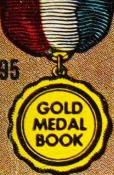
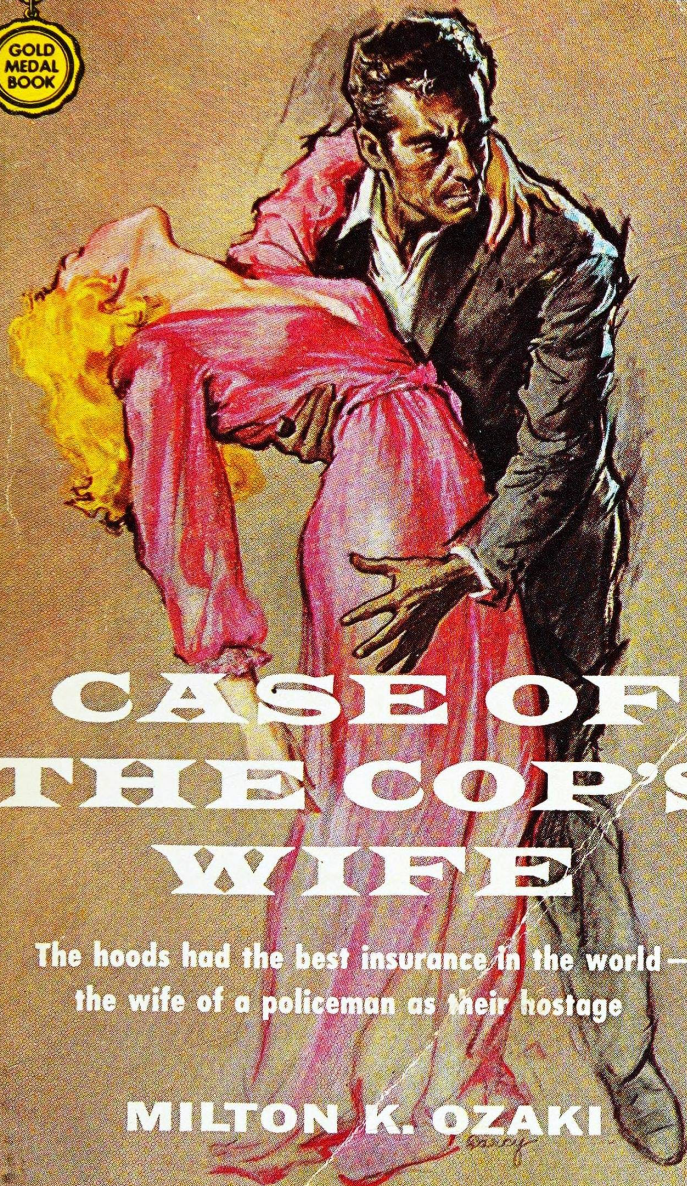


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CASE OF THE COP'S WIFE

The hoods had the best insurance in the world —
the wife of a policeman as their hostage

MILTON K. OZAKI

'My God!'

Wally looked shocked. "She's a policeman's wife." Then slowly he began to smile. "Boy, what a break!"

"Break? Are you nuts? Kidnapping means the F.B.I."

"Don't be a sap," Wally interrupted. "She's a cop's wife. You know what that means? It means we got the cops right where we want them. As long as we got her, they're going to be afraid to move in on us. She's a hostage. While they're tiptoeing around, we make a getaway."

Another Original Gold Medal Novel by

Milton K. Ozaki:

CASE OF THE DEADLY KISS

**CASE
OF THE
COP'S
WIFE**

An Original Gold Medal Novel by

MILTON K. OZAKI



Gold Medal Books

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CHAPTER ONE

LIEUTENANT ROBERT FURY cast an appraising glance over the small, bare room that served as his office at central police headquarters. As usual, the wastebasket needed emptying. The pile of folders on his desk was large and untidy and accusing, also as usual. Each represented an unsolved robbery in the city of Chicago, and the damned things kept piling up. He hoped that things would be quiet while he was away and that Callahan would be able to make a dent in them. He noticed the calendar; he'd forgotten to tear off a page that morning. Smiling faintly, Fury went to the wall, tore *WED OCT 30* from the big pad and stared for a moment at *THUR OCT 31*. Tomorrow would be November 1—and that might be *the* day. The time had raced by.

The phone on his desk buzzed, and automatically he started toward it. Halfway to the desk, he stopped and grinned. Hell, he was off duty—on vacation. He strode to the door and swung it wide open. "Callahan!" he called. "Your phone's ringing!"

Acting Lieutenant Saul Callahan, a man with a soft face and a hard body, slid off the desk where he had been sitting while talking with a pair of reporters. "Think you're smart, huh?" he said good-naturedly. "Boy, am I going to screw things up for you while you're gone!"

"You do and I'll have you assigned to a beat in the

Stock Yards district when I get back," Fury said, his grin widening.

"That'll be the day. You leaving now?"

"Yeah. It's all yours, Saul. Good luck."

"Any instructions?"

"Answer that damned phone. It might be the Commissioner."

"Sure, sure. Well, have a nice time, Bob. Let us know if it's a boy or a girl."

"You bet!"

Callahan waved and entered the inner office. The phone stopped ringing. Fury was tempted to stick around and find out what the call was about, but he sternly suppressed the notion. It was up to Callahan to handle things for the next two weeks. Callahan knew the ropes, and he was probably getting a kick out of being Acting Lieutenant. In a way it was a break for him. Callahan was a good sergeant. Let him have his kicks.

"Well, Lieutenant, we hear you're taking a vacation," a voice said. "Where are you going? Florida?"

Fury turned and saw that Jerry Olson, the *Tribune's* headquarters man, and Danny Ballard, who did a column for the *Sun-Times*, had ambled over. The question obviously had come from Ballard, a sharp little man with bland eyes who was expert at taking small grains of truth and making quite a stew out of them.

"Not this time," Fury said easily. "We're expecting our first child in a day or two. I'll probably spend part of my vacation sitting around a hospital and part of it building a nursery." He grinned. "You've got kids. You know how it is."

"Sure." Olson nodded.

"Hmm. Your wife is the former Mary Ellen Quinn, isn't she?" Ballard asked.

"Yes," Fury said. His jaw tightened a little. "I'd appreciate it if you fellows didn't try to make anything out of this."

"Well, I don't know," Ballard murmured, shrugging. "Old man Quinn is news, and anything his daughter does is—"

"She abdicated the society columns when she married a working cop," Fury said brusquely. He disliked everything about Ballard, and though he tried to suppress it, some of the dislike tinged his voice. "Right now I'm on vaca-

tion. You can pick on me all you like while I'm on duty, but now I'm entitled to a couple of weeks relaxation and privacy."

"Or else?" Ballard suggested slyly.

"I didn't say that," Fury replied. "I'm just stating my wishes, and I hope you'll respect them."

"Don't pay any attention to Danny, Lieutenant," Jerry Olson said placatingly. "He has a tough time filling that lousy column of his, and he goes around needling people without even realizing it."

"Says you," Ballard murmured.

"Says me," Olson repeated. He was a thin, tall man with wispy hair and looked more like a bookkeeper than a crack police reporter. "We won't pick on you, Lieutenant. I'll kick Danny's tail if he does. What's it going to be—a boy?"

"We don't really care," Fury admitted, smiling again. "We've been sitting around so long waiting for it that we're willing to take anything, just to end the suspense."

"Well, one nice thing about it—if you don't get what you want, you can always try again." Olson chuckled and glanced at Ballard. Ballard smirked.

"That's right," Fury said shortly. He had caught Ballard's smirk and unconsciously he balled one of his hands into a fist.

"Anything new on the Marten robbery?" Olson asked quickly.

"Check with Callahan. He's in charge now." Fury nodded briefly in farewell and started toward the door.

"Going to keep away from the rat-race, huh?"

Fury wasn't sure whether the comment came from Olson or Ballard. It sounded like a taunt, though—and it stung. He stopped, swung around and said coldly: "You're damned right. I'm not even going to read your lousy papers."

Then he turned on his heel and strode out.

"Big tough cop!" Ballard muttered as the door slammed.

"He's okay," Olson said. "He's not like those other crappers. Fury is strictly on the level. When he tells you something, you can bank on it. Play it smart, Danny, and lay off him."

"I ought to item the kid. The Quinns are society and her old man's got a—"

"Look, Danny." Olson laid a hand on Ballard's arm.

"I said lay off. You're batting out of your league when you line up against Fury. He's a young cop, a square cop, and a good cop; and what's more, he's on his way up. If you're looking for trouble, go ahead. All you have to do is start taking digs at Lieutenant Fury."

"We ought to try to find out what's being done about all these robberies," Ballard protested. "The situation stinks. That Marten robbery—"

"Sure, sure." Olso said boredly. "I agree. But if you'll just use your head, you'll realize there's no story yet. Callahan is just pinch-hitting for Fury. Take my word for it. Nothing's going to break until Fury gets back. I'm going to see if anything's doing at Missing Persons. You coming?" Walking leisurely, Olson headed for the door.

"Well . . . okay," Ballard said grudgingly and followed Olson.

Looking like tired, life-battered, poorly paid underdogs, the two reporters left Robbery and mingled with the stream of harried-looking citizens in the marble-tiled corridor of Chicago's central police headquarters. Their appearance belied them. Each was a highly paid specialist in the dissemination of news. Each represented a powerful Chicago newspaper. And, before very many hours passed, each was going to take a highly intense interest in Lieutenant Robert Fury's activities.

CHAPTER TWO

SAM NAZARIAN opened the door of the China Star Café, filling the doorway with his bulk and admitting a blast of cold air. Chung Lee, the owner, looked up from a racing form spread on the glass cigar case, nodded to Nazarian, then shuffled behind the counter to the coffee urn. He began filling a heavy iced-tea glass with hot black coffee. Nazarian, ignoring the few customers who sat at the wooden-topped counter, moved slowly toward the rear. He reached his regular table, moved the chair back with his foot and sat down without removing either his

brown felt hat or his heavy brown overcoat. Chung Lee set the glass of hot coffee in front of him and shuffled back to the front of the café.

Nazarian pursed his lips and stared at the coffee. With the pursed lips, his fat face looked something like a Mexican cupid's—a sleepy, good-natured, thoughtless cupid. After a while, Nazarian slowly searched one of his pockets until he found a cigar. He lit it carefully, then leaned back gently and closed his eyes. He looked old, probably in his sixties, maybe in his seventies. No one knew exactly how old he was and no one cared. The fact that he had been around Clark Street for years and could be found every night at the same table in the China Star Café was enough.

Within a few minutes, a thin-faced man with a heavy leather jacket got up from one of the stools at the counter and wandered back toward Sam Nazarian. Nazarian gave no sign that he was conscious of the other's approach. The thin-faced man sat down opposite Nazarian and nervously lit a cigarette. Nazarian slowly opened his eyes.

"Hullo, Sam," the thin-faced man said. He glanced toward the front of the café, where Chung Lee was bent over the racing form again. "Got a minute?"

Nazarian stared at him, his fat face expressionless.

"I got a load of clothes, mostly women's stuff," the thin-faced man said rapidly in a low, hoarse whisper. "Looks like high-class stuff. Suits, dresses, some coats, too. It oughtta be worth something to somebody."

"Where'd you get it?" Nazarian asked softly.

"Hijacked it this side of the Indiana line the other night. It was supposed to be liquor. Tiny was in with me on the deal, and I guess somebody gave him the wrong tip. We got it in a garage up north and don't know what to do with it."

Nazarian pursed his lips and stared at the glass of coffee. "See me tomorrow," he murmured.

"Thanks, Sam. We'll appreciate it." The thin-faced man got up and went back to the counter. After a few minutes, he and his companion got up and left. Nazarian had his eyes closed and appeared to be sleeping.

A clerkish-looking man wearing gold-rimmed eyeglasses entered the café, murmured something to Chung Lee and then walked directly back to Nazarian's table. He sat down and waited for Nazarian's attention.

Nazarian opened his eyes. "Yes?" he murmured.

"You told me to keep an eye on Wally Hirsch," the man began. Biting his lip, he shifted nervously. "Well . . . I think he's about to pull a job."

Nazarian's eyes flickered. "When?"

"Maybe tomorrow, maybe the day after. Soon, anyway. He's got two guns lined up, and it looks like something big. They been doing a lot of talking, but most of it out in a park where nobody can get close enough to hear."

"Who are the guns?"

"Two punks named Morales and Hoops. There's a girl in it, too. I can't figure her end of the play, but every time they get together Hirsch lets her do a lot of talking. Maybe she's casing the setup for them, or something."

"Who is she?"

"Nobody from around here, Sam. She isn't a bad-looking kid, though. She's got a room in a Wilson Avenue apartment and she pilots an elevator in the Revens store. I think Hirsch is off his rocker, cutting in a kid like that on a score."

Nazarian made no immediate comment. He closed his eyes for several minutes. The clerkish-looking man peered at him and waited patiently. Finally Nazarian said: "Maybe they're going to hit Revens."

"Revens is too big a job for only two guns," the man protested. "Hirsch has been in and out of the store a couple times this week, but I figured he was checking on the girl. Hell, Hirsch wouldn't be dumb enough to tackle a big store like Revens."

"Contact him," Nazarian murmured. "Tell him we want twenty per cent. Get his answer before midnight."

"You'll still be here?"

"Waiting." Nazarian smiled softly.

The clerkish-looking man nodded and left. A pair of plainclothes dicks entered noisily and straddled stools at the counter. Chung Lee shuffled about, serving them pie and coffee. An elderly woman in a blue plaid coat, who had been sitting at the end of the counter, slid from her stool suddenly and headed for Nazarian's table. While waiting for his attention, she fiddled nervously with a lock of gray hair which refused to stay tucked under her blue silk scarf.

Nazarian slowly opened his eyes and looked at her.

"I got trouble with the heat, Sam," she began in a little

whisper. "Those bastard cops come in this morning and tried to knock things over. The girls are talking about quitting. They say I gotta guarantee them protection or they're gonna walk out and go where they don't needa worry about cops busting in on them."

"It's your fault, Kate," Nazarian said softly.

"My fault? Why is it my fault? I been paying every week, ain't I? You said—"

"I said you pay every Wednesday night," Nazarian interrupted. "This is Thursday."

"My God, Sam, we had a bunch of guys, a bunch of conventioners, in last night and I couldn't get outta the joint! You mean because I didn't get here last night, me and my girls hadda have a couple lousy cops come in and—"

"Wednesday means Wednesday," Nazarian said mildly. "You keep your word, we'll keep ours." Raising one eyebrow, he asked: "Did you bring the dough?"

"Well . . . no." She twisted her fingers nervously. "I was kinda sore, Sam. I'll go get it." She met his eyes for a moment. "It'll be okay then, soon's I pay? I can tell the girls that?"

"It'll be okay. But when you pay late, Kate, it costs you a penalty. Say ten percent this time. Hereafter get it to me on Wednesday."

She opened her mouth as though to protest, then, seeing the hard light flickering in his eyes, she squeezed her lips tightly together and nodded. As she walked away, her heels made a weary, scratchy slur against the asphalt tile of the floor.

One of the plainclothes dicks got up, glanced toward the door, then strolled back and sat down at Nazarian's table. "Hi, Sam," he said casually. "How are they going?"

Nazarian, ignoring the question, said: "A couple tables are going in behind Shapiro's place on LaSalle. They're okay."

"Sure. Anything else?"

"The Palace is getting a load of booze in late tonight. The truck will unload in the alley. See that the beat cop doesn't get nosy."

"Nothing to it." The dick smiled. "Me and Hal will drop around and sort of keep an eye on things. The Palace seems to be doing okay lately."

Nazarian shrugged noncommittally, and, moving with

great deliberation, reached for the glass of now-cold coffee and sipped it delicately. Sighing, he set the glass carefully back on the table.

"That's all, huh?" The dick sounded disappointed.

"A couple babes are free-lancing out of the Case apartments," Nazarian said casually. "Apartment 304. They may have a hookup with that new bar down the street. You might check."

"You bet, Sam. Incidentally, Lieutenant Fury started his vacation this afternoon. His wife's expecting a kid. Saul Callahan's taking over while Fury is away."

Nazarian acknowledged this bit of information by grunting.

"Well, if that's all, I'll be going."

Nazarian pursed his lips and smiled faintly. "Drop in about midnight. I may have something for you."

"Sure thing, Sam. We'll be here right on the dot."

For a while, Nazarian stared at the coffee, thoughtfully chewing his lip. He frowned once, as though displeased by the direction of his thoughts. He was still staring at the coffee when a ragged bum stumbled into the café and headed for his table. The bum stood beside the table, licking his lips, rolling his eyes nervously, until Nazarian said sharply: "Sit down, Lefty, sit down."

"I got something for you, Sam," the bum said in a raspy voice. He gripped his hands tightly together in an obvious attempt to keep them from jittering. "I'm off the stuff, Sam. Honest. Ain't had a smoke in two days. I ain't looking for a handout. This is just for old-times' sake, see? Maybe you can use it, maybe you can't, but I know you like to hear what's going on, so—"

"Get to the point," Nazarian said softly.

"I began working the night spots. Sort of panhandling, you know. People get a few drinks, they feel sorry for everybody else and when I put the bite on them, they toss me two bits or a big half. I was over on Walton, working the Beachcomber and the Black Onyx, less than a half hour ago, when I spotted a joe lifting a Merc sedan. A green, four-door job."

"So?" Nazarian shrugged.

"Them damned carhops, they don't even bother to jerk the keys. And they're running around, moving cars up and down the street all the time, so nobody knows who's

doing what. This guy just came walking along, got into the Merc and gunned it the hell down the street. He was a Mex, I think."

"Describe him."

"Kinda skinny and short. Black hair. Big nose. Dark skin and kinda funny eyes. I remember the eyes, particularly. Sort of reminded me of glass. I was in the alley, so he didn't see me, but—"

"Clothes?" Nazarian interrupted.

"Kinda sharp. Gray suit, fancy shirt, a wide-brimmed hat. The pants had them narrow legs like all the Mex and Ricans are wearing."

Nazarian took a sip of coffee. "Plates?" he murmured.

"I didn't have time to spot 'em, Sam. Honest. He just slipped into the car and gunned it the hell down the street before—"

"Okay," Nazarian interrupted. The tone of his voice put a period to the conversation. He tossed a crumpled dollar bill across the table. "Walk up the street and find Sugar for me, Lefty. Tell him I want him."

"Yessir, you bet, Sam!" The bum clutched the bill and got hastily to his feet. "I'll have Sugar here before you can blink, Sam!"

CHAPTER THREE

WALLY HIRSCH was a big-boned, good-looking, virile man who once had a stab at playing professional baseball. In fact, if he had been able to stay away from liquor and the ladies, he would have had a good chance of working up to a slinging spot in the National League. But liquor and loving had interfered with his performance on the field, and a disgusted manager had busted him from the team. For a while he had drifted from job to job, all legit, until it had occurred to him that all work and no play made Wally a dull boy. He had become a bartender in a Detroit lounge, had seen some of the smart boys in the flesh. Determined to emulate them, he'd embarked

on a small caper of his own. As a result of poor planning, the caper had failed and he'd spent three years out of circulation. The hitch in jail had not been wasted, though. He'd made several solid connections and acquired quite a bit of know-how. He'd also learned that neither booze nor babes were good when a job was about to be pulled.

As Helen came into the kitchen, Wally knew without looking at her that she'd taken a bath and sprayed herself with some more of that goddam sweet-smelling perfume. She was a good babe, young and pretty, with blonde hair, blue eyes, and a nice shape, but she drove him nuts sometimes. Always taking baths. Always squirting herself with some different kind of stink water. She got twenty per cent discount at Revens, so she blew most of her dough on perfume. Maybe she was a psycho. Soap and water ought to be enough for any dame, unless she had a stink of some kind to hide.

"You ain't touched your drink, Wally," Helen said. She sat down at the kitchen table and bent toward him in a way which brought the wide V of her negligee in a direct line with his vision.

"So I didn't touch it," he growled. He moved his eyes away from her breasts and looked at the glass of whisky and water. He regarded it distastefully. "So what?"

"Lately you ain't touched me either." She widened her eyes, striving for the look of injured innocence which had always gotten results in the past. "I been wondering if you took the pledge, or something."

"For chrissake, Helen." He stared blankly at her. "We're pulling a big job tomorrow morning and all you're thinking about is booze and a roll in the hay!"

"Well, gosh, you needn't get sore." She recoiled nervously and folded the front of the negligee together. "A girl can't help wondering, you know. I thought maybe you didn't like me any more."

"For chrissake, Helen, leave me alone," Wally gritted. "I want to keep a clear head for tomorrow. I want everything to click. You think we're playing for peanuts?"

"I just said—"

"I know what you said!" he snapped. "Go and get some clothes on, for God's sake. Jim and Salvio are going to be here pretty soon. You think they're going to con-

centrate on the plans if you're walking around here half naked?"

"Okay, lover." She laughed softly. "Gimme a kiss and I'll get dressed." She got up and came toward him.

He snaked an arm around her, pulled her into his lap and bent over her. She started to giggle, but his mouth clamped over hers. A gurgle rustled in her throat. Deliberately, he held his mouth over hers, immobile and passionless.

She jerked her head away, squirmed violently and sprawled onto the floor, clutching at the open negligee. "Damn you!" she said hoarsely. "That's no way to kiss! If you haven't got the guts to—"

"I'm going to kiss your tail with my foot in a minute," Wally said coldly, "if you don't get dressed like I told you."

A buzzer sounded. Wally got up quickly, moving threateningly toward her. She scrambled to her feet and fled toward the bedroom. With a faint grin on his face he glared at her retreating backside. Then he went to the door, glancing at his wrist watch as he did so. It was ten P.M. Jim and Salvio were right on the dot, just like he'd told them to be. If they clicked like this tomorrow, the grab would be a cinch.

Wally opened the door, led them down the corridor to the kitchen and pointed to the chairs. When they were seated, he asked: "Did you get the stuff?"

Salvio said: "I got a Merc sedan. Picked it up on Walton Place and switched plates."

"What color?" Wally asked.

"Sort of a green. Hard to spot."

"Good. You check it over yet?"

"It'll be okay. Don't worry." Salvio flashed his teeth in a confident grin. "It's in the garage, where you told me."

"Where are the keys?"

"I left them in it."

"Okay." Wally nodded. "How about you, Jim?"

"I couldn't get a chopper." Hoops smiled wistfully, like a man admitting to an exciting but immoral past. He was a small, wiry man with long, pale fingers that twisted endlessly like nervous worms in his lap. "I got myself a nice shotgun, though. Sawed it to size this afternoon. In close quarters it's probably better than a chopper."

"A shotgun's okay." Wally drummed his fingers on the table. "We'll go through the plans once, then we're going to break up and hit the sack. No liquor, no dames—nothing except sleep tonight, understand?"

Salvio smiled thinly. "How about Helen?" he asked.

"What about her?"

"Just wondering." Salvio shrugged slightly. "She gonna be in good condition, too?"

"You're damned right she's going to be in good condition," Wally said flatly. He stared at Salvio. "I don't know what you've got on your mind, Salvio, but if you've got any ideas about Helen, you'd better—"

"No, no," Salvio said quickly. "I was just thinkin', Wally—"

"Stop it, then," Wally snapped. "I'm steering this caper. I want everything to move smoothly, because it's my neck as well as yours. Anybody expecting a cut of the take damned well better follow orders."

"Salvio's okay," Jim Hoops interrupted impatiently. "Let's get at it, Wally."

"All right." Wally forced himself to relax. "You start, Jim. Go through it slowly, just like we worked it out last night."

Jim Hoops scowled at the table top, then said slowly: "The store don't open until a quarter to ten, but there's an arcade through the building. In the middle of the arcade, there's a door the clerks use. That door opens at nine A.M. It's twenty-five feet from that door to the elevators, and only one elevator will be in operation. The clerks don't use the elevator. They go about ten feet through the handbag section, then turn right and go down a stairway to a locker room. There's a time clock there and they got to punch in at the clock. They—"

"Just a sec," Wally interrupted. "*Helen!*"

"Coming." Helen, her face set sullenly, came into the kitchen wearing a black skirt and a red sweater. "What do you want, boss?"

"Pull up a chair. I want you to listen in and double-check things for us. Okay, Jim, go ahead."

"Where was I? Oh, yeah. When the clerks go through the door from the arcade, they gotta pass an old gray-haired geezer. They don't need to show any identification or anything. The old guy just looks at them, and if he don't know them, he makes them write their names in a

book. If they're okay, they just say, 'Good morning, Pop,' then go downstairs and punch in, like I said before."

"Who else might be there?" Wally prompted.

"Sometimes a tall, thin-haired fellow with gold-rimmed glasses is standing around keeping an eye on things. He's the store's house dick, but he don't carry a rod. The old guy's not armed either."

"How about the lights?" Wally asked.

"I was getting to them. The store lights will be out. They go on automatically at nine thirty-five, so the clerks can see to jerk the rags off the counters and get their salesbooks and stuff ready before the doors open at nine forty-five. There'll be only two lights on--one by the elevators and one by the book where the old guy makes people sign in."

"I think you've got it, Jim." Wally nodded approvingly. "Okay, Salvio, go on from there."

"A truck from the bank will come with the dough," Salvio murmured, closing his eyes as though trying to visualize the scene. "It will park on State Street. There will be two men with the money, and they will come through the arcade and into the store by that door. They will arrive about nine twenty-five or nine thirty, and after they pass the old man, they will get into an elevator and ride to the seventh floor, where the cashier's office is." Salvio swallowed. "You'll go in at nine twenty, and Jim and I will follow. You will take the old man, Jim will take whoever else is around, and I will go behind the white post near the elevators."

"What're you going to be carrying—a fistful of daisies?" Wally demanded.

"You and I will have .38's and Jim will carry the shotgun." Salvio opened his eyes. "That is correct, yes?"

"Right. Go on."

"You oughtta let Salvio have the shotgun," Helen put in. She brushed a dangling lock of hair away from her face. "From the elevators he could cover the whole floor."

"You may have something, baby," Wally said, nodding approvingly. "Tell you what, Salvio. You and Jim will switch places. Jim, you get by the elevators with your sawed-off. Salvio, you stick with me and take care of the store dick if he's around. Okay?"

"Keep talking, Salvio," Wally urged.

"Well, when we are there, we'll take the two guys—"

"How will we take them?" Wally asked sharply.

"We'll show them our guns, then push them into the shoe department. If necessary, I'll hit them with the gun. I'll tie them together, put something in their mouths so they can't make any noise and—"

"Just be damned sure that you don't get gun happy," Wally warned. "They're both old geezers and they're unarmed. They'll probably wet their pants when they see us with guns in our mitts. We're going to be in a hurry, so if either one is crazy enough to give us an argument, just sap him and get them out of sight. Understand?"

"The dick's got a bum back," Helen said casually.

"How do you know?" Wally demanded.

"He told me." She stuck out the tip of her pink tongue. "Smarty!"

Wally snorted and returned his attention to Salvio. "Okay, you've got it straight so far. What happens next?"

"We'll carry them to a storeroom. I'll hide to the right of the door, and you will stand by the counter where there is a book. There we will wait until the men with the money come. I will wait until they have walked ten feet, then you will nod your head and we will both draw our guns."

"That's about it," Wally said, nodding slowly. "There's no telling how they'll react. According to Helen, they'll just stroll in and put their guns into their holsters as soon as they're through the door. Each will be lugging a pouch. That's a break for us. You'll have the drop on them from behind, Salvio, and when they swing toward me, Jim will go into action. Unless they're completely nuts, they'll see that they're cornered and they'll drop the dough and reach for the stars. In any event, we'll have to play that part by ear. I don't want any shooting, though, unless it's absolutely necessary. Get that through your head, Salvio—and you, too, Jim."

Salvio and Jim nodded.

"Okay. As soon as they drop the dough and reach, I'll move in and sap them. Salvio, you'll be by the door. There's a bolt and a shade on it. Push the bolt and pull down the shade."

"Yes." Salvio nodded quickly.

"Jim, as soon as you see that we've got things in hand, you'll follow the main aisle east and unbolt the door on Wabash Avenue. There'll still be one guy in the armored car, don't forget—and he'll be parked on State Street. We don't want to tangle with him, so you'll make damned sure you're headed for Wabash and not State. Helen will be waiting there with the car. Unbolt the door, but don't open it and don't raise the shade. Salvio and I will be roping the guards and getting the dough. It may take us two or three minutes, and when we come, we'll come running. I want to be able to just push through those doors and walk nice and easy over to the car. Is that clear?"

"What if there's an alarm?" Jim asked.

"There won't be an alarm," Wally told him confidently. "We'll be going in when there's no one around to push any buttons or ring any bells. We'll walk in, take over, grab the dough, and good-by. It'll be like shooting fish in a barrel."

"What if the clerks should see me?" Salvio asked.

Wally grinned. "Tell him, Helen," he directed.

"There won't be anybody around until nearly nine-forty," Helen said obediently. "They usually get in late and they'll have to go downstairs, punch in, change shoes, and put on a face. If anyone gets in early, they'll go up to the cafeteria for a quick coffee. A bell will ring at nine-forty and that's when they all rush to get their counters ready before the doors open."

"See?" Wally's grin widened. "Now tell them the best part, baby. We figured on grabbing a thirty-grand payroll. Tell them the new development, Helen."

"The store is putting on a big, special, pre-Christmas sale tomorrow and Saturday," Helen announced. "There's a three-page ad in tonight's *Tribune* announcing it, and the other papers will be loaded with ads, too. Mr. Revens talked to everybody on the loudspeaker today, and he said it'd be the biggest sale in the store's history."

"You know what that means?" Wally asked. "It means the store's going to need a hell of a lot of cash so the clerks can handle all that business. Besides the payroll, those guys from the bank will be carrying an extra sixty or seventy grand!"

Jim whistled softly.

Salvio moistened his lips and stared at Helen's legs.

"Any questions?" Wally asked.

Jim shook his head. Salvio shrugged.

"So much for the caper," Wally said. He pursed his lips. "There's just one more thing. I got a message tonight from the big boy." Wally's voice dropped an octave and became grave. "The bastard's apparently been keeping tab on us. Anyway, he knows we're getting ready to pull a job—and he wants a cut."

"How big a cut?" Jim demanded.

"Twenty per cent."

"Why, the chiseling bastard!" Helen exclaimed. Her eyes snapped angrily. "What makes him think he—"

"Those are my sentiments exactly," Wally said, smiling at her. "He gave us until midnight to make up our minds."

"Suppose we pay," Salvio said. "What do we get?"

"A great big okay . . . theoretically," Wally explained. "He's the boss man. Nobody runs a game, shakes a bed or sells a beer unless he's dealt in. If we pay off, he says he'll take care of the heat."

"He's got a hell of a lot of nerve," Jim growled. "What can he do if we pass him?"

Wally passed a finger across the front of his throat. "We'll be dead—in Chicago."

"In Chicago?" Helen echoed. "What do you mean by that?"

"He's the big boss in Chicago," Wally explained. "Outside Chicago, he's got the same pull you and I got."

"The hell with him, then," Jim said. "We're going to beat it out of the state, anyway. If he can't touch us, why pay?"

"You've got the answer," Wally said approvingly. "So here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to call in and tell him the deal is okay and we're cutting him in for—"

"Hey, you just said—" Salvio began.

"Wait, Salvio. I'm going to tell him that we'll hold still for the bite." Wally sat back and smiled gently at the three intent faces watching him. "Then we'll grab the dough and get the hell out of Chicago—and he can go screw. We aren't coming back. What the hell can he do to us?"

Salvio grinned. "We trick the big boss!"

"That's slick," Jim agreed. "Telling him yes, you get

the pressure off. Then we beat it and maybe send him a card. I like that, Wally."

"It's all jellied, then," Wally said, getting up. "I'll call the old bastard right away and make him think we're scared gutless. You guys go home and get some sleep. Be ready to take off early. You know when and where to meet me. Be there on time."

Jim and Salvio nodded and walked to the door. Salvio opened the door and turned, his dark insolent eyes sweeping over Helen. They plucked at her breasts, slid over her hips, then stared challengingly at her face. Helen sniffed and walked into the bedroom, her hips waving a sassy farewell. Salvio grinned and went downstairs, with Jim following closely behind him.

Wally locked the door and then strode into the bedroom. "I saw that," he said harshly. "I told you to leave that Mex alone, didn't I?"

"What did I do?" she retorted. "I suppose I can stop him from looking?" She stood with her back against the dresser, facing him, her eyes narrowed.

He stared at her a moment. Obviously, she was itching for trouble. He had to calm her down to get her into condition to handle the car tomorrow. Deliberately, he slapped her. She clenched her hands and made a small sound in her throat. He slapped her again, sending her stumbling across the room. With a grim smile he stepped forward, tripped her and aimed a foot at her tail. She went sprawling across the floor, whimpering softly. He stood looking down at her a moment, then he unfastened his leather belt and released it from the loops of his trousers. The belt whistled softly through the air and landed on her flank, making a short, ugly, snapping sound. She cried out harshly, and trembling, climbed to her feet. He swung the belt again, catching her on the thighs. She yelped, tore the sweater off over her head, and began unzipping her skirt. The belt came down again, plucking viciously at her rayon panties. Suddenly she was naked, and with a rapturous cry she flung herself toward him.

"Darling, darling!" she cried passionately. "Oh, darling, I do love you!"

"Sure you do," Wally muttered. He threw the belt aside and picked her up. She kicked ecstatically and clung to him, trying to reach his mouth with hers. He

carried her to the bed, flung her roughly upon it. "Let's make this snappy," he growled, taking off his shirt. "I've got a phone call to make."

CHAPTER FOUR

MARY ELLEN FURY considered herself thrice blessed.

First, she had been born into a large, happy family—her father was Thaddeus Quinn. That wouldn't sound like a great deal unless you were a regular reader of the financial or society pages. To Mary Ellen, being the daughter of Thaddeus Quinn had meant being raised in a big, beautiful house where the chores were taken care of by servants; always wearing good clothes and having plenty to eat; going to parties and taking dancing lessons; getting her own car when she graduated from high school; going to an exclusive girls' school in the East; and being a debutante and having a coming-out ball at the Drake. By the time she'd become twenty-one, the age other girls had considered a pivotal point in their lives, Mary Ellen had played a hard game of tennis, swum like a seal, danced divinely, known all the good jazz spots between New Orleans and Manhattan, and had had her pretty face and tousled red hair pictured on the cover of *Life*. Strangely enough, she had also managed to retain her virginity.

Second, the Lake Shore Drive apartment of Thaddeus Quinn, which the family had used as a sort of rest-room and dressing-room, had been robbed. Mary Ellen had happened to be in Chicago at the time. As a result of the robbery, Thaddeus Quinn had not only lost thirty thousand dollars in silverware, jewelry, furs, and *objets d'art*, but also a daughter. Lieutenant Robert Fury of the Chicago police department's Robbery Bureau had dropped in to inspect the premises. In addition to the premises, he had inspected her—and she had inspected him—and suddenly she had known he was what she wanted. She'd gotten him, too. If she'd inherited anything from her father, it was the gumption to go out and get what she wanted.

Third, after less than a year of marriage, she was

carrying Bob Fury's child. Her family had been appalled when she'd announced that she was going to marry a policeman. There had been a distinct frost in the air when Bob had refused to resign from the police force and take an executive job in the Quinn Cement Corporation. However, now that she was about to become a mother the frost had suddenly disappeared and she knew that she'd been forgiven—completely forgiven. She wasn't going to name it Thaddeus, though, no matter what happened. If it was a boy, it was going to be Robert Fury, Jr.

"Feeling okay, hon?" Bob asked, interrupting her thoughts. He'd asked the same question at least seventeen times that evening. And every time he asked it, he stared sort of obliquely at her great abdomen.

She looked up from the small flannel kimono on which she was crocheting a lacy edge and smiled. "Honest, Bob, I'm fine."

"No pains or anything, huh?" he asked.

"Nope. Don't rush me, darling." She laughed softly. "I never knew you were the nervous type. Who's having this baby—you or me?"

"I'm not nervous," he retorted. "I just like to know what's going on. I thought you said it was due today."

"I said *maybe* this would be the day. Mother said it looked to her as though the baby would come any minute."

"Oh." He continued to stare at her. She'd been beautiful when he married her, he thought, but he'd been half-afraid that she'd be the fluttery, society-type of wife. He needn't have worried. She'd settled down and done the cooking, the cleaning, and the scrimping, of which there was always plenty in a policeman's home. She hadn't uttered a single protest either. Now that she was pregnant, there was a special aura of loveliness about her. She seemed different. More tender. More understanding. He shook his head. "Where's that book you had?" he asked.

"Which book?"

"You know. The one about babies. You said it tells all about it."

"Nosy, huh?" She smiled. "I think it's on the bottom shelf over there. By the desk."

He got up, crossed the room, knelt in front of the bookcase. Frowning, he peered at the titles.

"Can't you forget that you're a policeman for a minute?"

she asked, laughing at the intent look on his face. "Gosh, Bob, ever since you got home this afternoon, you've been prowling around, checking up on things. Now you're starting to pick on this poor, defenseless child!"

"I just like to know what's what," he murmured. He found the book he wanted, turned on the light by the desk and began turning the pages. He found the place he wanted and began reading. "When was your last period?" he asked abruptly.

Mary Ellen laughed. "January twenty-third."

She watched him affectionately, bent intently over the book, a slight frown on his lean, handsome face. Maybe the baby would be a boy and would have dark, wavy hair like his father, instead of red fluff like hers. Red-headed boys always got teased, and they got into fights, and . . .

"Hell's bells!" he said, tearing a sheet of paper from a pad.

"Now what's the matter?" she asked.

"It was due *yesterday!*" he told her, sounding aghast. "Today is October thirty-first. According to this book, you take the date of the last period, subtract three months, then add seven days. It comes out to October thirtieth—and October thirtieth was yesterday!"

"That doesn't mean a thing, Bob," she told him calmly. "When it gets ready to come, it comes. There's no rule-of-thumb way to—"

"Do you mean to say that that fancy gynecologist and obstetrician you're going to doesn't have the faintest idea when his patients are going to—"

"Oh, Bob!" She shook her head hopelessly—then shifted gingerly. "Come here, darling," she said softly. "Hurry."

"You feel something?" He got up quickly and sat beside her on the sofa, his eyes serious and apprehensive.

"Put your hand here," she said softly, guiding his hand to the side of her abdomen. "Feel him kicking?"

He grinned. "Strong little devil, isn't he?"

"I'll say. It feels like he's trying to flutter-kick his way out."

"Maybe he heard me say that he was due yesterday. You'll probably start getting the pains any minute now."

"I doubt it."

"Have you got everything packed?"

"Of course. Weeks ago."

"Well . . . hell. If you're sure nothing's going to happen, we might as well go to bed." He sounded disappointed.

She gave him an arch look, then giggled. "A lot of good it's going to do you, Lieutenant."

He kissed her lightly, then helped her to her feet. "Well, I can dream, can't I?"

While she turned out the living-room lights, he went out to the kitchen to make sure that the back door was locked. He paused by the refrigerator and poured himself a glass of milk. Two weeks of relaxation ought to do his ulcer some good. He'd paint the nursery, install the crib, putter around the house, get things ready for the kid, forget completely the police rat-race. While rinsing out the glass, he happened to notice the time. It wasn't even midnight. He hadn't gotten to bed that early in months.

CHAPTER FIVE

SAM NAZARIAN seemed oblivious to time. For at least an hour, he had sat hunched down in his chair at the rear table, his eyes closed, his face buried in the open V of his heavy overcoat. People wandered into the China Star Café, ate, and then wandered out without giving him a second glance. From time to time, Chung Lee shuffled over to the table with a fresh glass of black coffee. He did not attempt to speak to Mr. Sam. Chung Lee knew that Mr. Sam was very busy.

At eleven-forty the clerkish-looking man came hurrying into the café. He sat down at the table, drummed his fingers nervously.

"Yes?" Nazarian murmured without looking up.

"Wally Hirsch just phoned. He says he and the boys talked it over and agreed to kick in."

"How much?"

"Twenty per cent, like you said."

"No argument?"

"No."

Nazarian smiled faintly. "He say anything about it?"

"No. I couldn't ask him, either. After all, we're supposed to know all about it."

"All right. Thanks."

"You're taking his word for it?"

Nazarian opened his eyes slowly, reached for the glass on the table and took a judicious sip. "No," he said softly. "If Hirsch intended to kick in, he'd have tried to chisel on the bite. They're going to duck out."

"Want me to pass the word? I can have a couple of the boys nail them before they can—"

"No," Nazarian interrupted. His eyelids began to shut again. "I'll handle it."

The clerkish-looking man left. Nazarian remained motionless, his body buried in the heavy overcoat, his wily mind absorbed with the possibilities of the situation. A tall, colored youth in tight-fitting corduroy slacks and a Navy surplus pea-jacket entered the café. A chubby, anxious-faced colored woman in a green-plain coat followed him in. He said something to her in a low voice and pointed to the counter. She nodded, edged onto a stool, and watched him apprehensively as he went to Nazarian's table.

"Mr. Sam?" he said respectfully.

"Talk, Sugar," Nazarian murmured. "I can hear you."

"Well, Mr. Sam, suh, I been chasing all ovah town, trying to find somebody works at Revens, like you told me to, but they don't hire many colored girls, Revens don't. Only one I could find is Bessie Lou Allen and she's only a maid upstairs where they got the expensive dresses—"

"Where is she?" Nazarian interrupted.

"I got her right here. She didn't want to come, but I told her she hadda." The colored boy's white, square teeth flashed in a proud smile. She's got a sister who peddles it on Forty-third, and I told her—"

"Fine, Sugar. Bring her to me. You wait up front."

"Yes, suh, Mr. Sam!"

The colored boy went to the counter, spoke softly to the woman and gestured toward the table. She shook her head and stood up slowly, obviously fearful of meeting Nazarian. The colored boy spoke rapidly and earnestly, holding her arm with his strong fingers as he did so. Reluctantly, she moved toward the rear. He watched her until she reached the table.

Nazarian shifted slightly and opened his eyes. He eyed the woman appraisingly, then smiled slightly. "Sit down, please," he murmured.

"Mister, I don't know who you are or what you want," the woman began angrily, "but I'm an honest, church-going woman and I don't have no truck with no-good characters like—"

"I want to pay you twenty dollars," Nazarian said mildly. "You can tell me what I want to know in about two minutes, and then I'll have you driven home."

She opened her mouth, then closed it. She stared at him, still reluctant, still suspicious, but no longer afraid. "I don't know nothing worth twenty dollars," she said.

"I'll give it to you just for answering a few questions, then," Nazarian told her. "How long have you worked at Revens?"

"Five years."

"What's going to happen there tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow?" She stared at him blankly for a moment. "You mean the sale?"

"Is there a sale?" Nazarian pursed his lips. "Tell me about it."

"It's just a big sale. Just a pre-Christmas sale, Mr. Revens calls it. We been busy marking things down for days and they got big ads in all the papers. We been working late every night, getting ready, and I gotta be there early tomorrow morning, mister, so—"

"A big sale. It begins tomorrow?"

"Yessir, it does. It's tomorrow and Saturday, and I gotta get lots of rest tonight, because—"

Nazarian shook his head. "There must be something else. What else is going to happen there tomorrow?"

"Nothing."

"You're sure? Try to think."

"It's just Friday. Except for the sale, it's just—" She stopped abruptly, then laughed. "Say, it's payday, too. I don't know how I forgot that, but I guess that ain't what you—"

"It's payday?" Nazarian looked interested. "On a Friday?"

"Just happens that way," she told him. "We gets our pay on the first and the fifteenth, no matter what day it is, unless it's Sunday, of course, and then—"

"So." Nazarian took a generous gulp of his coffee. "Tomorrow is payday. How do they pay you? Cash?"

"No, sir, we each gets a check, but if we want the cash we gets it by signing the check and going upstairs to the office." She laughed again, a bit nervously. "Mostly we all wants the cash. You'd think they'd just give it to us and not bother writing up all them checks."

"How many employees does Revens have?"

"I don't really know, mister. We each got a number, and mine's four hundred and nineteen, so I guess there's a lot of them, if you count all the clerks and the maids and the—"

"Thank you," Nazarian interrupted. He laid a twenty-dollar bill on the table. When she reached for it, he suddenly put his hand on hers. "You're not to tell anyone about coming here," he warned softly. "If you do, I'll have to have Sugar come for you again."

"I won't say nothing to nobody!" she promised, trying to free her hand. "You tell that mean boy to leave me alone!"

He released her. "Tell him I said he's to take you straight home."

The two plainclothes dicks were prompt. They entered the café on the stroke of midnight. The one who had talked to Nazarian previously came over to the table and sat down.

"Tomorrow is payday at Revens store," Nazarian greeted him. "I'm not positive, but I think a couple guns are going to try for it."

"The big department store?" The dick whistled softly. "What time?"

"I don't know. Probably when the store opens."

The dick snorted. "They'll have a fat chance."

"I'm sorry not to have more definite information," Nazarian said delicately, "but I thought you might be able to do yourself some good."

"In other words, you don't want it to go through headquarters."

"I'd rather you and your pal handled it personally," Nazarian admitted. "It would be less embarrassing for all of us, in case it misfired."

"Yeah, I can see that." The dick scowled. "Who are the guys?"

"Mostly punks." Nazarian described Hirsch, Morales and Hoops. "You should be able to spot them."

"I wish you knew when they intended to hit."

"Find out when the dough will be accessible. Hirsch has a contact inside the store, a girl who works there. He must have got the layout from her. Between now and morning, you can work out a plan. It's okay with me if they drop dead."

"What's your angle?"

Nazarian smiled gently. He reached for the glass, drained it and set it down carefully. "Maybe I'd like you to make lieutenant," he said enigmatically. Then, without another glance at the cop, he rose and walked slowly toward the front of the café. He nodded to Chung Lee when he reached the cigar case. Chung Lee bowed gravely. Nazarian opened the door, crossed the sidewalk, and stepped into a sedan which was waiting. The sedan swiftly slid away from the curb.

"How do you know it's on the level?" Officer Harold Titis demanded. They were sitting in the squad car, parked just south of Chicago Avenue on Clark Street.

"Use your head, Hal," Sergeant Peter Kappus growled from the other end of the dark seat. A flickering neon sign nearby gave his round face a greenish pallor. "Anything we get from Mr. Sam is on the level. That guy knows everything that's going on."

"Why the hell tip us to it?" Titis insisted. He was younger than Kappus and new to the district. He hadn't learned the ropes yet, but Sergeant Kappus was wising him up fast. "You told me last week that Sam bossed the district. I don't mind picking up a little gravy by doing the guy some favors, but if he's got his fingers in so many pies, why is he stooling on a job that somebody is planning to pull in the Loop?"

"Hell, it's obvious, ain't it?" Kappus said irritably. "These other guys crossed him. Or maybe they're trying to cut in on some of his boys. Maybe he owns stock in the damned store. The point is, he got the tip that the place is going to get hit—and he passed it on to me. If you don't want to have anything to do with it, just say so. I know about a hundred other cops who'll jump at the chance."

"I didn't say I wouldn't work on it with you. I just don't want to be a goddam dead hero. You just got through

saying there were three of them. There's only two of us."

"For chrissake, one of them will be piloting a car for the getaway," Sergeant Kappus said disgustedly. "Furthermore, we'll take them by surprise. They'll be nailed before they even realize what's happening."

"I think we ought to file a report. The captain will give us credit for the capture, and we won't—"

"Sure!" Sergeant Kappus said sarcastically. "Where you going to say the tip came from? You going to put it on the record that you're chummy with Mr. Sam?" He laughed grimly. "And what if it falls through? What if they rig a stake-out and nothing happens? You going to tell the captain you ate something and had a bad dream? I tell you, there's only one way to play this, and it's a break for us. We won't be taking no chances at all. We'll have the jump on them—I'll make double-damned sure of that—and if they try to make a break, we'll plug the bastards. Christ, can you imagine the publicity? The newspapers will eat it up. It'll all go on our records too, telling how we went out, on our own time too, by God, and risked our lives to foil a daring daylight robbery! The store might even give us a reward. And if we kill 'em, so much the better. The mayor will hang a medal on us, I bet."

"All right, all right. It ain't that I'm yellow, Pete. It just seems screwy to me that a guy with the connections this Mr. Sam is supposed to have—"

"He's doing us a favor, Hal," Sergeant Kappus explained expansively. "We been doing him some good turns lately, haven't we? He mentioned that we might get a promotion out of it—and he's right. We might even get transferred to a headquarters squad. It's a break, boy, a real break."

"So it's a break," Titus shrugged. "How you think we ought to play it?"

"Cagey—real cagey," Kappus said thoughtfully.

"Don't know what you mean."

"I'm thinking about it. Shut up for a minute."

They sat in silence for several minutes. Titus broke the silence by saying: "Look ahead, over on the right-hand side of the street, about the middle of the block. The girl in the striped skirt. She's making up to that drunk. Looks like she's trying to get him to go upstairs with her. We ought to—"

"The hell with her," Sergeant Kappus growled. "The dumb bastard's probably looking for trouble. Look, Hal,

here's the way I see it. We've got to get into the store ahead of them. The Loop stores don't open until around nine forty-five, but the clerks probably have got to get there sooner. We ought to be there by eight thirty, so we can warn the cashiers, get into the office where the dough is, and pick some spots where we can cover them without exposing ourselves. I want to be in a spot where I can knock them off, if necessary, before they know what's going on."

"Hell, nine o'clock's early enough," Titis protested. "It's after midnight now. By the time we finish our tour and go home, it'll be time to get up again."

"Stop crabbing, for chrissake," Kappus said, grinning. "Can't you hear Opportunity knocking?"

"That knocking you hear is my knees. For all we know, the bastards will be hopped up to the gills. My mother didn't raise me to be a dead cop."

"Don't be such a crepe-hanger, Hal." Kappus slapped him on the shoulder. "If anybody gets killed, it's going to be them. We aren't going to take any chances. I'll come by your place and pick you up at eight sharp. You be ready, too, damn it, or I'll tell the lieutenant that you refused to play ball with Mr. Sam. He'll put you on a beat where there's damned little gravy."

"Okay, okay, I'll be ready." Titis was staring down the street. "She hooked him, all right. They went upstairs to that fleabag. He'll get a dose, sure as hell."

"So he'll get a dose." Kappus laughed. "Guys dumb enough to get hooked by them kinda dames oughtta have some kind of a souvenir pinned on them!" He started the car. "Let's cruise the street once more, then call it a night. If we don't get some sleep, we won't look pretty when they snap our pictures tomorrow."

CHAPTER SIX

ON FRIDAY MORNING, November 1st, the first employee to show up for work at the John T. Revens & Company store was an elderly woman named Melissa Shepherd. The night watchman, Otto Abeles, admitted her at seven thirty

A.M. He locked the door after her and escorted her up to the sixth floor, where the cafeteria was located. Melissa Shepherd's job was to light the gas under the coffee urns, put the sweet rolls out on plates, and cook a pot of oatmeal. Since the Revens store occupied the entire northern half of a large seven-story building, her presence on the premises was hardly noticeable.

After taking Melissa Shepherd upstairs, Pop Abeles returned to the first floor. At seven-fifty a girl rapped on the door and was duly admitted. She was a young girl, dark-eyed and dark-haired, who had the bad luck to draw the early-duty assignment on the elevators that day. Dotty Wells was new on the staff and she realized that that was why she had been handed the dirty end of the stick. If it weren't payday, and if she hadn't needed the money so badly, she'd have told the captain what she could do with the assignment. As it was, she'd had to chase her boy friend home without breakfast, and he'd given her such a hard time that she hadn't even been able to grab a cup of coffee for herself. She mumbled a resentful good-morning to Pop Abeles when he let her in, then she clattered downstairs to the locker room to get into her uniform.

At eight o'clock an automatic bell rang throughout the store, signalling the hour. Dotty ran to the center cage, snapped on its lights, and ran it up to the first floor. The first floor looked dark and creepy. The white dustclothes, swathed over long waist-high counters, made the place look like a morgue. Dotty yawned.

Pop turned around and grinned at her. "How about getting me a cup of coffee?" he suggested. "It oughtta be ready by now. Get yourself one, too. I'll ring the bell if anyone wants to go up."

"Good idea, Pop." Still yawning, Dotty Wells ran the car up to the sixth floor.

At eight o'clock on Friday morning, November 1st, Mary Ellen Fury reached over and turned off the alarm. She lay very still for several minutes, letting her body come completely awake. She turned and looked at her husband. His eyes were closed and he was snoring softly.

Moving gingerly, with awkward maneuvering, she managed to sit up. She felt around on the floor with her toes until she found her slippers, got them on and tiptoed

into the bathroom. She took a warm shower and dried herself.

She pinned up her hair swiftly, put on a slash of lipstick and went into the bedroom. He was still sleeping soundly. She started toward the bed, then hesitated. It would be mean to awaken him. It was the first day of his vacation, and he hadn't been able to sleep like this for months. He could sleep late, get his own breakfast, and then just laze around until she got back from the doctor's office. It was just a routine examination, so she might even get back before he awakened.

Moving as soundlessly as possible, she took fresh underthings from a drawer of the dresser and got her *good* maternity dress from the closet. Taking her clothing into the kitchen, she lit the gas under a pot of water and made herself a cup of instant coffee while she dressed. She looked at the clock while brushing her hair. Darned near nine o'clock—and her appointment was for nine-thirty. Where did the time go, anyway? She gulped down the coffee, made sure her lipstick wasn't smeared, checked her purse for the car keys—and then remembered if he'd awaken and find her gone he wouldn't know where she was. Hurriedly, she went to the desk and scribbled a note:

Dearest:

Had to keep date with doctor. Routine. Nothing to get excited about. Will be back in a jiffy. Eggs and ham in refrig. Cook your own breakfast, and if you see the milkman, tell him to leave cottage cheese.

She read the note, underscored *Nothing to get excited about*, and propped it against the sugar bowl where he'd be sure to see it.

It looked like a warm, sunny autumn day. She decided not to bother with a coat. She was halfway out the door when it occurred to her that she might, she just *might* start getting the pains any minute. She might be downtown when they started, and if that happened, she wouldn't have time to come all the way home to get her suitcase. It was all packed, ready to go. Why not put it in the car and take it along, just in case? That's what Bob would call playing it smart and acting like an intelligent, well-organized person.

Smiling to herself, she left the kitchen door standing open while she ran back to the living room. The suitcase was in the front hall closet. She got it out, glanced at the mantel clock. Good Lord, it was nine ten already! Unless she was lucky enough to find a parking space right in front of the building where Dr. Martin had his office, she was going to be late and Dr. Martin would be furious.

Hurrying as fast as she could, she closed the back door quietly, slid the suitcase onto the rear seat of the green Ford sedan, and then got into the car herself. This required some squeezing, she discovered. Incredible as it seemed, in just a few days she'd gotten as big as a balloon. She moved the seat back as far as it would go, but it was still a tight fit.

It flashed through her mind that it might be dangerous to drive with the baby so close to the steering wheel. If there were an accident, she'd be pinned there, helpless, and the baby might be crushed. Its head was low, though. Still . . . For a moment she considered leaving the car home and calling a taxi but there simply wasn't time. She had to start immediately. Luckily, the car started without difficulty. She backed carefully out of the driveway and headed east toward the Loop.

Salvio Morales awakened early. He opened his eyes, sat up on the edge of the cot, ran his fingers through his hair. He had slept in his clothes, so getting dressed was no problem. He stared at the dingy room for several minutes, then he turned his head and looked out of the grimy window. The sun was shining. It would be a nice day.

Everyone thought Salvio was a Mex. They got this impression from his dark skin, his white teeth, the sly look in his dark eyes, the way his Latin temper flared occasionally, and the Spanish curses he frequently muttered. As a matter of fact, the one and only connection Salvio ever had had with Mexico had been a girl named Pepita—and he had slept with her only once. She had been willing enough and cheap enough, but she had had no spirit. Salvio admired spirit, for he had come from Puerto Rico, a land of squalor and poverty, and because he himself had spirit, he had been able to steal much money and had bettered himself in a way which made him a great

man in the eyes of his family and his friends. He was only twenty-three years old, but already he had stolen large sums of money. Today he would steal more, a veritable fortune, and then he would send for his sisters and his brothers and he would teach them how to become rich, too.

Salvio searched for a crumpled pack of cigarettes and lit one. Then he lifted the mattress of the cot and removed the gun. He eyed it a moment, as though estimating its power, then methodically took it apart and cleaned it. Like all good craftsmen, he had respect for the tools of his trade. It was a good gun. It was heavy and solid and it shot big bullets. He had never had to fire it yet, for when he pointed it at anyone, they did as he wished. At times he'd wondered exactly how much noise it would make if he pulled the trigger. A lot of noise, probably, for it was a big gun.

The gun was a magic weapon that he wielded without understanding. The only weapon he really loved and understood was a knife. He owned two knives with strong, sharp, beautiful blades. The gun was fine for scaring white people, but his knives were for real fighting.

When the gun was reassembled and loaded, Salvio put on a jacket and dropped the gun into a pocket. Of the two knives, one had a heavy spring blade. This he put in the other pocket of the jacket. The other knife was flat, light and very sharp. He slid this into his sock, just above his ankle.

He smoked several more cigarettes, tossing the butts onto the bare floor. At eight thirty he prepared to leave. This took about one minute and consisted mostly of stretching lazily and then lighting another cigarette, for he had nothing to pack. When he left the room, he left it forever.

Tomorrow he would be rich. He would buy a new suit. He would send much money to his sister. In America, money was everything. He could go any place, do anything. He could buy a car, take it to San Juan, and live like a rich man. He could even have a white woman, a spirited white woman like that Helen, for his very own. Maybe he would even rent such a woman for tomorrow night.

Salvio closed the door quietly, went downstairs, and walked toward the Loop. . . .

At eight minutes after nine, Mr. Elliot T. Revens, the president of John T. Revens & Company, entered the elevator and was taken up to the seventh floor by Dotty Wells, who had had her coffee and was feeling very much on the ball. A minute or so later, Mr. Dwight Dudley, the treasurer of the company, arrived. Next to arrive was Miss Angela Clinch, a spinister of uncertain years, who held the post of chief cashier.

Mr. Revens went directly to his private office, where he moodily contemplated the pros and cons of giving another pep talk to the store's employees before the doors were opened for the big pre-Christmas sale.

Mr. Dudley unlocked the company's safe and removed the trays of money which the cashiers would be needing in a few minutes.

Miss Clinch, who had been with the store for twenty years and who considered herself an executive, scurried around, turning on lights, adjusting the blinds, dusting the counters behind the grilled windows, and putting pencils and wage forms where the two girls who served as her assistants could find them readily. She really had nothing important to do until the messengers from the bank arrived with the money. But once they arrived, she would be very busy indeed, for she would have the job of checking and distributing more than a hundred thousand dollars to various departmental cashiers throughout the big store.

Sergeant Kappus spent a sleepless night. He undressed and went to bed as soon as he got home from the night's tour of duty, but sleep would not come. He knew he was onto something big. It was undoubtedly the biggest break he'd ever gotten. Mr. Sam had a finger on the pulse of what was going on, and he therefore must have definite knowledge about the impending robbery of Revens. Otherwise, how could he have named and described the three punks who were involved?

Over and over, Sergeant Kappus' restless mind checked the possibilities and weighed possible stratagems. There were three punks involved. The dangerous one was Hoops. Then there was a Mexican called Morales. The chances were that Morales would be assigned to the car. Probably the brain was the other gun, named Hirsch.

All three, obviously, were either dumb or crazy. Nobody

except a hairbrained dumb bastard would try to rob a big store in the Loop—and in daylight, at that. They had probably cased the store and figured that they'd have just a bunch of female clerks and cashiers to deal with. Boy, would they get a surprise!

Kappus had never been in the Revens store, for it was a woman's specialty store and carried only articles of feminine apparel. But he had been in enough big stores to be able to imagine the setup. The office would be upstairs some place. The punks would have to use an elevator to get to it. They'd have to walk from the elevator to the cashier's office. While they covered this distance, they'd be exposed. He and Titis would have the drop on them from the moment they stepped out of the elevator. He'd let them get to the door of the cashier's office, might even let them smash through it, and then he'd shout: "Stop! You're under arrest!"

They'd stop, by God. If they didn't, they'd be dead.

Sergeant Kappus realized, at seven-thirty A.M., that he might as well get up. He showered, shaved carefully, got his best suit from the closet, took a freshly laundered shirt from his dresser. He dressed with care, trying several neckties before he found one he thought would appear smart in the photographs. Almost as an afterthought, he decided to check his .38 Police Special. He hadn't had occasion to fire it in months, and it turned out to be lucky he'd remembered to check it, for two of the bullets were corroded. He cleaned the gun carefully, reloaded it with fresh ammunition, and patted it fondly as he fitted it into his shoulder holster.

Sergeant Kappus was a bachelor, so he drove to a nearby drugstore and ordered breakfast. He ate heartily and leafed through a *Tribune* while he ate. Since he had plenty of time, he drank a second cup of coffee.

At eight forty-five Kappus got into his car and drove north to pick up Officer Titis. Titis was married and was eating breakfast when Kappus arrived. Titis' wife and two of his kids were in the kitchen with him, and the kids were slopping cereal at each other. Mrs. Titis, with a bathrobe tied around her soda-straw figure, looked like a scarecrow. She insisted on Kappus having a cup of coffee while Hal was getting ready. He told her he'd already had two cups, but she was too stupid to get the point. She poured a cup

for him, so he had to sit down and pretend to appreciate it.

It was nine o'clock on the nose when he finally got Titis out of the house. Normally, the drive to the Loop wouldn't have taken more than five minutes, but, today of all days, he had to get caught smack in the middle of a stream of cars on Michigan Avenue when some jerk in a two-bit sailboat decided to come down the river. The bridge was raised and traffic came to a standstill. All he could do was sit there and curse the Federal laws which said that all navigable waters had to be kept open. By the time the damned sailboat passed and the bridge was lowered, it was nine-fifteen.

He couldn't use his siren, because it might warn the punks. By violating several minor traffic laws and by zig-zagging west on an east-bound street, he managed to reach Wabash Avenue. He barreled straight south to the Revens building, braked violently, and left the car in a No Parking zone.

He led Titis through the arcade to the store's employees' entrance, and he walked in, holding the leather folder containing his police star in his left hand. An old geezer was standing by a counter, and when Kappus and Titis entered, he straightened alertly as though about to stop them. Sergeant Kappus poked the star under his nose and growled: "Police. Which floor is the cashier's office on?"

"S-six!" the old geezer gasped. "What do—"

Sergeant Kappus spotted an elevator that was just beginning to go up. He ran toward it, shouting: "Just a minute, please!" and the girl smiled at him through the wrought-iron grillwork, stopped the car, brought the cage back down, and opened the door for him and Titis.

"Six!" Sergeant Kappus ordered.

Wally Hirsch got Helen out of bed bright and early by jerking the covers away and slapping her smartly on the tail. She smiled sleepily, rolled out, and went into the bathroom. He put on his shorts and undershirt, went out to the kitchen. There wasn't a hell of a lot there to eat, but he wasn't hungry anyway. He put water for coffee on the stove, then banged on the door of the bathroom.

"Come on, come on," he shouted. "You taking another bath, for chrissake?"

Helen opened the door and came prancing out naked, a comb and a towel in her hands. Her mussed hair gave her a gamin look, and he could see that she was bruised all to hell. "Maybe you haven't got kidneys, but I have!" she said. "What you expect me to do, put them out in the sun to dry out?"

He aimed a kick at her, but she laughed and skipped out of reach. A guy couldn't stay sore at her. Slap her down and she bounced right up, the more bruised the happier. The episode last night had been necessary, but it made him feel like he'd been through a wringer. Maybe he should have just punched her around a little, just given her a taste, just enough to keep her happy. She went nuts when he used the belt on her, and, without realizing it, he'd let it go farther than he'd intended. Oh, well . . . coffee and something to eat would put him back on the ball.

By the time he finished shaving, Helen was dressed in her red sweater and black skirt again. While he dressed, she made the coffee. Love and coffee—about all she was good for. And drive a car. She knew how to handle a car, all right. When she was behind the wheel of a car, any car, the damned thing seemed to do tricks.

"We've got to be rolling," he told her. "You sure you got everything straight?"

"What's there to keep straight?" she demanded. "I pick up the car from the garage where Salvio stashed it, and I drive down Wabash until I reach the store. I park right on Wabash, in front of the doors, and I keep the engine running and wait for you and Salvio and Jim to come out with the dough. A kid could remember that."

"When you see us coming out, reach back and open the doors. We may come out in a hell of a hurry."

"Got it." She gave him a smile.

"We pile in—and then what?"

"I drive south, observing all traffic laws and smiling prettily at any cops who happen to look our way, and I cut east to Michigan. I head north on Michigan until I hit Division, then I turn west and drop you guys at the Clark Street entrance to the subway. After that, I'm to head for the farm."

"Where'll the dough be?"

"Under the back seat."

"See that you leave it there, too. Go straight to the farm and put the car where it can't be seen. Take the plates off and put that set of Wisconsin ones on. Then sit tight until we get there. Clear?"

"As your baby blue eyes, darling." She went to the dresser, began tossing things into a suitcase. "You going to pack, or do I have the privilege of doing that for you, too?"

"The clothes I've got can go to the Salvation Army," he decided. "Just put my razor in with your stuff. Once we're clear, we can both buy complete new outfits. Let's put most of our stuff in that garbage can in back."

"That's certainly dandy with me." She went to the closet, removed an armful of dresses, and carried them out to the garbage can. When she returned, he gave her an armful of his stuff. She made four trips, and when she finished, the small apartment was pretty well cleaned out. He helped her throw her odds and ends into a small overnight bag.

"All right, let's move," he said, glancing at his watch. "I don't want to cut the time too thin. The boys might get nervous."

"So what are we waiting for?"

"Nothing, I guess." He looked around the apartment once more and nodded. "We're on our way."

As planned, they left the building separately. While he walked east on Wilson Avenue, she went to the garage where Salvio had put the stolen Merc. She got the car and followed him down Wilson, swinging the car so smoothly to the curb that he was able to jump in without her stopping.

"No trouble?" he asked quickly.

"Not a ghost," she said, keeping her eyes on the traffic. "The tank's full, the oil's okay, and it handles like a dream. That Salvio's a good picker."

Wally nodded and left her to do her driving. He had other things to think about. If the boys followed orders, Salvio would be waiting at the Wabash Avenue entrance of the arcade. Jim would be standing in the arcade, near the State Street side, looking at the displays. He would have his sawed-off in a shopping bag. All three would converge on the employees' entrance at the same time, and from that point on, it would be mostly a matter of acting swiftly and decisively before anyone could raise an alarm.

They should have very little trouble. Two old guys and an elevator operator. They'd all be scared gutless. He and Jim could have handled it alone, probably, but Salvio would come in handy when the armed messengers arrived.

"Step on it," he ordered. "It's damned near nine fifteen."

"I can't fly over the river, lover," Helen said calmly. "Somebody took the bridge away."

He cursed impotently. Like she said, the damned bridge was up and traffic was stalled for miles. Cars were piled up four abreast and nothing was moving. Christ, if Salvio and Jim got jumpy and decided that the heat had caught up with him . . .

"Here we go," Helen said suddenly. The bridge was slowly descending.

When they reached the store, it was nine-seventeen, and thank God, Salvio was propped up against the entrance of the arcade, smoking a cigarette.

"Okay, baby," Wally said softly. "Stick right here and I'll go in and buy you a big yellow Caddy."

"Goody," she said lightly. Then, her voice and eyes suddenly serious, she added: "You be careful, now."

"Damned right."

He walked into the arcade and felt, rather than saw, Salvio straighten and follow him. Jim was down at the other end, a shopping bag under his arm. Wally whistled softly. Jim looked casually toward him and then began moving slowly toward the door which was their objective. Two girls came hurrying down the arcade, laughing and chattering shrilly. He slowed down and let them pass. They reached the door, turned into the store. Wally grinned. Except for them, the arcade was now empty. They'd have a clear field for at least a minute—and a hell of a lot could happen in a minute.

As soon as Jim was in hearing distance, Wally said softly: "Everything okay, boy?"

Jim nodded and took hold of the shopping bag with both hands.

"In we go, then," Wally murmured, dropping one hand to the pocket where the gun was. He strode to the door and pushed it open.

The two cops had hardly gotten into the elevator and gone upstairs, when two girls who worked in Sportswear came in, hurrying like crazy, as usual. They cried, "Good

morning, Pop!" saying it in the breezy way kids have nowadays, and then they dashed down the stairway to the locker room. They had hardly disappeared when the door opened and three men came in. Pop Abeles was still thinking about the two cops, about the way they had flashed their stars and ordered the elevator to wait. Something about the three men, the hardness of their eyes or the way they came stalking in, made him think that they were cops, too. The impression lasted only for an instant, though. Revolvers appeared in the hands of two of them—and the third pulled a sawed-off shotgun from a paper shopping bag.

The one in front said: "Into the shoe department. Pop!"

As in a dream, Pop heard the elevator descending behind him, and he saw the other two men fan out, taking position behind the counters, and he tried to cry out, tried to move, but all he could think was: *I don't want to die—I don't want to die!* He saw the round-faced man's swift approach, saw his arm raise, knew he was going to be hit, but his nerves and muscles seemed frozen and all he could do was stand there and stare and think: *No—No—No!* He didn't even feel the blow which knocked him unconscious.

As soon as Wally pushed through the door, he saw that it was going to be duck soup. In one swift glance, he saw that the entire floor was deserted except for one old guy who was leaning against the end of a counter like he had a pain in his back.

Wally poked the gun at him and said crisply: "Into the shoe department, Pop!"

The old guy's eyes damned near popped out. He stood like he'd been caught with his hand in the till. Jim had the shotgun out and was loping toward the elevators. Salvio had moved into the shadows of the draped counters. Well, if the old guy wasn't going to move, he had to be moved. Wally took two quick strides toward him and clipped him with the gun. The old buggger didn't even blink. He just groaned softly and slid toward the door. Wally caught him with one hand and dragged him into the shoe department. Just in time, too, for just then one of the elevators came down and a girl called: "Pop! Oh, Pop!"

She made the mistake of opening the door of the cage and popping her head out. Jim got her behind the ear with the barrel of his shotgun and she fell flat on her kisser. Salvio darted over, grinning excitedly, and straddled her. He bent down, slid his hands under her arms, and grabbed her by the breasts. The damned Mex half-dragged, half-carried her into the shoe department, hanging on to them all the time. The girl was out like a light and didn't know the difference.

"Get your feels later, damn it!" Wally hissed. "Tie them up fast, then get back by the door!"

While Salvio roped the girl and the old guy, Wally went in and stood by the counter. Jim was crouched at the far end of the elevator bank.

Footsteps came running down the arcade and rattled to a stop by the door. The door opened and six girls trooped in. They sort of blinked at him, then they smiled hesitantly. He nodded and said gravely: "Good morning, girls." They echoed his greeting and scurried toward the stairs. When the last one disappeared, Wally looked at Jim and made an O with two fingers. Jim grinned.

According to the big clock at the front of the store, it was nine twenty-one. Three more girls arrived . . . then a group of five . . . a pair of elderly women . . . a colored girl . . . four middle-aged women who looked like they might have once been lady wrestlers. Jim bid them all a good morning.

At nine twenty-three, Wally shot a warning look at Salvio and Jim. Slow, heavy footsteps were coming down the arcade. Casually, Wally leaned on the counter, his right side away from the door, his hand on his gun. The door opened and the footsteps came closer. When he figured they were about ten feet away, Wally swung his head around. Salvio already had his gun out and was moving toward the door.

There were two of them, clad in sharp green uniforms with shiny black Sam Browne belts. Each was holding a revolver loosely in his right hand, the gun pointing at the floor, and each was lugging a heavy leather pouch.

Wally brought his gun up and snapped: "Stay where you are, boys!"

They stopped as though they'd run into a stone wall. One opened his mouth and gulped as though he'd swallowed a pickle. The other started to bring his gun up—

and saw Jim Hoops. His fingers opened and the gun clattered on the tile floor. The other one followed suit.

"Drop the dough!" Wally snapped. They obeyed.

Salvio had the arcade door locked and was pulling down the shade. The expressions on the messengers' faces were ludicrous. They were both pale, and were breathing heavily, like they'd been caught in the wrong bedroom.

"All right, boys," Wally said crisply. "Step this way. No tricks. There's two guns behind you." He backed toward the shoe department, the gun in his hand acting like a string and pulling them along after him.

Mentally, Wally began congratulating himself. The caper was in the bag. There was nothing left to do except rope the two messengers, pick up the dough—and take off.

Then, somewhere in the store, someone shouted and an elevator started to descend.

When Sergeant Kappus and Officer Titis landed on the seventh floor, they saw a series of open reception rooms, each labeled with a sign: CREDIT OFFICE. MERCHANDISING. OFFICE OF THE TREASURER. CASHIER. OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT.

Kappus headed for the one labeled CASHIER. Crossing a small room with several desks and chairs, he found himself facing three grilled windows. Behind one of the windows, an old bag with bleached blonde hair and fancy spectacles was fussing with some papers and pens. Kappus produced his star and thrust it through the window.

"Police!" he said authoritatively. "Who's in charge here?"

"Why—why, I am." The blonde looked astonished, as though the fact that she was in charge should have been obvious.

"We have reason to believe that a robbery is about to be attempted here," Kappus told her. "I am Sergeant Kappus. This is Officer Titis. We want to check the premises."

"You . . . you're kidding!" Her mouth hung open, exposing a small, whitish tongue and the prongs of two partial dentures.

"I wish we were," Kappus said grimly. "Let us in."

"Oh, I couldn't! It's—we're not allowed to admit anyone!"

"We're police officers, lady," Kappus told her impatiently. "The robbers may be on their way here this minute. We've got to station ourselves inside where—"

"Oh, dear! I simply can't let you in. I'll—please wait just a minute!" She darted away, out of his range of vision.

"Dumb bitch!" Kappus muttered. He winked at Titis. "A couple of kids with water-guns could knock over a setup like this. Look—nothing but a wooden door. Bet the safe's standing wide open, too."

The blonde returned, leading an elderly man in a white shirt who stared at them through horn-rimmed bifocals. "This . . . this is Mr. Dudley, the treasurer of the company," she announced nervously. "They're police officers, Mr. Dudley. They say we're going to be robbed! Do you think I ought to—"

"Thank you, Miss Clinch," Mr. Dudley said firmly. "What's this about a robbery, gentlemen?"

"We believe that a robbery is about to be perpetrated here," Kappus said, remembering a line he'd caught in a TV drama. "Several armed men are believed to be on their way here, and we want to know where your safe is so we can surprise them."

"I see." Mr. Dudley frowned. "May I see your credentials?"

Kappus and Titis produced their ID folders.

Mr. Dudley eyed them gravely, then nodded. "Please come in," he murmured. He unbolted the door and let them enter. "I suppose you realize that this is rather a shock. Are you sure there isn't a mistake? There has never been a robbery in the store's entire—"

"There's no mistake," Kappus interrupted brusquely. "This is your payday and we've been tipped off that they're going to try to grab it." He frowned disapprovingly at the wide-open doors of the big old-fashioned safe. "You better lock that, sir," he said, gesturing.

"There's hardly anything in it," Mr. Dudley objected.

"Where do you keep the money, then?"

"Well, we have two trays here, and another tray just went down to the third floor, and—"

Kappus eyed the trays skeptically. Even to his inexperienced eyes, the trays obviously didn't contain enough cash to justify an armed robbery. "You mean a big store like this operates on chicken-feed like—"

"Oh, each department has its own cashier, of course," Mr. Dudley said hastily. "They each have a cage with a locked drawer. This is just change which the girls use when customers pay bills or present checks for—"

"I thought this was payday. How do you—"

"Yes, of course." Mr. Dudley glanced at the clock. "That money comes from our bank by special messenger. It ought to be here any minute now. As a matter of fact, we have an exceptionally large amount of cash coming today because of our pre-Christmas sale—"

"By messenger!" Kappus yelled. "You mean it's being brought here? How much?"

"A little over a hundred thousand dollars. Isn't that right, Miss Clinch?"

"Yes, Mr. Dudley," the old blonde gasped. "If you want the exact amount, I can—"

"What time are they due here?" Kappus interrupted.

"Seems to me they should have been here several minutes ago," Mr. Dudley said worriedly. "Aren't they usually here by now, Miss Clinch?"

"They're supposed to leave the bank at nine fifteen. They're *always* here by now."

Kappus suddenly had a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach. He grabbed the blonde's arm and demanded: "How do they get into the store? Do they come through the arcade?"

"Yes. Of course. There's no other way for—"

"Oh, for chrissake!" Kappus groaned. "Come on, Hal! We've got to get downstairs!"

Guns in hand, Kappus and Titus ran to the elevator bank. None of the cars were moving. By peering down the shafts, Kappus spotted a car standing on the floor below. He whirled, spotted a door labeled STAIRWAY, and ran toward it. They reached the sixth floor, breathing heavily. The car was still there, its lights on and its steel gates held open by a wire hook. Kappus released the hook, pushed Titus in, and slammed the gates shut.

"Hey!" a voice shrieked. A uniformed girl was running toward them, carrying two paper cups of coffee. "That's my car!"

Kappus grabbed the operating lever and pulled it toward him. The car started to move up. He reversed the lever hastily, the car jolted, stopped, then began to go

down. The girl had reached the gates and was banging angrily on them, all the time shrieking that it was her car.

"I'll bring it right back!" Kappus shouted.

As the car dropped toward the main floor, they could hear her shrieking indignantly.

Jim Hoops had been in stir twice. He was, therefore, what is known in the trade as a "two-time loser." What this meant, in plain words, was that he had been in on two jobs, had gotten caught both times, and had had two strikes recorded against him. The next time he got nabbed, he'd be O-U-T, for the law makes a life sentence mandatory for habitual criminals—and the courts had long ago established that "three convictions" was the same as "habitual." Needless to say, Jim had no intention of getting nabbed again.

If the caper had not looked like a cinch, he would have had nothing to do with it. But Wally Hirsch had impressed him as a man who had brains, who wasn't yellow, and who wouldn't blow up under fire. Another consideration, of course, was the fact that Jim had an itch for money. He was pushing fifty, which was old in the gun-bearing fraternity, and figured it might be about time for him to buy a little business somewhere and go legit. A gas station in some small town out west appealed to him as a nice racket. He needed about five grand to float a station, and his end of the cut would give him that, plus a little drinking and tom-cattin' money.

When the messengers came tramping in, loaded down with the dough, Jim lifted the shotgun and swung it in a small, tight arc which covered them completely. His finger sort of itched on the smooth double triggers, and for one wild instant he hoped they'd try to make a break for it. The dumb bastards didn't even know how to carry their guns. They were loaded down with dough and didn't even have sense enough to keep their guns ready. The dumb, cocky, cop bastards.

The messengers dropped their guns, then the money-heavy pouches. Salvio had the door bolted and the shade down. Wally was marching the jerks into the shoe department. The job was in the bag! Everything had gone

smooth as smooth, and in about one minute, they'd be on their merry way, loaded down with enough lettuce to nibble on for the rest of their life.

From his position near the elevators, Jim was the first to hear the girl's shriek. Immediately, he swung around and listened alertly. There was a sound of mechanical movement among the elevators. Somewhere above, a man shouted. He sounded excited. The girl kept on shrieking.

Jim stepped close to the elevators and watched the chains. It was the center car which was moving. He looked up, saw a square of light descending rapidly. Jim stepped back into the shadows, glanced quickly around to estimate the situation. Salvio had the money pouches and was dragging them toward the shoe department. Wally was standing with his gun raised, about to sap one of the messengers.

Jim turned and fastened his eyes on the spot where the descending elevator would appear. The lighted cage dropped into sight suddenly, revealing two men, each armed with a revolver. Even before the cage stopped, one of them pointed at Salvio and then they began leveling their guns through the grill of the elevator gates.

Instinctively, Jim brought the shotgun into position the instant the cage appeared. His nostrils flared as his senses telegraphed one word to his brain: COPS. At the same instant, he steadied the shotgun and squeezed both triggers.

When Wally strode away from the car, Helen had every intention of following orders and staying right where she was until Wally and the other guys came out. She left the engine running, took the blue scarf from her purse, and began tying it over her hair, just in case someone spotted her driving the car away. With the scarf on, nobody could tell whether she was a blonde, a brunette, or what. It was a useless precaution, maybe, but it gave her something to do and she was a bit nervous.

"What's the big idea, lady?" a gruff voice demanded.

Helen jerked violently and darned near swallowed her tongue. She saw the blue uniform with brass buttons first; then she saw the big six-pointed star, the holstered pistol, and the cop's reddish, sarcastic-looking face. He had come

up from behind her on a cycle and he was glaring in through the window at her.

"Can't you read signs?" he demanded.

"I . . . I'm just waiting for a friend . . ." Helen managed to say. She said it breathlessly and gave him the smile which usually made men moisten their lips.

"You're in a No Parking zone, lady," the cop rasped. He did not moisten his lips. "You wanta park, there's a garage in the next block."

"Can't . . . can't I just stay here a minute?" Helen asked plaintively.

"The sign says *no parking at any time*," the cop retorted. "Either move or I'll write you a ticket. Now get going."

Helen realized that she had a difficult decision to make. She either had to move the car and take a chance on Wally remaining inside until she could get back, or she could tell the cop to go ahead and write her out a ticket. Under any other circumstances, she would have given the cop a piece of her lip and then torn up the ticket and thrown the pieces at him, but, reviewing the situation swiftly, she realized that it wasn't just a matter of getting a ticket. He might take his time writing the ticket, and he might demand to see her driver's license and a vehicle registration certificate. If that happened, it would be catastrophic. Her real name was on her driver's license, her lack of a registration certificate might arouse suspicion, and even worse, Wally might come running out while the dumb cop was standing there, one foot on the front bumper, writing out the ticket. She really had very little choice.

"I'll move, Officer, *of course!*" she said, smiling as sweetly as she could. She felt more like gnashing her teeth. "Sorry!"

She moved the car ahead slowly, hoping he would go on ahead. The cop trailed right along behind her to the corner, however. The light was green. She couldn't stall. She was going to have to circle the block. Since the next street was east-bound only, she had to go to the second cross-street before she could turn west—and the lousy suspicious cop kept trailing right along behind her.

Cursing silently, Helen gritted her teeth and prayed that she'd be able to get back before Wally needed her.

By the time Mary Ellen Fury got to Wabash and Washington, it was nine-thirty and she knew that she was going to be late. There was a steady stream of traffic down Wabash, and not a single darned place to park, either. Dr. Martin would have a fit. He always had a tight appointment schedule, and sometimes when a patient was late, he let her just sit until he got darned good and ready to see her. He was a wonderful doctor, though, in spite of his temperamental outbursts, and she wanted him to deliver her baby. She simply had to park someplace. If she were only a *minute* late. . . .

She saw the space in front of the Revens store, and with a sudden feeling that her luck was changing, she trod on the brake and began angling toward it. She had parked and was about to turn the ignition off when she saw the sign: NO PARKING AT ANY TIME.

For a moment, she felt completely frustrated. Then she thought: *Shucks, I don't care if they do give me a ticket!* The car was registered in her name, so what if they did fine her three dollars? It wouldn't be any embarrassment to Bob---and as far as she was concerned, it'd be worth it.

She turned off the ignition, and somewhat awkwardly, slid across the seat, opened the door and began to get out.

When the shotgun exploded, Wally felt his control of the situation snap. He was caught in the act of sapping one of the messengers, and when the shotgun went off, the other messenger jumped straight up in the air and started to swing violently around. Wally had no choice. He fired point-blank at the guy's chest.

Suddenly women were screaming all over the place.

Wally grabbed one of the pouches from Salvio, who looked scared and wild-eyed, then looked around for Jim. Jim was running toward them, still hanging onto the shotgun. Inwardly, Wally shuddered. Whoever had been in that elevator must have taken both barrels right in the guts. They'd need a shovel to scrape him off the walls. Damn it to hell---and just when the caper was practically all wrapped up, too.

They fled through the dark aisle of the shoe salon, their eyes fastened on the broad entrance doors ahead. Jim caught up with Salvio, grabbed the handle of the pouch, told him to run ahead. Salvio sprinted the rest of the way and unbolted the door.

Behind them, the screams had increased in volume and many feet were running. Someone would find the bodies. Someone would run to a telephone. Within minutes, the whole damned Loop would be crawling with cops.

Wally pushed through the door, confident that Helen would have the Merc waiting. Salvio and Jim were close behind him. The doors were in the center of a large V formed by display windows, and it was about twenty-five feet to the curb. Wally was about halfway to the curb before he realized that Helen and the Merc were not there.

Instead of the Merc, another green sedan was parked at the curb and a fat redhead in a blue dress was about to get out.

Without breaking his stride, Wally strode to the other car, snatched the keys from the startled woman's hand and slammed the door shut. He thrust the keys into Salvio's fingers and ordered: "Get behind the wheel, kid."

He opened the rear door, motioned Jim in, and tossed the heavy pouch onto the floor. There was a suitcase on the seat. He swept that onto the floor, too.

"Say, what's the big idea—!" the redhead began.

"Be smart, lady—keep your trap shut!" Wally growled, leaping in and slamming the door. "Get going, Salvio!"

"Now *just* a minute!" the redhead shrilled. "I'm not—"

Wally clipped her behind the ear. She shut her mouth and slumped down in the seat. Salvio, lips tight, kicked at the gas. The car moved away from the curb, sneaked through an amber light, and merged with the east-bound traffic. They reached Michigan Avenue. Wally listened intently. No sirens, no whistles, nothing. Salvio caught a green light and cut into a thick wave of cars heading north. Wally heaved a deep sigh. Then he turned to Jim.

"What the hell happened?" he demanded.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BOB FURY opened one eye and peeked drowsily at the clock beside the bed. It said nine-eighteen. He peered at it for several seconds, wondering why it hadn't gone off

at seven o'clock, then he remembered. Vacation. He could sleep all day if he wanted to. Snuggling his face into the pillow, he stretched a leg toward Mary Ellen's side of the bed. She had smooth, warm, friendly legs—in fact, her whole body, before the baby had filled her belly and made it difficult for her to get close to him, had been a friendly, pleasant thing to have around. His foot probed a wide circle and found nothing except twisted sheets. Raising his head, he peered at her side of the bed. She wasn't there.

Immediately he became wide awake. Feeling a little apprehensive, he sat up and stared at the bathroom door. The door was open. There was no light. Therefore she was not in the bathroom. He listened intently. No kitchen sounds. Would she have gone to the hospital without awakening him? No. Of course not. She was probably out in the yard. Maybe she had gone to the store. If the pains had started, she would have awakened him.

Yawning, he got up and went into the bathroom. He shaved, washed, began to get dressed. This was the day he was going to paint the nursery, so no use putting on anything good. He rummaged in the closet, found an old pair of work pants, a stained shirt, and some sad-looking shoes. He put them on, and still yawning, went out to the kitchen.

He found Mary Ellen's note. Reading it, he grinned and thought: How do you like that? Get your own breakfast. Watch for the milkman. Boy, the honeymoon was certainly over! She hadn't even set the table for him.

Humming tonelessly, he put water on for coffee, dropped two pieces of bread into the toaster, then scrambled himself three eggs. He ate quickly, his mind occupied with the problems of painting the nursery. He finished eating, stacked the dishes, and went down to the basement. The paint was all there, and there was also an assortment of brushes and a folder full of large decals. He spent several minutes examining the decals. One was a big, chuckling elephant with a friendly, waving trunk. He laughed and decided that he'd put it on the west wall, facing the crib. The kid would get a big bang out of it.

Humming tonelessly again, he opened a gallon of yellow enamel and began to stir it. . . .

"What makes you think they were cops?" Wally demanded.

"I got a special sense when it comes to cops," Jim retorted. "You think I needed to see their buzzers? They came down, waving guns, and they were getting ready to blast Salvio, so I let them have both barrels."

"Christ!" Wally groaned. "Maybe they weren't cops. Maybe they were just store dicks and—"

"They were cops. Take my word for it."

"Damn it, Jim, don't sound so goddam pleased about it. Don't you know killing a cop is the worst thing you could have done?"

"I've been wanting to blast a cop for years," Jim broke in. He grinned. "I got both of them before they even seen me."

"Jim—" Wally tried to conceal his inner turmoil. "—For chrissake, use your head. I know you had to blast them. I'm just saying it's the worst thing that could have happened. You bump off a watchman, or some dumb employee, or even a damned bank messenger, like I did, and it's not so bad. Sure, you can burn for it, but you can beat it out of the state and get out from under the pressure. But when you blast a cop, every two-bit sheriff from here to East Jesus comes after you. We're going to be hot—goddam hot!"

"I don't know why you're bitching to me," Jim snapped. "They nearly blasted Salvio and queered the caper. I stopped them. You'd have done the same thing, cops or not. The one you ought to be bitching about is that dumb blonde who was supposed to be waiting for us. You should have had Salvio—"

"We needed Salvio inside," Wally snapped back. "I don't know what the hell happened to her, but I'll kick her ass good when she comes around—"

"If she comes around," Jim cut in. "She turned yellow and beat it. Maybe she's the one who tipped the cops. I tell you, those cops *knew* what was going on. They had their guns out and—"

"Helen didn't spill to any cops," Wally said flatly. "It was just a damned unlucky coincidence that—"

"Somebody put in an alarm," Jim insisted. "Those cops *knew* there was some action, or they wouldn't have—"

"Nobody put in an alarm!" Wally insisted. "We had

everything under control. There's no alarm button, no way that anybody could have—"

"It could have been one of them girls you were smiling so pretty at," Jim put in slyly. "'Good morning, girls!'" he mimicked. "I bet one of them went down and phoned upstairs and told somebody that a dangerous-looking guy was—"

"All right, all right," Wally interrupted. "Keep the crap for later. Right now, they're probably broadcasting our descriptions and every cop within five hundred miles is going to be looking for us." The car had gotten as far as Elm Street. Wally leaned over and said: "The next is Division, Salvio. Turn left."

"Okay," Salvio muttered.

"We still going to break up at the subway?" Jim demanded.

"It's the only way," Wally told him. "I want you and Salvio to split up and to take it damned easy. You know where the farm is. Get there as fast as you can, but don't take any chances and make damned sure that there's nobody tailing you."

"What about you?"

"I'll drive this car to the city limits, maybe all the way to the farm. It's the only way to—"

"How about the dough?"

"We'll put it under the seat, like we planned. You'd both better stash your guns there, too. I'll decide what to do about the car and the dame when I get to the farm."

"The dame's carrying a kid," Salvio said hoarsely.

"The hell you say." Wally leaned forward and stared at the redhead, who was still slumped in the corner of the seat. "You're right. Of all the damned lousy breaks."

"It might not be smart to go to the farm," Jim said worriedly. "With that blonde ducking out on us, we'd better play it safe and—"

"There isn't time to change our plans," Wally snapped. "Don't worry about Helen. She didn't yak to the cops, and she'll have a good reason for not being there. If she doesn't, I'll make her wish she was dead."

They reached Clark Street and Salvio braked smoothly, bringing the small sedan to a stop beside the subway entrance. Hurriedly, Wally lifted the rear seat and pushed the pouches beneath it. He collected Salvio's and Jim's

guns, put them under the seat too. He slammed the seat into place, examined it critically. It looked okay. As a final touch, he laid the small gray suitcase on the seat.

"Take it easy now, boys—and good luck," Wally said. He closed the back door firmly and made sure that it was locked before climbing behind the wheel.

"Make goddam sure you're there with the dough when we get there!" Jim warned.

"Don't worry about the dough. Just take care of yourself!" Wally retorted. Salvio and Jim ducked into the subway. Wally waited carefully for the traffic signals to change, then he started the car. He drove straight west on Division. Traffic had thinned by the time he reached Halsted. He increased the speed slightly and continued west to Ashland, where he turned north. The redhead had remained in her ungainly, slumped position, and her eyes were still closed.

"What's your name, kid?" he asked casually. When she didn't move or reply, he said: "I didn't hit you very hard so I know you're playing possum. You might as well open your eyes and sit up."

Her eyes opened slowly and she stared at him. She cautiously straightened herself in the seat. Then she looked out the window at the people on the sidewalks, then ahead toward the intersection which they were approaching.

"You haven't got a chance," he said, guessing her thoughts. "If you jump, you're liable to hurt the kid. You wouldn't want to do that."

"What . . . what do you intend to do with me?"

"I haven't decided." They reached Diversey, caught the light, went right on through. "What's your name?"

"Mary Ellen . . . Fury," she said in a small voice.

"Uh-huh. Mrs. Robert Fury—and very big with child. Well, maybe that's a break." He nodded thoughtfully. When her face betrayed astonishment, he added: "The steering column. Your name's on it. What's in the suitcase?"

"Some clothing." She swallowed. "For the hospital."

"Good. That's very good. All ready for the coming-out party, huh?" He carefully guided the car around a big moving van. "As you've probably gathered, my friends and I are in a jam. In fact, we just killed a couple cops.

You happened to be in the wrong place at the right time, and I've got to get out of the city, so you're going to help me."

"How?" she managed to ask.

"You're going to pretend that you're my wife. You're about to go into labor and you've got to get to the hospital. What's your doctor's name?"

"David Martin. But—you *can't*—"

"Dr. Martin," he murmured, as though trying the name for size. "Okay, now listen carefully. In case anyone stops us—and that's liable to happen at any moment—you've got labor pains. You called this Dr. Martin and he told you to get to the hospital in a hurry. Let's see . . . Waukegan is near the state line, and I think there's a St. Mary's Hospital there. You've got to get to St. Mary's Hospital, because that's where this Dr. Martin does his work. You used to live in Waukegan and you're nuts about this Dr. Martin. Understand?"

"But . . . but—"

"Think it over," he advised. "I've just participated in a robbery and a killing. I'm a dangerous, desperate man. The police are after me. They're probably broadcasting a description of me right now. If we're stopped, it's up to you to act like the kid's ready to pop. You look pregnant enough, and if you'll groan and roll your eyes a little, the act ought to pass inspection. But—" His voice became harsh. "—If you get smart and don't play ball, or if you try to tip them off about me, before they can grab me, I'll punch you right in the gut. It'll kill the kid. Have I made myself clear?"

Instinctively the redhead cradled her abdomen with her arms. She looked sick, desperate and frightened. He knew that she'd play ball. It was probably her first kid, and she looked like she was hot with the idea of being a mother. Stumbling over her had been a break—a real first-class break. Nobody would try to stop an expectant father who was trying to get his wife to a hospital.

"Yes," the redhead murmured. "I . . . I understand."

He hardly heard her. He was busy trying to figure his next move.

Helen had gone west to State Street, had turned north, and then had been forced to go all the way to Randolph Street before she could get over to Wabash again. She

had been caught in a crawling mass of early shoppers and slow CTA buses, and it seemed to take forever to go the four blocks. She got to Wabash, finally, and turned south. As soon as she reached Washington, she scanned the sidewalk in front of Revens store to see if Wally was waiting. There was a crowd in front of the store, but neither Wally nor Jim Hoops nor Salvio Morales were in sight.

Helen sighed with relief. Thank God, she was in time. Then she saw the squad car. It was parked right in front of the store, right where Wally had told her to wait.

She was too late. Oh, God, she was too late!

CHAPTER EIGHT

BOB FURY had painted two of the walls and had gone into the kitchen to get a screwdriver to remove the plate over the light switch, when he happened to notice the time. It was eleven forty-seven, darned near noon, and Mary Ellen wasn't home yet. He read her note again. *Back in a jiffy*. Three hours was a hell of a long jiffy. You'd think she'd get home in time to prepare lunch for him.

Frowning, he read the note a third time. She didn't even say *which* doctor. For all he knew, she could have gone to see Dr. Heller, her dentist; or Dr. Caro, whom she sometimes consulted about skin rashes; or Dr. Ashley, who took care of her eyes; or Dr. Silverman, who was treating her corns; or Dr. Mudge, the specialist who took care of her family's internal aches and pains; or Dr. Martin, who was going to deliver the baby. It was probably Martin, but why chase downtown to see him, when she was on the verge of having the baby? That didn't make sense. Maybe she was worried because the baby was late. No; she hadn't seemed worried last night. She'd probably gone to the dentist. She'd been saying something about the baby taking calcium from her system and making her have cavities. He grunted skeptically. If it was taking Dr. Heller three hours to fill them, they must be damned big cavities. What would a baby want with that much calcium?

Somewhat irritably, he got the screwdriver, removed the switch plate, and began painting again. When he finished the wall, it was already five minutes to one.

"For Pete's sake," he mumbled, "what the devil can be keeping her?"

It occurred to him that the pains might have started after she left the house and she might have gone to the hospital. But someone would have phoned him. Unless the phone was out of order, of course. Hastily, he went to the phone, lifted the receiver, listened to the dial tone. The phone was okay. She would have phoned him immediately if she had gone to the hospital.

She had probably met someone downtown, was gabbing away and had forgotten how late it was. Or maybe she had decided to eat lunch downtown and do some shopping.

He kept remembering, though, that the note said *Back in a jiffy*. That meant that she hadn't intended to be away long. She knew it was the first day of his vacation, and she'd been talking about all the things they were going to do together. She'd even said, just before she went to sleep, that she was going to help him with the painting.

It wasn't like her to go traipsing off, not get home for lunch, not even phone and tell him what was delaying her. She was driving, too. She may have been in an accident. Oh, hell, he was probably making a mountain out of a molehill. That kind of worrying wouldn't do his ulcer any good. And it wouldn't kill him to get his own lunch, either.

The first report on the robbery of the Revens store reached central police headquarters at nine thirty-one A.M. It was phoned in by a Miss Heloise Johnson, a colored maid who worked in the Designer's Shoppe, the department which sold custom-made suits and dresses. Miss Johnson had been in the downstairs locker room, had heard the shots, and had run upstairs to see what was going on. One look had been enough. She had gone screaming downstairs to the employees' phone and called the police. Hysterically, she had informed the police operator that blood and bodies were all around—and then she had fainted, without mentioning *where* the blood and bodies were.

It took the police operator several minutes to trace

the call—and several more to get the proper wheels turning. He had relayed the information to Radio, Radio had notified a nearby squad, then Radio had advised both Homicide and Robbery, and then Homicide and Robbery had ordered additional squads to the scene.

Within minutes after the arrival of the first squad, it became known that two cops had been killed and a large sum of money had been taken. Later, it became known that a bank messenger had also been killed.

The effect of this information was multiple and immediate. All district captains were notified by teletype. The police commissioner and the mayor's office were advised. Radio began broadcasting a description of the desperadoes on an All Points circuit, which was picked up by every squad car, cycle and district station in the city, by the county sheriff's office, and by the state police of Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota—and also, incidentally, by short-wave receivers in the city rooms of every newspaper in Chicago.

By nine fifty-eight A.M., one of the biggest organizations in the world, red-faced and angry, was making loud noises and chasing around in all directions after the killers.

Following Wally Hirsch's instructions, Jim Hoops and Salvio Morales darted into the subway entrance and hurried downstairs. They reached the first level, where the ticket agents and the public washrooms were located, and here they decided to separate. Jim paid a twenty-five cent fare and descended to the train platform, where he immediately boarded a northbound train. The train was a Howard Express, and on reaching Howard Street, the Chicago city limits, he planned to switch to a North Shore train and ride to Kenosha, Wisconsin. Once across the state line, he reasoned, he could hop a bus to Antioch and then either bum or walk his way to the farm.

Salvio had other plans. Instinctively, he knew that his dark skin had increased the odds against him. He also knew that, to white people, a dark skin was a dark skin, and he could decrease the odds considerably by submerging himself among a lot of dark skins. He therefore simply crossed the subway station and walked up the stairs which led to the other side of Clark Street. On reaching street level, he walked south. He passed through a small Jap

district, consisting mostly of knick-knack stores and *suki-yaki* houses, and then, gradually, the store signs began to change from oriental to Spanish. Salvio took off his jacket and draped it over his arm. He had been sweating, but the sight of *Se Habla Español* signs, in profusion and assorted colors, did a great deal to restore his confidence. In one or two minutes, he would be safe.

Smiling slightly, he approached a narrow doorway, looked up and down the street to make certain that his entrance was unobserved, then opened the door and trudged up to the third floor. The building was a dilapidated one, occupied largely by Puerto Ricans, as many as three and four families to a flat. A smell of tomatoes filled the stale air, mingling with the acrid stench of urine. There were many children in the building. The rent was cheap. Who could afford to keep the plumbing in repair?

The door which Salvio approached led to one of the more opulent flats, consisting of two small rooms, a kitchen and a bedroom, occupied by a woman named Marta Nogales, who was known to have three children, no husband, no legitimate source of income, big breasts, and very few scruples. Marta, Salvio had been told, made love very competently and—of great importance to Salvio at the moment—was a skillful liar, especially if the lying had financial backing.

Salvio tapped on the door. A babble of childish screams arose within, footsteps approached, the door opened. A woman, neither young nor old, not beautiful, not ugly, wearing a cheap, tight house dress, opened the door "*Si!*" she murmured.

"*Señora Nogales?*" Salvio asked softly. He moistened his lips and felt himself sweating again. Her house dress was very tight. She indeed had very large breasts.

"*Si!*" she replied, softly. Her eyes were dark, appraising, calculating, watchful.

In Spanish, Salvio murmured that a mutual friend had mentioned her name to him and he was anxious to make her acquaintance. While saying this, he glanced pointedly down the dark, odorous stairway. Her eyes widened with immediate comprehension, and opening the door, she invited him to enter. He found himself in a kitchen, cluttered with the usual equipment, several bird cages, three dirty kids, an ironing board, a washtub, a basketful of un-

ironed clothes, and some wooden toys which the kids seemed determined to destroy.

She guided him across the kitchen and into the bedroom, which also was cluttered. The bed was big and sturdy and showed evidence of much use. There were no chairs on which to sit, so Salvio sank onto the edge of the bed. She closed the door. Then she faced him.

"You have done something bad?" she demanded, speaking in swift, sibilant Spanish.

"Perhaps," he replied, eying her with mounting pleasure. "My friend suggested that I might find safety here for a while."

"Ah . . ." She shrugged, shook her head sadly. "I have just the two rooms. With the children, it is crowded. It would be better, perhaps, *señor*, if you would—"

"There is not time for me to look elsewhere," he explained. From a pocket, he removed a twenty-dollar bill and handed it to her. "There would be another of these, when I leave."

"Ah!" Her eyes brightened. "You are a real *mán*. Perhaps it would be possible. When . . . when do you think they will come looking for you?"

"Who knows?" Salvio shrugged. "Anyway, I have spent the night here, have I not?"

"But certainly." She widened her eyes. "You have been my lover for a week, is it not so?"

"No, just last night," Salvio corrected. He began to grin. "It would make a good impression if they came upon us in bed together, I think."

"Of course, of course!" she agreed. "One moment. I will get rid of the little ones." She turned toward the door.

"The hell with the kids," Salvio said hoarsely. He reached for her and caught her arm. She looked into his eyes and laughed softly. She began to unbutton her dress.

At Belmont and Ashland Avenues, a beat cop was talking to a cycle cop. The cycle cop, who had a two-way transmitter on the back of his machine, was talking excitedly and gesturing animatedly to the beat cop, who, while shaking his head disbelievingly, was hurriedly jotting some information into a notebook.

The intersection was a busy one, and the sight of the two armed, uniformed cops was an unnerving one. While

Wally's attention was distracted for several seconds, the traffic signals changed from green to amber. When his eyes did register the change, it was too late—the amber had already become red. He jammed the brake down, but not quite fast enough. A Morgan Laundry truck, east-bound and honking furiously, cut directly in front of the Ford. For a second, Wally thought his luck would hold and that the truck would get past. It almost did—but not quite. With a metallic screech, his front fender scraped the tailgate of the truck. The redhead let out a frightened yelp. Wally cursed and tried to get the car into reverse.

Instantly, it seemed, the truck came to a dead stop. The cops swung around and started across the street, and thirty cars converged on the intersection, effectively blocking him and honking derisively. The truck driver, looking disgusted, got out and came around to survey the damage. On both sides of the street, the sidewalks became filled with curious people, all laughing and pointing.

The cycle cop ordered the truck to pull over to one side and the beat cop signalled peremptorily to Wally, ordering him to park on the other side of the street. Cursing under his breath, Wally watched the truck move out of the way. He knew the beat cop was watching him narrowly. He was going to have to obey. The cycle cop had gone to the center of the street and was vigorously trying to untangle the traffic jam.

"Remember what I told you, kid!" Wally muttered. Swallowing dryly, he rolled down the window on his side.

"So where's the fire, mister?" the cop demanded.

"Sorry, officer," Wally said apologetically. "I've got to get my wife to the hospital, and I guess I misjudged the light."

"You're lucky you didn't land in the morgue!" the cop snarled, peering through the window. "Let's see your driver's license!"

Wally reached for his wallet slowly. "Honest, officer," he said pleadingly. "I've got to get my wife to the hospital. She's about to have the baby. She's got the pains and—"

The cop had poked his hand through the window. He took the wallet, but, instead of looking at the driver's license, he looked at the redhead. There was no question about her imminent motherhood, and she certainly looked

worried and scared. The cop's glare turned to an amused frown. Still holding Wally's wallet, the cop straightened up and addressed the truck driver. "He bang you up much?"

"Naw." The truck driver shrugged. "I thought maybe he'd done me a favor and wrecked the rear end. The thing's about to fall apart. Looks like he scraped hell out of his own fender, though."

"I don't give a damn about the fender, officer," Wally said quickly. "It was my fault, entirely my fault. I've got to get my wife to the hospital before—"

"Yeah," the cop said. "His wife's about to have a kid. They're on the way to the hospital. You want to file a claim?"

"For what?" The truck driver laughed. "If he don't want to make anything out of it, why should I?"

"You going to make an insurance claim?" the cop asked Wally.

"Officer, I said I don't give a damn about that fender!" Wally said emphatically. "I said it was all my fault. If my wife don't get to the hospital right away, she's liable to—"

"Okay. Take it easy and watch the lights!" the cop said, grinning suddenly. He tossed Wally's wallet through the window. "Don't forget me when you're passing out cigars!"

"I'll bring you a whole box!" Wally promised. Under his breath, as he started the car, he added: "—You son of a bitch."

The cop nodded and grinned and waved him forward. Wally got the car into gear. As the green Ford passed him, the cop glanced at the license plate, jotted the number down on a page of his notebook, then added his shield number. He tore the page from the book and handed it to the truckdriver. "Better take this," he advised, "just in case. He might decide to put in a claim. If he does, you let me know."

"Aw, hell, he's got enough troubles," the truck driver said negligently. He stuffed the paper into his jacket pocket. "That guy's so nervous he probably didn't even see the lights. Bet it's his first kid!"

The cop laughed shortly, saw that traffic was back to normal, and hurried over to the cycle cop, who had been telling him about the All Points bulletin which had just

come over the radio. Revens' big downtown store had been robbed by three gunmen. A bank messenger and two cops had been killed in line of duty. The store had been hit for two hundred thousand dollars, and two cops had been blasted with a shotgun—killed in cold blood, when they attempted to stop the robbery.

The lousy hoodlums, the bastards! Nobody could kill a cop and get away with it! Boy, would he like to get his hands on those gun-crazy, cop-killing bastards!

For a minute, Helen felt stunned. She had *had* to move the Merc. She'd promised Wally that she'd stay right there, right in front of the doors so they could jump in when they came running out, but that damned cop had come along and the only way she could get rid of him was to have circled the block. It hadn't been her fault. Damn it, she *couldn't* have stayed there and taken a chance on the cop's having hung around. He could have demanded to take a look at her driver's license, and written her name down on a traffic ticket in black-and-white!

Now a squad car was there. Someone must have turned in an alarm. That meant that the caper was over, the heat was wise—and they'd either been caught or had gotten away.

Wally had probably blown his top. He'd think she had turned chicken and ducked out on him. If they'd been caught, he'd blame her, and that slimy Jim Hoops would probably rat on her. Salvio wouldn't and Wally wouldn't, but Jim had ice cubes in his pants and would get a kick out of fingering her to the cops. That would make her an accessory, and the damned cops would be after her like dogs chasing a bitch in heat. What the hell should she do? Try to get to the farm—or ditch the hot Merc and lie low for a while?

Without realizing it, she had continued to drive south on Wabash Avenue. She was approaching Twelfth Street before she realized where she was. A siren began growling, then began shrieking, and a squad car, its roof light flashing red, came hurtling in front of her. It screeched around the corner and raced north. She had a glimpse of the cops inside. They looked angry, intent, excited.

At the first shriek of the siren, she had braked frantically. Now, in frozen terror, she saw six additional cars—

five squad cars and an ambulance—all shrieking wildly, racing around the corner, one by one, all heading north on Wabash.

Suddenly it dawned on her: The big building on the corner was central police headquarters. Like a fool, she'd almost run right into the hornet's nest! The squads were on their way to Revens store. There had been an ambulance. That meant that someone was hurt—maybe someone was dead.

The thought was a frightening one. *What if Wally were dead?* What if he'd been caught and killed because she hadn't been waiting there for him? He was the only one who understood her, who really loved her. She would be alone . . . completely alone again.

Blindly, she got out of the stolen Merc. Carrying the overnight case, but not caring where she was going, she started down the street. Her knees felt weak and trembling. Then she saw a taxi cruising past. She started running, yelling and waving agitatedly as she ran. The taxi stopped, changed gears, began to back toward her.

Mary Ellen was staring hopefully at the two uniformed police officers, when she heard the honking and then glimpsed the laundry truck cutting in front of them. She thought they were going to crash. He had jammed on the brakes, but she was sure they were going to crash. A scream rose in her throat, but, with frightening clarity, she remembered his threat, and she cut off the scream and tried to hunch protectingly over the baby. She heard the rasp of metals in violent contact and, abruptly, the car stopped.

Her mind gradually cleared and she realized that the man called Wally was saying something, that he had been talking to her for some time.

“—did it just right, kid. I don't know if you noticed, but I had my fist all ready and I was going to slam it into the baby if you'd have said two words out of turn. When he looked in, you played it real smart. Christ, you looked so sick even *I* thought you were going to drop the kid in the middle of the street. You keep up that act and we'll both be out of the woods in a few minutes—”

She opened her eyes and stared at him. When he stopped talking, she said: “Would you stop some place for

a moment, please? I . . . I'm afraid I have to visit a washroom."

"Sorry," he said shortly. "We haven't time."

"It will only take a minute."

"A minute is too long. You're a big girl. You can wait."

"You don't understand," she said sharply. "The baby presses against my bladder. It isn't a question of waiting. Women in my condition have to relieve themselves frequently." She should have felt embarrassed, saying a thing like that to a strange man, but she didn't. She merely felt angry.

"Well—" He gave her a hard look. "I could stop at a filling station for a minute. You better not be thinking about trying anything, though."

"What could I try?" she asked hopelessly.

He nodded grimly, and as they approached the next filling station, he slowed down and studied the area. The station was a red-and-white stucco shanty with three red pumps in front and a hydraulic lift for grease jobs at the back. In the center of the shanty was a door, plainly labeled: COMFORT STATION.

"Okay. I'll stop for just a minute," he said quietly, pulling into the driveway. "You go in, do what you have to do, and come right out. I'll be right outside the door, and I'll be listening, so don't try to talk to anyone—and don't try to leave any messages. I'm going to check when you get through."

He parked right next to the place, got out, and opened the door and looked in before letting her enter. She brushed past him and closed the door and hooked it.

There was a tiny washbasin, a grimy cake of soap a square mirror, a tin paper-towel dispenser, a wastebasket, a metal bracket which held a cake of pink evil-smelling deodorizer. She eyed them hopefully, trying to think of a way to utilize them to transmit a message to someone—to anyone—telling them of her desperate situation. She couldn't write on the mirror. No—he'd see that instantly. No use putting a message in the wastebasket; no one would be apt to look through a mess of dirty paper wads. Her eyes studied the towel dispenser. *Why not?* She considered the idea swiftly. *At least, it was a chance.* Removing one of the towels carefully, she printed with her lipstick:

AM BEING ABDUCTED TO FARM.
PLEASE TELL IR6-6122!
HELP! MARY ELLEN FURY

Refolding the towel so the message would be on the inside, she opened the dispenser, removed most of the towels, and put the one containing her message near the bottom, but not on the bottom, in case he pulled a few out to check on her.

Then, after eying her strained face in the mirror for a second, she flushed the toilet and unhooked the door. He was standing just outside, smoking a cigarette. She had hoped an attendant would be around and would get a good look at her, but apparently there was only one and he was busy at the pumps, where a yellow Caddy convertible was getting the works.

He snapped his cigarette away, eyed her shrewdly, stood there until she got into the car and closed the door. Then he quickly stepped into the washroom. Hope surged in her—and died. He had taken the keys with him. She was considering her chances of getting out and running to the front of the station, when he opened the washroom door and came out.

He got in, put the key into the ignition, kicked at the starter. As the engine caught, he looked at her and raised and eyebrow. "Feel better?" he asked mockingly.

She was afraid to trust her voice. She nodded.

For at least an hour, the main floor of the Revens store teemed with police officers, store officials, technicians, photographers, and representatives of the press. Eventually, however, enough film had been exposed; the bodies had been officially pronounced dead and had been removed; the immediate participants (Otto Abeles, the watchman; Joe Bush, the surviving bank messenger; and Miss Dotty Wells, the elevator operator) had all been questioned; Dwight Dudley, treasurer of the company, had issued a statement as to the amount of money taken by the killers; Elliot T. Revens, president of the company, had formulated a release to the newspapers, offering a ten thousand dollar reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the killers; the big pre-Christmas sale had been postponed for the next day; the nearest

relatives of the three deceased had been notified; and the six thousand and two hundred thirty-seven members of the Chicago police force—having been informed of the heroic manner in which two of their brother officers had died and having been supplied with a general description of the three vicious killers—began tightening their jaws and looking around for the killers.

The police Officer who did the least striding around, made the fewest threats of vengeance, and worked the hardest during the first few hours, probably was Sergeant Adolph Valanis, the police artist. Sergeant Valanis had devised a series of charts, each depicting a large number of variations in the various parts of facial anatomy. By questioning persons who had seen a criminal, and by having them point out precisely what kind of a nose or eyes they remembered the criminal as having, he had successfully made sketches which strongly resembled wanted men. Now, as soon as it became known that a number of the store's employees had actually seen and spoken to one of the killers, Sergeant Valanis was rushed to the scene and put to work.

With his charts, a large drawing pad, and a make-shift easel, Sergeant Valanis set up shop in the store's shoe department. He questioned Otto Abeles, the watchman, first.

"What sort of a face did he have?" Sergeant Valanis asked.

"Round, I'd say. Not fat, not bony, either—"

"Like this one?" Sergeant Valanis pointed to the outline of a round face on one of the charts.

"Yeah, just about like that, I'd say." The old man nodded slowly. "You understand, of course, he was on me too fast for me to notice much in the—"

"How was his skin? Wrinkled? Smooth? Did he need a shave?"

"Well, he didn't have any beard or mustache, if that's what you mean. He looked clean-shaven to me, but the light ain't so good there, and—"

"What kind of a nose did he have?"

"Sort of a short, pudgy one, I'd say."

"Look at this chart, Mr. Abeles. Which of these four would you say was most like his?"

"Ummm, well—this one. This other one is sort of like it, but I think this one probably—"

Sergeant Valanis sketched rapidly with a soft pencil, then asked: "Now, his eyes. Were they large or small?"

"Just average, I'd say."

"Did one appear larger than the other?"

"I didn't notice any difference. I only had about a second, you know, before—"

"Were they far apart or close together?"

"Just average, I guess. I honestly didn't notice—"

"Just look at this chart, Mr. Abeles. Do any of these pairs of eyes remind you of his?"

Sergeant Valanis methodically questioned the old man about the killer's mouth, teeth, ears, hair, shirt, necktie, asking him to clarify his descriptions by making a selection from a chart, and all the time he sketched swiftly, adding details, building a human face which was a composite of details depicted on the charts. When he finished, he showed the sketch to the old man.

"Why . . . why, darned if it ain't a lot like him!" the watchman gasped.

"What's wrong with it?" Sergeant Valanis asked quickly.

"I don't know. Something about the eyes, I think." The old man shook his head. "It sure looks a lot like him, though."

Sergeant Valanis questioned Miss Dotty Wells, Joe Bush, and five of the clerks. To each, he displayed the sketch and asked their opinion of it. Miss Wells thought the nose was too squatty. Sergeant Valanis changed it subtly until it met with her approval. Joe Bush said he had had hard, mean-looking eyes. Valanis narrowed the eyes a bit, emphasized the pupils. Bush shuddered and said that the sketch made him feel scared all over again.

When all agreed that the sketch was a good likeness of the killer, Sergeant Valanis thanked them and hurried back to the police crime laboratory, where technicians photographed his sketch and began making prints.

The *Daily News* and the *Herald-American*, the afternoon papers, caught the first flash as they were preparing to put their first editions of the day to bed. Both immediately killed their lead stories and began remaking their front pages.

When the *Herald-American* hit the streets, it carried a double banner head which screamed: THREE COPS

SLAIN IN ROBBERY! *Killers Get \$300,000 from Revens Store!* The writer assigned to contrive the story had been able to name no names, and, in fact, had had to draw most of it from his own imagination. By straining somewhat, he managed to fill nearly half a column without resorting to any facts, none of which were available yet, anyway.

The *Daily News*, which carried more Revens advertising than the *Herald-American*, took the same lack of facts and gave them dignity: REVENS ROBBERY NETS KILLERS \$350,000! *Policemen Slain Defending Famous Loop Store!* The *News'* lead began: "As Revens clerks prepared to open the doors for the greatest pre-Christmas sale in the store's history, three daring gunmen appeared in their midst and shot to death two policemen and a bank messenger. . . ."

Public imagination was immediately fired by the news of policemen having been killed and a huge sum of money having been successfully stolen. All editions of both papers sold out as fast as they could be gotten to the newsstands.

CHAPTER NINE

BOB FURY finished painting the last wall of the nursery. He inspected the room critically, touched up a few thin spots with a brush, poured the excess paint back into the can, and gathered up the roller and the paint tray. On his way down to the basement, he passed through the kitchen. The time was three-sixteen.

He hadn't realized that it was that late. What in the hell could be keeping Mary Ellen, anyway? Feeling a twinge of anger at her thoughtlessness and inconsideration, he went downstairs, dumped the painting equipment into a corner, and returned to the nursery. He screwed the switch plate into place, picked up the newspapers which covered the floor, and carried them out to the incinerator.

The first day of his vacation—and she couldn't even get home in time to prepare his lunch. He went down to the basement again, washed the roller, the tray and the brushes, then swabbed his hands and arms with a wet rag. He got most of the paint off, went upstairs, undressed and took a shower. Then, increasingly annoyed, he strode into the living room and looked up Dr. Martin's office number in the city directory. He dialed it, drumming his fingers impatiently. A feminine voice answered and informed him that Dr. Martin was not in his office. The voice suggested by tone, although not in actual words, that she wished she weren't either.

"This is Robert Fury," he said crisply. "Did Mrs. Fury have an appointment with Dr. Martin today?"

"I believe she did, Mr. Fury."

"Have you any idea what time she left?"

"She didn't keep her appointment, Mr. Fury." The voice sounded both bored and accusing.

"What? She didn't keep it?"

"No, Mr. Fury. She was supposed to be here at nine-thirty."

"Are you *sure* she didn't get there?"

"She isn't marked in the book, Mr. Fury. Just a minute, please." The voice went away. It returned suddenly: "No, she wasn't in, Mr. Fury. She didn't begin labor, did she?"

"No," he said. His throat felt dry. "I mean, I don't know. Which hospital would she go to, if she had?"

"Wesley Memorial, Mr. Fury."

"Thank you." He hung up, found the telephone number of Wesley Memorial Hospital and dialed it. His hand trembled unaccountably. He dialed the number wrong and had to do it all over again.

First, he talked to a switchboard operator, then to the admissions clerk, then to a nurse in Obstetrics, and finally to someone in Emergency. All were most cooperative, but Mrs. Robert Fury simply had not been admitted.

Without realizing it, he immediately began thinking like a trained police executive. Visualizing a map of the city, he traced the streets which she would have had to travel in order to reach Dr. Martin's office. She would have had to pass through three police districts. He called each of them, indentifying himself as Lieutenant Fury of Robbery, and asked if a green Ford, Illinois license No.

366-144, had been involved in an accident that morning. In the first district, no accidents at all had been recorded; in the second district, two accidents were on record, both minor, neither involving a Ford; the third district embracing the Loop, seven accidents had occurred, one fatal, six minor, none involving a green Ford.

Still visualizing the map, he listed the hospitals in the area and began calling them. There were eight hospitals and he insisted on speaking to someone in both the Admissions and Obstetrics departments of each. Mrs. Robert Fury and Mary Ellen Fury were unknown.

He next called the Lake Shore Drive apartment of Mary Ellen's family. There was no answer. He called the Quinn residence in Lake Forest, talked to one of the maids, was assured that Miss Mary Ellen had not been out to visit her mother; in fact, Mrs. Quinn was out of town and wasn't expected back until Sunday.

She hadn't been involved in an accident.

She hadn't been hospitalized.

She hadn't kept her appointment with Dr. Martin.

What the hell could have happened?

Because one of the participants in the robbery had been described as being dark-skinned, of medium height, and possibly of Mexican or mulatto descent, squads of police began spreading a huge dragnet over the near-north, near-west and south sides of the city. These were slum areas, full of dilapidated buildings, many housing three and four families to a flat, but the police machine took them in stride.

Every male of medium height, who was unfortunate enough to have a dusky skin, was considered a possible cop-killer. All were detained and questioned. Those who were too old, too lame, or too fat were passed by, but those who fitted even slightly the meager description possessed by the police were questioned closely, their alibis were studied, and those who appeared frightened or guilty-looking were herded downtown for a lineup.

Clark Street was one of the first areas to be examined, and because of the language difficulties, the squads had a tough time of it. Almost all the Mexican, Syrian and Puerto Rican males were thin (because they were poorly fed), were of medium height (because it was unusual for

members of their races to be tall), and of course, all were dark-skinned. Few had alibis, because few were employed. For the most part, they had been sleeping or just sitting around. Their neighbors were willing—too willing, in fact—to confirm this, and the police distrusted that kind of an alibi, with good reason.

Salvio heard the heavy feet ascend the stairs and go up to the fifth floor. He heard doors opening, heard angry protestations voiced in fluent Spanish, heard heavy voices reply and the hard footsteps move about, searching every room. The woman was asleep. He lay there, tasting his fear and listening, until the police squad descended to the floor above. To warn the woman, he reached for her and squeezed one of her breasts gently.

"*Aun una vez?*" she murmured, rolling toward him.

"The police are coming," he whispered. "Remember, I have been here since last night."

"Yes." She smiled drowsily. "You are afraid?"

"Of course," he admitted. And, because he was afraid to face his fear, he put his arms about her and pulled her hard against him, crushing her breasts against his chest, stroking her more in frenzy than in passion.

"Ah, *sí!*" she whispered. "Let them find us like this. It will be better!" And she thrust her mouth over his, captured his legs with hers, and melted against him.

When the police entered, she was panting and he was sprawled across the dirty bedcover, drained and exhausted, almost too tired to be scared. The cop strode into the room, gaped at the scene, then guffawed as they both reached frantically for the sheet. "Well, well, well!" he commented, making an obscene gesture, "business is rushing, huh, Marta?" He eyed Salvio narrowly. "Where'd you find this one?"

"He is my friend!" the woman said angrily. "It is no business of yours! Why you break in like this? Why you—"

"Just checking, beautiful." The cop grinned knowingly. "How long have you two doves been billing and cooing?"

"It is not your business! This my house! He—"

"Come on, come on, or I'll run you in for soliciting, you brown-skinned whore!" the cop growled. "How long have you been here, Buster?" he demanded, looking at Salvio.

"Since last night, *señor*," Salvio muttered. "Please—"

"All night, huh?" The cop snorted. "For a skinny guy, you must have a lot of pep. Where's the dough, Marta? Let's see the dough he paid you."

"You no policeman—you are thief!" the woman cried. Clutching the sheet, she sprang toward the chair where she had flung her clothes. The cop, grinning, grabbed the dress before she could reach it. Fending her off with one hand, he searched the pockets. "Well, well, a real sucker, this time!" he said, finding the twenty-dollar bill. "Must be inflation. I thought you only got ten bucks for a night."

"That's my money!" she shrieked, trying to snatch the money from his fingers. "Food you are stealing from my children! You are thief—!"

The cop crumpled the bill in his fist, then flung it at Salvio. "Don't let the old bag rob you, Buster," he advised. "Ten bucks is all she charges for a night's pleasure, and ten bucks is all she's worth. As for you—" He planted a hand between her breasts and sent her sprawling onto the bed. "—I ought to run you in. I know you're just trying to make a buck, but you could at least send your kids some place else while you're making it. Next time I catch you in action while the kids are in the next room, I'm going to slap you in a cell. You *savvy* that?"

He turned on his heel and strode out.

As the door slammed, Salvio closed his eyes and released a low sigh. The woman snaked an arm across his body, captured his hand, drew it toward her. Her breasts jiggled with laughter as she pried his fingers open and retrieved the twenty-dollar bill.

At the Lincoln Avenue intersection, Wally turned and went northwest. At nearly every major intersection, there was one or two cops, alertly scanning the cars. Their eyes stared at the green Ford, saw that it contained only him and the redhead—and passed on to the next car. When they reached the city limits, Wally began to relax.

He followed highway fourteen until it intersected with sixty-three north of Barrington. Then sixty-three merged with fifty-nine, and fifty-nine merged with twelve. He followed the highway carefully, taking his time and occasionally pausing to study a small map. Shortly before

one o'clock, they reached Antioch. He entered the town with caution, driving slowly and watching for cops and highway signs, until he spotted an arrow pointing to route eighty-three. He followed eighty-three north. The state line, he knew, was not more than a mile or two away.

"I'm hungry," the redhead announced. She had been maintaining a glum silence.

"So am I," he said shortly. He became tense as they neared the state line, for it occurred to him that a road-block might have been established. A billboard announced: YOU ARE LEAVING ILLINOIS. COME AGAIN! Beyond the billboard, a state police car was parked. Two Wisconsin state troopers stood beside the road, studying the passing cars. Wally managed to maintain an even pressure on the gas. He felt their eyes swing toward him. He forced himself to stare back—and to wave casually as they passed. They made no attempt to stop him.

He exhaled slowly—and smiled. "Well, that's the last of them," he said, more to himself than to her. "I'm home free."

"All I had for breakfast was a cup of coffee," she muttered. "I'm supposed to be eating for two!"

"Shut up," he told her. "You're lucky you aren't dead."

He had never been to the farm, but Helen had indicated the roads on a map, had marked the distances, and shown him a snapshot which pictured the buildings. When he left eighty-three, he began checking off the turns. The area was mostly farmland and buildings were few and far between. He found the dirt road which Helen had described and guided the Ford into it. Two miles farther on, he spotted the farm.

The farm consisted of forty acres of barren land, a two-story frame house which was set back about two-hundred feet from a dirt road, a toolshed, a chicken coop, and a barn. All of the buildings were badly in need of repair, and the house hadn't seen paint in years. The farm had belonged to Helen's parents. When they died, title had passed to her and her brother. Neither had any intention of ever living on the farm again, but never having been able to find a buyer, they had continued to pay the low taxes year after year in the hope that the acreagemight prove of some value someday.

Wally drove the Ford around to the back of the house, parked, thought a moment, then drove out to the barn. There was a rusted padlock on the barn door. He swore softly, backed the car up, and returned to the house. He parked at the rear, turned off the ignition, pocketed the keys, and got the guns and the two money pouches out from under the back seat. They were quite a load and he grunted as he swung the pouches to the ground. He noticed that she was still sitting in the car.

"This is the end of the road, kid," he said. "Get out and stretch."

She eyed him apprehensively, then slowly got out. He watched her, noticing the ungainly way she moved. He didn't need to worry about her running away, that was for sure. She couldn't run ten feet without tripping and falling on her bump. She wouldn't risk that. Besides, where would she run to? North, there was nothing but weeds and marshy ground; west, there was dense underbrush, with a thick row of trees behind it; south, there was more underbrush, more weeds, more soggy ground. It was at least two-hundred feet to the road—and beyond the road there was nothing except weeds, piles of rocks, snakes, and more weeds. According to Helen, nobody lived within hearing distance; in fact, it was such lousy farming country and so far from the main highway that the nearest house was two miles away. The farm wasn't good for much, but it sure made a nice drop. Nobody would ever think of looking for them here.

Picking up the pouches, he lugged them to the back door. Helen had left the door unlocked. He twisted the knob and gave it a push. It swung open, creaking gently. He turned and called: "Come on, kid. A cricket or a squirrel might see you."

She approached slowly, biting her lip. "You aren't . . . really, you aren't going to keep me here, are you?"

"Why not?" he retorted. "Don't you like the fresh air and great open spaces? Come on, hurry up and get inside."

With obvious reluctance, she obeyed, stepping past him as though she half-expected him to goose her. "But . . . can't I phone my husband and tell him I'm all right? He'll be worried. He'll—"

"There's no phone here," he said shortly, kicking the door shut. The kitchen was big and old-fashioned. After

dropping the pouches in a corner, Wally looked around approvingly. There was a kerosene stove, a big square table, some wooden chairs. Everything had been cleaned up, ready for action. Some new pots and pans were on the stove, and three cartons of groceries were sitting on the table. Helen had done okay. He'd told her to lay in some supplies, and she'd even scrubbed the joint. Hell, if the heat got bad, they could dig in and be safe and snug for a week of Sundays.

"Are we going to be here . . . *alone*?" She was staring at him, and she looked not only worried but frightened.

"Why not?" he asked. "The worst has already happened to you, hasn't it?"

"But I have to be near a hospital!"

He had had other and more important things on his mind and hadn't paid much attention to her condition except as a gimmick for hoodwinking the cops. Now he examined her critically. She sure as hell was big.

"You're hanging kind of low," he said. "When's it due?"

"I've been expecting to go to the hospital all week!" she cried in a strained voice. "It could happen almost *any* time—and I can't, I simply *can't* have it *here*, without a doctor or . . . or *anything*."

"The hell you say. You mean you're *late*?"

"Of course! I just told you that I've been—"

"What were you doing in the Loop, then? Why weren't—"

"I was on my way to my doctor's office! I had an—"

"Oh, Christ," Wally muttered. "You mean you got the pains?"

"I don't know!" Her eyes began to fill with tears. "I'm so hungry and nervous and tired and . . . and—"

"Damn it to hell, anyway!" he said disgustedly. It was bad enough to have Helen run out on him, to have to grab a car with a strange woman in it, but damn it, why did it have to be a dame who was ready to pop? Kid or no kid, he couldn't let her out of his sight. She knew too damned much now. He was going to have to figure a way of shutting her up—permanently, probably. He'd never known it to fail: A pregnant dame meant trouble.

"Suppose I heat up some hot dogs and beans?" he growled, rummaging in the grocery cartons.

"B-beans are g-gassy!"

"Well, how about a can of hash—or some sardines—or a can of chicken soup?"

"The . . . the hash would be . . . all right."

"Okay, pull up a chair." He opened two cans of beef hash, emptied them into a saucepan, set it on the stove. There was no air pressure, so the stove wouldn't light. Cursing, he pumped air into the tank, struck another match. The burner burst into a weak, frail flame—and went out. "Damn it to hell," he muttered, grabbing the pump again. He finally got the stove going and put the pan onto the burner. "Coffee okay?" he asked.

"I . . . I'm supposed to drink milk."

"Well, I haven't had time to milk the cow today," he said sarcastically. "It's either coffee or plain water."

"Coffee, please . . . then."

"Oh, hell!" he muttered, discovering that the only source of water was a pump—and the pump didn't work. It needed to be primed, of course, but how the hell could he prime it without some water? Maybe there was a well outdoors. He went to the back door and looked out. There was a privy, but no sign of a well. He stared at the privy, snorted—then had an idea. He returned to the table, unpacked the cartons, opened a can of beer. He poured the beer into the neck of the pump, worked the handle vigorously. The pump made dry hiccupping noises, coughed, rattled, choked, sighed, and finally emitted a trickle of dirty water. He caught the water in the beer can and poured it back in. The trickle became a stream. He kept catching it and pouring it back until the water was coming out in a fairly steady stream.

"I . . . I think the hash is burning," she said.

"For chrissake, grab a spoon and stir it, then!" he shouted. "You aren't crippled, are you?"

CHAPTER TEN

IN SPITE OF the negative reports from the district police and the hospitals, Bob Fury slowly and surely became convinced that something terrible had happened to his

wife. He couldn't imagine *what* had happened, but he was certain that it was *something bad*.

Even if she had met an old friend and had stopped to have a cocktail, luncheon or a chat, she would have been home by now—or would have phoned. Nothing was more important to her than the baby, and she obviously hadn't forgotten her appointment with Dr. Martin. The note had been evidence of that. She had started for Martin's office, *and something had happened en route*.

Not an accident. The district police would have had a report. Not the baby. She would have been admitted to a hospital and they would have had her name. Something else . . . and maybe something serious.

He dressed swiftly and went next door to the Hobacks'. The Hobacks were loaded and had two cars. He explained to Claire Hoback that Mary Ellen had gone off in the Ford and that he needed a car for a few minutes. Claire was a good scout, but she loved to gab. While she was getting the keys, she asked how Mary Ellen was feeling, did he want a boy, what kind of diapers had Mary Ellen decided upon, could they get together for bridge some evening now that he was on vacation, and what did they plan to name the baby? He answered her as briefly as possible, took the keys to their Chevy, and promised to return it in a few minutes. She told him she wasn't going out, and anyway, Harry would be home soon with his Caddy, so he needn't rush back.

It was four thirty-two when he backed the Chevy out of the Hobacks' driveway and began tracing the streets that his wife must have taken on her way downtown.

When Jim Hoops boarded the North Shore train, he discovered that he had been lucky enough to catch the deluxe train, the Electroliner, which had a dining car. He had kept his nerves under strict control up to that point, but with the end of the caper definitely in sight, he had decided to have a drink. A drink couldn't hurt anything now, and he sure as hell needed it. If nothing else, he ought to celebrate. He'd blasted two cops and gotten away clean. By God, that called for a couple good drinks if anything ever did!

Jim went into the diner and had a couple drinks. The whisky was good, the steward was polite, and no one paid any particular attention to him—but Jim began to feel

uneasy. He had been looking ahead, had been keeping his mind on the problem of getting away fast and clean—and now, with that objective almost accomplished, he had had time to look back. He could see several things which he didn't like.

In the first place, Helen—that blonde bitch had nearly wrecked the caper. She'd run out, she'd left them high and dry without a getaway car. If things hadn't been clicking, they could have been stranded there on the street, with the loot in their hands, and some goddam cop could have spotted them and moved in on them. They could all have been killed—captured, at least. Helen had to go. She wasn't dependable, she couldn't be trusted—and she knew too much. She was hot for Wally today, but tomorrow she might be hot for somebody else, and that would mean that none of them were safe. The bitch had to go. He had blasted the cops, so it was his neck they were after. The sooner that dame was put away the better.

Helen wasn't the only one, though. The other dame—the one who'd been sitting there in the car—she'd have to be taken care of—but fast. Instead of sailing off with her in the car, Wally should have dumped her out in the street. No, he couldn't have done that. She'd have screamed and she'd have told the cops her plate numbers and the cops would have had them spotted. But now she had had a good look at them, she'd heard them talking, she knew he was the one who had blasted the cops, and she even knew they were rendezvousing at a farm. Damn it, like the gypsies said, once a dame got knocked up, she was bad luck. A knocked-up dame was like a curse. She and Helen both had to go, and it didn't make much difference which one was first. They were both too dangerous to stay alive.

Another thing. They should have split the dough. Letting Wally get away with all the loot had been a mistake. Wally was square, no doubt about that. But what if he got into a jam? What if that Helen had ratted to the cops? She not only knew where the rendezvous was—it belonged to her! She might have blown the whistle, and Wally might have walked into the cops' ever-loving arms—with all the loot in his hands. They should have split the take, with Wally carrying half and he carrying half, and then they'd have had the odds in their favor.

As it was, all their eggs were in one damned basket, and that bitch Helen was in a position where she could kick it over.

The more Jim thought about it, the less he liked it. He ordered another drink.

Yes, sir, the play was obvious. First, he'd have to get to the farm and make sure the heat wasn't waiting. Second, he'd have to collect his share of the loot. Third, he'd have to put Helen and that red-headed dame where they couldn't do any talking—in the ground.

When the train stopped at Kenosha, Jim Hoops got off and climbed into a taxi. He rode downtown to the local bus station and inquired about transportation to Antioch. There were no buses to Antioch. By studying a map in the station, he determined that Lake Geneva was near Antioch. There was only one bus to Lake Geneva and it didn't leave for another hour.

Jim decided to have another drink.

Helen had no objective in mind when she ran toward the taxi, but as soon as the hackie slapped down his flag and began to drive her away from the foreboding building of Central Police Headquarters, she got a grip on herself.

"Where to, lady?" the hackie demanded.

"Downtown!" she gasped.

"Any place in particular? Downtown's a big place."

"I'll tell you in a minute."

"Okay, lady!"

Desperately, she tried to think. Things might not be as bad as she had thought. Wally might have gotten away. If he had, in spite of her not having been there with the car, he'd be on his way to the farm. The thing for her to do would be to go to the farm—and hope that he'd get there. Then she could explain what had happened. When he knew that a cop had been hanging around and that she had lured him off the scene, he'd realize she had done the smart thing, the only thing. He'd have to forgive her. They'd realize that she had saved the caper. And they'd have to give her a cut of the take, like they'd promised.

Leaning forward in sudden decision, she told the hackie: "Take me to Northwestern Station, please!"

The hackie braked violently, made a sharp turn into Van Buren Street, muttering under his breath. She missed the train to Milwaukee by minutes, and spent an hour pacing the huge station, her nerves tightening apprehensively every time a uniformed guard or a redcap passed near her. She purchased a one-way ticket to Waukegan, sipped a cup of coffee, smoked innumerable cigarettes, finally bought a magazine and pretended to read it. As soon as the train was announced, she hurried to the platform, got aboard, and found herself a seat in the farthest car.

When the train began to move, she stared out of the window at the dingy Chicago buildings and thought: *I'll never come back here again. Never! Never!*

CHAPTER ELEVEN

LIEUTENANT FURY drove slowly, studying the cars parked along the streets. He spotted three green Fords, quickly ascertained that none was Mary Ellen's—and drove on. He reached the Loop, feeling the pangs of a growing fear. When he reached Wabash Avenue, he parked in front of the Revens building, where Dr. Martin's office was. He went in, located the elevator starter, identified himself as a police lieutenant, and had the operators who had been on duty that morning pulled from their cars. He described his wife briefly but graphically and asked if she had been seen. Apparently a lot of pregnant women had visited the building that day. None of the operators remembered a young, pregnant redhead in a dark blue dress which had a white polka-dot collar.

When he returned to the street, a cycle cop had his foot on the front bumper of the Chevy and was preparing to write a ticket. Fury exhibited his shield, nodded abstractedly when the cop began to apologize. His mind was on Mary Ellen and the fact that she had not gotten as far as the Loop, but something the cop said caught his attention.

"What did you just say?" he asked.

"I asked if there were any new developments, Lieutenant. Seeing you were in the building there, I thought you might be working on both the robbery and the killings. Since it happened right here, I figured—"

"What robbery?" Fury demanded.

"Are you kidding?" The cop eyed him suspiciously. "You sure that shield is yours? Why, every cop in the city has been alerted to catch the three guys who shot and killed two of the plainclothes boys in Revens store this morning! The newspapers are full of—"

"I've been away all day," Fury explained. "Tell me what happened."

"Why, three gunmen busted into Revens this morning, grabbed over four hundred thousand dollars in cash, killed a bank messenger, and then blasted two boys in plainclothes who tried to stop them. I was within a block of here when it happened. Nobody can figure out how they made their getaway. They must have had a car waiting, but nobody saw them come out and nobody saw a car hightailing it away, either."

"What time did it happen?"

"About nine-thirty. They ran through the shoe department and came out that door, just a couple minutes after I went past." The cop pointed. "I remember the time, because there was a blonde in a green Merc parked here and I made her get back into traffic where she belonged. She tried to hand me the old—"

"Did you happen to notice a green Ford sedan driven by a redhead in a dark blue dress?"

"Well, let's see." The cycle cop scratched his head. "I saw a hot-looking redhead near Randolph, but she wasn't driving a Ford. She had a sort of slick ponytail hairdo and she—"

"That's not the one. Short red hair, rather curly."

"I didn't see anybody like that, Lieutenant. Was she involved in the robbery? In a green Ford, huh? Maybe she was driving the bastards who—"

"She had nothing to do with the robbery," Fury said shortly. He got into the Chevy. "Thanks, officer. I've got to get to headquarters."

"If you catch those bastards, Lieutenant, give 'em a couple bullets for me. Any cop-killer ought to be mowed down, by God, and if I had the chance, I'd—"

Fury drove off. The idea of a big robbery having been

pulled at Revens store, the news that two police officers had been shot down, would ordinarily have sent him plunging into the chase, but, damn it, that was Callahan's baby now. His problem was to find Mary Ellen.

Unconsciously, he headed for headquarters. He parked in his accustomed place, entered the big, busy building, went directly to the public phones. Several people called to him. He nodded or waved automatically in reply, without really seeing them. He dialed his home number, listened to the *buzz-buzz* of the ringing signal for a long time. He hung up, dialed Wesley Memorial Hospital. No, Mrs. Robert Fury had not been admitted. He looked up the home phone of Dr. Martin and called him. He spoke to Dr. Martin briefly, giving the minimum explanation necessary, and was assured that the doctor had received no calls in regard to Mrs. Fury. He was certain that he would have been advised immediately, no matter which hospital she had gone to, for he had explained to Mrs. Fury the dangers which might attend the baby because of Mrs. Fury's negative Rh factor.

When Fury hung up, his face was a harassed mask. He had forgotten about that Rh factor business. As Mary Ellen had explained it to him months ago, something about his blood was positive and something about hers was negative, and as soon as the baby was delivered, a test had to be made and maybe the baby's blood would have to be drained and replaced. If it wasn't, the baby might die. That's why she had insisted on having a specialist like Dr. Martin.

His face set in grim lines, Fury took the elevator up to Missing Persons. He knew Captain Wright, the head of the bureau, but the captain was off duty. A Sergeant Lublow was in charge, and to save time, Fury explained the situation to him.

"No domestic difficulties, of course, Lieutenant?" Lublow asked briskly, filling out a form.

"None."

"What was she wearing?"

Fury dictated a detailed description of his wife which included her height, weight, age, religion, coloring, and identifying marks.

"Got a picture of her, Lieutenant?"

Fury took out his wallet, removed a photo of his wife, and gave it to Lublow.

"Say, I remember seeing this picture in the papers when you got married!" Lublow exclaimed. "She's Thaddeus Quinn's daughter, isn't she?"

"Yes," Fury said shortly. "Cut as much of the red tape as you can, will you, sergeant? We're expecting a baby and the delivery must be handled by a specialist. She must be found as soon as possible."

"Doctor's name?"

"David Martin."

"Hospital she intended to go to?"

"Wesley Memorial."

"That ought to do it, Lieutenant. I'll get the wheels turning right away."

"Thanks, sergeant. I'll appreciate it."

"You going to be working on the killings?"

"I don't know," Fury said, turning away.

"Wish you would, Lieutenant. I hear you've been doing a good job in Robbery. Those bastards ought to be caught fast!"

"Sure," Fury said. "Find my wife, sergeant. That's what I'm worried about right now."

"I'll do my damnedest, Lieutenant, but sometimes it takes a little—"

Sergeant Lublow discovered that he was talking to himself. Lieutenant Fury had stalked out. Sergeant Lublow had been on the force for twenty years, and the only reason he was in Missing Persons was because he had bad feet. With good feet, he believed he'd have gotten as assignment on the detective force, for he was not only smart but knew how to play the angles. With good feet, he'd have risen from the ranks and become a lieutenant, maybe even a captain. As it was, he was stuck behind a counter at a minor bureau, and, unless Captain Wright dropped dead, which was unlikely, or unless he pulled a particularly brilliant piece of spotting which caught the Commissioner's eye, he might be stuck where he was for another twenty years.

Now, with the description of Mary Ellen Fury before him, Sergeant Lublow sensed that Opportunity was knocking. Fury wanted his wife found fast. Fury was a lieutenant, in charge of Robbery—and his wife had been a Quinn. Get the wife spotted fast, and the lieutenant would be grateful, the powerful Quinns would be grateful—and the Commissioner would sure as hell hear what

a smart sergeant he had down in Missing Persons. The problem was: How the hell to find her fast? The bureau didn't operate that way. Routine had to be followed, things had to go through channels, wheels had to turn.

On the other hand, Fury's wife was a young, good-looking girl . . . she came from a society family . . . she was about to have a kid . . . anything could have happened to her . . . her husband, a prominent police lieutenant, was worried to death . . . a big baby specialist was standing by, because no regular doctor would know what to do when the baby came. Christ, it had all the makings of a regular soap opera! It was a natural for the papers . . . and for TV . . . even for radio. They'd eat it up. They'd make a noise which would be heard throughout the Middle West. If Mary Ellen Fury was still alive and kicking, someone would be bound to spot her and call in. What's more, the papers wouldn't forget that the tip came from Sergeant Leonard Lublow.

Ignoring the prescribed routine, Sergeant Lublow reached for the phone and called Jerry Olson at the *Tribune*. Then he called Danny Ballard at the *Sun-Times*.

CHAPTER TWELVE

AT FIVE MINUTES AFTER SIX, Eddie Lawrence decided to call it a day. In spite of all the cars on the street, business had been lousy. He'd opened the station at seven A.M., had taken fifteen minutes off for a sandwich, and the rest of the time he'd pumped gas. Damn it, there was no money in gas. It was getting so there was a station every three blocks, and the price was shaved so thin that he hardly made a dime on five gallons. He'd kept hoping that a few wash or grease jobs would come in, or somebody'd turn up with a clanking piston or a dragging fender, but no such luck.

Disgustedly, he locked the pumps, carried the oil display into the station, collected his windshield sprayer and rags, and turned off the driveway floodlights. He walked

around the back, spat contemptuously into the grease pit, pulled the door down and made sure it was locked. Then he went into the station, counted the money in the till, and entered the amount into a cash journal. He'd grossed fifty-three dollars and seventy-eight cents. A real stinking day if he'd ever had one. By the time he'd paid for the gas, the rent, the lights, and the state sales tax, he'd be lucky to have five bucks clear.

Thinking regretfully of the seven thousand dollars he'd put into the station, he took off his coveralls and threw them toward the hook in the corner. He missed. Without bothering to pick them up, he locked the station, just in case some wise-guy decided to help himself to the nickels in the till, and went to the washroom. Taking off his shirt, he soaped his hands and arms, washed the soap off, pulled a handful of paper towels from the dispenser. Like all paper towels, they were no good. They got soggy right away and didn't dry worth a damn. He flung them into the wastebasket and jerked some more out of the dispenser.

Looking into the mirror, he saw that his face was dirty. It sure was one of those days. He'd dried his hands—and now he had to wash his face. He was wasting towels, and towels cost money, and money was one thing he sure as hell didn't have. But a guy couldn't go around with a dirty face.

He refilled the basin with fresh water, soaped his face, splashed water on it. He grabbed more towels, swabbed his face. He studied them in the mirror. Damned if it didn't look like he was bleeding! Maybe the goddam paper towels had taken the skin off. He stared at the towels in his hand.

One of the towels was streaked with red. Somewhat puzzled, he unfolded it. Damned if there wasn't some printing on it. Yeah, someone had printed words with a lipstick. The stuff had gotten wet and bled, but he could still make out the words. Taking a dry towel from the dispenser, he flattened the soggy one on top of it and began to spell out the words:

AM BEING ABDUCTED TO FARM
PLEASE TELL IR6-6122!
HELP! MARY ELLEN FURY

Eddie Lawrence snorted. Who the hell was Mary Ellen Fury? Being abducted. That was something like kidnaping. A gag, probably. Some joker trying to have a laugh at his expense. IR6-6122. An Irving exchange. That was a Chicago number, all right. Maybe if he called, a dame would answer, a good-looking doll like that blonde in the Caddy who'd come in to get her tank filled that morning. Boy, would he like to fill something besides her tank!

He went back to the station, laid the stained towel on his desk, got a dime from the till, dropped it into the pay phone. Feeling somewhat silly, he dialed IR6-6122.

No one answered.

Completely disgusted, he hung up, tossed the dime back into the till, crumpled the towels into a ball, and flung it into the corner where his coveralls lay. Then he put on his shirt, turned off the lights, locked the station, and went home.

It sure had been a lousy, stinking day.

Helen descended from the Northwestern train at Waukegan without incident and immediately boarded a bus for Antioch. It was after six P.M. when she reached Antioch, daylight was fleeing, and she realized that she was hungry. The monotony of the train ride had relaxed her somewhat, and during the bus trip, she'd persuaded herself that, by being smart enough to move the hot car and thus draw the cop away, she had practically guaranteed the success of the caper. Wally and the guys had gotten away. They would be at the farm, waiting for her. They'd be damned grateful when they'd found out what she had done.

It was a long walk from Antioch to the farm, so she decided to get something to eat. On her way to the small lunchroom near the bus station, she noticed a newsstand. The late editions of both Chicago afternoon newspapers were prominently displayed. Even from forty feet away, the big, black headlines were readable: \$200,000 LOOP ROBBERY! the *Herald-American* screamed. TWO COPS, BANK MESSENGER SLAIN! the *Daily News* proclaimed.

With trembling fingers, she found a dime in her purse and purchased copies of both papers. Then, 'feeling as though a hand were slowly tightening on her heart, she entered the lunchroom and ordered a sandwich and a

cup of coffee. While the waitress was getting her order, she unfolded the *Herald-American* and read the story.

They had gotten away! They had shot their way out—with two hundred thousand dollars! That meant that they would be at the farm, waiting for her, waiting to divide the money, the beautiful, beautiful money!

With a sudden feeling of elation, she put the *Herald-American* aside and unfolded the *Daily News*. Immediately, her elation died. Staring at her from the middle of the front page was a *picture of Wally*. The waitress brought the sandwich and coffee. Helen stared at the picture, hardly believing her eyes. It was Wally. It certainly was Wally. Biting her lip to suppress a moan, she read the story. A cop artist had drawn the picture. Oh, God—if only it didn't look so much like him.

Without touching the sandwich, she gulped some of the coffee, paid the waitress, and started for the farm.

Jim Hoops felt no pain during the bus ride from Kenosha to Lake Geneva. Everything was clear; everything was dandy. The dough would be at the farm. Get rid of Helen, then get rid of the redhead—and good-by, you cop-bastards!

On reaching Lake Geneva, Jim inquired about ways of reaching Antioch. There was no bus until the next day; also, Antioch was twenty miles away. However, a train was leaving in a few minutes for Richmond, and Richmond was only ten miles from Antioch. That seemed like a progressive step, so Jim went to the station and boarded the train.

At Richmond, he was informed that the last bus to Antioch was long gone. The effect of the drinks had rapidly diminished, and he suddenly felt both frustrated and impatient. While standing in the station, trying to decide what to do, he was attracted by a display of Chicago papers. He purchased copies, casually slipped them under his arm, and went outside. Making certain that he was unobserved, he peeked at the *Herald-American*: \$200,000 LOOP ROBBERY!

Feeling tremendously proud and excited, he read the story. It was the usual newspaper crap. The cops didn't know which way was up, but they were screaming that an arrest was imminent. The dumb, loud-mouthed bastards.

So they'd gotten two hundred grand! That was even better than Wally had figured. His cut would be forty grand. Brother, that was a real score! He'd finally hit the jackpot.

He unfolded the *Daily News*—and jerked so violently that he nearly dropped the paper. A goddam picture of Wally was smack in the middle of the front page, a damned spitting likeness of him which anybody could recognize! Where in the hell had they gotten. . . . Hurriedly, he read the story. A cop artist. Of all the rotten luck! They should have knocked the whole damned bunch of them off. Now Wally was hotter than a firecracker. If any cop in the world got one peep at him, they'd all be in the soup! Christ, he had to get to the farm in a hurry, had to warn them, had to start working on an out.

An empty hack was parked near the bus station. For ten bucks, the hackie agreed to drive to Antioch. Jim jumped in and told him to get moving.

Salvio paid Marta Nogales the other twenty dollars he had promised her, and he then gave her ten dollars more to buy him some different clothes. She went out and came back with a gaudy Hawaiian-type shirt and a pair of light-blue slacks. She also purchased a bottle of rum and some *tortillas*. While he dressed, she heated the food and made some strong coffee, to which she added rum. When they had eaten, she sat on his lap and snuggled against him. He was tempted to take her to bed again, but after a moment's reflection, he decided that enough was enough. Wally and Jim would be waiting—and they would have the money. A woman would wait, but money wouldn't. If he was not there, his share might disappear. Once the money was in his hands, he could have two women, three women—as many as he wanted—all young and white and curved like that Helen.

"I must go," he told Marta, giving one of her breasts an affectionate squeeze.

"You are no longer afraid?" she asked.

"They will not recognize me now in these clothes," he told her. "I am grateful to you."

She eyed him speculatively. "You come back?"

"In a few days, probably," he promised, squeezing the other breast too, to show that he was impartial. "You

rest and wait for me. When I come back, I will have much money."

"How much?"

"Enough. You will not tell anyone that I was here?"

"No. I swear."

"Good. Tonight, get rid of my old clothes."

"Yes. You will hurry back?"

"Of course!"

After an affectionate embrace and once again telling himself that enough was enough, he descended to the street to find himself faced with the problem of getting out of the city and to the farm. The farm was a long ways away. It was out in the country.

While he stood indecisively on the curb, a Checker Cab stopped across the street and the driver got out. Salvio eyed the cab thoughtfully. The driver pulled up his trousers, spat into the street, and entered the Golden Pheasant Inn. Salvio, without conscious volition, strolled across the street, and stood by the cab. The key was in the ignition. The driver's cap was lying on the seat. It was an omen.

Salvio walked around the cab briskly, slid behind the wheel, slapped the cap onto his head. A moment later, he had the engine going. Flashing his teeth in a triumphant grin, he gunned the cab away from the curb and headed north.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

FROM MISSING PERSONS, Lieutenant Fury went to Stolen Vehicles, where he filed a description of Mary Ellen's car and its license number. The chief of the bureau frequently had occasion to work hand-in-hand with Robbery, so Fury was well known and his request got immediate action. Before he left the office, details were being teletyped to all district stations, where they would be posted and noted by every police officer in the city.

Fury was on his way to the elevators when he met

Captain O'Higgins, the chief of the detective bureau. As soon as O'Higgins saw Fury, he grinned and began shaking his head.

"I heard you were in the building, Bob!" he called. "Tough luck, boy. Guess you're not living right these days!"

For a second, Fury thought that O'Higgins had heard that Mary Ellen was missing, then he realized that O'Higgins wouldn't be grinning if that were the case. Impatiently, he stopped, prepared to listen to some scuttlebutt.

"You were supposed to start your vacation this morning, weren't you?" Captain O'Higgins said, continuing to grin.

"I *did* start my vacation," Fury replied. Absently, he got out a cigarette and lit it. He was very worried about Mary Ellen and didn't care to gab with O'Higgins, but lieutenants didn't brush past captains. "I'm spending it at home. Painting, fixing things—you know."

"That's what you think! You're wanted upstairs—and immediately."

"Why?"

"The Commissioner has ordered all leaves cancelled. It's a good thing you didn't go anywhere. You'd only have had to come back!"

"Cancelled?" Fury stared blankly at Captain O'Higgins' grinning face. "What the hell's the idea?"

"Haven't you heard?" O'Higgins stopped grinning and anger tinged his voice. "Two of our boys got knocked off this morning during the Revens robbery. We're not going to let the bastards get the idea that they can blast cops without being blasted right back. You're going to be right in the thick of it, Bob."

"But, for chrissake, Charlie—!"

"I envy you, Bob," O'Higgins broke in heavily. "I wish I were younger. I'd like to be outside, tracking the rotten bastards down instead of upstairs filling in forms and poring through a lot of technical crap. You've been doing a good job in Robbery, and I hope to hell you catch them. Put a piece of lead in their heads for me!"

"But—"

"Better hurry upstairs, Bob. The Commissioner is raising holy hell. I certainly wish you luck!"

Captain O'Higgins strode off. Fury flung his cigarette to the floor and stamped on it. For a second, he con-

sidered leaving the building and pretending that he was ignorant of the cancellation. But his years of training as a police officer asserted themselves. Swearing softly, he got in an elevator and rode up to Eight, where Robbery was located. He found Acting Lieutenant Callahan pacing the floor.

"Christ, am I glad to see you, Lieutenant!" Callahan said fervently. "I thought I could handle things, but I'm over my head. The Commissioner has called five times in the last hour, wanting to know when the hell you were going to be at your desk!"

"There're over six thousand men on the force," Fury said bitterly. "If six thousand cops can't nail a trio of trigger-happy punks, for chrissake, what does he think *I'm* going to do? You know damned well, Saul, that—"

"There goes the phone again," Callahan interrupted. "Why don't you tell him what you just said?"

Fury turned on his heel and strode into his office.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

AT EIGHT-THIRTEEN P.M., right in the middle of the second round of the wrestling match being televised from the Stadium, Frankie Knina's screen went blank.

"Jee-zus Kee-rist!" Frankie bellowed. "Another goddam commercial just when—"

The face of an announcer appeared immediately. "This program has been interrupted at the request of the Chicago Police Department," the announcer said gravely. The screen blinked, and then a life-sized sketch appeared. "Have you seen this man?" the announcer's voice demanded. "Examine this sketch closely. It is a likeness of one of the men who killed two police officers and a bank messenger during the robbery of the Revens store this morning. If you have seen this man, please phone Central Police headquarters immediately. The number is POLICE 5-1313. I repeat: If you have seen this man, call POLICE 5-1313 *immediately!*"

Frankie eyed the sketch, first disgustedly, then with a

flicker of interest. He began to scowl. The sketch remained on the screen for a full minute. When the wrestling match reappeared, Frankie took a long swallow of beer from the can beside his chair. The guy in the sketch had certainly looked familiar. . . .

Frankie kicked off his shoes and tried to concentrate on the screen, where Stan Ryman, the Canton Cyclone, was waving his arms threateningly at Jackson Rice, the Hyannis Hurricane. Rice had the advantage of weight, but Ryman had a lot of spit and guts. Ryman moved in, caught Rice's shoulder, only to have the Hurricane whirl and grab him about the waist. They flopped to the canvas and thrashed around, lover-like. . . .

"I saw that guy just lately!" Frankie muttered. "If it wasn't him, it sure was somebody who looked like him!" Reaching for the tuning knob, he began switching channels. He caught the police broadcast again on channel five and got another glimpse of the sketch. The glimpse was enough to prod his memory. "Yeah," Frankie said aloud. "Why, that's the guy who ran into my truck!"

Like most men who make their living behind the wheel of a delivery truck, Frankie Knirna had very little love for the police department. The cop-bastards were forever giving him tickets, were always bawling him out for parking in alleys, never hesitated to raise hell with him when he double-parked just long enough to run a bundle into a building. But . . . hell, there was a reward out for those killers, wasn't there? He went out to the kitchen, where his wife had been reading the daily horoscope in the *Tribune*, and got the paper. Yup, there was a reward. Ten thousand bucks! The ten grand was for information leading to the arrest and conviction.

Frankie went to the phone and dialed P-O-5-1-3-1-3.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

AFTER instructing Callahan to see that the Hobacks' Chevy was returned to them, Lieutenant Fury called Claire Hoback, thanked her for letting him use the car, and

explained that he was having it returned as he had been called back to duty. She *oh*-ed and *ah*-ed and tried to get some inside information on the Revens robbery, but he assured her that he knew even less about it than she did.

For the next hour, Fury plowed through the accumulated data on the case. Since the Commissioner had ordered Homicide and Robbery to supply each other with duplicate memoranda, this was no small job. When he finished, Fury called Callahan.

"I think I have the picture, Saul," he said briefly. "It looks to me like an inside job; at least, it was steered from the inside—and by someone who certainly was usually on the scene when the bank's messengers arrived. The tip-off, I think, is in the transcript of the watchman's statement. He says that, on entering, the leader ordered: *Into the shoe department, Pop!* Other employees state that Abeles was commonly known as Pop around the store. I'll admit that it may be a coincidence—and that a lot of people tend to refer to any old guy as Pop—but I have a feeling that when those guys entered the store, the leader was under considerable tension, and when he called Abeles Pop, he was unconsciously repeating a name which he had heard someone else use."

"Want me to get Abeles?" Callahan asked.

"No, not Abeles. Find out who's in charge of Personnel at the store. I want the time records checked. Go back at least two months. Find out who normally was on duty in the store during the early hours. If there have been any recent changes, note them. Catch on? We're looking for someone who had an opportunity to time the arrival of those bank messengers."

"I get it." Callahan nodded.

"Another thing." Fury's face hardened subtly. "Those two 'hero' cops who got killed—Kappus and Titis. I want to know what they were doing in the store. According to the cashier's statement, they had prior knowledge of the robbery. If so, we should have been notified. Obviously, someone tipped them and they were trying to make the most of it. They were working out of the DesPlaines district. I want to know where that tip originated."

"That's Captain Balzer's bailiwick."

"That's just too bad," Fury said grimly. "The Commis-

sioner has ordered me to make an all-out investigation, and I'll be damned if I'll whitewash a couple cops who got killed because they ignored clearly prescribed procedure. If Balzer knows where the tip came from, he damned well better say so—and say so fast—because I'm in the mood to take his district apart for him."

"Anything else, Lieutenant?" Callahan asked apprehensively. He had never seen Fury look so angry.

"Get that started, then come back. I'll have some more."

"Yes, sir!" Callahan rushed out.

Fury reached for the phone and dialed his home number. There was no answer. He called Missing Persons and was assured that the wheels were turning. He told them that he was on duty in Robbery and to notify him immediately if any trace of his wife was found. He hung up, stared bleakly at the phone, then at the pile of memoranda on his desk. He clenched and unclenched a hand impotently.

The phone rang sharply.

"Robbery. Lieutenant Fury," he said automatically.

"This is Stolen Vehicles, Lieutenant," Captain Wright's voice said briskly. "Nothing on your car yet, but here's something that may interest you. We just got a call from a hackie who drives for Checker. He parked on Clark, a half-block north of Chicago Avenue, and went into a restaurant to get something to eat. He was sitting at the counter, and he saw a slim, medium-sized Mex or Puerto Rican cross the street and nose around his hack. Before he could do anything about it, this guy climbed into the cab and took off. He's headed north."

"How was he dressed?" Fury asked.

"Gaudy Hawaiian-type shirt, light jacket, blue slacks. The jacket jibes. He could have changed his shirt and pants."

"What's the license number of the cab?"

"T-055-235."

"Where is the driver now?"

"I told him he had to sign a statement of theft. He's on his way down."

"Good. Call Checker, Captain, and find out if the stolen hack is equipped with radio. If it is, instruct them not to broadcast anything about the theft. If it is *not* radio-equipped, ask them to broadcast the license number. Make

this clear, Captain: *No attempt is to be made to stop or to capture that cab.* If it's spotted, I want to know its location—and that's all. I'll have the same order broadcast to all north-side squads immediately."

"Think he'll lead you to the rendezvous, huh?"

"It's a chance. Call the independent cab companies, too, Captain. Give them the same instructions."

"Good idea, Lieutenant. I'll take care of it."

Fury hung up, studied the map of the city which hung beside his desk, then called Radio. He began dictating explicit instructions for squad car observation of a north-bound Checker cab bearing license number T-055-235.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

AS SOON AS Mr. Sam entered the China Star Café, Chung Lee sensed that all was not well. Mr. Sam did not nod his usual greeting. He moved faster than usual, betraying impatience, and he sat down irritably, grating the chair against the floor so that it made a harsh sound, almost a snarling, angry sound. Chung Lee hurried to get Mr. Sam a glass of hot, black coffee.

A woman approached Mr. Sam's table, asking permission for her husband, who was blind, to beg on Michigan Avenue.

"Ask next week," Nazarian snarled. He didn't even bother to open his eyes to look at her.

A man approached, asking for an okay on a dice game to be operated during a lodge's fund-raising party.

"No," Nazarian rasped.

"The money's for a good cause," the man protested. "I guarantee that you'll get your usual cut, and—"

"No!" Nazarian repeated harshly. "Beat it."

When Captain Balzer, who ran the district, came stalking in, the word had already gone out that Mr. Sam was in a bad mood and that it was useless to approach him. Except for Chung Lee and Mr. Sam, the China Star Café was deserted.

"Sam, we're both in trouble," Balzer said, pulling back a chair and sitting down. "You made a mistake when you tipped Kappus to that robbery."

"Who says I tipped him?" Mr. Sam murmured.

"I know goddam well you tipped him!" Balzer said violently. "Don't you think I know he's been sucking around you? You probably told him he'd better not file a report. You figured the caper might blow up and headquarters would come around with some embarrassing questions. Well, the worst has happened. The Commissioner has ordered an all-out investigation, and Fury is threatening to take the district apart unless I come up with the source of the tip. He isn't dumb—and he isn't kidding, either. You ready to take a ride downtown with me, Sam?"

Nazarian sighed. He shook his head. "It's really that bad?" he asked quietly.

"There's a rumor that Captain Cortlandt may be sent in to take over the district. If Cortlandt comes in, you're out of business, Sam."

Nazarian nodded slowly. He took a sip of coffee. "All right, Captain." Nazarian straightened a little and looked toward the front of the café. The clerkish-looking man had come in and was sitting at the counter, talking to Chung Lee. Nazarian rattled his glass on the table, and when they looked up, he gestured to the clerkish-looking man, who immediately got up and hurried back to Nazarian's table.

"This man's name is Vern Price," Nazarian told the police captain, speaking slowly and with a note of decision. "He's the owner of the Wagon Wheel. Two nights ago, three men and a girl were in his joint. The men were Wally Hirsch, Jim Hoops, and Salvio Morales. The girl was a blonde named Helen Harris. They'd been in before and he'd heard their names mentioned. He heard them plotting to rob the Revens store. Hirsch, who appeared to be the leader, was questioning the girl about the store, so Vern gathered that she worked there and was setting up the play for them. Vern, being an honest, law-abiding citizen, told Sergeant Kappus what he had heard, and he assumed that Sergeant Kappus would take whatever steps were necessary and proper."

Balzer looked thoughtful. "Well, it sounds all right,"

he admitted. "Will it hold water, though? Fury will check and double-check, sure as hell."

"It will hold water," Nazarian promised. "Do you have the story straight, Vern?"

"I think so, Mr. Sam." Price didn't look very happy. "Am . . . will they arrest me?"

"No." Nazarian shook his head. "As a businessman, you're interested in seeing the law upheld. That's why you told Sergeant Kappus what you had heard. As soon as you found out that Kappus had been killed while trying to prevent the robbery, you went to Captain Balzer and told him what you knew. The police will have no reason to arrest you. You are simply a public-spirited citizen who is doing his civic duty. Don't forget to emphasize that."

"He may be held," Balzer warned.

"That's all right," Nazarian said. He eyed Price. "You'll be taken care of, Vern. There's nothing to worry about."

"Whatever you say, Mr. Sam."

A few minutes later, Captain Balzer, looking considerably mollified, strode out of the China Star Café. Vern Price followed him. When the door closed, Nazarian closed his eyes and smiled faintly. Chung Lee began to draw another glass of hot, black coffee.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

WHEN FRANKIE KNINA'S call reached headquarters all six of the police switchboards were lit up like Christmas trees. The effect of the TV broadcast of the sketch had been almost instantaneous. Even before the first broadcast was finished, dozens of calls were received, reporting that the killer had been seen in as many different parts of the city. One woman reported that the man in the sketch was her brother, whom she had not seen for fifteen years. As the broadcasts continued, the number of calls reached into the hundreds, each of which had to be methodically noted and assigned for possible investigation.

The harried operator who took Frankie Knina's call heard him say something about a car banging into his truck that morning, and thinking that the call was a routine accident report, she immediately switched the call to Accident.

A sergeant in Accident listened to Frankie Knina's story and decided that the switchboard had routed the call to him by mistake. He jiggled the phone, got the operator, and told her to give the call to Homicide.

Homicide's three phones were busy, so Frankie was asked to wait a moment, please. He waited a long time, and for understandable reasons, Frankie was about to say to hell with the whole thing, when the line clicked and a voice said: "Homicide. Sergeant McKinley speaking."

For the third time, Frankie Knina began to explain how he had happened to see one of the killers that morning.

Lieutenant Fury had just ordered a squad car readied for his possible use, when his phone buzzed and a voice said urgently: "This is Radio. We've spotted that Checker!"

"Where is it?"

"South of Addison, going northwest on Lincoln."

"Box him in, but don't let him know that he's under observation. Advise all squads to use extreme caution. We believe the driver is one of the participants in this morning's robbery."

"I understand, sir."

Fury hung up. "They've spotted the Checker," he said, swinging around to face Callahan, who had just come in with another memorandum. "This may be the break we need, Saul. The Mex could have holed in somewhere and waited until he figured the heat had cooled off a bit, and now he may be trying to reach his buddies." He looked at the paper in Callahan's hands. "Now what?"

"Homicide just sent this up. A guy who drives a laundry truck saw the sketch that's being broadcasted and he says the killer ran into his truck this morning at Ashland and Belmont. He says he's got the license number of the car and the shield number of the officer stationed at the intersection. McKinley thinks he's on the level, and they're getting a trace on the license. The officer who saw the accident has been ordered to report here. It may be a false alarm, but McKinley seems to think—"

"Oh, God!" Fury said hollowly. He rose, holding the memorandum in a trembling hand. "Saul, that license number—*it's my wife's car!*"

"How could it be?" Callahan ejaculated.

"Damned if I know!" Fury dialed Homicide, got McKinley. "I just received that last memorandum," he said urgently. "Was the car a green Ford sedan?"

"Yeah, a green Ford sedan. We should have the owner's name in a few minutes—"

"Was there a woman in the car?"

"Why, yes. Seems kind of funny. This Knina, the driver of the truck, says this guy had his wife in the car with him. He was rushing her to a hospital. Knina says she looked like she was about to have a kid, and because nothing except a fender got scraped, the officer at the intersection sent him on his way without—"

"Oh, my God!" Fury muttered. "Listen, McKinley: The woman in that car was my wife. The bastard must have been kidnapping her!"

Operator Three in Radio said into him mike: "Car two-sixteen Car . . . two-sixteen . . . Come in!"

"Two-sixteen!"

"Are you still on the Checker?"

"He's headed west on Devon. Five-one and three-fourteen are working with me. We've got it boxed in tight."

"How far west are you?"

"We'll be at Milwaukee Avenue in a minute."

"Don't lose him!"

"What if he leaves the city limits?"

"Order are to stick with him."

"A pleasure. We'll stick."

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

EDDIE LAWRENCE had considered going to a movie and had decided against it. For one thing, he was tired. For another, it was no fun sitting in a movie without some girl to

twist fingers with. For still another, the rotten day at the station had soured him on the idea of spending money.

Eddie did not have a TV set, but he did have a small portable radio. He had a platter program tuned in, and now he was leafing through an old *Figure Study Review*, trying to imagine himself dancing cheek-to-cheek with one of the naked beauties portrayed in the magazine's glossy art studies. A portrait of a long-haired blonde on a couch titillated his imagination. Imagine getting next to a girl like that! A girl who'd pose like that would probably be ready for anything. Ready? That babe looked *eager*. All a guy'd have to do is snap his fingers, and she'd probably—

The platter program ended, and an announcer said: "—and now here's Danny Ballard with the latest news, as gathered by the *Sun-Times*' newsroom!"

"Oh, nuts!" Eddie muttered. The announcer's voice had shattered his dream. Ballard talked through his nose, and Eddie had often suspected, through his hat, too. There wouldn't be any more dance music until Ballard went off, though. Eddie rolled over on the bed and closed his eyes resignedly.

"... Now here's a shocking piece of news which has just reached your reporter! Mary Ellen Fury, wife of police Lieutenant Robert Fury—she's the socialite daughter of the Thaddeus Quinns, you'll remember—is missing from her home tonight, and the Missing Persons bureau of the police department has been asked to institute a search for her. Mrs. Fury is twenty-two years old, is five-eight in height, weighs one hundred and twenty pounds normally, and has red hair. I say that she weighs one hundred and twenty pounds *normally* because she is expecting a child, and of course—"

Eddie Lawrence sat up. Mary Ellen Fury! Why, hell, that's the name that was on that towel. Maybe she really was missing. A police lieutenant's wife, too.

Eddie tossed the magazine aside and hurriedly got into his bathrobe. Feeling an excitement even keener than that which the picture of the blonde had inspired, he went downstairs to the pay phone and dialed P-O-5-1-3-1-3. When an operator answered, he asked for Lieutenant Fury.

"A dame named Marge Lito is in charge of Personnel at Revens," Callahan reported. "She went out on a date and nobody knows where she is."

"Uh-huh—" Fury nodded.

"What you want me to do about her?"

"Park a man on her doorstep. Tell him to bring her in no matter what hour she gets home."

"Will do. How are the boys doing on that Checker?"

"They've managed to hang on, so far." Fury turned away from the big map. "I'm afraid they're about to run into trouble, though. The guy's headed northwest on Milwaukee Avenue, and he's boxed in. But as soon as they cross the river, they're going to run into highway forty-five, and once they're on the open road, he'll spot their blinkers sure as hell. Call Radio, Saul, and ask them to contact the state police and every town in that area. If he sticks to forty-five, he'll have to go through Wheeling, Half Day and Libertyville. Ask them to watch for him. Be sure to emphasize that he's not to be stopped. Use your phone. I'm keeping my line clear."

"Any word of your wife?"

"McKinley talked to the officer who witnessed the accident. He agrees that the guy in the sketch was driving. He had a good look at him—and he was even able to describe my wife's dress." Fury choked, then he cried angrily: "The dumb bastard of a cop had the guy's wallet in his hand and didn't even bother to open it! All he had to do was look at the guy's driver's license—that's *the least* he's supposed to do in a situation like that!—and we'd know the bastard's name and maybe even his address. As it is, all we know is that he was driving my wife's car—and she was on the verge of having the baby!"

The phone buzzed. Fury reached for the receiver, swallowed, fought to subdue the flame of mingled fear and anger which blazed within him.

"Robbery. Lieutenant Fury speaking."

"Is this the Lieutenant Fury whose wife is missing?"

Fury's hand tightened on the receiver. "It is."

"Well, my name is Eddie Lawrence. I run a gas station on the north side and this afternoon I found a towel in the washroom with a message on it. Looked like it had been written with lipstick. At first I thought it was a gag, because when I tried to call the—"

"What was the message?" Fury asked. He had the odd feeling that he was standing on the other side of the room, listening to two other people talking.

"Something about being abducted. It said 'Help!' and

it was signed Mary Ellen Fury, and it asked me to call a number. I did, but nobody answered, so I thought it was just a gag until I happened to hear on the radio—”

“What was the number?” Fury interrupted.

“I can’t remember, exactly. It was an Irving exchange, I think—”

“Irving 6-6122?”

“That’s it! That’s the number I called, but no one—”

“What did you do with the message?”

“It’s still in my gas station. I crumpled it up and threw it in a corner, but it’s still there in—”

“Where are you now, Mr. Lawrence?” Fury had to make an effort to control his voice. He felt like shouting. He jotted down the name and address, repeated it, then said: “Please stay right where you are, Mr. Lawrence. A squad will be there in a few minutes. They’ll take you to your gas station and then return you to your home. I’ll be very grateful if you’ll find that message and give it to them.”

“Why, gosh, Lieutenant, I’d be glad to! I sure hope you find her!”

“Thank you, Mr. Lawrence. I’m really very much indebted to you for calling.” Fury hung up and stared at the slip of paper on which he had jotted Lawrence’s name and address. His hand was trembling. “Callahan!” he cried. “CALLAHAN!”

“Yes, Lieutenant!” Callahan came on the run.

For a moment, all Fury could do was look at the startled sergeant. Then he swallowed and said hoarsely: “This guy says he’s found a message from my wife. Get over there and pick it up. Phone me as soon as you have it.”

After Callahan left, Fury sat and stared at his hands for a moment. They had stopped trembling. Slowly, he clenched his right hand into a hard fist and pounded it against the top of his desk. The call had sounded on the level. But he knew only too well that, in every big case, there were always a bunch of screwballs who came in and confessed, who phoned in false information, who wrote letters accusing innocent people.

He got up abruptly and studied the map. The Ford had been seen at Ashland and Belmont. The guy who phoned had given an address about ten blocks north of there. The call might be on the level. He really might have a note written by Mary Ellen . . .

"Lieutenant—?"

Fury turned and saw that one of the secretaries was standing in his doorway. "Yes?" he said crisply.

"Captain Balzer is here to see you. He said it was urgent."

"Send him in."

Balzer entered the office, pushing ahead of him a slender, middle-aged man who wore gold-rimmed glasses. Balzer, ordinarily a big, bluff, genial man with a hearty hale-fellow-well-met attitude, appeared grim and determined. Fury shook hands with him, pointed to chairs.

"I think I've got the dope necessary to break the case," Balzer said immediately. "This is Vern Price, Lieutenant. He runs a joint in my district. The Wagon Wheel. He heard the killers planning to knock over Revens!"

Fury studied Price. "You actually saw them, all three of them?"

"Yessir, Lieutenant, I sure did—" Price began.

"*Four* of them, Lieutenant—not three!" Balzer interrupted. "And he not only saw them! He knows their names!"

Fury felt a quiver of excitement. Automatically, he reached for a pencil. "Go ahead, Mr. Price. I'm listening."

"Well, these guys been hanging around my joint, Lieutenant. They been coming in nearly every night for a couple weeks. Three guys and a girl. I been tending bar myself to cut down on expenses, and I couldn't help hearing them talking. I figured they were guns, and when I heard them planning a job, I knew they were guns for sure. The guy who acted like the boss was the guy whose picture you got in the papers. Hirsch, Wally Hirsch—that's his name. The girl—she's a young, good-looking blonde—was with him all the time, so I figured they were paired off. You know. Her name's Helen Harris. She works downtown someplace, I think. Anyway, she never came in until five-thirty, six o'clock."

"The other two?" Fury prompted.

"The other two were both guns. I'm sure of that. One was a Mex, name of Salvio Morales; the other was a sort of medium-sized guy, a bit older than the others, who worked his lips like he might be an ex-con. His name was Hoops—Jim Hoops. As soon as I read in the papers about the shooting this morning, I thought to myself—"

"Just a minute," Fury interrupted. He reached for the phone and called Identification. "This is Lieutenant Fury in Robbery. Get these names: Hirsch, Wally or Walter. Hoops, Jim or James, may be an ex-con. Morales, Salvio, possibly Mexican. Harris, Helen. See if you have anything on them. This is a hot tip and I want a fast report." He hung up, swung around to face Price. "You say you heard them talking. What did you hear?"

"Mostly the usual yak, Lieutenant. You know how it is when a few guys get together over some drinks. The thing that tipped me to them was the way they got off by themselves in a booth every once in a while, talking like they were thrashing something out, and whenever anybody went near they'd clam up. I figured they were planning on pulling a job and didn't want anybody to get wise."

"Did you hear them mention Revens?"

"Yessir, I did. I thought they were kidding, matter of fact. When Sergeant Kappus dropped in, I told him about it. It never occurred to me they might be serious or that he'd try to—"

"So you're the one who tipped Kappus."

"I sure did, Lieutenant. I figured it was my duty as a law-abiding citizen. But like I said, I thought the guys were just small-time, that their talking about Revens might be some kind of a joke. It never occurred to me that Sergeant Kappus would—"

"Where do these people live?"

"I don't know, Lieutenant. They used to come in during the evening, have some drinks, and—well, you know. People are coming in and going out all the time. I can't keep track of—"

"This girl," Fury interrupted. "What kind of work do you think she did?"

"I never heard them say, Lieutenant—"

"Now, look, Price," Fury snapped, "if you run a joint, and if she was a good-looking blonde, you must have sized her up. What type was she? A secretary? A dice girl? A girl on the make? A country type? Somebody in show biz?"

Price frowned thoughtfully. "Well, she looked kinda sharp, but not real smart—if you know what I mean. Dressed kinda good. Used nice perfume. She wasn't hustling, because the only guy she ever gave two peeks to was this Hirsch. I figured—"

"Yeah—" Fury scowled, reached for the phone again. "Sergeant Verdes? Lieutenant Fury. Get hold of that Dotty Wells, the elevator girl at Revens. Find out if she knows a blonde named Helen Harris who may have worked in the store. Call me back."

"I've known Mr. Price a long time," Balzer put in. "He runs a clean joint. He's always cooperated, too. You can bank on everything he tells you, Lieutenant—"

"I want him to dictate a statement," Fury said. "Then I want him to describe Hoops, Morales, and the girl to Sergeant Valanis. If the tip is straight, Captain, I'll see that the Commissioner hears about your part in this."

"I don't want any medals," Balzer protested. "All I want is to see that those cop-killers get what's coming to them."

"Naturally. This should help us to get them, Captain. If it does, you'll deserve credit." Fury's phone buzzed. "Take Mr. Price down to Identification, will you, Captain? I'll have a stenographer meet you there." He picked up the receiver. "Robbery. Lieutenant Fury."

"This is Parkinson, sir. Sergeant Callahan told us to wait until Marge Lito came home. We've got her now. What do we do with her?"

Fury explained in detail, then added: "If she has anything on a girl named Helen Harris, bring the file to my office immediately. Check the files for that, first—then the rest."

"Okay, Lieutenant."

Without putting down the receiver, Fury broke the connection, then dialed Radio. "This is Lieutenant Fury. How are you doing with that Checker?" He asked.

"Looks like he plans to make a cross-country run," the operator reported. "He's almost to Antioch—and the state line's only a few miles away. If he crosses the line, we're going to—"

"Notify the Wisconsin state police," Fury snapped. "If necessary, I want that cab tailed all the way to Canada."

"I already contacted the Wisconsin boys, Lieutenant."

"Good. Stick with it. That cab's damned important." As soon as he hung up, the phone buzzed. "Robbery. Lieutenant Fury."

"I've got the note," Saul Callahan's voice reported. "It's on a paper towel and written with lipstick. The towel's in

pretty poor shape, because he used it to wipe his face and then crumpled it up and—”

“What does it say?” Fury interrupted huskily.

“It says: “Am being abducted to farm. Please tell Irving 6-6122. Help! Mary Ellen Fury.” Callahan cleared his throat. “It looks on the level to me, Lieutenant. This guy didn’t see her, though. He says they may have stopped while he was busy out in front, and—”

“That’s all it says?”

“That’s all, Lieutenant. Those paper towels aren’t very big, you know.”

“All right, Saul. Check all the towels in that washroom. If there are any in the wastebasket, check them, too. Then come on in.”

“I already checked, Lieutenant. There’s nothing except this one towel. I’ll be right in.”

“Thanks, Saul.”

Fury got up and studied the map. Abducted to a farm. Christ, there were a million farms. The Checker was headed towards Antioch and beyond Antioch was Wisconsin. The state of Wisconsin was studded with farms. Minnesota was full of farms. They might even be headed for Iowa—and Iowa was lousy with farms. Why in God’s name couldn’t she have said *where* they were taking her! She didn’t know, of course. She must have heard them mention a farm. But that entire area was full of little lakes, summer resorts, and big and little farms. Unless that Checker led them to the spot, they were stumped.

The phone buzzed.

“Robbery. Lieutenant Fury.”

“This is Radio, Lieutenant. I’m sorry to report that Checker got away—”

“*What!*”

“Yes, sir. It went into Antioch, and, somehow, they got it confused with another Checker—and they took off after the wrong one. By the time they realized their mistake, it was too late. They’re cruising around on the chance of spotting him again, but it looks pretty hopeless to me, Lieutenant. Our only chance is if he tries to cross the state line. Then maybe the Wisconsin boys will be able to pick him up.”

“Okay,” Fury said quietly. “Thanks.”

He hung up. Then he groaned.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

IF SHE pulled a cop away from the door, she did the smart thing," Wally decided. "If we'd come out and run into a cop, we'd have been dead ducks. We'd have had to blast him before he could blast us, and we'd have been spotted by fifty people, sure as hell. You agree, Jim?"

"If she pulled a cop away," Jim Hoops said pointedly. "All we've got is her say so."

"You bastard!" Helen exclaimed. "If it hadn't been for me, you trigger-happy morons would have come waltzing out and found a reception committee waiting!"

"Shut up, Helen," Wally ordered.

The money pouches, as yet unopened, lay on the kitchen table. Hoops, Helen and Wally were seated around the table, smoking and drinking in almost complete darkness. Flashlights and a kerosene lamp were available, but Wally had ruled that a light would be dangerous. The house was supposed to be unoccupied. Farmers were nosy and sharp-eyed. The windows were shaded, but someone might drive past, glimpse the light, and come snooping around.

"She got yellow and ducked out," Hoops' accused. "Then she read that we had got away and had made a big score, so she dreamed up that crap about a cop. She didn't have the guts to stick there with the car like she was supposed to do, but now she's got the guts to come around and ask for a piece of something she—"

"What's the big idea?" Helen demanded. "Are you trying to deal me out so you can grab my share? Well, you've got another think coming! Maybe you're a big shot when you've got a shotgun in your hands, but I'm not scared of you and I'm not holding still for—"

"For chrissake, Helen!" Wally pleaded. "Shut up and let me—"

"I won't shut up!" Helen retorted. "Who got the dope so you could plan the caper? Who came out here and cleaned and bought supplies and—"

"You did!" Wally admitted quickly. "No one's trying to do you out of your cut. Jim's sore because he thinks you ducked out—and I was sore at first, too. If you'd come running out like we did, you'd realize that it's only by the grace of God that we managed to get here—"

"Is that her name?" Helen demanded. "Grace?"

"I don't know what you're—" Wally began. He stopped, laughed shortly. "Oh, her. So that's what you're griped about. Her name's Mary Ellen."

"Mary Ellen, huh?" Helen took a deep drag on her cigarette. "I suppose I've got competition now. Why didn't you dump her out of the car? Why bring her here, for God's sake?"

"She saw us. She heard us talking. She'd have told the heat what plates we were carrying," Wally explained. "It's a good thing I had her along, as a matter of fact. I might have gotten in a jam with cops."

"Where'd you put her?"

"Upstairs. She wanted to go to bed."

"You mean she's up there alone?" Helen asked incredulously. "Oh—you mean you got her tied up?"

"Why should I tie her up? She isn't going any place."

"You fool!" Helen sprang to her feet. "All she has to do is open the window and jump out. She's probably on her way to Antioch right now—"

"She's not nuts enough to jump out of a second-story window. She's in bed."

"Listen, wise guy. When I wanted to go dancing and my parents said I couldn't, I went out those windows plenty of times. There's a rainpipe and all you gotta do is—"

"This dame isn't interested in going dancing," Wally said, laughing softly. "And she couldn't get near a rainpipe."

"Why not? Even if she's fat, she could grab it and—"

"The dame's pregnant," Hoops put in sourly.

"Pregnant?" Helen was silent a moment. "You mean it?"

"She's darned near ready to pop," Wally admitted. "One thing we don't need to worry about is her trying to run any place. She's scared she'll hurt the kid."

"This I've got to see," Helen said. She took one of the

flashlights, flicked it on, and started for the narrow stairs which led to the second floor.

"Douse the damned flash!" Wally growled. "I said no lights, didn't I?"

"Nobody'll see a light up there," Helen retorted. "There's nothing facing that window except the barn and a lot of trees." She ran lightly upstairs.

"Stubborn bitch," Hoops commented. "That dame's aching for a kick in the kisser."

"You don't understand her, Jim," Wally said placatingly. "She's all right."

"The hell I don't. I understand her too well. She's asking for trouble, and if we don't get rid of her, we're all going to get it in the neck. I'm in favor of kissing her good-bye."

"A deal is a deal," Wally said. "She gets her cut. After all, she helped set up the caper."

Hoops sniffed. A match flared as he lit another cigarette. They smoked in silence for a while, both listening to the chirping of the crickets outdoors and the unintelligible murmur of the girls' voices upstairs.

"Too bad they got that picture of you," Jim remarked finally. "It sort of makes you a marked man."

"They were dumb to print it," Wally retorted. "Now that I know they've got it, all I've got to do is raise a mustache, put on some fake specs, maybe even bleach my hair a little—and they'll be looking for six other guys."

"I don't know. That sketch was pretty damned good."

"Forget it. I'm not worrying. Why should you?"

"I'm glad they didn't tag me like that."

"Forget it. For chrissake, forget it!" Wally muttered. "I wonder what's keeping Salvio?"

"Maybe they got him."

"Could be. Salvio's no stupe, though. I wish to hell we had a radio. Maybe we're sitting here waiting for nothing."

"Hell, why wait? Let's open the bags and see what we got. We can cut it up and put his in a pile, then we'll be ready to take off when he gets here."

"We agreed to wait. You know how you'd feel if you walked in and found the dough split up. You'd think we screwed you, maybe."

"Well, I'd like to know how big a score we made."

"Three hundred grand, the paper said."

"One said three-*fifty*."

"Either way, it's a sweet score."

"Damned right," Hoops said happily. "Boy, I'll bet those cop bastards are burning!"

"No doubt about it," Wally agreed. He smiled into the darkness.

During the abduction, Mary Ellen had been scared, of course. But her mind had been occupied with trying to figure out who the men were, what they had done, where they were taking her, how she could escape. Now there was nothing to do—and suddenly she was terrified.

After they had eaten, he had stacked the dishes in the sink. Then he had prowled the house restlessly. After that he decided to take all the guns apart and clean them. She sat at the table, watching him by fading daylight. While he worked, he hummed tonelessly, exactly the way Bob did when he was doing something he enjoyed. The memory sent a sharp spasm of remorse through her, and as though everything had been a dream up to that point, she suddenly became completely conscious of her danger.

She had been kidnapped by a gang of thieves—by *killers*. She was in Wisconsin, miles from the jurisdiction of the Chicago police. They had no intention of ever letting her go. They *couldn't* let her go, not even so she could have her baby, because she had seen too much, knew too much.

He was waiting for the others to come, and when they arrived, they'd divide the money. Then they'd decide what to do with her. She knew what the decision would be. They were killers. They couldn't afford to take any chances. They had to seal her mouth permanently. They had to kill her.

Mary Ellen didn't want to die. She loved her home and her husband. Even if she did have to wash dishes and scrub woodwork and do her own marketing and make her clothes and shoes last—she loved doing it. Bob would miss her. He'd be a bachelor if it hadn't been for her. He'd be all alone in their new house. There wouldn't be anyone to keep track of his clothes, to cook late snacks for him—and he wouldn't like sleeping with anyone else, either.

She suddenly felt like crying.

Nobody was indispensable—and Bob was a man, of

course. He'd get along, somehow. She wasn't afraid to die; everybody had to die someday. It wouldn't be so bad if it weren't for the baby. When they killed her, they'd kill the baby.

Tears filled her eyes and began to trickle down her cheeks. She felt hopeless and impotent and exhausted and betrayed and abandoned and lost; in fact, she felt downright sick, mentally and physically sick.

"Could . . . could I lie down somewhere?" she whispered.

He jerked his head around and stared at her, and then told her there was a bed upstairs. It was almost dark, but she managed to stumble up the stairs. There were two rooms upstairs, each with a window, but only one of the rooms was furnished. It had a big, old-fashioned, iron-framed bed, a rickety wicker chair—and nothing else. It was chilly upstairs, too; much chillier than it had been in the kitchen. There was a quilt and two thick blankets on the bed, though. Without bothering to undress, she kicked off her shoes, crawled under the covers, drew her knees up, and cradled the baby in her arms. She trembled—and then the sobs came. She cried until, finally, she fell asleep.

She was awakened by a light flashing into her eyes and a hand touching her body. She cringed away and tried to sit up, a cry of terror moaning in her throat.

"It's okay," a girl's voice said. "It's just me."

The light moved and she saw that the room was very dark and that the light came from a flashlight in the hand of a blonde girl, who looked like she might be about her own age. She had pulled the blankets aside and was staring at Mary Ellen's body as though she were either angry or stunned.

"I . . . I was sleeping . . . I guess!" Mary Ellen gasped.

"Gosh, you really are going to have a baby, aren't you!" the girl said, sounding awed. "How far gone are you?"

"It's due any time now," Mary Ellen told her.

"Would you mind if I . . . if I touched it?" the girl asked, sitting on the edge of the bed.

Without realizing it, Mary Ellen smiled. The girl seemed completely awed. "Put your hand right here. Feel that sort of little bump? That's its foot."

"I'll be darned." The girl pressed lightly with her hand, her pretty face curiously serious. "You know, I nearly had a baby, once."

"You did?"

The girl nodded. "Uh-huh. A boy in high school did it to me. We weren't married, weren't even going steady. You're married, aren't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, we weren't. I hardly knew the guy, in fact. We went to a dance, and on the way back, we parked in his car—and it happened. I didn't think much about it at the time, but I got knocked up higher than a kite. I was thinking about running away from home, when my old man happened to find out. He took a strap to me."

"Oh," Mary Ellen said sympathetically.

"Anyway, he beat me so bad I lost the kid. Maybe it was just as well." The girl shrugged and her face changed. She suddenly looked older and shrewder. "You've certainly got yourself into a peck of trouble," she accused.

"Are you . . . are you one of *them*?"

The girl nodded. "I was supposed to drive the car. A cop chased me away and you must have parked right where I was supposed to be." She moistened her lips nervously. "You know what we did, I suppose."

"I couldn't help hearing them talking," Mary Ellen admitted. "They . . . they shot someone, didn't they?"

"Two cops and a bank messenger. Killed all three."

"Oh."

"Nobody was supposed to get hurt. One of the guys got trigger-crazy when he saw the cops. We planned to just grab the dough and run, but now we're all on the spot."

"Oh," Mary Ellen said again. It sounded inadequate, but she couldn't think of anything else to say.

"The way we had it planned, it was going to be easy. We intended to hide out here for a day or two, then to break up and go on our ways. But now we've got three killings and a kidnapping against us. We're going to have a tough time getting anywhere. On top of that, you're in the family way. Life can get so complicated."

"I don't care what they do to me," Mary Ellen said quickly. "I just don't want anything to happen to the baby. Will you tell them that? If they'll let me have my baby, I swear I'll never mention them to anybody!"

The girl shrugged. "I'll tell them, but they aren't going to believe it. You can't blame them. If we're caught, we'll all burn for sure. I guess you know that, don't you?" Her

voice changed again. "You'd better cover yourself before you catch cold. Say, what's your name, anyway?"

"Mary Ellen Fury."

"That's kind of pretty." The girl smiled fleetingly. "Well, I better go back downstairs. You go to sleep."

As the flashlight moved toward the door, Mary Ellen called: "Will you tell me where the bathroom is, please?"

"We're roughing it," the girl told her. "All we've got is a privy out in back. If you really gotta go, I'll show you where it is."

"I'm coming," Mary Ellen said quickly. "Please wait for me."

Jim Hoops rose swiftly and grabbed the shotgun.

"What's the matter?" Wally demanded.

"Someone's outside," Hoops said quietly. "Listen."

Tensely, they stood in the dark kitchen, listening. A slurring, scuffling sound became audible, and as one, they moved to the door and stepped outside. The air was chilly and both shivered involuntarily. It was very dark outside, with only a sliver of moon rising far to the south. The sound came again, from the direction of the road, louder and more distinct than before. Hoops, the shotgun poised for action, knelt and stared toward the road. A moving shadow gradually became discernible. It moved parallel with the road, stopped, then turned and came toward the farmhouse. Gradually, the shadow took on the shape of a man. Hoops raised the shotgun and steadied its barrel.

"Wait," Wally whispered. "Maybe it's Salvio."

They waited, immobile and scarcely breathing, until he was about twenty-five feet away. Then Wally said: "Stay where you are! Don't move!"

"*Amigos!*" a voice said lightly. "It is Salvio, come to visit the beautiful *hacienda!*"

"For chrissake!" Hoops growled, getting to his feet. "You damned near got lead poisoning. Why didn't you holler?"

"Yeah, you scared hell out of us," Wally agreed. "We figured you'd holed up some place for the night."

"I wait for dark," Salvio explained, coming up to them. "Walking is not for me. My feet ache. I got to sit down."

"How far did you hike?" Wally asked.

"From Antioch. Too far. Must be miles and miles."

"Hell, that's only three miles," Hoops said derisively. "I walked that myself."

"How'd you get to Antioch?" Wally demanded. "Bus?"

"Taxi!" Salvio's teeth flashed faintly in the moonlight.

"You mean you rode a cab all the way from Chi to Antioch?" Wally cried. "You dumb jerk, don't you know the cops'll check on all the cabs and—"

"Not this one," Salvio said, laughing softly. "I hook it."

"Oh, Jesus!" Hoops groaned. "You hooked a cab in Chi and dropped it in Antioch? Don't you know they'll spot that cab, and fifteen minutes after they do, every cop in the country will be around here, looking for us?"

"Why?" Salvio asked. "A cab is a cab. Anyone can steal one, no?"

"Maybe you don't realize it, kid, but we're goddam hot! They'll be checking every lead they get. You ever hear of a thing called radio? For all you know, they may have spotted you and been right on your tail!"

"Nobody follow. I watch," Salvio said confidently.

"You sure you weren't spotted in Antioch?"

"Nobody follow. I come across fields."

"Well, maybe it's okay. At least, you're here," Wally said. "No use yakking about spilled milk. Let's get inside where it's warmer." He shivered. "It sure as hell gets cold out here in the country."

"The money, it is here?" Salvio asked.

"Yeah, it's inside. We haven't opened it yet. We were waiting for you." Wally was reaching for the doorknob, when the door opened and Helen and the redhead appeared. "Where do you think you're going?" Wally demanded.

"To the little girl's room, if you don't mind!" Helen retorted, pushing past him. She saw Salvio. "Well, cowboy, so you finally got here. I was beginning to think you were cheating on me. Come on, Mary Ellen. If they don't get out of your way, give 'em a push."

"Don't take all night," Wally growled. "Now that Salvio's here, we can get down to business."

"Don't worry, lover. We'll be right back."

"One dame is bad," Hoops commented, groping his way back into the dark kitchen, "but two of them is worse. We gotta get rid of them dames, Wally."

"What do you mean, get rid of *them*?" Wally demanded. "We've got to do something about the redhead, that's for sure. But Helen's in on the caper. She's got the same vote you or Salvio's got."

"I still think she ducked out on us," Hoops said stubbornly. "When it comes to a tight spot, dames are no good. She's out to get what she can from you, and if we get in a bad jam, she'll try to save her own skin before she—"

"That's enough, Jim," Wally warned. "Helen's with me. Don't you forget it, either."

"Hey, where is the light?" Salvio murmured.

"Too dangerous," Wally snapped.

"Then how're we going to count the take?" Hoops asked.

"We gotta have some light."

"We'll take the stuff upstairs," Wally decided. "Helen says you can't see the light from the road. Each of you grab a chair. I'll bring the bags." He flashed a light for a second, located the pouches, then held the light so it illuminated the stairs. "Move fast, you guys. I don't want anybody coming around and asking questions."

"How much we get?" Salvio asked, going up the stairs with a kitchen chair held in front of him. "Hundred grand?"

"The paper says three-fifty," Hoops told him.

"Three *hundred* fifty grand?" Salvio sounded awed.

"That's what the paper said."

"*Madre mio!*" Salvio murmured reverently. "We are all rich!"

"Our cut'll be seventy grand apiece—and that ain't peanuts," Hoops agreed. He carried his chair around to the other side of the bed and set it down. "We oughtta have that lamp that's downstairs, Wally."

"Go down and get it, then," Wally told him. "Bring up that knife that's on the stove, too. We're going to have to cut these bags open."

"I got knife," Salvio said. He dipped a hand into the pocket of his jacket. A knife seemed to spring into his palm, its long, keen blade open and ready for action. Salvio laughed at the startled expressions on their faces. "This good knife. Cut anything!"

"I'll take your word for it," Wally said. He tossed the heavy pouches onto the bed. "Just get the lamp, Jim—and tell the girls to get up here."

"Don't get excited, gentlemen, we're already here," Helen said, coming up the stairs. The redhead was right behind her.

"How about her?" Hoops asked, pointing at the redhead. "You going to let her sit in on this?"

"May as well. She knows so much now that a little bit more won't make any difference." Wally smiled slightly. "Anyway, we may need somebody to referee things. Get the damned lamp, Jim, so we can get started—and stop worrying about everything."

Hoops opened his mouth as though to say something, then he turned and hurried downstairs. He returned with the kerosene lamp. Wally struck a match, touched it to the wick, adjusted it until a flickering yellowish light illuminated the bedroom.

"Us girls will take grandstand seats on the bed," Helen said. "Come on, Mary Ellen. You can lean against this pillow." Smiling, Helen helped the redhead onto the bed, adjusted a pillow behind her back. Then Helen climbed onto the bed beside her and smoothed her skirt over her knees. "All right, boys, pitch it right here." She patted her lap. "Come to mama, you beautiful greenbacks!"

"Okay, Salvio," Wally said softly. "Open one of them up."

Flashing his teeth in a big smile, Salvio reached toward one of the leather pouches, and as delicately as a surgeon making an incision, he drew the knife down its length. The leather parted and several bundles of banknotes spilled onto the bed. Hoops, chuckling, grabbed the pouch, held it high—and shook it. Rolls of coins and bundles of paper money cascaded onto the blanket.

"Wow!" Helen said reverently. "Look at all them mink coats!"

Wally laughed, picked up five bundles, each marked one thousand dollars, and tossed them into her lap. "Here's the yellow Caddy I promised you, kiddo!" He picked up five more, tossed them in front of Hoops. "Buy yourself a gas station, Jim!" Then to Salvio: "What do you want, Salvio—a gin mill of your own? Here's the down payment."

He counted out five grand for each of them, then gave himself ten grand. Twice more he went around, giving each a similar amount each time around. That took care of the

bills. He divided the rolls of coins rapidly, giving each of them one thousand and himself two thousand.

"Hell, that's only a total of eighty grand," Hoops commented, eyeing the second pouch with anticipation. "This one must be really loaded!"

Salvio sliced through the leather of the second pouch, and once again, Hoops grabbed it and held it high and shook it. Bundles of money rained onto the bed again, but this time, they were greeted with silence.

"For chrissake," Hoops said. He sounded stunned. "They're nothing but dollar bills." He pushed his hand into the pouch, threw it aside, got the first pouch, examined it incredulously. "You mean that's *all*?" he cried. "That ain't anywhere near three hundred grand!"

"We've been robbed," Helen said seriously.

"Damned right, we've been robbed!" Hoops shouted. "Give me that flash, Wally." He snatched the flashlight and subjected each of the pouches to a careful examination. When he finished, he cursed and kicked them violently across the room.

Wally grinned. "What's the matter, Jim?" he challenged. "Did you think I opened them up and pasted them back together again?"

"I think it's damned funny that the papers say we got over three hundred grand—and all that's here doesn't even add to a third of that!" Hoops said angrily. He pointed at the pile of dollar bills. "There ain't even twenty grand there. It's chicken feed, that's what is is!"

"This chicken will take some of it," Helen said, laughing. She patted her lap invitingly.

Wally bent over the bed and divided the bundles into five equal piles, each totaling twelve hundred dollars. He divided three between them, kept two for himself. "It comes to about the way I originally figured," he told them. "It's not what the papers say we got, but it's more than we first aimed for. I don't think you got much reason to gripe, Jim. Yesterday you were broke. Now you got a nice nest egg." He looked at Helen. "You satisfied, baby?"

"Why not?" She cuddled an armful of the bundles. "I've got over seventeen thousand dollars. That's more than I ever *saw* before."

"How about you, Salvio?"

"Okay, Wally!" Salvio flashed his teeth. "I rich man now, *si?*"

"You're rich—if you can slide home free, now, kid," Wally told him. "How about you, Jim. Satisfied?"

"Someone's giving us a fast shuffle!" Hoops declared positively. "Either the store's got a crooked cashier, or the cops are figuring a way so they—"

"Maybe the store was insured," Helen put in brightly. "Maybe they told the papers three hundred grand because they're going to claim that much."

"Yeah. Could be." Hoops nodded slowly. "I think you got it figured, Helen. The store, the bank, and the cops, they put their heads together and they're going to beat the insurance company out of a couple hundred grand. The cheap conniving crooks! I've got a notion to write a note to the papers, by God!"

"The big problem now," Wally said pointedly, "is what are we going to do with the redhead?"

Wally, Jim and Salvio were sitting in the kitchen. They had come downstairs to wrap their shares of the loot into individual packages and had remained to drink to the success of the caper. Helen and the redhead were still upstairs.

"It's no problem," Hoops said. "We gotta knock her off. Period. We ain't safe as long as she can yell cop."

"What do you think, Salvio?"

Salvio was silent for a moment. "She is danger," he admitted, somewhat reluctantly.

"You're right," Wally agreed. "She's a danger as long as she's alive. The next question is: Who's going to do it?"

"I knocked off two cops and you knocked off the bank messenger," Jim said casually. "It's Salvio's turn."

"Woman full of baby is bad luck," Salvio murmured. "This Helen, she went away with the car. Why not let her do it?"

"That's a damned good idea," Jim agreed. "So far, all she's done is talk. Let her prove that she's with us. You're sharp, Salvio!"

"I don't think she'll do it," Wally said, shaking his head. "She'll do damned near anything to get dough, but she'll draw the line at knocking off another dame in cold blood."

"Tell her it's either her or the redhead," Jim suggested.

"What do you mean?"

"You got hot pants for this Helen, so it's spoiling your judgment," Jim accused. "I say she ducked out on us. She says she didn't. There's no way we can know for sure which it is. One of these days she's gonna get sick of you, or you're gonna rub her fur the wrong way, and then there'll be hell to pay. All she's got to do is run to the cops and turn state's evidence—and we'll be sitting in the seat while she's outside laughing at us. I'm in favor of knocking her off, deal or no deal, just to clear the air. But—" Jim paused and pointed the glowing tip of his cigarette at Wally. "—but if she's willing to knock off this redhead, that'll convince me that she's on the level. She'll be in it as deep as we are and turning state's evidence won't save her neck. She'll be a killer just like us—and we can relax." His voice swung toward Salvio. "Am I right, Sal?"

"It would be a proof," Salvio murmured.

"She won't do it," Wally said flatly. "You guys don't understand her. She'd rather take a beating than hurt anybody. Killing isn't a girl's job, anyway. If you want the redhead knocked off, we'll match for the job and—"

"Match, hell!" Jim snorted. "I'm putting it to you fair and square, Wally. Either she knocks off the redhead—or she *and* the redhead are going to get taken care of."

There was a long silence. Upstairs, the drone of the girls' voices continued. Outside, the crickets chirped incessantly. Wally sighed.

"All right. I'll tell her," he said. "I know she won't do it, though."

Helen came clattering down the stairs. She stopped when she reached the kitchen and stood in the doorway, trying to adjust her eyes to the darkness. When she made out the glowing tips of the three cigarettes, she moved carefully toward the table.

"I thought you guys were coming back up," she said. "What're you doing down here, figuring out where to spend your money?"

"Yeah," Wally mumbled.

"Well, you can start by buying me a drink," she said. She reached the table, located a chair, sat down. "You know, I'm worried about that girl we've got upstairs. I don't know much about having kids, but it looks to me like she might drop it any minute. She says it's a couple days late already."

Silence greeted her statement.

"Well, are you guys struck dumb?" she demanded. "Or am I just talking to myself?"

Jim Hoops cleared his throat. His chair scraped the floor. "Let's you and me take a walk around outside, Sal," he said casually. "Maybe Wally and Helen got something they want to talk about."

CHAPTER TWENTY

IT WAS nearly midnight. The stolen taxi had been located in Antioch, Illinois, abandoned behind the small town's only hotel. Nothing had been found in the taxi except a driver's cap, and that had been claimed by the owner of the taxi. The Antioch police had reported that the town had been combed from end to end. No unidentified strangers were within the town's precincts.

According to the Wisconsin state police, all highways in the area had been under continuous guard and all cars driven by males had been stopped. No one even remotely answering the description of the man who had stolen the Checker taxi had been spotted. This report had been echoed by the sheriffs of three surrounding counties. Apparently the Mex had gotten out of the stolen Checker—and immediately hopped a ride on a flying saucer.

The personnel records of the Revens store had been examined. A Helen Harris had been employed as an elevator operator, and according to the time records, she frequently had been assigned to the early shift. According to her application form, she was twenty-two years old, white, five-foot seven inches, one hundred and twelve pounds. Protestant, born in Waterloo, Iowa, and was not a high school graduate. The store did not require that applicants for employment furnish photographs.

Vern Price had been shown photos of thousands of known robbers and gunmen. An urgent request had been teletyped to the F.B.I. in Washington, asking for any and all data recorded against Wally Hirsch, Walter Hirsch, Jim

Hoops, James Hoops, Salvio Morales, and Helen Harris or Helene Harris. So far, Price had failed to identify any of the photos—and nothing had come through from Washington.

However, the police machine still continued to grind. The Clark Street area had been searched again, and a woman named Marta Nogales was in custody. A man's shirt and slacks had been found in her room, of a size and description which tallied with the clothes known to have been worn by Morales. However, the woman denied, loudly and in two languages, that she had been visited by any "bad mans."

Ballistics had come through with a report on the slug which had killed Nels Gregerson, the bank messenger. It had been fired from a .38 caliber Smith and Wesson revolver. Identification had produced photos of hundreds of fingerprints, all taken from the glass of the counter near which Hirsch had stood. It was impossible to tell which were his.

Homicide was going nuts, trying to trace down all the tips phoned in by helpful citizens. And, ever since Danny Ballard went on the air with the news that Mary Ellen Fury was missing, the switchboards had been swamped with calls from people who were sure that they had seen a red-haired girl who looked awfully pregnant and who might be that policeman's wife.

"You'd better go home and get some sleep," Callahan suggested when the clock showed midnight. "Nothing's going to break any more tonight. I'll call you if anything does."

Lieutenant Fury continued to stare at the map. "Thanks, Saul," he muttered. "I'll stick it out a little longer. You go on home."

"Looking at the map isn't going to tell you where that guy went," Callahan growled. "He could be in Minneapolis by now."

"I've got a hunch, Saul," Fury said quietly.

"Yeah?" Callahan slid a hip onto the corner of Fury's desk. "Tell me about it."

"Hirsch was heading north when he was spotted at Ashland and Belmont. The guy in the Checker went north—all the way to Antioch. Mary Ellen's note mentioned a farm. I think they've holed up on a farm in Wisconsin, somewhere near Antioch."

"Why abandon the Checker in Antioch, then?"

"Because Antioch was in walking distance, and he was afraid a taxi would get spotted out in the country."

"Sounds reasonable. Why Wisconsin, though? There's a lot of farms right around Antioch."

"Because they didn't intend to shoot anybody. Kappus and Titis had no business being in the store. If they hadn't come down in that elevator when they did, it would have been a run-of-the-mill robbery. They would have sapped the two bank messengers, put them in the stockroom with the girl and the old man, grabbed the dough, and taken off. Kappus and Titis butted in though, and it developed into a homicide, a triple homicide, with a lot of shooting and screaming which they hadn't figured on."

"I still don't get it."

"Forget you're a cop, Saul. Try to figure it the way they did. What would have happened if they'd managed to just grab the dough and run? We'd have got out a broadcast on them, and the papers would have given the story some play locally, but that's about as far as it would have gone. A department store had got robbed—so what? They'd have grabbed the dough, separated, and met later somewhere across the state line, some place like a farm, where they could have divided the dough leisurely and relaxed in safety while the heat would have died down."

"Well—" Callahan scowled at the map.

"It figures, Saul. It would have worked, too, if they hadn't made the mistake of killing two cops. They knew they had the big heat after them, but it was too late to change their plans. That's how Mary Ellen got rung in on the deal. They panicked after the shooting and she happened to be outside in her car. Hirsch must have jumped in, pushed a gun in her face, and grabbed the wheel. She couldn't have done a thing. She'd have had to go along with him."

"There's a hell of a lot of farms in that area," Callahan said, still scowling at the map.

"That's where they are, though," Fury said bleakly. "They're holed up in there somewhere, and that's where they're holding my wife."

"Why don't we go look for them?" Callahan asked quietly.

"It's out of our jurisdiction."

"We could ring in the F.B.I. and the state police."

"Too much red tape.-By the time they got organized, they'll have rendezvoused and gone. My wife might be dead. The baby, too."

"Tell you what, Lieutenant," Callahan said thoughtfully. "Like you say, there's a lot of red tape. But there's more than one way of skinning a cat. Suppose we make out a set of reports. We'll send one to the F.B.I., the other to Homicide. Then we'll put Sergeant Loomis in charge of the office. After all, we're both entitled to some sleep. But we won't go home to bed. We'll go to Antioch and see what we can dig up."

"You're sticking your neck out, Saul."

"Well, it's my neck." Callahan grinned suddenly. "You start composing those reports, Lieutenant. I'll see if I can get a radio car and a couple volunteers."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

HERE'S SOMETHING you don't know, Sal," Jim Hoops said, keeping his voice low. He and Salvio were standing near the outhouse. In comparison with the city noises which they were used to, the country seemed deathly quiet. "The cops got a picture of Wally. It's in all the papers already."

"Picture?" Salvio sounded surprised—and afraid. "How they do that?"

"They had a cop artist question the clerks. You remember how he stood there, saying good morning to them, just like he owned the joint? Well, they got a good look at him, and they described him to this cop artist, and he drew the picture. Looks just like him, too."

"That is bad, no?"

"It is bad, yes. I couldn't help blasting those cops, Sal. You know that. It was either you or them. You'd be dead now, sure, if I hadn't blown them to hell when I did. But nothing scares a cop like another cop getting killed, and now they're hot for our necks. If we get caught, we'll burn. You realize that?"

"I go far away. Rich man do anything, go anywhere."

"That's what you think! No matter where you go, they'll extradite you. Bring you back. They can do it legally, and having dough won't do you any good."

"What we going to do, Jim?"

"I don't know. I'm worried about them two dames. We've sure as hell got to get rid of them. I'm worried about Wally too, now that the cops have his picture. They're going to spot him, sooner or later, and they're liable to make him talk. They'll pressure the hell out of him. They may even make a deal with him, a deal letting him off easy if he gives them the dope on us. That's a big temptation when the cops are kicking you around, Sal. Take my word for it. I've seen bigger and better guys than Wally break and run off at the mouth when the cops started working them over."

"Bad!" Salvio shook his head.

"Damned bad," Jim agreed. "To protect ourselves, we ought to get rid of Wally. I like the guy, but that picture makes him a liability. You take a peek at it when we get back to the house. They've got it right on the front page of the paper, where everybody and his sister will see it. I tell you, he's a marked man."

"We kill Wally." Salvio smiled. "Then I take Helen!"

"If she knocks off the redhead," Jim agreed. "I don't care what you do with the blonde, providing she does what she's supposed to do. As soon as she knocks off the redhead, she's yours. We'll split his cut of the take, too. That'll be another seventeen grand apiece."

"Ah, we will be very rich men, Jim!"

"Very rich—and very safe," Jim said emphatically. "You willing to do the job?"

"Right now?" Salvio reached into his pocket and brought out his knife. The blade glistened in the faint moonlight.

"Wait until Helen takes care of the redhead. Once that's settled, we can finish Wally and then be on our way. Okay?"

"Okay, Jim."

Solemnly, they shook hands.

"I can't do it, Wally!" Helen said in a horrified whisper. "You know I can't do it!"

"You're going to have to," Wally told her. "Jim's right

about her being a danger. She's got to be taken care of. Two words out of her and we'd all burn."

"Don't make *me* do it! I never killed *anything*, Wally!"

"Jim is convinced that you ducked out on us this morning. He wants you to be in as deep as we are."

"That trigger-crazy rat!" she exclaimed. "You aren't going to listen to him, are you? I did just as much as he did!"

"I'm not saying you didn't," Wally explained patiently. "All I'm saying is that the redhead has got to be gotten rid of. The only way you can convince Jim that you're with us, now and forever, is by doing the job yourself."

"But the baby, Wally! I'd be killing a poor, helpless baby!"

"It isn't a baby until it's born. For chrissake, Helen, don't you realize that she's *got* to be killed? And if you don't do the job, Jim's going to be worried about you, and as long as he's worried, you're in danger? To put his own mind at rest, he's liable to put a couple slugs into you."

"And you'll let him, I suppose!"

"I can't stand guard over you every second, and you can't blame a man for trying to protect himself, either. I hate to admit it, but Jim's right about this. You don't have to shoot her. You could just push her down the stairs, or something."

"Not while she's got the baby, Wally. Please! Let's wait until she's had it, and then—"

"Don't be stupid. She *can't* have the baby, not here, anyway! Who's going to deliver it? Who'd take care of it? She'd die and the baby'd die, and we'd just have a hell of a mess. Push her down the stairs, like I said, and we can dig a hole out in back where she'd never be found. Then we can get out of here and relax."

"I'll have to think about it, Wally." Helen's voice quavered. "Honest, I'm scared of killing a baby. I couldn't ever sleep if I did that."

"Well, none of us are going to get much sleep as long as that redhead's alive," Wally warned. "You'd better get your feet on the ground, kid. Jim's getting nervous—and so am I."

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

ON THE RIDE NORTH, Lieutenant Fury sat in the back of the police sedan and let Callahan do the talking. Ronnie Schwinn, a detective assigned to Homicide, had volunteered to go along. As he drove, Callahan reviewed all the known facts and explained Fury's theory, while Schwinn studied a map of the area and asked questions.

Fury was nearly oblivious to their presence. Out of his office and away from the headquarters building, he felt less like a police officer and more like a man riding to the rescue of his wife and child. He visualized Mary Ellen with frightening clarity, and as the miles rolled past, he saw her weeping while submitting to the killers' demands, saw them striking her and binding her so she couldn't run away, saw them staring at her and deciding that she had to die. He couldn't bear to think about the baby. Perhaps she already had had it. Perhaps it was dead. Perhaps they were both dead.

"—don't you agree, Lieutenant?" Callahan asked.

With difficulty, Fury tore his mind away from his imaginings. "I'm sorry, Saul. What did you say?"

"Assuming they're holed up out there. On a farm, say. They wouldn't have expected to just barge in on any old farm and take over. Either it's a place which is for rent or a place which nobody has been using for a while. Reasonable?"

"Yes."

"Well, in that case, they must have been out to it a couple times before. They probably laid in some supplies. Groceries, smokes, liquor—you know. According to this map, Antioch's just a whistle-stop. Only twenty-five hundred people. There can't be many stores, and somebody ought to remember if some strangers were in buying a lot of stuff like that—"

"It's a resort area," Fury said. "People rent cottages."

"Yeah, I guess that's right," Callahan admitted. "Well,

Schwinn has an idea worth looking into, I think. He says chances are that these three guns are from out of town. He thinks our best lead is the girl, that Helen Harris. He thinks she may have lived around here, maybe even went to school here."

"It's just a chance, Lieutenant," Schwinn put in. "But according to the map, there's just the town of Antioch, and across the state line, another little town called Trevor. I thought we might check with the school authorities and ask if they'd ever heard the name."

"Not a bad idea," Fury agreed, thinking it over. "I wish we had a picture, though."

"We know her size, age, weight—and that she was pretty," Callahan said. "That, plus the fact that she's a blonde, ought to narrow the field considerably."

"Where are we now, Saul?"

"Nowhere near, Lieutenant. You can take another nap."

Fury grunted and went back to his imaginings.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

WHAT'D SHE SAY?" Jim demanded. He struck a match and held it awhile before touching it to his cigarette. His eyes were narrow and calculating.

"She's thinking about it," Wally replied. "She understands the situation."

"Thinking!?" Jim snorted. "She's gotta show some action."

"She'd do it in a minute if it weren't for the kid. I don't think she'd even hesitate. You know how dames are about kids, Jim. It's the baby that bothers her."

"Oh, for chrissake," Jim said disgustedly. "She's yellow, that's what's the matter. She handed you a lot of sweet-talk, probably begged you to take the job off her hands! Well, by God, if she ducks out on this, I'm going to make double-damned sure that she—"

"You're going to shut your trap and keep it shut!" Wally flared angrily. "Who's running this caper—you or me?"

You fixing to take over? If you are, let's hear you say so!"

"Why get in an uproar?" Jim demanded. "You're the boss. Nobody said you weren't. But you know I'm right. It's our necks and we got a vote, too, ain't we?"

"Keep your trap shut, Jim, and let me think!"

"All right, all right, for chrissake," Jim muttered. "Sal, hand me another beer. The box is behind you somewhere."

Salvio fumbled around in the dark, found the beer, opened a can apiece for Jim and himself. "You want beer, Wally?" he asked.

"Yeah, I guess so," Wally said irritably. "I wish to Christ we had a radio. While we're sitting here, anything could be happening."

"Where you put the car?" Salvio asked.

"In the barn—" Wally slapped the table. "Of course! Salvio, you're a brain." He jumped to his feet, upsetting both the beer and his chair. "Let's see if we can catch a news broadcast!"

Stumbling and cursing as they walked through the darkness over uneven ground, they made their way to the barn. Wally unlocked the door, waited until they were all inside before turning on his flashlight. He shielded the beam with his hand, then closed the barn door securely.

Salvio went to the Ford and switched on the radio. Jim and Wally lit cigarettes. The strains of a dance band gradually filled the barn. Salvio turned the tuner knob slowly, looking for a newscast. There were none.

"We're too early," Wally decided, looking at his watch. "Tune in WGN, Salvio. That's the *Trib's* station. If there's anything new, they'll have it. There ought to be a newscast in about five minutes."

Salvio turned the dial and the strains of the dance band filled the barn again. Wally began pacing nervously up and down. Jim walked around, peering into the empty cow stalls. Salvio shuffled his feet and pretended to jitterbug to the beat of the music. As soon as the music stopped, all three returned to the Ford and listened intently. The disc jockey announced a Lena Horne number. Wally swore softly and began to pace again.

At the stroke of one o'clock, a newscaster came on. He began with the national news, then tackled state news, then made a plea for a gentle laxative which children

would love. Finally, he got to the local news. In short, staccato sentences, he reviewed the Revens robbery, repeating the same bare facts which had been in both the *Herald-American* and the *Daily News*.

"Not a damned thing new," Wally said disgustedly.

"He cut the take to two hundred thousand dollars," Jim said. "You notice that?"

"It's still more than we got," Wally reminded him. "Well, maybe no news is good news. We may as well hit the sack. The cops are going around in circles."

Salvio was about to switch off the radio, when the announcer said: ". . . Police are searching tonight for Mary Ellen Fury, daughter of the Thaddeus Quinns of Lake Forest and wife of Police Lieutenant Robert Fury. Mrs. Fury, an expectant mother, disappeared somewhere between her home and her doctor's office early this morning. Police believe that she has been kidnapped . . ."

"Hey!" Jim exclaimed. "You hear that? They mean the redhead!"

"Yeah." Wally looked shocked, then slowly he began to smile. "Boy, what a break!"

"Break?" Jim echoed. "Are you nuts? Kidnapping means the F.B.I.! We got no more chance of ducking them than—"

"Don't be a sap," Wally interrupted, aiming a playful punch at Jim's shoulder. "He said she was a cop lieutenant's wife. You know what that means? It means we got the cops right where we want them! As long as we got her—and the cop's kid, too—they're going to be afraid to move in on us. She's a hostage, Jim. What do you think of that?"

"Hostage or no hostage, she's a dame who can finger us right into the hot-seat—" Jim began.

"Sure," Wally admitted. "That isn't the point. The point is, that as long as we got her and the kid, the cops are going to be scared to make a wrong move because we might hurt that cop lieutenant's wife and kid. Get it? While they're tip-toeing around, we'll have a better chance of kissing the dopes good-by!"

They were standing there, arguing about it, when they heard the sound of running footsteps and Helen calling: "Wally! Where are you, Wally!"

Wally switched the flashlight off and opened the barn door. "Here!" he called softly. "What's the matter?"

"Oh, Wally!" she wailed. "You got to do something! You got to hurry up and do something!"

"What the hell's the matter?"

Helen gasped for breath. "She's started! She's got the pains! Oh, Wally—she's going to have the baby!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

IT WAS one forty-seven A.M. when Callahan guided the police sedan down the main street of Antioch. The street was narrow and deserted, flanked on both sides by dark store fronts. They drove the length of the short street, turned around, cruised back. On a side street, a man was walking. When he saw the car's lights, he ducked his head and hurried south. Callahan grunted, made a U-turn, went after him. When they were abreast of him, Callahan leaned out and asked: "Hey, buddy! Where's the police station?"

The man stopped and stared at them. "Who you want—the chief or the constable?"

"Either one."

"Try the tavern." The man grinned. "Constable's sure to be there."

"Which tavern?"

"Only one here, mister. Go back a block, turn left, look for a Schlitz sign. He oughtta be in the back."

They found the tavern without difficulty, and seated at a rear table, a robust man wearing a constable's star and billy was investigating a bottle of beer. Fury identified himself and asked for information about the local schools. The constable belched comfortably and looked thoughtful. There was only one school. Not a high school, just went to eighth grade. The principal was old Mrs. Veaudrill. She'd been principal nigh onto fifty years.

"Where'll I find her?" Fury asked impatiently.

"You'll find her sleeping, Lieutenant!" The constable

chuckled. "In fact, you'll find most everybody around here sleeping at this hour!"

"This is extremely important, Constable," Fury said sharply. "Do you know where she lives? If you do, I'd like her address."

"Shucks, you don't need her address. You can see her house from here." The constable lumbered to the door and pointed down the street. "It's that little yellow one over there. She's got a dog. Barks like all get-out, but it don't bite. Just ring her bell."

"Thanks." Fury turned on his heel and strode out.

"No trouble, no trouble at all!" the constable called after him.

Callahan laughed as Fury climbed into the car. "No wonder they lost that Checker," he said. "I'll bet you just got through interviewing fifty per cent of the Antioch police force!"

Schwinn grinned. Fury was too disgusted to comment.

The principal of Antioch's only school, obviously awakened from a sound sleep, was at first irritated, then bewildered, then nervously cooperative. Yes, there had been a girl named Harris. It wasn't Helen Harris, though. It was . . . Phyllis Harris . . . yes, Phyllis Harris. Dark hair, short, sort of chubby. Not very bright, either. Her father had been a drinker. No, they didn't live on a farm . . .

"So much for Antioch," Fury said helplessly, getting into the car again. "Cross your fingers and head for Trevor, Saul."

The town of Trevor was virtually a carbon copy of Antioch. There was the same main street, the same quietness, another tavern, another constable. This one was eating, though, instead of drinking. They found him consuming a bowl of chili while chatting with the bartender.

"Well, we got a school, all right," he admitted. "Eight grades. Nobody there at this hour, though."

"Can you tell us where the principal lives?"

"Sure. Say, you're working a long way from home, aren't you?"

"I'm following a hot lead. Can you give me her address?"

"You'd never find it. I'll drive you over."

"I have a car. If you'll just direct me—"

"Well, I'll ride with you, then. It's only about a mile. Hey, Pete!" he called to the bartender. "Keep this chili until I get back!"

Miss Carlotta Carlisle, the principal of the Trevor school, appeared in her doorway wearing a bathrobe, a frown, and a tiara of pincurls. The constable introduced Fury, and Fury explained, as explicitly as possible, what he wanted to know.

"Harris? Helen Harris?" The woman shook her head. "No, I don't believe we've ever had any Harrises at our school. There was a Harrison. Ruby, I think her name was."

"This girl is blonde, of medium height, and rather pretty. She is twenty-two years old now," Fury said hopefully. "We believe she lived on a farm near here—"

"Twenty-two years old . . . that means she left us about 10 years ago. Blonde and rather pretty, hmmm?" The woman pursed her lips. She had forgotten to put in her dentures. "Well, we haven't had many blondes, not pretty ones, anyway, although prettiness is largely a matter of opinion. Maybe you mean . . . yes, I think her name was Helen . . . it wasn't Harris, though. Quite a vivacious child . . ."

"Yes, Miss Carlisle?" Fury said encouragingly.

"Harashek. I think that was her name. Helen Harashek. I believe her parents were Polish. I don't know whether they lived on a farm, but she was blonde and—"

"Helen Harashek!" the constable interrupted. "I remember her! She got kicked out of high school. Used to be dance crazy and some boy got her in trouble and—"

"Yes, I believe she was!" Miss Carlisle agreed, bobbing her pincurls. "I haven't heard anything about her for years. Is she in trouble, Lieutenant?"

"Where did the Harasheks live?" Fury asked, ignoring the question.

"They had a place out on the Salem road, near the old quarry. Nobody's lived there for years, though. The old man died, then the old woman, and both kids run off and never came back. Farm's falling apart. Kids nowadays don't care about working a farm, you know—"

"Will you take me there, Constable?" Fury's throat was suddenly constricted with excitement. His fingers dug into the constable's arm. "Will you take me there *right now?*"

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THERE'S NOT a damned thing we can do," Wally said emphatically. "Even if she's having ten kids, we're not calling a doctor!"

"But the baby'll die!" Helen cried frantically. "You can't let it die!"

"The hell we can't," Jim said. He laughed shortly. "She and the kid are both going to get knocked off." He looked at Wally, then at Salvio. "I'm in favor of putting her out of her misery right now. How about it?"

"You're not touching her!" Helen cried. Before they realized her intent, she grabbed the shotgun and backed toward the stairs. "You rats aren't going to touch that kid!" she said passionately. "I always wanted a baby, and this is my chance to get one! Before you can touch her, you've got to kill me—and I'll blast any son of a bitch who tries to come upstairs!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

HOW MUCH FARTHER is it?" Fury asked tensely.

"Around the next bend. I'm afraid you're going to be disappointed, Lieutenant. There's nothing much there. House is ready to fall down. Same with the barn. Land isn't any good, either. They're foolish to keep paying taxes on it. They probably hope the state'll run a highway through there some day."

"Drive past slowly, Saul," Fury directed. "Which side of the road, Constable?"

"Right hand side. It's set back from the road a ways. You'll see it in a minute." The constable peered through the window. "We're coming to it now. See, that's the

farmhouse. Dark as a widow's heart, just like I said."

Fury studied the farmhouse as they passed—and his hopes sank. Even in the faint moonlight, it looked deserted, long abandoned.

"What do you think, Saul?" he asked.

Callahan shrugged. "Well, we're here. What've we got to lose?"

"All right." Fury nodded. "Drop us here, then. Park the car down the road a ways, then come back. Schwinn and I will have a look."

"Maybe it's none of my business, Lieutenant," the constable said as Callahan stopped the car, "but I'm certainly curious about what you're looking for. What'd that girl do, anyway?"

"I'm sorry, Constable. I should have explained." In as few words as possible, Fury told him about the Revens robbery, the triple killing, the disappearance of his wife, and the theory which had brought them to Trevor.

"Well, why the hell didn't you say you was looking for those killers!" the constable exclaimed, slapping the gun on his hip. "I heard about that on the radio. Let's go in there and get them."

"They've got my wife," Fury warned. He felt as though someone had dropped a heavy stone into his stomach. "If they're there—and if they realize that they're spotted—they'll probably kill her."

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

THEM GROANS are driving me nuts!" Jim muttered.

"She's dying, maybe," Salvio whispered.

"I wish she'd hurry up about it, if she is. Give me another beer, Sal. How about telling Helen to gag her, Wally? The way she's groaning, everybody in the next county's going to know we're here!"

"She'll stop in a minute," Wally said nervously. "Give me another beer, too, Salvio."

Salvio struck a match, located the beer, and slid the two

cans. across the table. Jim felt around on the table until he found the opener. He opened his can, passed the opener across to Wally. The groans intensified, then abruptly stopped.

"Jee-zuss!" Jim muttered. "How long we gonna put up with that?"

"Damned if I know," Wally admitted. "Sometimes it only takes minutes; sometimes it takes hours"

"Hours? I can't stand listening to that for hours!"

"Go upstairs and tell her to shut up, then," Wally suggested.

"You been sleeping with the blonde," Jim retorted. "Why in hell can't you control her? If she was my dame, I'd go up there and kick some sense into—"

"Sure you would," Wally said sarcastically. "You and the Fifth Army. Can't you see she's nuts about the idea of getting a baby? She don't give a damn about the redhead. Once the kid pops, Helen will grab it and everything will be okay."

"If she wants a kid that bad, why don't she have one? Why does she have to—"

"Something's wrong with her equipment," Wally said shortly.

"Well, them groans are driving me nuts!"

"Take a walk, then," Wally suggested. "That's what I'm going to do. It's about time I paid a visit to the used beer department."

"What a dump," Jim grumbled. "No lights . . . no heat . . . no beds . . . the can's outdoors . . . and on top of that we gotta listen to a dame having her pup!"

Wally slammed the backdoor.

Salvio laughed softly.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

FURY HEADED for the house, Ronnie Schwinn went off toward the barn, and the constable simply slid into the darkness and disappeared. All moved slowly and silently, care-

ful not to betray their presence by scuffing the ground or kicking anything, listening intently for signs of human life.

Abruptly, Fury stopped. He thought he had heard a faint moan or a groan. It was not repeated, however, and he decided he had heard wind whistling through the trees. Very cautiously, he began circling the house. Once, he thought he heard voices. He decided that he was imagining things. Then, suddenly, he froze. About twenty feet from the rear of the house, a square patch of flickering yellow lay on the bare ground. He stared at it a moment, then stepped away from the building and looked up. There was a window on the second floor—and it was lighted!

Fury's heart-beat accelerated as, with extreme caution, he moved farther away from the building, his eyes fixed on the window. From fifty feet away, he could see the back of a chair. He stood there a long while, oblivious to the chill night air, and finally, he was rewarded. A woman moved past the window. He couldn't distinguish her features, but she wore a red sweater and she had blonde hair.

A pebble rattled behind him. Instantly, Fury whirled, his hand sweeping toward the gun in his shoulder holster. Seeing that it was Schwinn, he relaxed and pointed toward the lighted window. Schwinn grinned, and, putting his lips close to Fury's ear, whispered: "There's a car in the garage!"

Fury nodded and pointed to the left. Keeping to the darkest shadows, they went around to the other side of the house. There was a single door in back. They went crouched near the house, weighing the possibilities, when a faint but clearly audible groan shattered the silence. Schwinn, looking startled, reached for his gun. Fury, after a frozen moment of immobility, ran silently toward the patch of light and stared up at the window. The groan came again, longer and louder than before. The blonde passed the window again.

Suddenly, as clearly as if he had been able to see into that upstairs room, Fury knew what was happening: Mary Ellen was there. They were holding her captive. The groans were her groans . . . labor pains . . . she was about to have the baby.

Signaling frantically to Schwinn, Fury removed his shoes and ran back to the road. Someone whistled softly. Fury stopped, saw the constable striding toward him. "Some-

body's been using the outhouse," the constable announced softly. "Guess maybe you fellows were right—"

"They're there!" Fury told him. "There's a light on the second floor in back. We heard groans. I think my wife's in labor. There's a blonde woman with her."

Saul Callahan approached, carrying a flashlight. "What's the conference about?" he whispered. "You see something?"

Fury explained swiftly, adding: "Go back to the car, Saul. Call Radio and explain where we are. Tell them to locate Dr. David Martin immediately. Have him stand by in case we need obstetric advice. Got that?"

"I'll tell them to put him in a radio car and rush him in this direction!"

"No. He'd never make it here in time. Take him to headquarters and have him wait in Radio." Fury turned to the constable. "There must be a doctor around here, Constable. Go with Callahan and bring a doctor back with you. Hurry!"

Callahan and the constable nodded. They ran back up the road.

"We can't do much until they get back," Fury said impotently. "Let's double-check on the back—" He stopped in mid-sentence, dropped to the ground, pulling Schwinn down with him. A door had slammed somewhere. They peered in the direction from which the sound had come.

Schwinn thudded suddenly, bent, removed his shoes. "Nature is calling," he whispered. He ran silently off in the direction of the outhouse.

Fury was baffled for a moment, then he caught on. Unsheathing his gun, he followed Schwinn.

"There she goes again!" Jim muttered. "Sal, I been thinking. Now's the time for us to do what has to be done. While Wally's outside, you could slip up on him and use that stabber of yours. While you're doing that, I'll take care of the dames. By the time you get back, it'll be nice and quiet around here—and we can blow."

"Si!" Salvio arose, a bit unsteadily, and fumbled his way to the door. "Two minutes. You wait, Jim."

"Make damned sure you do a good job," Jim warned.

"For sure, I kill him."

As soon as Salvio left, Jim got up, switched on a flash-

light, and located the packages of money. He carried them to the back door and set them on the ground outside. Then he returned to the kitchen. The redhead was groaning like crazy, and Helen was scurrying around up there like a chicken without her head. Dumb dames! Never anything but trouble when dames like that were around. Pretty soon they'd have something to groan about.

A can of kerosene stood beside the stove. He lifted it approvingly. The can felt like it was about half-full. That ought to be enough. All the joint needed was a start and it would go up like a dry haystack.

He removed the screwcap on the can's spout and moved around, splashing kerosene on the floor. He gave the area around the stairway an especially good wetting.

Fury heard a grunt, a thud, a body hitting the ground. By the time he reached them, Schwinn was astraddle the guy's chest and was methodically banging the guy's head against the ground while his hands gripped the guy's throat.

"Don't kill him!" Fury hissed. "Drag him over here!"

They dragged the heavy body behind the outhouse. Schwinn, using a pencil flashlight, illuminated the guy's face briefly. Then Schwinn and Fury looked at each other and grinned.

"It's Hirsch!" Fury whispered.

"I'm a hero!" Schwinn murmured.

"Not yet," Fury told him. "There's at least two more. See if he's alive."

Schwinn unbuttoned Hirsch's shirt, slid his hand in over the heart. He nodded. "He's ticking, Lieutenant."

"Put cuffs on him, then sap him for good luck," Fury ordered. "They may come looking for him."

As though triggered by the statement, the back door of the house slammed again. Fury immediately moved toward the house, leaving Schwinn to dispose of Hirsch.

At first, Fury saw no one. He sank onto his haunches and stared into the darkness, expecting whoever it was to take the path between the house and the privy. Suddenly he heard a faint sound *behind* him. Fury nearly betrayed his presence by whirling around and leaping to his feet. Fortunately, he turned his head first—and saw the dark shadow moving toward him. It was a man. The man car-

ried a knife. He was moving quickly and purposefully, his eyes on the narrow shape of the outhouse.

Fury held his breath and waited until the last possible second. As he catapulted forward, the guy turned his face, opened his mouth—and let out a scream.

Fury's fist landed on his throat and the scream became a gurgle. He stumbled backward. Fury jumped him. He fell, with Fury atop him, and tried to roll, tried to slash with the knife. Fury kned him hard, then chopped a hand against the side of his neck. The guy trembled—and went limp.

"Get him?" Schwinn whispered.

For a moment, Fury couldn't answer. He hadn't had occasion to indulge in hand-to-hand combat for a long time, and he suddenly realized that he'd been very close to death. The knife had sliced through his jacket. An inch the other way and it would have torn through his guts.

"Yeah," Fury managed to gasp. "Get him out of the way fast! The bastard screamed before I could stop him!"

"Right!" Schwinn grabbed the guy's legs. They dragged him around behind the outhouse, close to Hirsch. Schwinn got out his flash. "It's the Mex," he announced. "Wow, look at that toad-stabber!" He pried the knife from the unconscious man's fingers. "We ought to stick it into his gizzard, Lieutenant!"

"Just cuff him and sap him," Fury said, rising. "I'm going into the house."

Jim heard the short scream—and grinned. He thought: *There goes Wally.* He emptied the kerosene can with a flourish, flung it in the general direction of the sink. It landed with a bang, bounced off, rattled across the floor. Jim laughed, as with sudden inspiration, it occurred to him that there was kerosene in the stove, too. He removed the cap from the tank, lifted the end of the stove until the tank began to gurgle and its contents spilled out onto the floor.

When it was empty, he went to the table, got a packet of matches. He recognized the packet as one Helen had had in her purse. Grinning, he tore off a match, struck it. It flared—and went out. He lit another one, tossed it gaily toward a puddle of kerosene. It went out before it reached

the floor. He tore off two more, struck them together. As they burst into flame, he heard the back door open. Still grinning, he turned and called to Sal.

As the door closed behind him, Fury heard a harsh voice call: "Hey, Sal! Get the car and throw the dough into it! It's going to be too hot around here for a couple of cool characters like us!"

As he stepped into the dark room, he scented the kerosene fumes, saw the flare of fire, saw a grinning face peering at him—and heard a groan. He realized what was about to happen, and to prevent it, he fired point-blank. As his gun went off, he saw the grin fade and the matches drop. Instantly, flames leaped up and began to spread across the floor.

In the weird half-light created by the tongues of fire, Fury spotted the stairway and sprang toward it. He was halfway up before he saw the wild-eyed blonde who stood at the top of the stairs, waving a shotgun.

"Stop!" she screamed. "Stop or I'll—"

"The place is on fire!" Fury cried, continuing toward her. "You've got to get out! *The place is on fire!*"

Thick oily clouds of smoke and the crackle of dry wood burning were already rolling up the stairwell. She looked at him wildly, raised the gun, pointed it at him. A heavy groan came from the nearby room. The blonde flicked her eyes toward the room, and in that instant, Fury plunged upward and grabbed her legs. She screamed and struck at him with the gun. He heard the gun roar. She screamed again, then dropped the gun. Fury heard it clattering down the stairs. Ignoring her wild blows and screams, Fury thrust her aside and sprang into the room.

Mary Ellen, nearly naked, lay on the bed. Her eyes were closed and her arms were over her head, grasping the iron bars of the bedstead. Her face glistened with perspiration. As he looked at her, she set her teeth and groaned heavily.

"Mary Ellen!" Fury shouted. "Thank God!"

She opened her eyes and stared at him blankly. Then she moaned: "Oh, Bob! I'm so sorry, Bob! I'm afraid! *I'm afraid!*"

The building seemed to be twisting and trembling. Fury looked frantically about. The stairwell had become

a tunnel of flame. He ran to the window, smashed the glass.

"Schwinn!" he screamed. "*Schwinn!*"

The detective appeared beneath the window. "Here, Lieutenant! Here I am!"

"Stay there!" Fury ordered. He ran to the bed, hurriedly bundled her in all the blankets and the quilt, then carried her to the window. He looked out, saw that Schwinn had disappeared. "Schwinn! God damn you, *Schwinn!*"

A car's engine roared suddenly and Fury saw the green Ford come racing out of the barn. Schwinn waved and stopped close to the house, beneath the window. Then Schwinn was out of the car and was climbing atop the sedan.

Fury manouvered the blanketed bundle through the window and into Schwinn's arms. Then Fury went in and got the blonde.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

AT FOUR THIRTY-FIVE A.M., after a hectic fifteen mile ride through the night in a screaming ambulance, Mary Ellen Fury reached Kenosha, the nearest city with an obstetrical specialist available, accompanied by a country doctor, a radio car which maintained constant contact with Dr. David Martin in Chicago, and three cops.

At four fifty-six A.M., Mary Ellen Fury became a mother.

In the so-called Father's Room of the hospital Lieutenant Fury and Sergeant Callahan smoked innumerable cigarettes. Callahan made several attempts to lighten the heavy silence with conversation.

"It was a mistake to leave Schwinn there," he said. "You know that, Lieutenant? Schwinn's with Homicide. They'll get credit for the pinch."

Fury grunted disinterestedly.

"On the other hand," Callahan went on, "letting that constable hang around wasn't smart, either. What if he

says we had no justification? What if he says he was in charge? He'll get credit for the pinch. We might even have to extradite those guys."

Fury grunted again. Callahan shrugged and lapsed into silence. At five fifteen A.M., a door opened and a tall, lanky man with thin, wispy hair entered the room. He looked at Callahan, then at Fury. He smiled uncertainly, for both had immediately looked up eagerly—and both looked worried.

"Lieutenant Fury?" he murmured.

"Yes?" Fury spring to his feet. So did Callahan.

"I'm Dr. Rattan. I'm happy to say that your wife is fine and that you have a beautiful baby girl. There were no complications at all."

"How do you like that?" Callahan muttered. "No complications at all!"

"My wife's all right?" Fury asked dazedly.

"She's perfectly fine. You'll be able to go in and see her in a few minutes. I've already talked to Dr. Martin by phone. He asked me to give you his congratulations."

"It's a girl, huh?" Fury said.

"Tough luck, Lieutenant," Callahan said, winking at the doctor. "Maybe next time it'll be a boy!"

Fury stared at him. He shuddered.

THE END

of an Original Gold Medal Novel by
MILTON K. OZAKI

The Gold Medal seal on this book means it has never been published as a book before. To select an original book that you have not already read, look for the Gold Medal seal.

THE OPERATION was planned carefully because these men were professionals in the sciences of death, terror and violence.

More than a hundred thousand dollars was at stake, and they had to be sure nothing would go wrong. Perhaps some innocent people would die, that didn't matter. Only the money mattered.

Then how did it go wrong?

When Mary Ellen Fury, wife of police Lieutenant Robert Fury, parked her green sedan in the exact spot where the getaway car was supposed to be. Parked it at 9:30 A.M. just as Wally Hirsh and his gang ran from the scene of the murder and robbery.