."

Mike Leonard knew he had no business going into that little lunchroom just

off Eighth Street on the South Side to talk to the girl behind the counter. He wondered what the commissioner would say if he knew that Mike had already taken Kathie Merloni to a dance.

She stood there smiling at him now but he caught the wariness in her dark eyes. There was a touch of bitterness in them, too. Her hair of jet black gave off little purple lights. She was tall and slim and Mike was sure he could have held both her high-heeled shoes in the palm of his hand. There was only one thing about the girl that Mike disapproved of. She wore too much lip rouge and she did not need it.

Mike said, "Hello," and grinned at Kathie. "You ought never to put that stuff on your lips, Kathie. You're pretty enough."

"Last night you said that, Leonard," the girl reminded him a little coldly. "You tryin' to make a good woman out of me? A Merloni?"

"Nobody can pick his family," Mike said, "but they can pick their friends."

**K**ATHIE'S eyes clouded over with threatened storm and Mike knew he had said the wrong thing. It was difficult to say the right thing to Kathie Merloni. The stigma of the Merlonis was on her and that was one reason, Mike thought, why she was working in a cheap restaurant like Grady's. She deserved a better break and he told her so.

"Huh," she said scornfully, "we belong on the South Side, we Merlonis. You coppers should know that!" She banged a cup of coffee down in front of the plain-clothes man so that some of the contents splashed into the saucer.

"I suppose if I got up nerve enough to get a job uptown, the police would have somebody like you tip off the boss that I am a crook's daughter. No, mister, I know what chances I've got in this world! I know what they say at headquarters—Don't trust a—"

"Can that!" Mike growled. He set the cup down and wiped his mouth. "Seen Frankie lately?" he queried. "Tony?"

Katie Merloni leaned over the counter and her words struck hard against Mike's

lean-jawed face. "I might have. I don't know. And listen, copper, if you're being nice to me for what information you can get out of me, you can save your time. I'm on the level but I'm not helpin' the cops. Don't forget that, Mister Leonard!"

"I won't," Mike said, swinging away from the counter to step off the stool. "Next time I see you, have some of that red stuff wiped off your lips. I don't like it!"

"It's my face," the girl snapped.

"Sure," Mike grinned affably, "but you don't have to abuse it, kid. G'night." When he went out he heard a dish crash against the floor behind the counter.

Two nights later Mike Leonard walked into a small tavern on Beaver Street, a narrow warren that ran between Eighth and Ninth. In a back room four young men were playing pool. Mike knew them all. Frankie and Tony Merloni, Rocky Tripp and Joey Sarrow. They were well dressed according to the doubtful sartorial standards of that end of town.

Conversation lagged when Mike entered and asked for a beer which he did not want. Frankie Merloni spat into the sawdust and racked his clue. His wide and deeply socketed eyes were set in a wedge-shaped face. Under a long, prominent nose his thin little lips seemed like a straight line. Frankie was even tougher than he looked.

"Let's git outta here," he sneered. "The joint smells."

Mike Leonard swung around to face the four South Side guys. To Tony Merloni he said: "It wouldn't if you'd change that shirt you wear once in a while. Silk, isn't it, Tony? You must be doing all right."

"Some guys are smart," Frankie said. "And some join the police force." He laughed but the smile was of short duration. "I heard you been talkin' sweet to that cousin of mine over at Grady's, copper! Lay offa her. She's a Merloni an' no Merlonis mix with coppers."

"I've a hunch they will before long, Frankie. Not socially!"

The toughs left the tavern then. Mike watched them get into a sedan that stood



at the curb in front of the place. He himself remained leaning against the little bar for several minutes. A slow grin came to his lips as he let his mind back-track.

Wise heads in the department had given Mike Leonard and other young cops the benefit of knowledge they had gleaned from years of police work. Five years of beat pounding had taught Mike plenty, too. Criminals, particularly burglars, generally stick to one *modus operandi*. They adhere to a certain method or technique. When a method has been tried successfully several times, they stick to that method.

**I**NVESTIGATION of two safe jobs had convinced Mike Leonard that the South Side gang, whoever it was composed of, were sticking to one method. The punch or knob-knocking job. In both cases the burglars knocked off the safe dial with a sledge hammer, punched the spindle back with a center punch and mallet and so broke the small sockets. The lock, then, was easily released. There was only one gang working on the South Side, Mike told himself.

"Well," he said aloud to the tavern keeper, "this isn't being on the job."

He set down his half empty glass. "Lot of these guys around here deserve to be robbed—the stuff they keep over night in those safes. Take that jewelry outfit over on—" Mike trapped his lips, thrust his hand into his pocket to pay for the beer.

The tavern keeper's face was stony. Mike swung away from the bar and went out into the street.

The barkeep watched the detective until he was swallowed up beyond the range of a street lamp across the way. Then he went into a phone booth and called a number. A nervous voice answered after a short wait.

"Listen—that copper's dumb! He plants a trap right in front of my mug an' figgers I'll fall for it. Well, I'm goin' to an' you're goin' to. Start casin' that joolery outfit—Lundell's. Use Sammy Lewis to play it safe. We'll have that flat-foot on a spot when we knock it off."

"Yeah. Nice goin', Porky. We crack it wide open Wednesday night."

Around noon the next day Mike Leonard was in Grady's lunchroom but he was getting scant attention from Kathie Merloni. He sat at a table in a corner where he could watch the door. After a while two men came in. Both were young and wore rough working clothes. They advanced toward the man from headquarters and sat down near him. Mike nodded.

He said: "You try that beer I was telling you about?"

"We did, Mike. Such a cozy place we hung around for almost a half hour talking."

"No kiddin'."

"That's right, Mike. Cheap there, too. Seein' as payday is still a day off at the Gypsum plant—"

Kathie came over, her dark eyes studying the workmen. She looked at Mike, pressed her red lips hard together. There was more rouge on them than usual. Mike grinned when he noticed that. It told him something he wanted to know. A girl would not go out of her way to be disagreeable to a man to whom she was indifferent.

"Your stool pigeons?" she queried sarcastically.

Mike felt restless inside. He wished he could be sure of something. When he left the lunchroom with a refusal of a date from Kathie Merloni, he walked down Eighth Street for a block and turned a corner.

Up ahead a man was getting into a cab and Mike knew it was a little hoodlum named Sammy Lewis. Mike kept on walking, looked up at a second story window bearing the letters LUNDELL, Wholesale Jewelry. He grinned icily, kept on walking. The Commissioner's voice whispered in his brain. "Never trust a Merloni!" Mike wished he had never heard that grim warning.

Night shrouded the Darwell Gypsum Company. Detective Mike Leonard crouched in the doorway of a shed fifty yards from the company office. Inside the building a night watchman waited, gun held in his fist. In the next room

there was a safe containing nine thousand dollars—the Gypsum company payroll.

Across town a church clock tolled ten times. Mike had been in the shadows for an hour. Time dragged. Then the detective heard a car purr along the street that was hidden from his view by a high board fence. A muffled squeal of brakes struck against his ears.

He straightened a little, his breath suspended for several seconds. Soon three shadowy figures came from behind the company office.

"Got in the way I figured," Mike thought grimly, gripping his police positive harder. "Under the fence where that hole was worn—let 'em get inside—get 'em between two fires. They'll start yellin' like the yellow rats they are."

**S**OMETHING went wrong inside the office when the three men got inside the door. Mike Leonard never knew what it was because the watchman was dead when he saw him again. When he started away from the door of the shed, a crook yelled: "Look out! It's a—!" The roar of a gun muffled the rest of that startled cry.

The three men came running out of the place and saw Mike Leonard driving toward them. Another shot followed upon the drifting echoes of the first and something slammed into Mike and slowed him up. But his own gun had answered that bullet and, as he reeled, he saw one of the fleeing figures stumble a little.

Somebody hollered, "Wait for me—listen, you rats! I—" while Mike was shaking mist away from his eyes.

One side of Mike Leonard's neck felt as if it had been hit by an axe. The shock of the bullet burn wore off slightly as he started after the crook who had been left behind. He heard a car racing along the street outside.

He got through the fence, glanced around wildly and saw a man running through the shadows close to the buildings along Eighth Street. He fired a shot, knew he had missed. His hands were still shaky.

He drove after his man, saw him wheel around a corner not twenty feet away. When he got around that corner, however, the man seemed to have vanished in mid-air.

Mike stood still for several seconds, fighting nausea. He felt blood running down around his collar and soaking into his shirt at the shoulder. For a few seconds he did not know where he was. Then a sign beckoned to him, a familiar sign that was not more than two doors away. Grady's.

The wounded detective stumbled into the lunchroom and glanced around dizzily, a wild hunch seizing hold of him. The girl was not behind the counter. He called out throatily once and Kathie Merloni immediately came out of a back room. A tray dropped from her hands and made a loud banging noise on the floor.

She cried out, "Mike, you're hurt!" and ran to him.

Mike laughed softly. The first time she had ever called him by his first name.

"Listen, kid," he said, "did you see a guy go by here? He couldn't have gone far. He couldn't have gotten out of sight so quick unless—" Mike's eyes dropped to the floor as he rested against the counter for a moment.

There were spots on the congoleum, dark spots that trailed toward that back room from which Kathie had appeared. Blood. The detective looked at Kathie, saw that color was receding from her face. His eyes glazed.

"He ducked in here, didn't he?" he bit out. "He knew you worked here—a Merloni. You'd help him even if— Who was it?"

The girl's eyes were defiant albeit shocked by fear.

Mike went into the back room that was cluttered with rubbish. Old crates and barrels and other restaurant refuse. He pulled at the debris for a few seconds before he saw the open window.

The cool breeze coming through it cleared his senses a little. Then he knew that he had passed out for a few minutes between the corner of that building on Eighth Street and the door of

Grady's. The crook would have had a good start.

The girl was braced against the counter when Mike stumbled back into the restaurant. She was biting into her red lips with even white teeth.

"Okay, sister," Mike said. "You saw him. Who was it?"

"I told you once I never help coppers!"

Through clenched teeth Mike said: "Never trust a Merloni!"

Kathie reeled back from Mike's words as if from a blow of his fist. "What's bred in the bone," the detective bit out, "comes out in the flesh!"

**T**HE girl's anger put small red sparks in her dark eyes, drove the hurt of Mike's words out of them. "Sure, copper," she snapped. "I'm a Merloni. I have to be bad. For years they told me that cops were born to be killed. They told me I could never be anything but jail bait, that my name would keep dragging me down.

"Well, I guess they're right, Mike Leonard! I won't tell you who came through here. Anybody'd think you were after somebody big. But a burglar—a kid who wouldn't ever get a break—"

"Burglar!" Mike ripped out. "This time they've committed murder, my girl. The watchman over in the gypsum plant. I know it's Frankie's gang. I set the trap. I knew Porky was the brains of the gang.

"I planted two men in Porky's place. They talked about a factory payroll. I mentioned to Porky that a jewelry place was an invite to burglars and he figured I was dumb. He thought that was the only part of the trap. Murder, kid, this time. You've got to tell me who that guy was."

Kathie was deathly pale. Her lips formed the grim word "murder," but no sound came out.

"Who was it?" Mike roared. He had to get it over. He could not stand up much longer. He had lost a lot of blood. The girl's words drifted through the fog forming inside his head. "N-No—no, I won't!"

Mike stumbled out of Grady's blindly, his tongue thickly faltering over the words: "Never trust a Merloni. They're all the same breed."

A cruising taxi spotted the dick reeling and staggering down Eighth Street and he angled toward the curb in a hurry. Mike grabbed hold of the door, opened it with some difficulty and fell inside the cab. "Police headquarters," he managed to gasp.

The wounded detective reported at headquarters. A police surgeon was immediately called to dress his wound.

"Little closer, Leonard," the doc said, "and you'd have been in the morgue right now! You should stay in bed for a day or so."

"I should but I'm not going to," Mike replied. "I've got work to do."

Late the next day Mike Leonard talked to the commissioner. "I know it's Frankie's gang," he said. "I winged one of the rats. They managed to get away from that trap I set for 'em. The watchman, poor devil, acted too quick maybe. I've got to have proof, though, haven't I? Juries are hell for proof, commissioner."

"We've got to get Frankie Merloni before he goes much farther, Leonard," the commissioner said. "It'll mean a couple more cops' widows soon if you don't get that proof."

Mike grimaced. "They're using up borrowed time," he bit out. "I'll get Frankie, though. That skunk, Porky, will go back for keeps. They're yellow and they'll slip up. They'll be thinking of the chair right now."

Mike Leonard was guessing right. In a room of a squalid hotel near the railroad yards Frankie Merloni, his brother, Tony, Rocky Tripp and Joey Sarrow were in hiding. Joey lay in a corner on a bed that smelled of insecticide. His shirt was open and thick bandages were bared to the light. There was fear in his eyes and in his words.

"She'll squeal, see? They'll put us in that hot seat, Frankie!"

There was a fifth man in the room leaning over a grimy wash basin, rinsing his hands. His sallow face was twist-

ed into an oily smile. He swung around and looked at the hoodlums.

"This job is worth more than a hundred bucks to Porky," he said. "I'm chargin' five hundred for takin' that bullet out of Joey. Too bad you missed that payroll tonight, boys. But you can cut me in on the next one."

Frankie Merloni's face flamed. "Yeah?" he ground out. "Maybe I'll shoot a bullet you can't dig out because it'll be in your guts, Doc!"

"Leggo that gun, Frankie," Tripp snarled. "We need the doc. Porky said he could be trusted. Anyways, we got one murder rap to beat. Two of 'em would—"

"Okay, Doc," Frankie snarled. "Beat it!"

**W**HEN the crooked professional man had gone, Joey said: "Mike Leonard's been seein' that dame that's a cousin of yours, Frankie. She'll maybe talk too much. She's always beefin' about wantin' to live like other people an'—"

"Kathie's a Merloni, ain't she?" Frankie barked hoarsely. "No Merloni ever squealed to no dirty cop. Why'd ya run to Grady's, huh? Yuh got us in this mess!"

"I thought she'd help me," Joey whined. "She done all right— So I got you in this mess, huh? You killed that—"

Frankie Merloni jumped up, deep-set eyes throwing hellish light darts. "Say that again out loud, Joey, an' you won't ever live to do it ag'in!"

Rocky Tripp and Frankie's brother showed the terror that was speeding up their heartbeats to a frenzied pace. Beads of sweat glistened on their clammy, furtive faces. Rocky put his fear into an unfinished sentence. "If she does squeal, Frankie. . . ."

Frankie Merloni cursed and picked up a bottle. He drank some of the raw whisky, then threw the bottle into a wire basket. His whole body shook when he went over to the window, drew the faded curtain aside. Soon the whisky imbued him with false courage, loosened his tongue.

"Yeah, I shot that lousy watchman.

It was him or me. An' I nearly got that lousy flatfoot! If I had of, we wouldn't have nothin' to worry about now."

Tony Merloni said: "We can't take no chances, Frankie. I don't wanna burn. We gotta stop her from talkin'. If she's fell for that copper—"

"Kathie?" Frankie laughed derisively. "Fall for a cop? Don't make me laugh!" His raucous laugh broke off, however, as doubt crept into his desperate brain. He sat down, grunted: "Yeah—if she should open up, we're all cooked. You guys with me. They don't just bump off the guy that fires the shot . . . ."

His brother grinned without feeling. "She's only a cousin, Frankie. She's only another dame. We—"

A numbed silence gripped the hideout. Each of the four read the other's crazy, murderous thoughts. Frankie Merloni pawed sweat from his face and blurted out:

"We don't have to kill her, see? We can take her an' scare hell outta her—take her where we can tell her what she'll get if she ever opens her trap about Joey, see?"

Tony nodded. "Yeah, Frankie. Maybe—maybe we won't have to bump her!"

Kathie Merloni always left Grady's at ten o'clock when she worked nights. She had her things on and was preparing to leave when the telephone rang in the booth. Grady answered it and then called out:

"Hey, Kathie, wait a minute. It's for you."

Tony Merloni was on the other end of the wire. "Hello, kid," he said when he heard Kathie's voice. "Listen, ma's awful sick. I wish you'd come over."

"What's the matter with her?"

"I dunno. One of them spells she gets. She says you gen'rally know what to do an'—"

"All right. I'll come, Tony," the girl said in a dull voice.

There was a terrible ache in Kathie's heart and a storm raging in her soul. She thought of Mike Leonard as she crossed Eighth Street and headed toward the smoke-blackened tenements four

blocks away. Mike had treated her like the lady she had always longed to be and in return she had shown him that she was no better than the rest of her breed.

Kathie now admitted to herself that she was in love with Mike, but there was one part of her that rebelled against the feeling. Cops had always declared open hunting season on the Merlonis and she had been nurtured on hate for the hunters.

The memory of Mike reeling into Grady's with blood running out of him was like a knife thrust into her heart. Mike was fine and good. If a girl married him her name would be changed. It would not be Merloni any more. She could go to a different section of the city . . . .

A SEDAN stood in front of the tenement house. Tony Merloni got out of it as Kathie came along. He grinned at his cousin and said: "Never mind, kid. Ma snapped out of it okay. She says to go home as you're probably tired. Git in the boiler, kid, an' I'll run you home."

Kathie Merloni hesitated. Things seemed all wrong somehow. Fear crept into her as she studied Tony's face. His eyes were unnaturally bright as he drew near her. Kathie had heard that Tony smoked reefers. Then she saw someone else in the back of the car and she turned to run.

But Tony got his hands on her and swung her around roughly. One of his dirty-gloved hands was clamped over her red mouth. Tony balled the other one and struck the girl just hard enough to stop her violent struggles. He dragged her to the sedan and pushed her inside.

"Gag her, Frankie," Tony ripped out, and Rocky Tripp came out of the dark shadows of a basement entrance and got into the automobile.

The girl fought wildly for a minute and Tony cursed once when her teeth bit into his wrist. A few minutes later she lay back against the cushions, helpless. Terror took all the strength out of

her limbs. Frankie held a gun and his eyes were shining like his brother's.

Kathie knew what was going to happen to her. She knew that Joey Sarrow had been in on the Darwell Gypsum Company job and that Joey was a pal of Tony and Frankie Merloni. They were afraid she would break down and tell Mike Leonard about Joey. The chair faced the killers of the watchman, and Kathie knew that they would commit murder to cover up murder.

They would kill their own flesh and blood for self-protection. Rats! She had defied Mike Leonard to help that kind of scum. Kathie Merloni knew she had found herself too late.

Midnight. Kathie sat bound in a chair in the squalid room of the hotel that served as one of the South Side gang's hideouts. Her cousins, Frankie and Tony, stared at her from where they sat on the edge of Joey Sarrow's bed. Their faces were pale and twitching with nervous frenzy.

"We can't keep her here forever," Tony said. "The bulls will comb the town. We got a kidnapin' rap against us now."

Frankie's hands opened and closed. "Yeah. But I gotta think it over, Tony. Killin' your own—"

Joey Sarrow laughed with a note of hysteria. "Think of the chair, Frankie. Two guys draggin' you toward it—your toes draggin'! That chair burns you! I read about the last guy they strapped into it. The paper said a curl of smoke went up toward the ceilin' an'—"

"Shut up!" Tony screamed.

Kathie Merloni's dark eyes kept widening to make room for the terror that crowded into them. Her heart was a ball of ice in her chest and there was a horrible dryness in her throat.

"We could throw her in the river," Tony suggested. "The cops'd say she got sick of bein' a Merloni!"

"Yeah," Joey agreed. "We can't never let her go, Frankie."

Frankie got up and paced the floor. He said: "Maybe she'd keep her trap shut now if we let her go. We showed her what'll happen if she squeals."

"You're nuts," Joey called out hoarsely.

"Yeah, Frankie, we gotta—"

"Listen," Frankie said, "gimme time to think it over."

But Joey Sarrow kept muttering until Frankie finally whirled on him savagely.

"Shut up!" Frankie yelled. "I'm runnin' this gang, get that? Tony, you scram over to Porky's place. Get some grub an' a bottle of rye. Some reefers, too. The alarm won't be out yet."

Joey said, his eyes dancing: "Sure, Tony. Don't forget the reefers." He knew what they could do to Frankie Merloni.

**M**IKE LEONARD hurried down to the tenement district at seventhirty the next morning, a tightness around his stout heart. He went up to the Merloni flat with a couple of cops and there he found a gray-haired woman rocking from side to side in a chair, her gnarled hands clamped to her head. Neighbors were trying to calm Kathie's mother, the woman who had suffered because she was a Merloni and who was only a Merloni because she had married one of them.

Mike said gently: "Tell me about it. When did you miss her, Mrs. Merloni?"

"This mornin' only. She hasn't been home all night. Something terrible has happened. I have the feeling here—"

Mike turned away, grim misgivings clouding his eyes. He was pretty sure he knew what had happened. Kathie could tell who had been in on the robbery in which the watchman had been killed and those rats had grabbed her. If they had not already— Mike tried not to think of that.

Over on Eighth Street Mike Leonard looked for signs of the Merlonis. He met Rocky Tripp coming out of a tobacco store and he crowded the hoodlum against the side of the building.

"Come on, rat," he said, "what do you know about that Darwell job? Where's that girl?"

Rocky grinned. "I dunno what you're gettin' at, flatfoot. What girl? You'd think me an' the Merlonis an' Joey Sar-

row was the only guys in this town. You got nothin' on me, Leonard."

"Not yet," Mike admitted grimly, "but when I do—!"

All that day Mike walked the South Side, a growing fear in step with him. There was a possibility that Porky Berger was the boss of more than one gang, yet if the Merlonis had not tried for that Darwell payroll, why had the crook he had winged gone through Grady's to insure his getaway?

Mike saw no sign of the Merlonis until late that night. From the shadows of a building across the street he watched Tony enter Porky's. He could see through Berger's squalid poolroom and he saw Tony nod to a hoodlum. Then both men took cues from the rack.

The detective crossed the street and went into the poolroom. He leaned against the bar and watched the game for a few seconds. Tony Merloni had stripped down to his dirty silk shirt and Mike saw something that sent an escaping breath back into his lungs.

"Heard from Kathie, Tony?" he said suddenly.

Tony's eyes lifted to meet Mike's probing glance. "No, but Frankie an' the boys are lookin' for her, flatfoot. When they find the rats that— Say, why don't you go look for her? Or ain't a Merloni worth savin'?"

"You got something there, Tony," Mike countered. "I've got more important things to do."

Soon Mike lounged away from the counter and slipped out of Porky Berger's. He walked north on Eighth Street hurriedly, an idea taking shape inside his head. At a cigar store he stopped, went into a phone booth and called headquarters.

Twenty minutes later a cab picked Mike Leonard up. It rolled into a side street and stopped. When it came out again, there was but one man in it, the driver. The taxi headed north and Mike Leonard emerged from the side street. He wore a ragged coat and a cap, heavy battered shoes.

He slung along Eighth Street, pausing to look into windows. For half an hour

he did that and then he saw Tony Merloni walking toward him. The dick lowered his chin into the upturned collar of his ragged coat when the Merloni passed him. At the end of the block, he turned and started after Tony.

Tony ducked through a narrow side street and Mike started running. A few moments later he picked up Tony again and hugged the shadows stretching out from the buildings along a cobblestone street. Tony crossed parallel lines of tracks, increased his pace.

He turned left, then cut to the right and walked down a long street lined with tenements and fourth-rate hotels. Mike Leonard could not lose him now. He stopped, watched Tony duck into a doorway marked by a single light globe. The letters on the globe were ELKO HOTEL.

Frankie Merloni had madness burning in his eyes when his brother walked into the room. Kathie lay face downward on the bed, hopeless dry sobs bursting from her spasmodically. Fear had numbed her and her captors had removed the gag from her mouth. Joey Sarrow was sitting up, a glass of whisky in his hand. Rocky Tripp paced the floor and his haggard face betrayed the storm raging in his heart.

"It's about time you got back!" Frankie ripped out at Tony. "What's the dope?"

"Aw, I met that flatfoot again," Tony said, his slit eyes darting toward the girl. "You got nothin' to worry about no more. He ain't huntin' for no dame. He said no Merloni was worth a cop's time."

"He said that?" Frankie screeched. "Some day I'll kill that smart-aleck bull!" He laughed then. "Then what we got to do won't be so risky."

**K**ATHIE MERLONI heard those words and a lot of the fear went out of her. Mike did not care. There was nothing left for her to live for. Let that which was about to happen be quick. She thought of the way Mike Leonard had looked when he told her about the red stuff on her lips.

She remembered how Mike had held

**One Year To Pay For Ring**

Jeweled Accurate

SEND NO MONEY with order

Curved Shockproof

Ring has simulated diamonds set in Lifetime Sterling Silver, decorated in Rich, 1/30, 14k Gold

Your choice of ladies' smart new Jeweled Wrist Watch or men's curved Gold Plate Front wrist watch included FREE of any extra charge with every ring ordered NOW and paid for within one year on our new easy two \$2 payment plan (total only \$4). Remember . . . the cost of the watch is included in the price of the ring. . . YOU PAY NOTHING EXTRA for the Watch! We gladly trust you. Wear for 10 days Free Trial. Send coupon or postcard today. SEND NO MONEY with your order. Your order shipped by RETURN MAIL.

Send NO Money with Order

GOLD STANDARD WATCH CO., Dept. LS-176  
Newton MASS. RUSH OFFER

Lady's Model  Man's Model

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

**WILL YOU WEAR THIS SUIT**  
and Make up to \$12 in a Day!

Let me send you a fine all-wool union tailored suit FREE OF ONE PENNY COST. Just follow my easy plan and show the suit to your friends. Make up to \$12 in a day easily. No experience—no house-to-house canvassing necessary. Send for Samples—FREE OF COST. Write today for FREE details: ACTUAL SAMPLES and "sure-fire" money-getting plans. Send no money. H. J. Collins, PROGRESS TAILORING CO., Dept. T-192, 500 South Throop Street, Chicago, Illinois.

**SONG POEMS WANTED**  
**TO BE SET TO MUSIC**  
Free Examination. Send Your Poems To  
**J. CHAS. McNEIL**  
BACHELOR OF MUSIC  
4153-MG South Van Ness Los Angeles, Calif.

# U.S. GOV'T JOBS

Earn \$1260 to \$2100 at start. U. S. citizens (men & women) age 18 to 50 have opportunity to qualify for next examinations. FREE BOOK explains requirements and how former Examiners' tested method helps you pass Government tests. Write AT ONCE, Patterson School, 238 Mercantile Bldg., Rochester, N. Y.

## Fistula Often Brings Tragedy

Loss of bowel control and ills due to self-poisoning often result from neglected Fistula. Thousands could save themselves from humiliation and serious illness by knowing the facts and taking proper treatment in time. The McCleary Clinic, largest Institution specializing in non-malignant rectal diseases, finds radical surgery not advisable except in extreme cases. Results of successful mild McCleary treatment of patients from all over the world and condition of these diseases explained in Book offered FREE by McCleary Clinic, 644 Elms Blvd., Excelsior Springs, Mo. Write for Book and Reference List mailed in plain wrapper, FREE.



# FREE SAMPLES OF REMARKABLE TREATMENT FOR Stomach Ulcers

(Due to Gastric Hyper-Acidity)



H. H. Bromley, of Rutland, Vt., writes: "I suffered for 10 years with acid-stomach trouble. Doctors all told me I had ulcers and would have to diet the rest of my life. Before taking your treatment I weighed 143 pounds and could eat nothing but soft foods and milk. Now, after taking Von's Tablets, I weigh 171 pounds, can eat almost anything and feel perfectly well." If you suffer from acid indigestion, gastritis, heartburn, bloating or any other acid stomach trouble, you too, should receive quick relief. Send for FREE Samples of this wonderful treatment and details of guaranteed trial offer. Valuable Booklet is included. Write

PHILADELPHIA VON CO., Dept. 468-F, Fox Bldg., Phil., Pa.

**JUST OUT 4 in 1** Combination  
**\$15 TYPE ELECTRIC SHAVER AND VIBRATOR**  
 Shaves, Massages, Tones Muscles, Stimulates. Double edged self-sharpening shaving head. AC operation. Year Guar. 3 durable white Rubber vibrators for scalp, facial and muscle massaging. Ideal for men and women.  
 Complete Sample Outfit: Shaver and Attachments. Send for one today. **\$1.95**  
 C.O.D. Orders accepted. Agents Wanted.  
 Reliable Jobbers, Dept. T, 930 Roosevelt Road, Chicago, Ill.

**WANTED ORIGINAL POEMS, SONGS FOR PUBLICATION AND RADIO**  
 and for submission to motion picture, record and transcription markets.  
**WESTMORE MUSIC CORPORATION, DEPT. IF, PORTLAND, ORE.**

**WIN CONTEST MONEY**  
 Join our CONTEST CLUB PLAN... EVERY WEEK YOU GET ONE FINISHED ENTRY in a BIG CONTEST. Your puzzles are solved. Your contest statements, letters are individually and expertly written for you. You do nothing but sign your name—mail them off. You cash in on our knowledge of what it takes to win. A member states: "Just won 4 LIBBY checks, 2 KELLOGG checks, one TDOL check. Thanks!"  
 Write for 500 actual winning entries in recent contests and complete details of our CLUB PLAN. Enclose 10c for mailing. "OUR WORK... YOUR PROFIT" EDITORS & PUBLISHERS SERVICE CO., Dept. A-37, P. O. Box 8, Philadelphia, Pa.

**MAKE MORE MONEY** taking orders for Shirts, Ties, Underwear, Hosiery, Dresses, Uniforms, Sweaters, Raincoats, Pants, Suits, Shoes, Belts, etc. No experience—No investment required. Sales equipment FREE.  
 Write NIMROD, 4922-P, Lincoln Ave., Chicago

**FALSE TEETH**  
 That ~ Fit  
 ARE PRICELESS

**ROOFLESS PLATES**  
 FILL A LONG FELT WANT  
 SEND NO MONEY

Thousands of pleased users say my plates saved them many dollars, improved their appearance. Aids your speech.

**FREE** Sanitary Wrapped Impression Material and FULL INSTRUCTIONS How to Order by Mail.

**Dr. J. S. LIPPERT**  
 Free Trial  
 Don't Delay. Write for Money Saving Prices TODAY.

From Dr. Joe S. Lippert Dental Lab., Inc.  
 Dept. 514-JN 24 E. Van Buren Street, Chicago

her while they were dancing. Not like other men. He seemed to be afraid that she would break in his arms. Kathie fed on these, the only beautiful things that had ever happened to her.

"Well, Frankie?"

"Okay. Gimme a reefer. I ain't gonna burn for no dame. Tonight we do it. What'll—it be?"

"Best way," Tony said breathlessly. "Slug her an' throw her in the river."

"But we won't leave no marks. Rocky knows how to hit that way."

Kathie's senses reeled and she felt a terrible numbness come over her.

"You and Tony get the car," Frankie said to Rocky.

Mike Leonard, coming up the stairs of the flophouse, heard a door open and close, caught the sound of voices. On the second floor there would be a small lobby where a crooked landlord hunched behind a desk. Mike went back down the stairs, slipped into the dank darkness of the back hall.

Footsteps pounded hollowly through the place. He saw Tony Merloni and Rocky Tripp go out of the hotel. Instantly Mike sped up to the second floor, the lower part of his face hidden by the up-turned coat collar.

Voices drifted toward him. They came from the end of the hall and he walked that way. Light was reflected from an old-fashioned transom over a door marked 47.

"Well," a voice said, "we'll be okay tomorrow, Frankie!"

"Yeah, but shut up, will you?"

A groan, a stifled cry drifted through the panels and struck against Mike's ears. His heart leaped and started to beat wildly. He had to stifle the impulsive cry that burst from his throat. Gritting his teeth, the plainclothes man hurled his body against the flimsy wood-en door.

It banged open and he almost crashed into the startled Frankie Merloni. Frankie swore crazily and brought up his gun. Mike Leonard beat him to the punch and his police positive flamed not five inches from the Merloni's chest.

Frankie staggered backward, his evil

little mouth opened wide, reefer-inflamed eyes glazing with sudden horror. He collapsed to the floor and lay squirming there, hands clutching his chest in an effort to stop his life from flowing out.

**J**OEY SARROW tried to get his gun out of his pocket. Mike drove him over backward, chair and all, with a vicious kick of a heavy boot. Joey's gun flew out of his fingers. He screamed with pain, the shriek arrested as though the hand of Death had closed around his windpipe.

Kathie Merloni had risen from the bed. Both hands were clamped over her mouth and her eyes seemed reluctant to believe that they were actually seeing Mike Leonard. In the next second she was stumbling toward him, crying his name, and Mike held her close.

"There, there, Kathie, it's all right," he soothed her. "I'm here, kid. Listen, we're not out yet. They're coming up the stairs. They heard—! Kathie, get down and lie still! Let go of me, kid. If they start shooting—!"

Tony Merloni's voice broke and ran through the hall. "Coppers, Rocky! The lousy coppers—"

"It's Mike Leonard, you rats! Come on and get the girl, Tony. Better try. You'll never get away. You'll burn—"

Rocky yelled: "We gotta beat it, Tony!"

"Yeah? Well, run, you yellow rat! This copper ain't ever gettin' out of here alive!"

"I told you you ought to change that silk shirt once in a while, Tony," Mike mocked him. "Didn't you see Kathie's lip rouge on that cuff of yours? Bit you, didn't she? All I had to do was follow you right here."

Shots answered the detective's taunt. Bullets ripped at the door jamb and sent splinters flying. Tony Merloni, the dread reefer fumes having eaten into his brain, rushed the room after firing the blast.

He came in shooting, but Mike Leonard dropped him before he stepped over the sill. Joey Sarrow lay on the floor sobbing with terror and Rocky Tripp was yelling from the hall:



## BELIEVE IN LUCK?—S

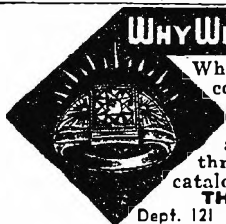
Carry a pair of GENUINE BRAHMA RED LIVE HIGHLY MAGNETIC LODESTONES! Legend reputes, Occult Oriental ancients superstitiously carried two Live Lodestones as MOST POWERFUL MAGNETIC "LUCKY" CHARMS, one to "attract" Good Luck in Money, Games, Love, Business, Work, etc., the other to "prevent" Bad Luck, Losses, Evil, Trouble, Harm, etc. Believe in Luck! Carry a Pair of these curious Genuine Brahma Red Live Lodestones! We make no supernatural claims. \$1.97 Postpaid for the two, with all information. \$1.97 and 15c extra if C.O.D. Satisfaction GUARANTEED or Money Returned. Order yours NOW!

ASTROL CO., Dept 81, Main P. O., Box 72, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

NOTICE! Beware of imitations! We absolutely GUARANTEE these Genuine Brahma Lodestones are ALIVE! We believe they are just what you want, the REAL THING—POWERFUL DRAWING, EXTRA HIGHLY MAGNETIC! Fully Guaranteed—Order TODAY! Copyright 1937—A. Co.

## BEWITCH OTHERS

Make them love you. Wild powerful love control. Secure clever woman's private methods (confidential). Get special charm. Revealing book, introducing you to new power, only 10c (sealed). GARDEN STUDIOS, Dept. 3470, Box 423, Madison Square Station, N. Y. C.



## WHY WEAR DIAMONDS?

When Diamond-Dazzling Zircons from the Mines of far-away Siam are so effective and inexpensive! Stand acid; cut glass; true backs; thrilling beauty! Write for catalog. Address:

THE ZIRCON COMPANY  
Dept. 121 Wheeling, W. Va.

## EPILEPSY — EPILEPTICS!

Detroit lady finds relief for husband. She will tell you how. All letters answered.

MRS. GEO. DEMPSTER

Apt. G 6900 Lafayette Blvd. West Detroit, Mich.

*See*

## WOODSTOCK

### TYPEWRITERS



## DICE. CARDS.

Specialties for Magicians' use. Inks, Shiners, Check-Cop, Daubs. Catalog, ten cents, stamps or coin. HILL BROS., Box A, Salida, Colo.

## BE A DETECTIVE

Make Secret Investigations

Earn Big money. Work home or travel! Fascinating work. Experience unnecessary. DETECTIVE Particulars FREE. Write to GEO. T. N. WAGNER + 2640 Broadway, N.Y.

## Rheumatism

Relieve Pain In Few Minutes

To relieve the torturing pain of Neuritis, Rheumatism, Neuralgia, Lumbago in few minutes, get **NURITO**, the Doctor's formula. No opiates, no narcotics. Does the work quickly—must relieve cruel pain to your satisfaction in few minutes—or money back at Druggist's. Don't suffer. Get trustworthy **NURITO** on this guarantec. Don't wait.

# FREE TRIAL OFFER

**NEW REMINGTON NOISELESS  
PORTABLE!**



AS LITTLE AS

**10¢  
A DAY**

**Money Back Guarantee  
10-Day Free Trial Offer**

**AT LAST!** The famous Remington Noiseless Portable that speaks in a whisper is available for as little as 10c a day. Here is your opportunity to get a real Remington Noiseless Portable guaranteed by the factory. Equipped with all attachments that make for complete writing equipment. Standard keyboard. Automatic ribbon reverse. Variable line spacer and all the conveniences of the finest portable ever built. PLUS the NOISELESS feature. Act now while this special opportunity holds good. Send coupon TODAY for details.

### YOU DON'T RISK A PENNY

We send this Remington Noiseless Portable direct to you with 10 days FREE trial. If you are not satisfied, send it back. WE PAY ALL SHIPPING CHARGES.

### ● FREE TYPING BOOKLET

With your new Remington Noiseless Portable we will send you—absolutely FREE—a 24-page booklet on typing. It teaches the Touch System, used by all expert typists. It is simply written and completely illustrated. Instructions are as simple as A, B, C. Even a child can easily understand this method. A little study and the average person, child or adult, becomes fascinated. Follow this booklet's instructions during this 10-Day Trial Period we give you with your typewriter and you will wonder why you ever took the trouble to write letters by hand.

### ● SPECIAL CARRYING CASE

Also under this new Purchase plan, we will send to you with every Remington Noiseless Portable, a special carrying case sturdily built of 3 ply wood. This handsome case is covered with heavy du Pont fabric. The top is removed by one motion, leaving the machine firmly attached to the base. This makes it easy to use your Remington anywhere—on knees, in chairs, on trains. Don't delay...send in the coupon for complete details!

**SEND COUPON WHILE LOW PRICES HOLD**

Remington Rand Inc. Dept. 137-6  
465 Washington St., Buffalo, N. Y.

Tell me, without obligation, how to get a Free Trial of a new Remington Noiseless Portable, including Carrying Case and Free Typing Instruction Booklet for as little as 10c a day. Send Catalogue.

Name.....

Address.....

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

"Listen, copper—I'm comin' in. I ain't got a gun. Gimme a break. I didn't kill the watchman. It—It was Frankie. He—"

Leonard said: "Come on in, Rocky. With your hands over your head, though!" he added in warning.

It was a matter of seconds before Mike had the cuffs on Rocky. Joey Sarrow had no fight left in him. The Merlonis were cold meat for the dead wagon. The South Side gang was finished. Mike went downstairs and phoned headquarters.

"Two more Merlonis," he told the sergeant at the desk. "At the Elko Hotel on Front Street. Tell the boys to step on it down here."

Detective Mike Leonard took Kathie Merloni home after the Elko mess had been cleaned up.

"Funny, kid," he murmured into her dark hair. "That lip rouge you use—when you bit Tony, you left your mark. Led me to you on the best hunch I've ever had. And me telling you to go easy on it!"

"I guess somebody bigger than you and me put that stubborn streak in you, Kathie," he chuckled as he remembered how saucily she had looked at him after putting on the lipstick thicker than ever. "Come on now, kid," he said, gently disengaging himself. "I've got to get you upstairs. You've had a glimpse into hell."

A few nights later, Mike Leonard and Kathie Merloni sat in a little spaghetti house just off Eighth Street. The girl's eyes were dancing and a smile showed her sparkling teeth.

"What's on your mind, Kathie?" Mike asked.

"Oh I was just thinking, Mike," she replied. "You aren't the kind of fellow to drag a girl's name—even a Merloni's—into the mud." Her voice was low and she looked down demurely. "Being in a place like the Elko at night—I've got to have protec—"

Mike put his big hand over Kathie's. "All right," he laughed, "you've got me, kid. You've hooked me and I'm asking you to be Mrs. Mike Leonard. The commissioner was right. A guy can't ever trust a Merloni!"



# WHAT HAPPENED TO THE THOMPSON TWINS!

SAY BILL, YOU SURE LOOK LIKE A **NEW MAN!** YET WE WERE BOTH THE SAME ONLY 3 MONTHS AGO!

YOU BET I'M A **NEW MAN!** AND IF YOU WANT TO KEEP UP WITH ME YOU'D BETTER FIND OUT THE **ATLAS SECRET OF BODY-BUILDING!**

## Let Me Make YOU a **NEW MAN!** I'll Prove I Can Do It in Just 7 Days!

**D**ON'T take MY word for it! Don't believe anyone else in the world—**BUT YOURSELF!** I want you to **SEE WITH YOUR OWN EYES** what I can do for you in **ONLY 7 DAYS!** THEN look in the mirror. You'll hardly *believe* your eyes. So just take a tape-measure and let your new measurements **PROVE** what my secrets of "Dynamic Tension" have done for you, **EVEN IN THAT VERY FIRST WEEK!**

I know what it is to be frail, skinny, always tired. Once I was a 97-pound weakling. But I **DID** something about it. I discovered "Dynamic Tension." And then I twice won the title, "World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

Do **YOU** want a body like mine? Biceps like iron. A powerful back. Arms and legs that never tire. A stomach ridged with bands of muscle. A big, deep, husky chest. A general physical condition that doubles the fun of living. Just let me tell you how to get them!

### FREE BOOK

Don't waste any time about it. Send my coupon. Get my 48-page **FREE BOOK.** See—in actual photographs—what I did for myself—and for thousands of others. Read how I will **PROVE**—at my own risk—what I can do for **YOU**—without dangerous, straining apparatus of any kind! Your only risk is the cost of a postage stamp to mail my coupon **AT ONCE!** Address me personally, **Charles Atlas, Dept. 49F, 115 E. 23rd St., New York City.**

### CHARLES ATLAS

Dept. 49F  
115 E. 23rd St.  
New York, N. Y.

I want proof that **DYNAMIC TENSION** will make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body, big muscles. Send me your **FREE BOOK, "EVERLASTING HEALTH AND STRENGTH,"** and all about your 7-day **TRIAL OFFER.**

Name .....

(Please print or write plainly)

Address .....

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

**MAIL COUPON TODAY FOR BIG FREE BOOK**

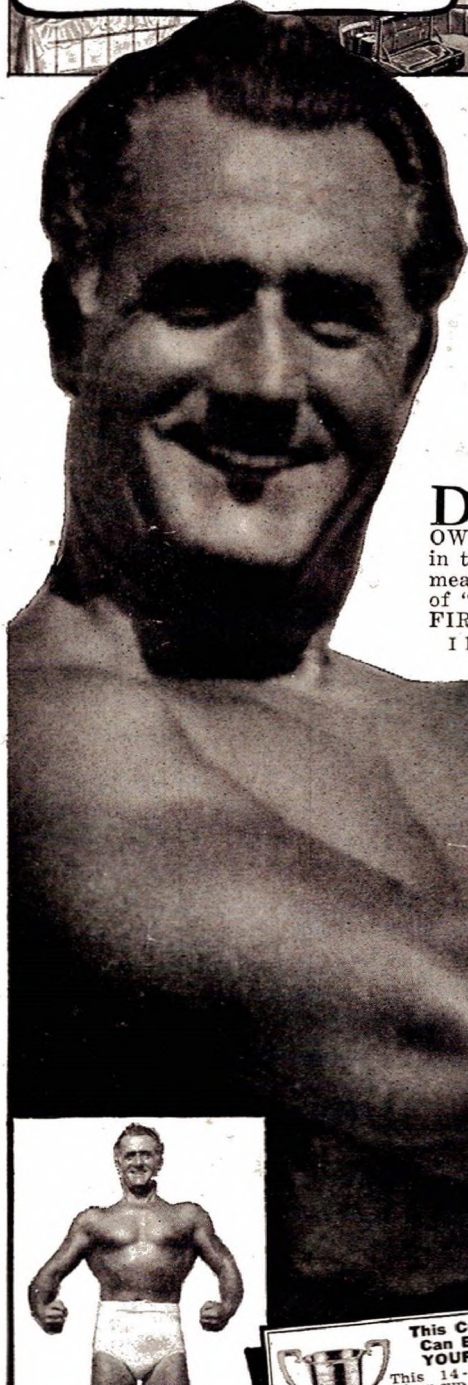
### This Cup Can Be YOURS



This 14-inch silver cup goes to my pupil who improves most in next 3 months. You can win—no matter what you measure now.



This is an actual snapshot taken at the beach. It shows exactly how I look today. Would **YOU** like my kind of build? Mail coupon for my **FREE BOOK.**







# FOOT ITCH

## ATHLETE'S FOOT

*Send Coupon,  
Don't Pay Until Relieved*

According to the Government Health Bulletin No. E-28, at least 50% of the adult population of the United States are being attacked by the disease known as Athlete's Foot.

Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little watery blisters form, and the skin cracks and peels. After a while, the itching becomes intense, and you feel as though you would like to scratch off all the skin.

### BEWARE OF IT SPREADING

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

Get relief from this disease as quickly as possible, because it is very contagious, and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

Most people who have Athlete's Foot have tried all kinds of remedies to relieve it without success. Ordinary germicides, antiseptics, salve or ointments seldom do any good.

## HERE'S HOW TO RELIEVE IT

The germ that causes the disease is known as Tinea Trichophyton. It buries itself deep in the tissues of the skin and is very hard to kill. A test made shows it takes 15 minutes of boiling to kill the germ; so you can see why the ordinary remedies are unsuccessful.

H. F. was developed solely for the purpose of relieving Athlete's Foot. It is a liquid that penetrates and dries quickly. You just paint the affected parts. It peels off the tissue of the skin where the germ breeds.

### ITCHING STOPS QUICKLY

As soon as you apply H. F. you should find that the itching is quickly relieved. You should paint the infected parts with H. F. night and morning until your feet are well. Usually this takes from three to ten days, although in severe cases it may take longer or in mild cases less time.

H. F. will leave the skin soft and smooth. You may marvel at the quick way it brings you relief; especially if you are one of those who have tried for years to get rid of Athlete's Foot without success.

### H. F. SENT ON FREE TRIAL

Sign and mail the coupon, and a bottle of H. F. will be mailed you immediately. Don't send any money and don't pay the postman any money; don't pay anything any time unless H.F. is helping you. If it does help you, we know you will be glad to send us \$1 for the supply at the end of ten days. That's how much faith we have in H. F. Read, sign and mail the coupon today.



**GORE PRODUCTS, INC.** ACE  
832 Perdido St., New Orleans, La.

Please send me immediately a complete supply for foot trouble as described above. I agree to use it according to directions. If at the end of 10 days my feet are getting better, I will send you \$1. If I am not entirely satisfied, I will return the unused portion of the bottle to you within 15 days from the time I receive it.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... STATE .....