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THE saint MAGAZINE

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Some old, some new — the finest in mystery fiction.

EDITORIAL

Crimes come in all shapes and sizes, from pinching an apple off the local fruit stand to wholesale genocide. To protect society, a special breed of men and women have devoted their lives to crime detection and the apprehension of criminals of every sort. Others have based their careers on the prosecution, defense, judging, or incarceration of lawbreakers. The judicial system is an industry that seems to have an unending supply of raw material to keep its wheels turning.

And because crime is, unfortunately, such an ongoing part of human society, it has become the central theme for innumerable novels, short stories, plays, and movies, involving another sizable group of people—the fiction writers. A few writers in the crime field, mostly members of the press, do more than just entertain the reading public—they provide information regarding real crimes and criminals and the disposition of their cases. And they keep us posted as to trends in crime and crime fighting.

One such reporter of real-life happenings is A. E. Maxwell, a top writer for the *Los Angeles Times*. Elsewhere in this issue, he relates a startling but reassuring personal experience having to do with a growing criminal phenomenon—terrorism!

The slaughtering of innocent civilians or the taking of hostages for political or pseudopolitical reasons has been increasing at an alarming rate world wide. The Olympic Games being held in Los Angeles this year obviously provide the potential for more of this particular type of cowardly crime. However, the federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies have taken positive and effective steps to keep terrorism in this country to an absolute minimum or, ideally, to eliminate it altogether.

In Mr. Maxwell's gripping account of the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team and their precision operation (in which he participated as a surrogate "hostage"), he reveals a hitherto unknown weapon in the U.S. arsenal against terrorism—a deterrent force which should allow us all to breath easier and to feel more secure.

The Olympic Games represent human society at its best—friendly but intense competition for well-deserved recognition. Countries with diverse cultures, philosophies, and governments can vie on the athletic battlefield for the medals which are the spoils of this particular "war." We can all cheer for our favorites, knowing that the losers will survive to "fight" again.

This same spirit of entertainment arising from the struggles of fiercely competitive adversaries applies to the make-believe world of crime fiction as well. We all root for the "good guys," hoping they'll win.

But in real life, it's imperative!

Keith Bancroft
Editor

THE *saint* MAGAZINE

August, 1984

FICTION...

...AND FACT

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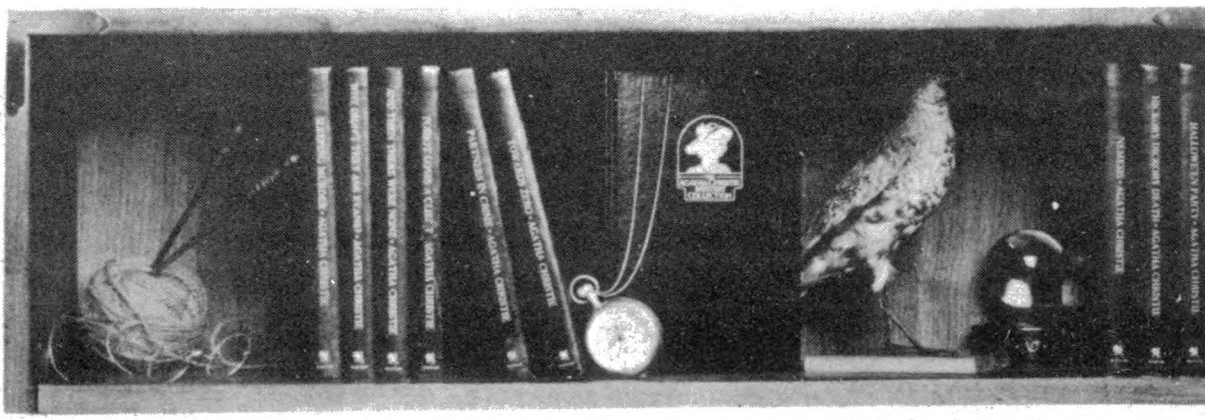

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JOHN LUTZ — The cop shot a burglar — or was it a kid? Finding out which can be dangerous to your health! . . .

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LESLIE CHARTERIS

The Saint's creator once more shows his easy familiarity with another of the world's intriguing regions—Mexico. As an experienced traveler, he understands the customs, the language, the local color. With these valuable insights, Mr. Charteris paints a variegated background against which Simon Templar, The Saint, engages in a puzzling adventure with a determined young wife out to find her husband. As THE UNCERTAIN WIDOW, she travels far and endures much just to make sure the scoundrel is really dead!

THE UNCERTAIN WIDOW

Bandits? said Señor Copas. He shrugged. *"Si, hay siempre bandidos.* The Government will never catch them all. Here in Mexico they are a tradition of the country."

He looked again at the girl in the dark hat, appreciatively, because she was worth looking at, and he was a true Latin, and there was still romance in the heart that beat above his rounded abdomen.

He chuckled uncertainly, ignoring the other customers who were sitting in various degrees of patience behind their empty plates, and said: "But the señorita has nothing to fear. She is not going into the wilds."

"But I want to go into the wilds," she said.

Her voice was low and soft and musical, matching the quiet symmetry of her face and the repose of her hands. She was smart without exaggeration. She was Fifth Avenue with none of its brittle hardness, incongruously transported to that standstill Mexican village, and yet contriving not to seem out of place. To Señor Copas she was a miracle.

To Simon Templar she was a quickening of interest and a hint of adventure that might lead anywhere or nowhere.

His eye for charm was no slower than that of Señor Copas, but there was more in it than that.

To Templar, who had been called the most audacious bandit of the twentieth century, the subject of banditry was fascinating as well. And he had an impish sense of humour which couldn't resist the thought of what the other members of the audience would have said and done if they had known that the man who was listening to their conversation about bandits was the notorious Saint himself.

"Are you more interested in the wilds or the bandits?" he asked, in Spanish as native as her own.

She turned to him with friendly brown eyes in which there was a trace of subtle mockery.

"I'm not particular."

"*No es posible,*" said Señor Copas firmly, as he dragged himself away to his kitchen.

"He doesn't seem to like the idea," said the Saint.

He was sitting beside her, at the communal table which half filled the dining room of the hotel. She broke a roll with her graceful, leisurely moving hands. He saw that her fingers were slender and tapering, delicately manicured, and that one of them wore a wedding ring.

Fifth Avenue in the Fonda de la Quinta, in the shadow of the Sierra Madre, in the state of Durango in Old Mexico, which was a very different place.

"You know a lot about this country?" she asked.

"I've been here before."

"Do you know the mountains?"

"Fairly well."

"Do you know the bandits, too?"

The Saint gazed at her with precarious gravity. He looked like a man who would obviously be on visiting terms with bandits. He looked rather like a bandit himself in a debonair and reckless sort of way, with his alert tanned face and clean-cut fighting mouth and the unscrupulous gay twinkle in his blue eyes.

"Listen," he said. "Once upon a time I was walking between San Miguel and Gajo, two villages not far from here. I

saw from my map that the road led around in a great horseshoe, but they told me at an inn that there was a shortcut, straight across, down into the canyon and up the other side. I climbed down something like the side of a precipice for hours. The path was all great loose stones, and presently one of them turned under my foot and I took a spill and sprained my ankle. When I got to the bottom, I was done in. I couldn't move another step, particularly climbing. I hadn't any food, but there was a stream running through the bottom of the canyon, so I had water. I could only hope that someone else would try that shortcut and find me.... "

"At the end of the third day a man did find me, and he looked like one of your bandits if anyone ever did. He did what he could for me, gave me food from his pack—bread and sausage and cheese—and then said he would go on to San Miguel and send help for me. He could have taken everything I had, but he didn't. He was insulted when I offered to pay him. 'I am not a beggar,' he said—and I've never seen anyone so haughty in my life—'I am El Rojo.' "

"Then why is Señor Copas so frightened?"

"They're all frightened of El Rojo."

Her finely pencilled brows drew together. "El Rojo? Who is El Rojo?"

"The greatest bandit since Villa. They're all scared because there's a rumour that he's in the district. You ought to be scared, too. They're all offended if you aren't scared of El Rojo.... He really is a great character, though. I remember once the Government decided it was time that something drastic was done about him. They sent out half the Mexican army to round him up. It was the funniest thing I ever heard of. But you have to know the country to see the joke."

"They didn't catch him?"

The Saint chuckled. "One man who knew the country could laugh at three armies."

For a little while the girl was wrapped in an unapproachable solitude of thought. Then she turned to the Saint

again.

"Señor," she said, "do you think you could help me find El Rojo?"

Even south of the border, he was still a Saint errant, or perhaps a sucker for adventure. He said: "I could try."

They rode out on the dazzling stone track that winds beside the river—a track which was nothing more than the marks that centuries of solitary feet had left on the riot of tumbled boulders from which the hills rose up.

The Saint lounged in the saddle, relaxed like a *vaquero,* letting his mount pick its own way over the broken rock. His mind went back to the café where they had sat together over coffee, after lunch, and he had said to her: "Either you must be a journalist looking for an unusual interview, or you want to be kidnapped by El Rojo for publicity, or you've been reading too many romantic stories and you think you could fall in love with him."

She had only smiled in her quiet way, inscrutable in spite of its friendliness, and said: "No, señor—you are wrong in your guesses. I am looking for my husband."

The Saint's brows slanted quizzically. "You mean you are Señora Rojo?"

"Oh, no. I am Señora Alvarez de Quevedo. Teresa Alvarez." Then she looked at him, quickly and clearly, as if she had made up her mind about something.

"The last time I heard of my husband, he was at the Fonda de la Quinta," she said. "That was two years ago. He wrote to me that he was going into the mountains. He liked to do things like that—to climb mountains and sleep under the stars and be a man alone, sometimes. It is curious, for he was very much a city man. . . . I never heard of him again. He said he was going to climb the Gran Seño. I remembered, when I heard the name, that I had read of El Rojo in the newspapers about that time. And it semed to me, when I heard you speak of El Rojo, that perhaps El Rojo was the answer."

"If it was El Rojo," said the Saint quietly, "I don't think it

would help you to find him now."

Her eyes were still an enigma. "Even so," she said, "it would be something to know."

"But you've waited two years. . . . "

"Yes," she said, softly. "I have waited two years."

She had told him no more than that, and he had known that she did not wish to say any more, but it had been enough to send him off on that quixotic wild-goose chase.

He had been leading the way for two hours, but presently, where the trail broadened for a short distance, she brought her horse up beside his, and they rode knee to knee.

"I wonder why you should do this for me," she said.

He shrugged. "Why did you ask me?"

"It was an impulse." She moved her hands puzzledly. "I don't know. I suppose you have the air of a man who is used to being asked impossible things. You look as if you would do them."

"I do," said the Saint, modestly.

It was his own answer, too. She was a damsel in distress—and no damsel in distress had ever called on the Saint in vain. She was beautiful, also, which was a very desirable asset to damsels in distress. And about her there was a mystery, which to Simon Templar was the trumpet call of adventure.

In the late afternoon, at one of the bends in the trail where it dipped to the level of the river, the Saint reined in his horse and dismounted at the water's edge.

"Are we there?" she said.

"No, but we're leaving the river."

He scooped water up in his hands and drank it and splashed it over his face. It was numbingly cold, but it steamed off his arms in the hot, dry air. She knelt down and drank beside him, and then sat back on her heels and looked up at the hills that hemmed them in.

A kind of shy happiness lighted her eyes, almost uncertainly, as if it had not been there for a long time and felt itself a stranger.

"I understand now," she said. "I understand why Gaspar loved all this, in spite of what he was. If only he could have been content with it. . . ."

"You were not happy?" said the Saint gently.

She looked at him. "No, señor. I have not been happy for so long that I am afraid."

She got up quickly and put her foot in the stirrup. He helped her to mount, then swung into his own saddle. They set off across the shallow stream, the horses picking their way delicately between the boulders.

On the far side they climbed, following a trail so faint that she could not see it at all—but the Saint rarely hesitated. Presently, the trees were thicker, and over the skyline loomed the real summit of the hill they were climbing. The valley was swallowed up in darkness, and up there, where the Saint turned his horse across the slope, the brief, subtropical twilight was fading.

Simon Templar lighted a cigarette as he rode, but he had barely taken the first puff of smoke into his lungs when a man stepped from behind a tree with a rifle levelled and broke the stillness of the evening with a curt, *"Manos arriba!"*

The Saint turned his head with a smile. "You've got what you wanted," he said to Teresa Alvarez. "May I present El Rojo?"

The introduction was almost superfluous, for the red mask from which El Rojo took his name, a mask which covered his face from the brim of his sombrero down to his stubble-bearded chin, was sufficient identification. Watching the girl, Simon saw no sign of fear as the bandit came forward. Her face was pale, but she sat straight-backed on her horse and gazed at him with an unexpected eagerness in her eyes. Simon turned back to El Rojo.

"Qué tál, amigo?" he murmured genially.

The bandit stared at him unresponsively. *"Baje usted,"* he ordered gruffly. He glanced at the girl. "You, too—get down."

His eyes, after that glance, remained fixed on her, even after she was down from the saddle and standing by the horse's head. The Saint wondered for the first time whether he might not have let his zest for adventure override his common sense when he deliberately led her into the stronghold of an outlawed and desperate man.

El Rojo turned back to him. "The señorita," he said, "will tie your hands behind you."

He dragged a length of cord from his pocket and threw it across the space between them. The girl looked at it coldly.

"Go on," said the Saint. "Do what the nice gentleman tells you. It's part of the act."

He could take care of such minor details when the time came, but for the present there was a mystery with which he was more preoccupied.

When the Saint's hands had been tied, El Rojo pointed his rifle. "The señorita will lead the way," he said. "You will follow, and I shall direct you from behind. You would be wise not to try and run away."

He watched them file past him, and from the sounds that followed, the Saint deduced that El Rojo had taken the horses by their bridles and was towing them after him as he brought up the rear.

As they moved roughly parallel with the valley, the slope on their right became steeper and steeper until it was simply a precipice, and the rocks on their left towered bleaker and higher, and they were walking along a narrow ledge with the shadow of one cliff over them and another cliff falling away from their feet into a void of darkness.

The path wound snakelike around the fissures and buttresses into which the precipice was sculptured, and presently, rounding one of those natural breastworks, they found themselves at a place where the path widened suddenly to become a natural balcony about twenty feet long and twelve feet deep—and then stopped. A natural wall of rock screened it from sight of the valley or the hills on the other side.

El Rojo followed them into the niche, leading the two horses, which he tied up to an iron ring by the mouth of a cave that opened in the rock wall at the end. There was a dull glow of embers close by the mouth of the cave. The bandit stirred them with his foot and threw on a couple of mesquite logs.

"Perhaps you are hungry," said El Rojo. "I have little to offer my guests, but you are welcome to what there is."

"I should like a cigarette as much as anything," said the Saint. "But I'm not a very good contortionist."

The bandit considered him. "I could untie you, señor, if you gave me your word of honour not to attempt to escape. It is, I believe, usual in these circumstances." His speech had an elaborate theatricalism which came oddly out of his rough and ragged clothing.

"I'll give you my word for two hours," said the Saint, after a moment's thought. "It can be renewed if necessary."

"Es bastante. Y usted, señorita?"

"Conforme."

"Entonces, por dos horas."

El Rojo laid down his rifle and untied the Saint's hands; but Simon noticed that he picked up the gun again at once, and that he kept it always within easy reach. The Saint understood the symptom well enough not to be disturbed by it. He lighted a cigarette and stretched himself out comfortably beside the fire and beside Teresa Alvarez, while the night closed down like a purple blanket and El Rojo brought out the bread and cheese and sausage and coarse red wine which are the staple fare in the mountains.

He said presently: "I take it that you have ideas about ransom."

The bandit shrugged. "I regret the necessity. But I am a poor man, and you must be charitable. Let us say that it was unlucky that you chose to travel this way."

"But we were looking for you," said Teresa.

El Rojo stopped with a knifeload of cheese halfway to his mouth. "For me?"

"Yes," she said. "I wanted to see you, and this gentleman

was good enough to help me. We were not unlucky. We came here on purpose."

"You pay me an unusual compliment, señorita. Could one ask what I have done to deserve such a distinguished honour?"

"I am looking for my husband," she said simply.

He sat watching her. "*No comprendo.* It is true that I often have the pleasure of entertaining travellers in the mountains. But, alas, they never stay with me for long. Either their friends are so desolate in their absence that they bribe me to ensure their safe and speedy return—or their friends are so unresponsive that I am forced to conclude that they cannot be very desirable guests. I am incapable of believing that a gentleman who had won the heart of the señora can have belonged to the latter category."

"It is possible," she said, without bitterness. "But I knew nothing of it."

She was silent for a moment. "It was two years ago," she said. "He came here to Durango, to La Quinta. He was going into the mountains. No one ever heard of him again. I know that you were here then, and I wondered if you might have—entertained him. Perhaps I was foolish. . . . "

El Rojo dug his knife in the cheese. "*Por Dios!*" he said. "Is it like that that one lives in Mexico? You have lost your husband for two years, and it is not until today that you want to find him?"

"I don't want to find him," she said. "I want to know that he is dead."

She said it quietly, without any force of feeling, as if it was a thought she had lived with for so long that it had become a commonplace part of her life. But in the very passionlessness of that matter-of-fact statement there was something that sent an electric ripple up the Saint's spine.

He had finished eating, and he was sitting smoking with his feet towards the warmth of the fire and his back leaning against the rock. On his left, Teresa Alvarez was looking straight ahead of her, as if she had been alone, and El

Rojo's eyes were riveted on her through the slits in his mask, so that the Saint almost felt as if he were an eavesdropper. But he was too absorbed in the play to care about that.

"I was very young," said the girl, in that quiet and detached way that left so much emotion to be guessed at. "I was still in the convent school when I was engaged to him. I knew nothing, and I was not given any choice. I was married to him a few weeks later. Yes, these things happen. It is still the custom in the old-fashioned families. The parents choose a man they think will make their daughter a good husband, and she is expected to be guided by their wisdom."

Her face was impassive in the firelight. "I think he was unfaithful to me on our honeymoon," she said. "I know he was unfaithful many times after that. He boasted of it. I might have forgiven that, but he boasted also that he had only married me for my dowry—and for what pleasure he could have out of me before he wanted a change. I found out that he was nothing but a shady adventurer, a gambler, a cheat, a petty swindler, a man without a shadow of honour or even common decency. But by that time I had no one to go to.... My father and mother died suddenly six months after we were married, and I had never had any friends of my own. It will seem strange to you—it seems strange to me, now—but I never realized that I could leave him myself. I had never been brought up to know anything of the world. So I stayed with him. For four years.... And then he came here, and I never saw him again."

The Saint could feel the suffering and humiliation and disillusionment of those four years as vividly as if she had told the story of them day by day, and his blue eyes rested on her with a new and oddly gentle understanding.

She went on after a while. "At first I was only glad that he had gone, and that I could have some peace until he returned. He had told me that he was going away for a holiday, but one day a man from the police came to see me,

and I found out that he had gone away because for once he had not been so clever as he had been before, and there was a charge against him.

"Then I hoped that the police would catch him and he would go to prison, perhaps for many years—perhaps forever. But they never found him. And I hoped that he might have fallen over a precipice in the mountains, or that he had escaped to the other end of the world, or anything that would mean he would never come back to me. I didn't mind very much what it was, so long as I never saw him again. But I was happy. And then, six months ago, I fell in love. And my happiness was finished again."

"Because you were in love?" El Rojo asked, incredulously.

"Because I was not free. This man is everything that my husband never was, and he knows everything that I have told you. He wants to marry me. Before, I never cared where my husband was, nor what had happened to him. But now, you see, I must know."

El Rojo looked up towards the Saint. "And the señor," he said, is he the fortunate man with whom you fell in love?"

"No. He is in Mexico City. He is in the government service, and he could not leave to come with me."

"He is rich, this man?"

"Yes," she said, and her voice was no longer cold.

There was silence for a long time—for so long that the dancing firelight died down to a steady red glow.

Teresa Alvarez gazed into the dull embers, with her arms clasped around her knees, absorbed in her own thoughts, and at last she said: "But I have only been dreaming. Even in such a small territory as this, why should anyone remember one man who was here two years ago?"

El Rojo stirred himself a little. "Was you husband," he said, "a man of middle height, with smooth black hair and greenish eyes and a thin black moustache?"

Suddenly she was still, with a stillness that seemed more violent than movement.

"Yes," she said. "He was like that."

"And his name was Alvarez?"

"Yes. Gaspar Alvarez de Quevedo." Her voice was no more than a whisper.

The bandit drew a gust of evil-smelling smoke from his cheap cigarette. "Such a man was a guest of mine about two years ago," he said slowly. "I remember him best because of the ring, which I gave to a girl in Matamoros, and because he was the only guest I have had here who left without my consent."

"He escaped?" The words came from the girl's lips with a weariness that was too deep for feeling.

"He tried to," said El Rojo. "But it was very dark, and these mountains are not friendly to those who do not know them well."

He stretched out his arm towards the black emptiness beyond the rock wall that guarded the niche where they sat. "I buried him where he fell. It was difficult to reach him, but I could not risk his body being seen by any goatherds going up the valley. In the morning, if you like, I will point you out his grave. It is below the path we followed to come here—more than a hundred metres down.... The señora may go on without fear to the happiness that life has kept waiting for her."

It was very dark, but Simon could see the tears rise in the girl's eyes before she hid her face in her hands.

The morning sun was cutting hot swaths through the fading mist when El Rojo followed the Saint and Teresa along the winding ledge between cliff and cliff that led out of his eyrie high above the river. Where the slope of the mountain opened clear before them he called to them to stop, and he held the bridle of the horse which the girl was to ride while she climbed into the saddle.

"I give you—*buen viaje*," he said. "You can make no mistake. Follow the side of the hill until you come to a belt of trees, and then go downwards. To find your way back here—that is another matter. But if you keep going downwards you must come to the river, and on the other side of

the river is the road to La Quinta. I will meet you somewhere on that road in three days from now, at about four o'clock in the afternoon."

"I can never thank you," she said.

"You have no need to," he answered, roughly. "You are going to bring me—how much did we agree?—one hundred thousand pesos, and the señor remains as my guest as a surety for our meeting. I regret that I have to be commercial, but one must live. And if your lover is rich, he will not mind."

She held out her hand to the Saint.

"I shall be there to meet him in three days," she said. "And then I shall be able to thank you again."

"This was nothing," he answered with his lazy smile. "But if you ever meet any dragons, I wish you'd send for me."

He kissed her fingers and watched her ride away until the curve of the hill hid her from sight. It was true that he had done very little, but he had seen the light in her eyes before she went, and to him that was reward enough for any adventure.

He was thoughtful as he walked back along the cliff-edge track towards the bandit's cave with El Rojo just behind his elbow. When they were halfway along it, he said casually, "By the way, I ought to warn you that the parole I renewed last night is just running out."

The muzzle of the bandit's rifle pressed into his chest as he turned. "In that case, señor, you will please put up your hands. Unless, of course, you prefer to renew your parole again."

Simon raised his hands to the level of his shoulders. "My friend," he said, "have you forgotten the Arroyo Verde?"

"*Perdone?*"

"The Arroyo Verde," said the Saint steadily. "Between San Miguel and Gajo. Where there was a man with a sprained ankle who had been there for three days without food, and who might have stayed there until he starved if a brigand with a price on his head had not stayed to help him."

"I have not the least idea what you are talking about."

"I thought not," said the Saint softly. "Because you weren't there."

He saw the bandit's hands go rigid around the gun, and the blue steel in his eyes was as sharp as knife points.

"I didn't think this brigand would have forgotten me so completely that we could spend an evening together without him recognising me. You see, we got quite friendly down in that forsaken canyon, and when my ankle was better I paid him a visit here. That's why I was able to find my way so easily yesterday. I came to Durango because I hoped to meet him again. And yet this brigand's name was El Rojo, too. How do you explain that—Señor Alvarez?"

For a moment the bandit was silent, standing tense and still, and Simon could feel the shattering chaos whirling through the man's mind, the wild spin of instinctive stratagems and lies sinking down to the grim realisation of their ultimate futility.

"And suppose I am Alvarez?" said the man at last, and his natural voice was quite different from the way he had been speaking before.

"Then you should tell me more about what you said last night—and about El Rojo. Where is he?"

"I found him here by accident, but he thought I was looking for him. We fought, and he fell over the precipice. He lies in the grave which I said was mine."

"And because you wanted to disappear, and because you loved the mountains, you thought that the best way for you to hide would be to take his place. No one had ever seen the face of El Rojo. No one ever knew who he was. You took his mask and became El Rojo."

"Eso es."

Alvarez had not moved. Simon could sense the taut nerves of a man who held death in his hands and was only waiting for one word to turn the scale of his decision.

Simon Templar was also waiting for the answer to one question. He said: "And last night?"

"A usted que más le da?"

"The answer is in your hands," said the Saint.

His eyes were as clear and unclouded as the sky over their heads, and there was something as ageless and unchangeable as justice in the even tones of his voice.

"Perhaps in these two years you might have changed," he said. "Perhaps you were glad that you could never go back to the old life. And perhaps you told that lie to cut the last link with it, and you were glad to set your wife free for the happiness which you never gave her. If that was so, your secret will always be safe with me. But I've never seen a man like you change very much, and I wondered why all you asked about your wife's lover was whether he was rich. I wondered if it had occurred to you that if you let her believe you were dead, so that she would marry this man, you could go back to Mexico City and charge a price for your silence. And if that was so.... "

"You will never tell her," said Alvarez viciously, and the rifle jerked in his hand.

The crack of the shot rattled back and forth, growing fainter and fainter between the hills, and something like fire struck the Saint's chest. He smiled, as if something amused him.

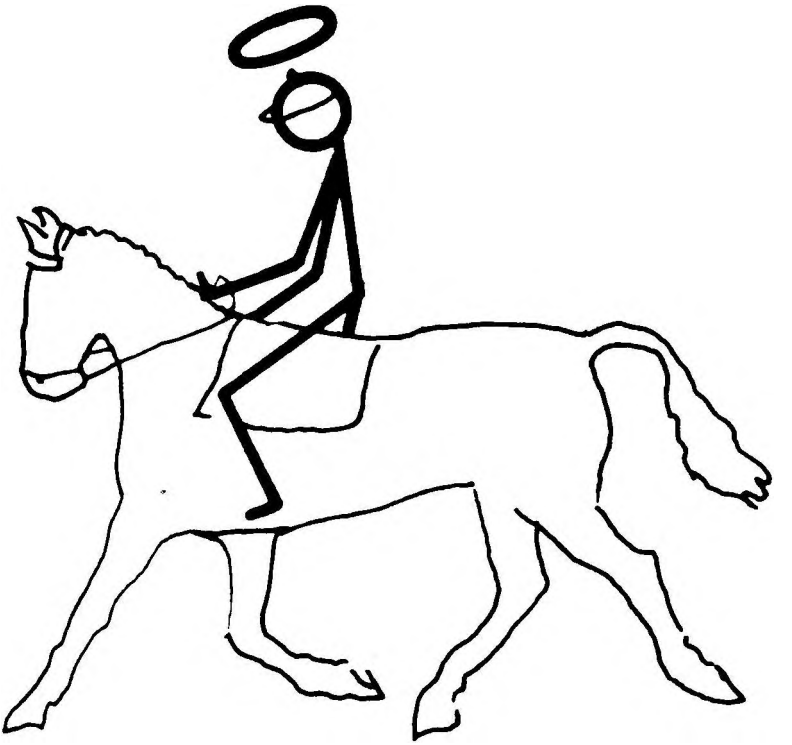
"You're wasting your time," he said. "I took all the bullets out of the shells in your gun while you were asleep last night. But you've told me what I wanted to know. I said that the answer was in your hands.... "

Alvarez came out of the superstitious trance which had gripped him for a moment. He snatched the rifle back and then lunged with it savagely. Simon stepped to the right, and the thrust passed under his left arm. Then he swung his right fist to Alvarez's jaw. Alvarez was on the very edge of the path, and the force of the blow lifted him backwards with his arms sprawling....

Simon Templar stood for some time gazing down into the abyss. His face was serene and untroubled, and he felt neither pity nor remorse. His mind went on working calmly and prosaically. There was no need for Teresa Alvarez to know. Nothing would disturb her conscience if she went on

believing what she had been told the night before. And she would think well of El Rojo, who to her would always be the real El Rojo whom Simon had called his friend.

He would have to think up some story to account for El Rojo deciding to waive his claim to the hundred thousand pesos she had promised. He went thoughtfully back to collect his horse. ST



PHILLIP M. MARGOLIN

Phillip Margolin is a practicing criminal defense lawyer in Portland, Oregon, and the author of two novels, ***Heartstone*** *(which was nominated for an Edgar Award by the Mystery Writers of America) and* ***The Last Innocent Man.*** *He's also been published in the Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine.*

In THE JAILHOUSE LAWYER, Mr. Margolin draws on his professional experiences and creates an authentic and realistic courtroom scenario. His use of dialogue and characterization, as well as emotional impact, is outstanding. In addition, he provides one answer to the age-old question—does a lawyer who represents himself have a fool for a client . . . ?

THE JAILHOUSE LAWYER

A *lawyer who represents himself has a fool for a client.* If that maxim is true, it ought to go double for jailhouse lawyers, and it usually does. But, every rule has its exceptions. I learned that the hard way when I prosecuted Tommy Lee Jones for drunk driving, back when I was a young D.A. That was over ten years ago. I've been involved in more than a few big cases since then—murder trials, a couple of million-dollar verdicts. I even represented the governor once. But, if you ask me to name the case I think about the most, I'd have to say it's *State versus Tommy Lee Jones.*

The first time I saw Tommy Lee was the morning of his trial. His wild afro, scraggly goatee, and soiled jail clothes made him look fierce. Any lawyer worth his salt would have made certain that Tommy Lee wore street clothes to court and cut his hair, but Tommy Lee refused to let the court appoint counsel for him, and he was too poor to hire his own.

"You the pig they sent to pers'cute me?" Tommy Lee snarled when I walked to the counsel table.

"Ken Fritz," I said, extending my hand. Tommy Lee just glared. I smiled, amused. I love to win, and a notch is a notch, although knocking off one of the top defense lawyers is certainly more satisfying than steamrolling a jailhouse lawyer.

"Simmer down, Tommy Lee," one of the two jail guards warned. And, if you're wondering why Tommy Lee was so heavily guarded when the charge was only drunk driving, you might be interested to know that two months after the traffic citation had been issued in Portland, Oregon, Tommy Lee was rearrested on a fugitive complaint out of Newark, New Jersey, charging him with murder. Tommy Lee was also handling his extradition battle.

The bailiff rapped the gavel and Arlen Hatcher stomped in. Judge Hatcher was the prosecutor's friend. He was tall and walked with a slight stoop. His cheeks were sunken, and his thin lips curled back to form a wolfish grin whenever he overruled a defense objection. The judge was happiest at sentencings.

I jumped to my feet, but Tommy Lee stayed seated. Old Arlen fixed Tommy Lee with his death stare. Tommy Lee didn't even blink.

"Please stand when the judge enters," the bailiff ordered menacingly. Tommy Lee unwound slowly, his eyes still locked to the judge's.

I called the case, and the judge told the bailiff to send for a jury. That's when Tommy Lee made, what I thought then, was his fatal mistake.

"I don't want no jury," he said.

"What?" Judge Hatcher asked incredulously.

"One pig or six pigs, it don' make no difference."

Old Arlen turned scarlet.

"You ever hear of contempt?" he asked in a low whisper. "One more reference to barnyard animals out of you, and you'll be an expert on it . . . Mr. Jones."

Now, I'm certain that "Mr. Jones" was originally "Boy," but

Hatcher quit doing that, on the record, after the Supreme Court reprimanded him. Actually, Hatcher wasn't any more prejudiced against blacks than he was against any other defendant.

And that's another reason I thought Tommy Lee was a fool for defending himself. He needed a lawyer who knew the ropes. Hell, with a client like Tommy Lee, any lawyer in the county would have made certain that Arlen Hatcher wasn't the trial judge.

My only witness was Marty Singer, a big, mean cop who was a little slow. He made up for that by having an almost supernatural knack for screwing defense attorneys during cross-examination. How a guy with Singer's I.Q. could be so fast on the draw with the perfect wrong answer was beyond me. I guessed he was sort of an idiot savant cross-examinee.

I established that Marty was working as a traffic patrolman on February 8, 1970, then asked him if he had made an arrest for driving under the influence that night.

"I was driving on Salmon near Third," he said, "when I saw a car weaving across the lane line. I stopped the car and asked the driver for his license. He had trouble getting it out of his wallet, and I smelled alcohol on his breath. I asked the driver to exit the vehicle and he did. He was unsteady on his feet, and his speech was slurred."

"Did you ask the driver to perform any field sobriety tests?"

"I did."

"How did he do?"

"Flunked them all miserably."

Now, even the greenest lawyer would have been out of his chair screaming "objection" to that answer, but Tommy Lee just gazed out the window.

"And who did the license identify the driver to be?" I asked.

"Bobby Lee Jones," Singer answered. My heart dropped into the bottom of my brilliantly polished wingtips.

"Er, you mean Tommy Lee, don't you, Officer?"

Singer looked confused.

"I'm . . . I think it was Bobby Lee," he said. Then, he

brightened.

"But, later, he gave me the name Tommy Lee."

"Later?"

"When I said I was going to arrest him."

"He said he was Tommy Lee?"

"Right."

I breathed deeply, then pointed to the defendant.

"And is this the man you arrested?"

For the first time, Tommy Lee looked right at Singer and, for the second time, Singer looked confused.

"Yes," he answered shakily, "I think that's him."

If this had been a jury trial, I would have been dead after Singer's crappy identification, but old Arlen hadn't heard a word since Tommy Lee called him a pig.

"One last question, Officer. Did the defendant jump bail?"

"Right. He failed to appear at arraignment, and we didn't get him until we picked him up on this murder case out of New Jersey."

Of course, this was all perfectly improper, mentioning the bail jump and the murder case. But all's fair in love and war, and if Tommy Lee wanted to represent himself, that was his tough luck.

I could see Judge Hatcher writing the word "murder" on his pad and circling it a few times. He gave Tommy Lee another dose of the death stare and I said, "No further questions."

Now, a good defense lawyer would have made mincemeat out of Singer's I.D., but Tommy Lee was his own fool. He put on his fiercest face and began to insult the witness.

"Ain't it true, you told the brother you stopped, who ain't me, that you would let him go for five bucks?"

Now that's a lie for sure, I thought. Way below Singer's price range.

"It is not true," Singer said, his ears starting to glow.

"How much you charge him, then?"

I objected, Hatcher whacked his gavel down hard, and the trial continued with both Singer and the judge glaring at Tommy Lee.

"You say this so-called arrest was on February 8, 1970?"

Singer nodded.

"You sniff any glue, or shoot up, like you do, on that date?"

Hatcher smashed the gavel down before I could object.

"One more disrespectful question like that and I'll have you in contempt. This is an officer of the law up here. Show him some respect, even if you have none for yourself."

"I got no respec'," Tommy Lee yelled back, "fo' a so-called man who perjures hisself and say he be arrestin' me when I ain't there."

As he started to stand, the two guards wrestled him back into his seat. Singer was seething, and Hatcher was beginning to drool. I sat back and enjoyed the show. With every word he spoke, Tommy Lee was digging a deeper trench into which I would soon be booting his body.

"How come you so sure you seen me?" Tommy Lee asked, when all was again calm.

"I remember you," Singer said, a lot more firm in his conviction than he had been when I questioned him.

"Don't all black boys look the same to you?" the defendant asked with a sneer. Singer was really angry now.

"I have no problem distinguishing one black man from another, Mr. Jones," he replied.

"Ain't it true the man you really stopped was my brother, Bobby Lee, who give you my name to beat this rap?"

Singer smiled and shook his head. He was adamant now. He'd swear it was Tommy Lee even if it wasn't. Tommy Lee swung around toward the back of the room and pointed to a black man seated there.

"Ain't it him you stopped?" he challenged.

Singer looked the man over. The man's hair was neatly clipped and combed and he was dressed in a three-piece suit. He was everything Tommy Lee was not. Singer took only a moment to decide.

"That is not the man I arrested."

"You still say it's me you stopped on February 8?"

"Definitely."

Well, the verdict was a foregone conclusion. I never saw anyone bury himself so badly in all my life. Of course, if I had known then what I know now, I wouldn't have recounted my courtroom triumph with such glee during lunch.

I only saw Tommy Lee once more after his conviction. Three weeks later, I was handling Criminal Presiding when they called Tommy Lee's extradition matter. The man they led out of the jail was dressed the same and looked the same, but his attitude was different. He smiled when he saw me and extended his hand.

"You sure got me good, counselor," he said, and I noticed the thick, Negro drawl was gone.

"Just doing my job," I said. "Nothing personal."

"I'm aware of that," he answered.

Then, Judge Cody took the bench, and I said that this was the time set for Mr. Jones to contest his extradition to New Jersey. But Tommy Lee surprised us all by saying he wanted to waive extradition and would go back voluntarily.

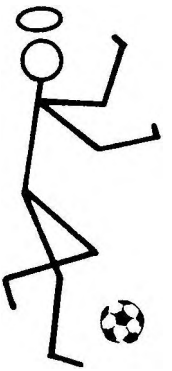
"Now, you're certain that's what you want to do?" Judge Cody asked. He was very conscientious and was always protecting people's rights. A real pain in the neck.

"Well, all right," the judge said, and that was the last I ever saw of Tommy Lee Jones.

But not the last time I thought about him. See, I knew something was wrong. He was just so different. The way he walked and the way he talked. It bothered me all day. Then, just before quitting time, I figured it out. Tommy Lee and that well-dressed black man, the one he said was his brother, did look alike. It was the clothes and the hairdo and the radical black histrionics that had thrown me off.

But why take the rap for his brother? Maybe it was simple brotherly love, but I didn't think so. Then, a little bell began to tinkle in my subconscious and I pulled Tommy Lee's extradition file. As I opened it, I could hear Tommy Lee saying, "You still say it's me you stopped on February 8?" and Marty Singer, his jaw tight and his cheeks red with anger, answering, "Definitely."

I looked down at the open file and felt sick. You see, that murder, the one that took place clear across the country in New Jersey. . . . According to the extradition papers, it had occurred on February 8. ST



JUSTICE IN ARREARS

In March, 1982, Joseph D. Allen, district attorney of Mendocino County, California, mailed handbills to several newspapers in his county.

They were not election notices aimed at getting him re-elected to office. Rather, they were addressed to "Thieves, Thugs, Con Men, and other Criminals" asking for their patience because the district attorney's till had run dry.

The handbills read: *Please be advised. The district attorney's office has run out of funds to prosecute you for your crime until July, 1982. Therefore: Please postpone the commission of all crimes which are not urgent until after that date.*

"I guess my campaign was effective," said Allen. "I had no money to pay for anything—court reporters, witnesses, nothing. And if you don't pay witnesses, they don't show up at the trial."

The Board of Supervisors voted Allen's office $15,000.

Apparently Allen was not happy with the prospect of trying to prosecute criminals with a shortage of funds or face another battle with the Board of Supervisors. He resigned his office at the end of his term.

MEL WALDMAN

Mr. Waldman is a seasoned writer with more than his share of droll imagination. Drawing on his background as a counselor to drug patients, he has created "street-wise" characters who are quaint, charming—and alive! They have a better than average chance of staying that way—as long as they don't mess with...

GENERAL TOM

After Joe placed the package on the bench, he waited behind the trees. This section of the park was usually deserted. But in a short while, a young, attractive woman pushing a baby carriage arrived. She sat down next to the package.

The baby screamed incessantly. "Quiet!" the woman ordered. Still the baby's anguished cries continued. "Drink the special milk!" she commanded.

After the woman fed the baby, it fell asleep. The woman grabbed the package and stood up. "Good-bye!" she announced to the sleeping child. Then she vanished.

Joe scurried to the baby carriage. Looking in, he said, "This one's a beauty. Blond and blue eyes."

Joe took the child to Angel's apartment. When he showed it to Angel, he shouted jubilantly, "This baby's gonna make me a fortune!"

"He's as pretty as a girl. Where'd you get him?"

"Told you the other day. This here pretty girl was gettin rid of her baby."

"Not the junkie?"

"Yeah."

"Be careful, Joe. Who ya sellin the kid to?"

"Heard Big Tom's lookin for a kid."

"Stay away from Big Tom. He'd kill ya if ya sold him a junkie baby."

"Ain't scared of Big Tom. And besides, the thing's real pretty. And after it kicks the stuff, it'll be real fine."

"No, Joe. Big Tom would kill ya."

"He's hungry for a kid. Hear he had a kid years ago. Never seen it. Maybe he never had none."

"The street says his kid's a freak."

"Who knows, Angel? Nobody seen his kid."

"He keeps it hidden, Joe."

"Heard that story bout fifteen years ago. The kid oughta be grown by now. Ain't never seen it."

"Big Tom's ashamed. Keeps it hidden."

"The street lies."

"Just be careful, Joe. Big Tom's got a freak. Ain't gonna want another."

Joe sold the baby to Big Tom. It was the biggest deal of his life.

A week later, Angel told Joe, "Ya gotta leave town. The street says Big Tom is real angry."

"Big Tom ain't nothin."

"Maybe there's a contract on ya."

"I gave him a beauty."

"I'm afraid, Joe."

"Don't worry, Angel. Things are better than ever. Got another big deal today."

"Don't go, Joe. Big Tom's out there."

"Big fat Tom? I'll see him a mile away."

After Joe dropped the package on the bench, he hid behind the trees. In a little while, a pretty woman pushing a baby carriage arrived. She sat down next to the package. Then she rocked the carriage. The baby didn't cry. "It's a good baby," Joe muttered. A few minutes later, the woman picked up the package. Then she disappeared.

Joe waited a while before he approached the carriage. "No sign of Big Tom," he muttered. "The street lies."

Joe strutted to the carriage. "I'm Big Joe!" he said defiantly. "Nobody gonna hurt Big Joe."

Momentarily, he stopped. "What's that?" Joe looked around, clutching the gun inside his jacket. "Oh, it ain't nothin," he sighed. "Maybe the wind." He walked jauntily to the carriage. "Let's see what the stork brung."

Standing over the carriage, he said, "Oh, this one's got a veil. Let's see what's underneath the pretty veil." Lifting the silk cloth, Joe gazed at the ugly baby. "Christ!" he screamed.

The ugly baby grinned at Joe, its old wrinkled face smiling sardonically while its tiny hands pointed the gun at Joe. "Good-bye, Joe," it announced as it pulled the trigger, catapulting Joe across eternity.

Suddenly, Big Tom loomed in the distance. "Everything okay, Little Tom?" he cried out.

"Sure, Dad," the dwarf answered.

Big Tom strolled toward the carriage.

"Get me out of here, Dad!" Little Tom urged. "I want a smoke."

When Big Tom arrived, he lifted his son out of the carriage. He took out a big fat cigar and said, "Enjoy!"

"You proud of me, Dad?"

"You bet."

"I blew him away."

"You sure did, son."

"Ain't I the best?"

"The best."

"Better than General Tom Thumb?"

"Better."

"And the spy Richebourg?"

"Sure, Tom. It ain't nothin for a dwarf to pretend he's a baby and smuggle messages out in his diapers. He don't have to kill no one. And back during the French Revolution, nobody looked for that kind of spy."

"You proud, Dad?"

"Big Tom's proud. Gonna call you General Tom."

Little Tom smoked his cigar. Then Big Tom lifted him back into the carriage. "Time to go home, General."

Big Tom slowly pushed the carriage. When father and son got out of the park, General Tom was asleep. ST

CHRISTIANNA BRAND

For her second appearance in the new SAINT Magazine, Christianna Brand has honoured us with an introduction to her Grace, the Duchess of Chaffinge.

When she was urged to create a new detective character as much like herself as possible, Miss Brand responded with her usual dedication, wit, and good humour: "I took a long, burning look at Me and out of the ashes there stepped, rather arthritically, a lady of whom I can only say that while she retains many of the characteristics most maddening to my friends, she has some carefully added charms which are all her own."

We quite agree. The Duchess is not only a charming lady but a clever sleuth as well. Herein she tackles a most puzzling triple killing in which the most enigmatic clue is...

THE ROCKING CHAIR

The crowd grew restless as the visiting vicar droned on. All they really wanted was a proper good look at her ladyship's hat. "It's never that old straw with a couple of flowers from the garden pinned in front."

The Duchess sat waiting her turn, oblivious of it all. Her mind was a million miles away, conning over what her visitor had told her about the three dead ladies....

Fifteen years ago. She recalled the case, but only very vaguely. A house by the lakeside on the island—St. Martha's Island, that was, off the Cornish coast—and in the sitting room, three women lying dead, spread out like a trefoil cloverleaf, their poor heads forming the centre point. Shot at very close range, three shots fired, no more—almost certainly by one or other of themselves; but the weapon so splashed with blood that no fingerprints could be lifted

from it. Two quiet, pleasant, harmless sisters, known to everyone on the island; and a younger woman, known to nobody anywhere. To this day, it had never been established who in the world she could have been.

But her visitor knew—and all these years later had come to consult the Duchess as to what should be done about it. The visitor was a not entirely lovable old party called Miss Maud Trumble, rich and famous author of dozens of really quite terrible books—though why anybody who could have changed her name to Dawn Cloud or something should go on calling herself Maud Trumble was beyond the Duchess's imagining.

"...and will therefore ask her Grace to declare the bazaar ...OPEN!" concluded the vicar, raising his voice to a light bellow to alert her ladyship, who appeared to be three-quarters asleep. The Duchess came to with a start and said in her clear, carrying, bazaar-opening voice, "Oh, gosh!—is it me?"

The Hat had been well worth waiting for. She shed a few peony petals as, bowing her thanks to right and left, she scrambled arthritically down from the platform and forced her guest on a round of the produce stalls. "I'll have some of that jam. It looks quite delicious!"

"It's the rhubarb lot that cook sent down from the Castle, m'lady...."

"Oh, my goodness, then I certainly won't! Thank you, Peggy, for the warning." She bent a searching gaze upon the stall-holder. "You *are* Peggy, aren't you? Peggy-with-the-glasses-on, that our dear chauffeur Bill married?"

"No, your Grace, I'm Peggy-a-bit-deaf that he ought to have married. Her, he had to," said Peggy with a pious sniff. "Which is different."

"Oh, yes, it is, *is*n't it?" said the Duchess, vaguely effusive, and hurried Miss Trumble away. "That'll teach me to show off to you," she said ruefully. "The Aristocracy being gracious with the Peasantry." But she had spotted a friend in the crowd. "There's Chief Inspector Cockrill, just the person we want! He'll help us."

"After the debacle of our Three Dead Ladies," said Miss Trumble stiffly, "we, on the island, have little faith in the mainland police. However, by all means bring the gentleman in. I shall have much pleasure in putting him through his paces."

"Oh, dear!" said the Duchess. "Perhaps . . . ."

"No, no, I insist. He looks hardly up to my metal," said the lady. And, indeed, Inspector Cockrill—small, elderly, hot and rather cross, a battered straw hat breasting the fine spray of his greying hair—was hardly an awe-inspiring figure. Miss Trumble approached him, nevertheless, with a rapid résumé of the situation. Her Grace intervened with hasty introduction. "So do come home, Cockie. The car's here, and we could have a little booze-up."

"What, at three o'clock on a boiling hot afternoon?" said the Inspector, but capitulated and, half an hour later, sinking back into a chair in her big, untidy private sitting room up at the Castle, with a cup of tea in his hand, prompted: "Well, tell me about the ladies."

"The Ladies'?" said the Duchess, startled. "I was only there for an hour or so. I didn't have to go."

"The ladies, the *ladies!* Perhaps, Miss Trumble," said the Inspector, whose time was not unlimited, "you would care to outline the case for me? I remember very little about it."

"Then I will inform you," said Miss Trumble, "of what the police had at the time to work upon." She plonked down the facts before him like small dollops of cold porridge. "Two sisters. Mrs. Cray, Rosemary, aged fifty-seven; Miss Rosalie Twining, five years younger. Quiet, harmless, charming. Mrs. Cray extremely religious, from her convent days. Devoted to one another," said Miss Trumble, relaxing the chill a little, "and loved by all. In our tiny community, loved by all."

"And then this young woman?"

"Aged thirty-two or thereabouts. Very neat and tidy, exceptionally so," said Miss Trumble, looking coldly upon the Inspector, whose appearance certainly did not enter into this category. "Health had been good—well, up to then. No infor-

mative dental work. Clothes very ordinary . . . ."

"What, exactly, was she wearing?"

"I'll tell you what she was wearing," said Miss Trumble. "She was wearing a pendant, an imitation scarab set in gold." She added offhandedly that the two ladies were wearing identical pendants and again deflected attention by bringing it sharply to the most important point of all, the dead girl's face. The bullet that had killed her had gone rather high. Nothing too dreadful, said Miss Trumble with a shudder, but—unrecognisable.

"And no one ever did recognise her? There must have been worldwide publicity. But then, of course, no photograph would have helped. And on the island?"

"Nobody. Not even in the shops, and yet there'd been a breakfast—coffee and rolls."

"But how long had she been there?"

"Two nights at least. The last ferry had been at half-past-five on Monday evening, and they died on the Wednesday morning."

"Ferry tickets?"

"No dice there. And there's no other way for her to have got to the island, and you can take that from me flat," said Miss Trumble, perhaps guiltily aware that very few other facts had been given to them absolutely flat.

"You didn't see her yourself, Miss Trumble? Even after . . . all the commotion at the house . . . ?"

"You can't see their house from mine," said Miss Trumble. "It's round the bend of the lake, between me and the harbour." That was what was so wonderful, she said, the remoteness, and yet less than half a mile from the dear little shops . . . .

"Where can she have concealed herself?" interrupted the Inspector. Miss Trumble was known to rabbit on more than somewhat, in her works, about the marvels of St. Martha's Island.

"No one ever discovered. And yet, we all know one another in our tiny community. Any stranger stands out a mile. We don't encourage strangers, Inspector. We are con-

tent among ourselves, all so loving, so generous, so . . . carefree . . . ." Miss Trumble had taken the invitation to a booze-up quite literally and now took a decidedly carefree draught of her vodka tonic. "My sweet house, down by the water's edge, not another building in sight—those mornings, dew-pearled—for all the world, I would not miss a single one of those awakenings to a summer morn . . . ."

"And you live there all the year round?" said Cockie, interrupting again.

And yet, thought the Duchess, should he not be just a trifle more attentive? Somewhere under all this guff, she had a feeling that Miss Trumble was testing him, daring him. Her own police had failed in the investigation. Even after all these years, she did not want a mainland policeman to do better.

"All the year round—except for my Roamings." Maud Trumble was noted for an almost obsessive research into the more exotic regions of the world for "colour" for her highly exotic novels. She expatiated upon the Roamings with a wealth of detail which soon had the Inspector longing for a return to the Duchess's verbal hedgehoppings. "But—back to St. Martha's! Summer tourists, you will exclaim—the girl lost among a clamour of summer tourists. But no—a tiny hotel catering only to Regulars, occasionally a house let to carefully vetted tenants." Nor was camping permitted. "We want no weekend fornication in our beautiful woodlands."

"Goodness!" said the Duchess. Maud Trumble's works were full of practically nothing else *but*, though her tents were pitched mostly in far Tibet or on the sands of Araby . . . . "And no signs of her having slept out-of-doors, or, of course, you'd have told us?"

"Of course," said Miss Trumble, heartily.

So—back to the two sisters. "Visitors for some years, always took the same house, quite accepted by us all. The General and Mrs. Cray—her sister seldom came, in those days; she was in America. Only a girl she was when Mrs. Cray was married. Came over from finishing school in Switzerland for the wedding and then within a week or so was

off to the United States. I've no idea why. Some quite prestigious jobs there, and then when war broke out she got herself sent home and had a post in the American Embassy in Grosvenor Square. Stuck it out when the bombing came, but Mrs. Cray—she was always so high-strung and nervous.... They'd decided to buy the house anyway and retire to the island when the General left the army; so she settled down and made a home for him there till the time came."

"And the sister?"

"Bombed out in '43 or whenever it was—V-1 you know; the doodle bugs we used to call them," said Miss Trumble with the easy familiarity of one who, safe on her island, had never seen a bomb fall in her life. "And they released her from her job, and she salvaged what she could and came and settled down with her sister. And the General came home at last and there they all were, shuch a happy little threeshome—threesome," corrected Miss Trumble, slightly taken aback.

All the same, mildly squiffy she might be, Miss Trumble was playing a game with them. It was like a detective story, thought the Duchess, where the clues are placed not so much squarely before the reader as slightly obliquely, so that they come out as not quite what in fact they are. She suggested: "Mrs. Cray had no children? Was she very much devoted to her husband?"

"Doted," said Miss Trumble.

"And the sister?"

"Doted. We all doted upon him, so handsome, so charming!"

"She didn't perhaps dote just a smidgeon too much?"

"Rubbish! Had a young man of her own in America. Couldn't get married because his wife was crippled or something. Couldn't ask for divorce. She didn't talk much about it. Mrs. Cray, of course, didn't approve. But anyway, he was killed in the war—sent over with the American army to the Middle East and his ship sunk off Salerno."

"And the General?"

"Staff job in Cairo, the last two or three years, then invalided out—his heart. And three years later, they came back from shopping and found him. Lying back in the old rocking chair. Mumbled out a few words, 'Happiest hours.... Honeysuckle Rose....' The place was called Honeysuckle House, and, of course, her name was Rosemary. But it was strange," said Miss Trumble, "that he should die in that old rocking chair."

"Why strange?"

"It was a double rocking chair, interesting old piece. Victorian. Bit battered, you know, but he loved it. Never would let anyone sit in it. It was tucked away in a corner. They kept it in their shrine. Mrs. Cray built a sort of shrine around his memory, right there in the sitting room—the rocking chair with a piece of ribbon tied across it like they do in museums, and his uniform, medals, cap, gloves, riding boots, old photographs...."

"I *see*," said Inspector Cockrill.

"You see what?" said Miss Trumble, rather sharply.

"Where the weapon came from. His old army automatic, which, by the way, he should have handed in. But—loaded?"

"Two women in that lonely house in the woods—that's why he had it there in the first place."

"Not sharing your faith in the island community?" said the Duchess, a mite nastily. "But anyway, the girl doesn't sound like a ma...like a marauder." It had seemed only civil to join her guest in the booze-up, and *marauder* suddenly became rather a tricky old word to say. "They hadn't been expecting her?"

"No, no. Midmorning, and they were still in their negligees. They'd never have done that if they'd been expecting a visitor; they were terribly proper. Shall I be a little generous," said Miss Trumble, "and tell you something which I know now, but the police never knew? The ladies had never in their lives set eyes on the young woman."

It was certainly all very odd. Cockrill got up and went over to the window, staring down unseeingly at the huge

stretch of parkland beneath the Castle, the broad terraces, the high-walled gardens with their orderly rows of vegetables and flowers. "Were there no papers? Didn't she carry a handbag?"

"A plastic thing. Nothing in it but toilet tissues, a little money, very ordinary cosmetics. All very neatly stowed into their compartments," said Miss Trumble, again in that oddly challenging way.

The Inspector was silent. "Miss Trumble," said the Duchess, "I take it that you now know who she was? When they died—did you know then?"

"Assolutely not," said Miss Trumble. She made a visible effort to pull herself together. "Absolutely not."

"I mean—you weren't harbouring her, were you? You were all so free on the island and generous...."

"I never set eyes on the girl in my life," said Miss Trumble. "Never spoke two words to her in my life."

Very odd. All very, very odd. Two harmless women known to everybody, and a stranger known to nobody. The bodies had been discovered, Miss Trumble revealed, in the late afternoon. By the time the mainland experts arrived, what havoc might not have been wrought by the tiny and inexperienced police force that so blameless an island would warrant? No prints on the gun, no indication of the order in which the three women had died. There were suggestions that they had set down in conversation for at least a little while—Mrs. Cray's chair hitched a little closer to the central chair so that her "good ear" might be towards the visitor, Miss Twining's spectacles on a table close to hand....

Why Miss Trumble should suddenly burst into slightly tipsy giggles was perhaps explained by her suddenly remarking that when they first met, the three ladies appeared to have been wearing gloves. Red, white, and blue gloves. "Not Union Jack gloves. Nothing so loyal as that. Blue gloves and white gloves and red gloves...."

"Red, white, and blue...? Oh, my goodness!" said the Duchess, blinded by a sudden revelation. "That does explain

a lot."

If Inspector Cockrill was similarly comforted, he did not betray it. "What about the ladies' wills?"

"A few small bequests. All the rest for the benefit of the island. Nothing interesting there."

Impasse. The Inspector turned back from the window. "Miss Trumble—why should you have come to the Duchess with this problem? Why to *her*?"

"I explained that to her. I had to come to London, so I thought I'd just run down and see her. The young woman was in some remote way related to her."

"Everyone is in some way related to me," said the Duchess. "With so old and fecund a family, if that's the right word, they more or less have to be." It was like Adam and Eve, she added vaguely.

"But how did Miss Trumble know about it?"

"If anyone is related to a Duchess," said Miss Trumble, somewhat scathingly, "pretty soon *every*one knows it. They show off about it."

"I never can think why," said the Duchess. "I don't think *I* do, and I *am* one."

"But, Miss Trumble . . . ?"

"A question hangs over it all," said Miss Trumble, "and I don't think I should die without someone knowing at least as much as I do. So—just go on guessing," she invited the Inspector.

Chief Inspector Cockrill did not entirely care for the word *guessing*, but was obliged to guess anyway. "It can only have been a case of blackmail. And, considering the three scarab pendants, something to do with the General."

"The General's life in Cairo was an open book," said Miss Trumble. "A man devoted to his wife—I've seen his letters home; she would proudly show them round—so loving and caring, longing only to be back on the island; and his love for ever and ever to his Honeysuckle Rose. But happy enough in Cairo. Made friends with a British couple with a charming small girl . . . ."

If not the General, then one or other of the sisters? But

Mrs. Cray had been a model of piety, married at twenty-three to a man upon whom she had doted, as Miss Trumble would have said, to the end of his life and after. And enquiries appeared to have elicited not a breath of scandal against the sister—persuing her prestigious jobs in Washington, D.C., and, at outbreak of war, very properly dashing home to offer her (noncombatant) services to King and Country....

Or the girl had done the shooting? The gun, being kept as a means of defence as well as a relic, would have been readily to hand. But the girl had been eleven or twelve when the General had known her in Cairo. True, little pitchers had long ears.... But, again, those letters had sounded very genuine....

"Why *now?*" said the Inspector. "Why didn't you tell the police, then, what you knew? Or at least contact her relatives?"

"I knew nothing about her relatives. If she'd been in Egypt, she wasn't there now; and no one ever came forward. As for the police—you, yourself, now know as much as the police ever discovered. You seem no nearer to suggesting a solution. The red, white, and blue gloves, for instance—what do you make of that?"

The Duchess opened her mouth to reply, but Cockie was already saying, calmly: "Well, that when you so subtly led us into believing that this all happened in the summer, you were deceiving us. The sisters were doing their housework when the girl arrived—red rubber gloves for washing up, white cotton for dusting. That leaves the girl with blue ones. And she wasn't wearing dainty net gloves for a walk through the woods along the lake: she was wearing woolly blue ones—to keep her hands warm—wasn't she? And if it was winter, there need be no mystery about her coming to the island undetected. At half-past-five in the evening, it would be dark. She simply stepped off the ferry and, carrying her light case, or even just a rucksack, walked off along the path...."

"Less than half a mile—to your house, Miss Trumble," said the Duchess, reproachfully.

"I tell you, I never set eyes...."

"You were off on your Roamings—otherwise, you must have. You told us you never missed a summer's day on your island—those dawn awakenings.... She was there in the winter."

"Are you suggesting," said Miss Trumble, stiffly, "that she broke into my empty house?"

"No, no, of course not," said the Duchess. "You'd told her she could use it—you'd told her the way to it along the path and where she'd find the key. She wrote to you, I suppose, one of your innumerable fans, and the letter reached you, forwarded on, when you were just about to set off for Peru or wherever it was...."

"Outer Mongolia," said Miss Trumble haughtily. Peru, indeed! Why not Grand Central Station and be done with it? "I do not journey to ordinary places."

"...and you dashed off this kind note to her. She was an aspiring writer, perhaps, and you thought she should have a chance to work without having to worry about rent and things. Her letter would show that she was an acceptable sort of person. She could quote my name as an earnest of respectability—though when I think of some of my ancestors," said the Duchess, "that's really a bit of a joke.

"And she'd refer to the island and mention having known General Cray when she was a child, and heard all about it. So...."

"Do you suppose that, after the killings, every house on the island wasn't thoroughly searched?"

"You kept a tiny bit emphasising how neat she was," said her Grace. "You were needling Inspector Cockrill, to see whether or not he'd get the significance. The significance was that she kept your house like a new pin." She looked encouragingly at Cockrill, and he did not fail her. "She'd stack away her bit of luggage wherever you kept yours—all sorts of cases for your different travels. She used a sleeping bag, probably, to save laundry problems and so on, and that

also would be rolled away with the rest. Her few clothes were very ordinary, you said, and, hung up at the end of one of your closets, they'd excite no attention. She'd automatically wash up and put away what little crockery she used. Probably you'd told her to help herself from your deep freeze till she got around to some shopping."

"Had I also invited her to use my credit cards?" said Miss Trumble, acidly. "None were found, nor any cheque book."

"Do you think a girl as hard up as that would have a bank account?" suggested her Grace. "Thousands don't. She'd have hoarded up her pennies, and the police wouldn't think anything of a few five-pound notes stashed away somewhere. You wouldn't need British currency where you were going, and you had complete faith in the islanders. Like the key—you'd just have tucked it into some hiding place near the front door and told her where she'd find it. She wouldn't risk carrying it around in the plastic handbag—if she lost it, she couldn't get another. Oh, and of course, like a good girl, she'd cover up your typewriter when she wasn't using it; and any bits of work she'd done would be taken as something of yours."

Miss Trumble looked not over-pleased at the idea of amateur efforts being mistaken for her own, but only asked, coldly: "And all this I kept to myself when the news broke?"

"But it never did break, did it?" said the Inspector. "Not in Outer Mongolia. And by the time you got home, except on the island, the furore would have died down. You'd heard nothing of it by the time you got back to your house."

"There was a note there from the police," said Miss Trumble. "In case I got back and found signs of their intrusion. They told me briefly what had happened—ten weeks ago by that time—but said there was no sign of any intruder."

"And, of course, no lights would have been seen," said Cockie. "Your house wasn't in view of any other. But didn't they check for the girl's fingerprints—all over your place?"

"They were perfectly satisfied that no one had been there." She shrugged. "I told you I had a low opinion of the mainland police."

The Duchess did not remark that the island police would probably have done the house-combing. She said only, "So you kept quiet?"

"Well—yes. I had time to think it all out before I need reveal that I was back at home. After all, it didn't really matter where the girl had stayed."

"Not to the police," said the Inspector.

She looked at him shrewdly. "What are you hinting at?" and added suddenly: "All this has been told to you quite privately. You will respect my confidence?"

"So far, Miss Trumble," said Cockrill rather grimly, "I think we have in fact had very little *of* your confidence."

"I'd have told it all to the Duchess, but she suddenly rushed me off to this wretched bazaar of hers. You were brought in, and it has amused me to challenge you. So I ask you again—what are you hinting at?"

"It might not matter to the police where the girl had stayed," said Inspector Cockrill. "But it mattered very much to you, Miss Trumble—didn't it? This precious island, no one admitted who wasn't approved and accepted all round. And you, without even a word of warning, had introduced a stranger of whom you knew nothing—who in the event proved to have been in all likelihood a blackmailer, and who certainly had brought about the dreadful deaths of two much-loved members of your little community...."

Miss Trumble's face had gone a rather pasty white, beneath its customary crocodile tan. "I recognised at once what I had done. But.... Her letter had been forwarded to me at Ulan Bator, my last outpost before I set off on my trip. I was distraught with preparations; on an impulse I just dashed off a note to her. If I hadn't...." She asked rather pathetically: "Do you really think she had it all planned? A blackmailer for sordid money?"

"Perhaps not that," said the Duchess, kindly. "It could have been for something much more innocent...."

"Such as—for acceptance?" said the Inspector. "She comes to the house, she draws attention to the scarab pen-

dant she's wearing, identical with their own. She says...she says that the donor had told her that if she ever needed to, she should bring it to Honeysuckle House on the island of St. Martha and show it, as proof of identity, to...."

"To her mother," said Miss Trumble.

To her mother! "Oh, Miss Trumble!" said the Duchess reproachfully again. "You told us that neither of the sisters had ever even seen the girl."

"Well.... When babies are to be adopted," said Miss Trumble, "they are often taken away at birth so that the mother need feel less pang in parting with them. And a sister of Mrs. Cray would certainly have been obliged to part with an illegitimate child. Remember, this all happened many years ago. Things were not nearly so easy as they are these days. And Mrs. Cray was so rigidly pious and upright; to the end, I think Rosalie was a little in awe of her."

"But would she really have been so obsessed with her sister's morality as to snatch up the gun?" asked Cockie.

"She was a little deaf," said the Duchess. "If she misheard, if she got things wrong, if she thought that the General...."

"The love of her life!" cried Miss Trumble, inspired. "Faithless! That highly strung creature, all her aggressions crushed down by the long years of self-enforced discipline! Who knows what nameless suspicions might not have been harboured all this time, in that secret heart?" The great novelist was clearly getting into her stride, not unassisted by vodka. "The belovéd husband—false! The sister a traitor to their lifelong devotion! The storm blows up, overwhelms her at last. The gun is to hand. She seizes it up and in one mad moment blots out all the pain...."

"A moment's reflection might have saved them all a lot of trouble," said Cockie, discouragingly. "The General had known her sister for only a few days—at the time of his own marriage. He then saw her rarely on her holidays home from the States. But to be the age she was at the time of the killings, the girl must have been conceived long before that."

"Before she even left Switzerland," said the Duchess. "Hence the hurried departure to America where she would

be unrecognised. A Swiss lover...."

"What would a nice pacifist Swiss be doing in Cairo during the war?" said Cockie. "Surely so much more likely...."

"The American boyfriend!" said her Grace. "Couldn't get a divorce because the poor crippled wife went on not dying. So the child was given for adoption. Then the war. Miss Twining came home, and the lover was eventually packed off with the U.S. Army to the Middle East and later to Italy, where he died. But meanwhile, she'd have written to him to try to get in touch with the adoptive parents, now in Cairo, and to send her news of the child. She must have told him about the scarab pendants. Perhaps it was even she who'd arranged that if her daughter ever wanted to find her...."

"So, Miss Trumble, you see," said the Inspector with none of his habitual acerbity, "if the deaf woman gets things wrong—becomes hysterical and starts shooting around—that's really no fault of yours."

"It was my fault that she ever went there," said Miss Trumble. "And wherever the wrong may have lain, it was through her going there that it was exposed. I knew as much as you do now. I should have worked out the truth, as you've done—I should not have let her go.

"And before I die, I wanted to get it off my conscience—at least not to have it all hoarded up within me. I could hardly have told anybody on the island; but the Duchess.... I've heard about your Grace," she said. "You have a reputation for being clever about this kind of thing—elucidating things—and for being kind. It's true that I've been playing games with the Inspector, challenging him. But to you I'd have told it all, simply and outright. It would have been like going to confession."

"*Absolvo te!*" said the Duchess in the words of the absolution and, like the priest in the confessional, sketched a sign of the cross in the air. "Dear Miss Trumble, in fact there is nothing to be forgiven. There was no blackmail, no relationships, no nothing. We've just been working through the possibilities, perhaps trying to prove to you that our police aren't quite so dumb after all. But, of course, there's no real-

ity in any of it. It's much, much more simple than that, isn't it, Cockie?"

"You did a kind and generous thing, Miss Trumble," said the Inspector. "You did no wrong at all."

"In fact, nobody in all this business has done anything wrong," said the Duchess. "Unless you could count that poor woman, not responsible for what she was doing...."

"No court would have condemned her," said Inspector Cockrill. "'While the balance of her mind was disturbed'—that's the official phrase."

"The girl dropped in at the house," said the Duchess, "with only the kindest intentions. She happened by chance to be on the island, and she wanted to tell the General's widow how, as a little girl, she had known him in Cairo, and how often he had talked to her about his home and his love and longing to be back there.... And she'd catch sight of the rocking chair, perhaps, and say how often he'd described it to her, that battered old Victorian relic, the double rocking chair—and told her how the happiest hours of his life had been spent in that old chair, gently rocking to and fro with his arms about his one true love...."

"...and the poor wife leapt to her feet," said Cockie, "and cried out, 'But it's *her* chair! I never in my life sat rocking in that chair with him!' The chair, bomb battered, that her sister had salvaged from those days when she—and he—had been alone together in London. Where he'd crawled to die as a last message to the true love of his life, mumbling out his dying words—to *her*."

"No wonder you laughed, Miss Trumble," said the Duchess, "when you told us that Miss Twining wore spectacles and Mrs. Cray was rather hard of hearing. It was like my two Peggies, wasn't it? Peggy-with-the-glasses-on, as they call her in the village, and Peggy-a-bit-deaf. He must have known it from the moment he set eyes on the little sister—come over to London for the wedding. It was like our dear chauffeur, Bill. He was marrying the wrong girl."

"And you tell me there was no wrong in that?" said Miss Trumble.

"They couldn't help falling in love; and it really was love, if it lasted all those years, spent mostly apart. For the rest—he kept to his promise. He went through with the marriage. She went abroad. They kept out of temptation's way. When they were thrown together by the war—they two in London, with the wife safely tucked away on the island —well, if at the end they could say that their happiest hours had been spent in a rocking chair," said the Duchess, "I do think that that was most honourably sticking at least to the letter of fidelity. The only small deception was in those letters—over the head of their recipient—sending all his true love to his Honeysuckle Rose. Well, her name was Rose, too, wasn't it? Rosalie."

"But all this the poor wife couldn't know," said the Inspector. "And Miss Trumble had most graphically described what could have been the state of her mind. The gun was there, and she just simply picked it up .... Many, many murders have arisen in the same sort of way."

He cast about for his disreputable old straw hat and, holding it across his chest, made a not ungraceful obeisance to his late enemy. "I agree with her Grace, Miss Trumble. You did only what was generous and kind. There's no need to blame yourself at all." To his hostess he said: "Don't bother to ring. I can find my own way to the portcullis."

"Fool!" said the Duchess as she went out with him at least to the head of the stairway. "Poor old trout! But I suppose she'll get over it."

"One way or another," said the Chief Inspector, "I dare say she will."

Miss Trumble hadn't taken too long. She was standing at the little side table when the Duchess returned, pouring out for herself a sufficiently reviving vodka tonic. "My *dear!*" she said, "I've got it all worked out already! Have to fiddle the scene, of course, and disguise the characters .... I thought, perhaps—Pocahontas. That would please my dear American public. Marries the man Rolfe, you know, but has never got over her passion for John Smith, or whatever his name was,

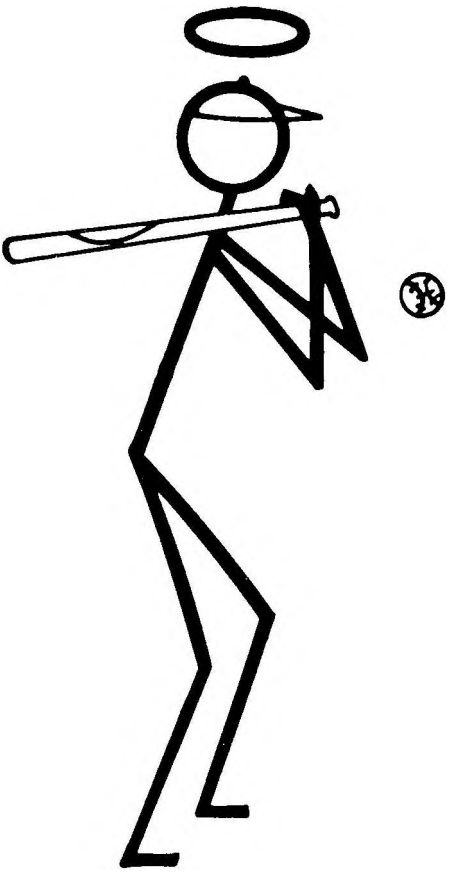
that she rescued from whoever it was—I can look all that up...."

"She being twelve years old at the time?" murmured the Duchess.

But the great author swept on, "...and there, in the noble hall of her home, stands the splendid gilt couch that had seen the consummation of all their love...."

"But it was a rocking chair," protested her Grace, "and the whole point is, that *nothing* happened there."

"Oh, I don't think my readers would like that at *all*," said Miss Trumble. ST



DEAD RIGHT

The city morgue in the Bronx, New York, is sometimes so busy that the next of kin take numbers—as in a corner bakery shop—and wait in line for their body-identification call.

☆ ☆ ☆

Edgar Allan Poe is generally credited with inventing the detective story. Before he wrote "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," the genre was almost totally unknown to English and American literature.

☆ ☆ ☆

When President James Garfield was shot in 1881, Alexander Graham Bell used a metal-locating tool he had devised to help find the assassin's bullet. The device was workable but was not successful on this occasion, because no one had thought to remove the steel-springed mattress on which the president was lying. The metal, it turned out, interfered with the search. And the unsanitary methods used in attempting to locate the bullet caused infection to spread throughout Garfield's body, resulting in his death.

SANCTUARY

A dummy bomb found in a fast-food restaurant on the crowded Las Vegas Strip was planted as a diversion to mask a bank robbery two blocks away.

An FBI spokesman said that as a police bomb squad was cautiously checking the device in the restaurant, a man entered the bank and announced a holdup.

He hastily fled the bank with a packet of money, which then exploded, covering his shirt with red dye and spraying him with tear gas. The bank robber "ripped his shirt off, hailed a passing police car, and jumped into the vehicle" according to the FBI spokesman.

JOE R. LANSDALE

In his thirty-plus years, Joe Lansdale has been employed as a factory worker, bouncer, martial arts instructor, and custodial supervisor, all of which have obviously added to his insight into human nature.

Currently a full-time freelance writer, his varied output includes short stories in several genres, novels, criticisms, reviews, interviews, and film scripts. By his own admission, his best work has been in the horror vein.

In OLD CHARLIE, he combines both mystery and the macabre. There's little question that Mr. Lansdale knows the "right kind of bait" to hook the readers.

OLD CHARLIE

Hi there. Catching much?

Well, they're in there. Just got to have the right bait and be patient. You don't mind if I sit down on the bank next to you, do you?

Good, good. Thanks.

Yeah, I like it fine. I never fish with anything but a cane pole. An old-fashioned way of doing things, I guess, but it suits me. I like to sharpen one end a bit, stick that baby in the ground, and wait it out. Maybe find someone like yourself to chat with for awhile.

Whee, it's hot. Near sundown, too. You know, every time I'm out fishing in heat like this, I think of Old Charlie.

Huh? No, no. You couldn't really say he was a friend of mine. You see, I met him right on this bank, sort of like I'm meeting you, only he came down and sat beside me.

It was hot, just like today. So damned hot you'd think your nose was going to melt off your face and run down your chin. I was out here trying to catch a bite before sun-

down, because there's not much I like better than fish, when here comes this old codger with a fishing rig. It was just like he stepped out of nowhere.

Don't let my saying he was old get you to thinking about white hair and withered muscles. This old boy was stout-looking, like maybe he'd done hard labor all his life. Looked, and was built, a whole lot like me, as a matter of fact.

He comes and sits down about where I am now and smiles at me. That was the first time I'd ever seen that kind of smile, sort of strange and satisfied. And it looked wavery, as if it was nothing more than a reflection in the water.

After he got settled, got his gear all worked out, and put his bait on, he cast his line and looked at me with that smile again.

"Catching much?" he asked me.

"No," I say. "Nothing. Haven't had a bite all day."

He smiled that smile. "My name's Charlie. Some folks just call me Old Charlie."

"Ned," I say.

"I sure do love to fish," he says. "I drive out every afternoon, up and down this Sabine River bank, shopping for a fresh place to fish."

"You don't say," I says to him. "Well, ain't much here."

About that time, Old Charlie gets him a bite and pulls in a nice-size bass. He puts it on a chain and stakes it out in the water.

Then Old Charlie rebaits his hook and tosses it again. A bass twice the size of the first hits it immediately, and he adds it to his chain.

Wasn't five minutes later and he'd nabbed another.

Me, I hadn't caught doodlysquat. So I sort of forgot about the old boy and his odd smile and got to watching him haul them in. I bet he had nine fish on that chain when I finally said, "That rod and reel must be the way to go?"

He looked at me and smiled again. "No, don't matter what you fish with, it's the bait that does it. Got the right bait, you can catch anything."

"What do you use?"

"I've tried many baits," he said smiling, "but there isn't a one that beats this one. Came by using it in an odd way, too. My wife gave me the idea. Course, that was a few years back. Not married now. You see, my wife was a young thing, about thirty-two years younger than me, and I married her when she was just a kid. Otherwise, she wouldn't have been fool enough to marry an old man like me. I knew I was robbing the cradle, impressing her with my worldly knowledge so I could have someone at home all the time, but I couldn't help myself.

"Her parents didn't mind much. They were river trash and were ready to get shed of her anyway. Just one more mouth to feed far as they were concerned. I guess that made it all the easier for me.

"Anyway, we got married. Things went right smart for the first few years. Then one day this Bible-thumper came by. He was something of a preacher and a Bible salesman, and I let him in to talk to us. Well, he talked a right nice sermon, and Amy, my wife, insisted that we invite him to dinner and buy one of his Bibles.

"I noticed right then and there that she and that Bible-thumper were exchanging looks, and not the sort to make you think of church and gospel reading.

"I was burned by it, but I'm a realistic old cuss, and I knew I was pretty old for Amy and that there wasn't any harm in her looking. Long as that was all she did. Guess by that time, she'd found out I wasn't nearly as worldly as she had thought. All I had to offer her was a hardscrabble farm and what I could catch off the river, and neither was exactly first-rate. Could hardly grow a cotton-pickin' thing on that place, the soil was so worked out, and I didn't have money for no store-bought fertilizer—and didn't have no animals to speak of that could supply me with any barnyard stuff, neither. Fishing had got plumb rotten. This was before the bait.

"Well, me not being able to catch much fish was hurtin' me the most. I didn't care much for plowing them old hot fields. Never had. But fishing . . . now that was my pride and

joy. That and Amy.

"So, we're scraping by like usual, and I start to notice this change in Amy. It started taking place the day after that Bible-thumper's visit. She still fixed meals, ironed, and stuff, but she spent a lot of time looking out the windows, like she was expecting something. Half the time when I spoke to her, she didn't even hear me.

"And damned if that thumper didn't show up about a week later. We'd already bought a Bible, and since he didn't have no new product to sell us, he just preached at us. Told us about the ten commandments and about hellfire and damnation. But from the way he was looking at Amy, I figured there was at least one or two of them commandments he didn't take too serious, and I don't think he gave a hang about hellfire and damnation.

"I kept my temper, them being young and all. I figured the thumper would give it up pretty soon anyway, and when he was gone Amy would forget.

"But he didn't give it up. Got so he came around often, his suit all brushed up, his hair slicked back, and that Bible under his arm like it was some kind of key to any man's home. He even took to coming early in the day while I was working the fields, or in the barn sharpening up my tools.

"He and Amy would sit on the front porch, and every once in awhile I'd look up from my old mules and quit plowing and see them sitting there in the rocking chairs on the porch. Him with that Bible on his knee—closed—and her looking at him like he was the very one that hung the moon.

"They'd be there when I quit the fields and went down to the river in the cool of the afternoon, and though I didn't like the idea of them being alone like that, it never really occurred to me that anything would come of it—I mean, not really.

"Old men can be such fools.

"Well, I remember thinking that it had gone far enough. Even if they were young and all, I just couldn't go on with that open flirting right in front of my eyes. I figured they

must have thought me pretty stupid, and maybe that bothered me even more.

"Anyway, I went down to the river that afternoon. Told myself that when I got back I'd have me a talk with Amy, or if that Bible-thumper was still there amoonin' on the porch, I'd pull him aside and tell him politely that if he came back again I was going to blow his head off.

"This day I'm down at the river there's not a thing biting. Not only do we need the food, but my pride is involved here. I'd been a fisherman all of life, and it was getting so I couldn't seine a minnow out of a washtub. I just couldn't have imagined at that time how fine that bait was going to work.... But I'm getting ahead of myself.

"Disgusted, I decided to come back from the creek early, and what do I see but this Bible fella's car still parked in our yard, and it getting along toward sundown, too. I'll tell you, I hadn't caught a thing and I wasn't in any kind of friendly mood, and it just went all over me like a bad dose of wood ticks. When I got to the front porch I was even madder, because the rockers were empty. The Bible that thumper always toted was lying on the seat of one of them, but they weren't anywhere to be seen.

"Guess I was thinking it right then, but I was hoping that I wasn't going to find what I thought I was going to find. Wanted to think they had just went in to have a drink of water or a bite to eat, but my mind wouldn't rightly settle on that.

"Creeping, almost, I walked up on the porch and slipped inside. The noises I heard from the bedroom didn't sound anything like water-drinking, eating, or gospel-talking.

"Just went nuts. Got the butcher knife off the cabinet, and ... I don't half remember.

"Later, when the police came out there looking for the thumper, they didn't find a thing. Turned out he was a real blabbermouth. Everyone in town knew about him and Amy before I did—I mean, you know, in that way. So they believed me when I said I figured they'd run off together. I'm sure glad they didn't seine the river, or they'd have found

his car where I run it off in the deep water.

"Guess that wouldn't have mattered much though. Even if they'd found the car, they wouldn't have had no bodies. And without the bodies, they can't do a thing to you. You see, I'd cut them up real good and lean and laid me out about twenty lines. Fish hit that bait like it was made for them. Took me maybe three days to use it up—which is about when the police showed up. But by then the bait was gone and I'd sold most of the fish and turned myself a nice dollar. Hell, rest of the mess I cooked up and ate. Matter-of-fact, them officers were there when I was eating the last of it.

"I was a changed man after that. Got to smiling all the time. Just couldn't help myself. Loved catchin' them fish. Fishing is just dear to my heart, even more so now. You might say I owed it all to Amy.

"Got so I started making up more of the bait—you know, other folks I'd find on the river, kind of out by themselves. It got so I was making a living off fishing alone."

That's Old Charlie's story, fella.... Hey, why are you looking at me like that?

Me, Old Charlie?

No sir, not me. This here on my right is Old Charlie.

What do you mean there's no one there? Sure there is.... Oh yeah, I forgot. No one else seems to see Old Charlie but me. Can't understand that. Old Charlie tells me it used to be no one could see *me*. Can you believe that? Townsfolks used to say Old Charlie had gone crazy over his wife running off and all. Said he'd taken to talking to himself, calling the other self Ned.

Ain't so. I'm Ned. I work for Old Charlie now. Odd thing is, I can't remember ever doing anything else. Old Charlie has got to where he can't bring himself to kill folks for the bait anymore. Says it upsets him. So he has me do it. I mean, we've got to go on living, don't we? Fishing is all we know. You're a fisherman. You understand, don't you?

You sure are looking at me odd, fella. Is it the smile? Yeah, guess it is. You see, I got it, too. Once.... Wait a min-

ute. What's that, Charlie?. . . Yes, yes, I'm hurrying. Just a minute.

You see, once you get used to hauling in them fish, using that sort of bait, it's the only kind you want to use from then on. Just keeps me and Charlie smiling all the time.

So when we see someone like yourself sitting out here all alone, we just can't help ourselves. Just got to have the bait. That's another reason I keep the end of this cane pole so sharp. ST

CLINK

Many common words have pronunciations which echo their meaning, although the meaning can change over the years. Such a word is *clink,* which started life as a designation for the odd sound made by the rattling of iron chains. Coined shortly before the year 1400, the vivid term was at first used chiefly in blacksmith shops and on farms.

Then, English prison authorities established the use of special chains in famous (or infamous) Southwark Prison. Located near London Bridge, the institution was on a historic site. Southwark itself received its name from southward fortifications erected by Roman armies of occupation. Independently incorporated for centuries, the borough was home to famous inns and houses of entertainment. One major attraction was the Globe Theater, in which many of Shakespeare's plays were first produced.

Southwark's gloomy prison was at least as well known as any other institution in the region. From the clink of chains within its walls, the house of detention itself became known as "the clink." Gradually, other prisons adopted the use of chains similar to those whose sounds had named the noted dungeon. As a result, Englishmen of the sixteenth century used *clink* to designate any prison—with or without the noise of chains echoing through its corridors.

BERNARD PETERSON

Having been a physicist in the research division of a major electronics corporation in New Jersey for about thirty years, Bernard Peterson seemed firmly entrenched in his life's work. However, about six years ago, in his spare time, he began writing fiction "to do something different from physics, something creative, to make an extra buck, and God knows what subconscious reason." His first novel, ***The Peripheral Spy,*** *has since been published in the United States, England, Italy, and Sweden.*

Now, The SAINT Magazine is pleased to present another breakthrough for Mr. Peterson—his first short story. In MOTHER LOVE, we meet Sonya and Stephen, two members of a Russian spy network operating in this country. But we get to know them from an unusual perspective. We come to understand the loneliness, the anguish, and the emotional stress of their job. Can they remain completely faithful to "Mother" Russia when their personal lives and desires, and Sonya's own maternal instincts, are stretched to the breaking point?

MOTHER LOVE

The children swarmed down the wide staircase in a torrent of noise. They had entered by a side door and, with spirits released from the clamp of the bitter February cold, they yanked off hats, unwound scarves, and whooped and jostled each other along the marble corridor. The three teachers who had entered with them promptly began shaping them into three groups. The children acceded to the herding grudgingly, and several of them took the opportunity to draw their sleeves across runny noses.

The large, brightly lit windows, lining the walls with their

superb dioramas of scenes that were so totally unexpected to a city dweller, caught their eyes soon enough. Here, magnificently stuffed and mounted beasts roamed uncluttered landscapes that could have been from another planet. Flat plains seemed to stretch for miles to distant horizons, presenting a perspective that jolted children who customarily walked to school between buildings that formed some of the deepest valleys on earth. The very titles beneath the windows, filled with strange-sounding words and syllables, seemed to be from another language. Bison, they said, and Pronghorn.

Sonya Rogovin had not expected the children. She had chosen a place from her list of common but completely unique locations in the city, and a time when interference by others would be minimal. The presence of the fourth grade from Public School #168 at this particular museum on this particular morning was totally unforeseen. But Sonya Rogovin was not disconcerted. She was sixty-one years old, had herself taken classes to visit museums when she had been a teacher, and she reckoned that the children would be gone soon enough, taken either by the variety of the wonders that were housed on other floors, or by a teacher's firmly planned schedule. She was right. By the time Stephen Petroff wandered idly down the staircase, the Hall of North American Mammals was once again deserted.

Petroff's folded newspaper was under his left arm, so Sonya undid the belt of her heavy cloth coat and sat down on the bench in the middle of the hall. She was a gray-haired, pleasant-looking woman with a small round nose and a mouth that seemed always to be on the verge of a smile. Age had thickened her torso and softened her face, but she was by no means heavy. Her movements were graceful—those of her hands and fingers especially so. She wore metal-rimmed bifocals, no earrings, and a necklace made of some dull compositional material. There was not one single feature of her clothes or person that would cause anyone's eye to linger on her. It was a valuable quality.

She motioned for Petroff to sit down beside her, and

when she spoke it was with firmness and some energy.

"You look tired, Stephen," she said solicitously. He really looked more than tired. *Dispirited,* she thought to herself. "Is everything all right? Are you sleeping well?"

Stephen Petroff sighed heavily as he sat down and unfolded his newspaper. He withdrew from its pages a sealed, legal-size envelope and handed it to her. Unhurriedly, she tucked it away, not in the large purse she carried on her lap, but in an inside pocket of her coat, one that could be buttoned with a flap.

Petroff turned to look at her, but didn't speak. His face, even though he had just come in from the numbing cold, had an unhealthy pallor, and his eyes and mouth were expressionless. He hadn't even taken his hat off.

For a few seconds he just stared. Then, "Is that what old people ask one another, Sonya? How are you sleeping?" He turned away to look unseeingly at the marble wall opposite them. "Well, as a matter of fact, you are right. No, Sonya, I have not been sleeping well."

Sonya Rogovin leaned forward, the better to look at his face. It was fleshy and pudgy, and it seemed not to have any real shape. It sagged in peculiar places. He had spoken ironically, but still there had been no flicker of emotion in his eyes. *God, he's in a mood,* she said to herself.

"Listen," she said aloud. "What is it? Has anything happened? Do you need money? Medical attention? I know we're not to contact the consulate, but in extreme circumstances there are procedures for that. I, myself, have done it three times, so you shouldn't be too shy about it, Stephen. Really, you shouldn't."

Looking at him now a bit more carefully, she could see that new pouches of flesh had appeared on his face—pouches that had not been there six weeks before, when she had last seen him. He looked much older, older even than she. And he was, in reality, four years younger.

He seemed as though he hadn't heard a word she had said, hadn't even been listening. For a while, he continued to stare straight ahead. Then he turned, suddenly, to say,

"Sonya, come and have a coffee with me. It seems cold and lifeless in here. Come. Maybe a hot cup of coffee is just what we need."

"Listen, Stephen," she answered. "You know we're not supposed to do that. We're supposed to do our business and then separate. Every minute we stay together increases the chances for...."

His face changed, suddenly. Just like that. From being merely a set of neutral, lifeless features, it abruptly broke into an image of profound despair, with terror-stricken eyes and a twisted mouth.

"Come, Sonya. Please. Look, we're both clean. We're way out of the normal places of recognition risk. Surely a small coffee shop on a side street...."

It was very disquieting. Inviting her for coffee. Her refusal should not have produced such desperation. It was completely out of scale. There definitely was something wrong.

"Yes, yes, of course we can have some coffee," she said quickly. "Come. Button up your coat, and we'll find a nice quiet place where we can talk a bit." She had plenty of time, really. Envelopes like this were customarily destined for a subsequent (and unknown) contact, and she had until three o'clock to deliver it to one of her letter-drops.

They took their time, adjusting their scarves and pulling on their gloves before leaving the museum and submitting themselves to the bitterly cold wind that pounded down the broad avenue. Automatically, they walked southward—to keep the wind at their backs—and at the first corner they turned left toward one of the more commercial avenues, where they quickly came across the steamy windows of a coffee shop. Sonya took Stephen's arm and steered him toward the door.

Neither the man at the grille nor the two women sitting on stools at the counter turned around to look at them as they moved to one of the rear booths. The counterman was busy working a mound of sliced onions across the sizzling grille, and the smell of frying was very strong in the air. Sonya and

Stephen removed their coats, and while Stephen hung his up on a coatrack, Sonya carefully folded hers and laid it beside her in the booth. She noticed that, from where he sat, Stephen could not directly see his coat. It was a lapse. He was not functioning at all well.

It was several moments before the counterman came to take their orders. Stephen asked for coffee, Sonya for tea. When their drinks came, Stephen broke three of the white envelopes of sugar into his cup, while Sonya took one of the pink envelopes of noncaloric sugar substitute.

"Well," said Sonya, "so now tell me. What is it, Stephen?"

Stephen suddenly leaned forward, brought his face close to hers, and looked at her so intently that she involuntarily drew back. "You know, Sonya, I felt the walls of my room moving this morning. Well, . . ." He shrugged. "...I mean, the walls didn't really move. I know they didn't. It was more like a tremor in *me*, you know. The thing is, I think I know exactly what caused it. I thought about it, you see, and in no time at all I figured out what caused it." He stopped to drink some coffee, then went on haltingly—as though it were difficult either to get the words out, or to identify the thought.

"It's not just that I'm lonely, you see. We're all lonely. Sure, some people can handle that better than others. I realize that. I understand that. But it's more than that for me. It came to me that for a very long time now my emotional life has been completely barren. I'm talking about five or six years, Sonya." The words came faster now. "I mean, I haven't laughed with anyone, or shared a common thought, or smiled at anyone more than once. I mean, I haven't been *involved* in even the smallest way with anyone. Oh, I don't mean the work, Sonya. That's mechanical—it doesn't count. I'm talking about some human contact, you know. Some relationship that grows out of what I am made of inside—not what I do."

He stopped to gulp some more coffee. "And it's not going to change. My life is going to continue like that, Sonya. My realizing that was what made the walls move." He leaned

back in the booth. "One day I'll get hit by a truck—or have a heart attack—and my life will end. Just like that, with no more passion. It's terrifying, Sonya. Terrifying." He stopped to light a cigarette. But after three or four nervous puffs, he stabbed out its glowing tip in an ashtray.

"It's not healthy to live this way. Believe me. It's wrong—a wrong way to live. I have no one—no wife, no parents, no brothers, no cousins. For a Russian, at least a Russian like me, it's almost unbearable."

"I haven't seen my son in four years, Stephen."

"Fine. So you have a son you haven't seen in four years. I have *no* son. There's a difference, you know, and it makes a difference in how you . . . you . . ." He moved his hand vaguely as he searched for a phrase. "...go through your life," he finally said, lamely.

"Sonya, let me tell you some things." He stopped to light another cigarette.

God, but he's in a bad way, she thought.

"You know what I've been doing lately?" He puffed deeply. "I've been asking strangers on the street if they have the time. Just to get some human interaction. Just to have someone interested in me for a few seconds. Just to have me part of someone else's life for a moment or two. And all the time I'm wearing my watch. You know what else, Sonya? I've . . . ."

"Stephen, listen. You can always ask for emergency leave. You can probably be in Moscow within the month. All you have to do . . . ."

"No, no. I tried that seven months ago. When I decoded the Center's reply, it was negative—and suspicious. The clerks there probably reviewed my dossier and noticed that I listed no family or beneficiary for my pension. So what was the emergency? What could I have told them? That I was cracking up? That I was living my life wrong? Clerks—that's all they are in Moscow Center. No one—nothing—really meaningful." He puffed vehemently on his cigarette. "A few coded phone messages, and you. That's what I know. That's my life, Sonya. That, and an electronic device that

shows inane stories on a cathoderay screen." He stopped, gesturing with a forefinger. "Sonya, I'm going to spend the rest of my life without any human passion. It's making the walls of my apartment move."

Stephen's breathing was uneven, and his fingers trembled slightly as he lit yet another cigarette. She understood only too well what he had been talking about, but not at all the degree to which it seemed to be unnerving him. He was supposed to be reliable and steady. More, he had to have *demonstrated* these qualities at one time for him to be working in the communications link. What could have happened?

Not that Sonya was totally unsympathetic. She knew loneliness, too. She missed her son, Michael, terribly. An only child, he had been the focus of her attentions after her husband Simeon had been killed in the War. She had lavished her life on him until he had moved to Kiev after college to do geologic studies for some vaguely defined oil-drilling organization. He had not married, and for several years he had politely but firmly fended her off. She had remained in Moscow, teaching her English courses. Comfortable, but separated from her Michael.

Then, one day Sonya had been approached by an old War comrade of her husband, and had been recruited. Why not use her command of English to serve Mother Russia as courier in a foreign land? After all, she was alone now, and it would give some meaning to her life. It would not be a situation where any danger would be involved, of course, and life in a large Western city could be better in many ways than that in Moscow—especially in winter. Sonya Rogovin had nodded, yielded to the logic of what he had said, and, from the very start, found that he had been exactly right.

But she still missed Michael, and, even in this foreign city, often saw bits and pieces of him in the people around her. Even now, Stephen had put his left hand under his chin in exactly the same way Michael used to do when studying in the evening. She had a momentary urge to

smooth back a disheveled lock of hair from Stephen's head, but easily suppressed it.

"If it's really that bad, Stephen, what are you going to do?"

He looked up sharply, then jerked backed in his chair. "What do you mean, Sonya, what am I going to do?"

"Well, I mean...."

For a few seconds he just stared at her. Then, "Don't worry," he said quickly. "I'll be all right. It's nothing I can't handle. Just a mood that'll pass in a day." He had done a complete turnabout. Just like that. As though a switch had been thrown. He suddenly wiped his mouth with a paper napkin. "Thanks for having coffee with me and listening to a few ramblings. It was just the thing for a cold February morning. We owe that to each other, eh? Two old comrades in the field. I'm going to run now. Just remembered a chess match I wanted to see at my club." He hastily threw a couple of crumpled bills on the table. "No, no, don't bother. Please, finish your tea. I'm going to catch the bus. Keep warm now, you hear? Good-bye until next time." He didn't even bother to put his muffler on as he shrugged into his coat and almost ran from the restaurant.

Sonya was thoroughly nonplussed. His behavior had been strange, to say the least. Whatever impression he was trying to make at the end couldn't fool a child, let alone Sonya Rogovin. She ordered a second cup of tea and told herself to keep Stephen Petroff's conduct in mind for the future.

Succumbing to a not-quite-explainable urge to enjoy some of the ease that surrounded her, Sonya slowly finished her tea. Back on the street, she hailed a taxi going south—no problem at this time of day—and settled back as the cab glided past luxurious apartment buildings on her left and the only large park in the city on her right.

Thoughts of Michael filled her head—his favorite foods, the way he knotted his tie, the smell of his hair. She sighed heavily. There were times when she missed him fiercely.

After about a mile, her thoughts were rudely interrupted.

Stephen Petroff suddenly exited from the bus that had been preceding her down the wide avenue, looked around casually but thoroughly, and then skipped into a bookstore. She was surprised on two counts. First, to see him at all in this crowded city of millions, and second, because they were still a considerable distance from the chess club. An idea struck her, and on impulse she paid off the driver, stepped from the cab, and entered the bookstore.

She meant only to talk to Stephen, to see if some continuing companionship might be helpful. Maybe it was just a particularly bad period he was going through. Maybe a bit of fellowship, all the more effective because of its spontaneity, was just the thing to perk him up. She quickly spotted him and readied a broad, friendly smile. But before she could approach, he abruptly darted out a side door.

Sonya was brought up short, and her smile disappeared. It dawned on her that Stephen Petroff's actions were now turning into classic, if rudimentary, moves of evasion. But he had been clean when they had met in the museum, and there was no reason for him to think he was being followed now, so why had he performed them? Was he merely being overly cautious or simply doing something instinctual before.... Before what? Sonya frowned and suddenly dashed to the door through which Stephen had disappeared just a few seconds before. She spied him immediately about fifty yards down the street, walking rapidly. She quickly crossed to the other side of the street and, with short choppy steps, began to follow him.

Sonya closed the distance to thirty yards and had no trouble keeping it. The streets were beginning to be populated now by office workers on their way to an early lunch, and the recognition risk became correspondingly smaller. Petroff turned southward on the next avenue and, because it was much broader than the side street, diminished the risk even more. His stride was brisk and purposeful now, and he looked neither at the store windows nor at the people passing him. Several blocks went by like this until, abruptly, he slowed his pace almost to a stroll. In a little while he

stopped altogether, turned around, and slowly retraced his steps.

He paused at one of the doorways, turned, and looked up at the building. He stood that way for some time, seemingly unaware of the cold. A couple of passersby, apparently surprised at finding anyone stationary in the middle of the sidewalk, jostled him as they went by.

He began walking again, slowly, with head down, the picture of someone deep in thought. Sonya could not make out any distinguishing feature of the building before which Petroff had stopped and so, even though it increased the risk, she crossed the street hurriedly to get a better look. There was nothing unusual to be seen, however. Puzzled, she ran her eyes over the name plaques at the entrance. There was a book company, a printing shop, a clothing manufacturer, a jewelry store—and, occupying one entire floor, the office of the Canadian Consul General.

For the second time in the space of a few moments, someone engrossed in thought stood like a statue before that particular doorway. There was no doubt in her mind that the consulate had been the object of Petroff's attention. The questions came fast, even as she shook herself free of her surprise and started up after Petroff again. Why? she asked herself. What was the connection? What could he have been thinking about?

Petroff's stride was more relaxed now, and after several blocks he turned and entered a storefront. This time, Sonya didn't even have to slow down. There was only one sign on the glass panel of the front door, THE MIDTOWN CHESS CLUB. He had mentioned this to Sonya, in the past, as his temporary place of refuge.

Sonya Rogovin was no fool. As she continued on down the street, the answers to her questions came soon enough—inevitably, if reluctantly. A friendless Russian, getting on in years, operating alone in an alien land with no family at home, complaining about a lack of passion in his life—who pauses in thought before a Western consulate—doesn't have

to shout his thoughts out loud. Sonya recalled his words of barely an hour ago: "...my emotional life has been completely barren...it's almost unbearable...wrong...terrifying...." *Oh, my God, Stephen,* she thought, *not you!*

She had personally known two people in her eighteen years of service who had defected—one stationed in the United States, the other in Australia. In both instances, it had happened suddenly, with no previous indication that anything had been wrong. She had been certain that in neither case had it been for money. Some psychological cord had broken, some errant emotion had quivered, and they were gone. Just like that. All one had to do was duck into a doorway, or perhaps through a gate, and it was done. It was really almost impossible to prevent. Sonya had felt some sympathy for the people, but none at all for the deed. It was an abandonment of one's homeland. It was like forsaking one's family. Even though she was conscious of all the warts on Mother Russia, she could never, herself, perform that act. It was treason.

Well, she sighed, she had a duty to perform now, and Sonya Rogovin did not shirk duty. There were two telephone numbers she had memorized for use in emergencies—when something was up, or when some urgent help was needed. She looked around and saw a large department store, which she happened to know had a bank of public telephone booths on the first floor. She fished around in her purse for a ten-cent piece and, as she walked toward the store, she thought to herself, *Poor Stephen, to feel that this was what you had to do because you found your life emotionally barren.* Well, she had to admit that, for a while anyway, it would give him all the human involvement he could want. But at such cost!

She slid the door of the phone booth shut and heard the tinkle as the coin fell. Not that he had much to offer—a few letter-drops and one other contact in the link. Both were easily replaceable. There would be no real inconvenience to the network. She, of course, would become useless and would have to be recalled.

Sonya Rogovin started dialing the seven-digit number, but at the third digit she began to slow down. She never got past the sixth one. A realization usually came to her intellectually in the form of one single act of comprehension. This time, it seemed to enter her consciousness through every pore of her body. She sat there, on the small seat in the booth, door shut, and let the delicate, formless fragments of logic coalesce into the one final idea. Then she went back through the steps—slowly, carefully, looking for loopholes in the reasoning. There were none. She went through them once more. Again there were none. She would be recalled. She would be recalled and she would see Michael. Maybe, now, he might even consider....

She had been surprisingly calm when the idea initially registered. Now, belatedly, her heart began pounding at the possibility that suddenly lay before her. It had appeared with no warning, no foreshadowing, and she was totally unprepared for it. She slowly removed her hat and forced herself to ponder the idea, to try to assimilate it, to get used to the reality of it. It was all too easy. After a few moments, there remained only some self-persuasion to perform, some rationalization to negotiate. Sonya Rogovin, transformed by unexpected prospects, made short work of both. She began with the fact that her own failure to call in her information would only indicate a lack of enterprise, certainly not, in itself, treason. Besides, it was not as though Stephen Petroff were an outright scoundrel, defecting (if that was indeed his intent) in order to give away significant security information, since he simply had none to give. Ultimately, she concluded, she was quite deserving of such possibilities after having been a good soldier for eighteen years.

It was now warm enough in the booth to make Sonya loosen her coat and scarf. It had been easy for her to find satisfactory justification for what she had in mind. Or had her embrace of the idea been so powerful that almost anything would have sufficed? Well, no matter.

She rose to leave the booth, but then sat down again. A thought had occurred to her that literally made her gasp.

What if he needed time to move on what might have been just an idea? Perhaps he would wait a week, a month, several months, before he developed sufficient resolve to act. Suppose Stephen Petroff were, in fact, *not* about to defect. If she had to wait, not knowing when, or even if he would, she'd be on psychological tenterhooks.

Perspiration dampened her upper lip, and her right hand closed into a fist. It was suddenly unthinkable that her dream of seeing Michael might not be realized. She slid the door open and left the booth.

For several minutes, her mind raced along unfamiliar channels as she wandered slowly among the counters, not seeing the men's shirts, ladies' shawls, pipes, handbags that drifted by her. No attention was paid to her. After traversing the entire width of the first floor, she nodded once to herself in decision and turned back to the telephones. Her mouth was grimly set as she reentered the phone booth and dialed Stephen Petroff's number.

She let the phone ring three times, hung up, dialed again, let it ring twice, and hung up again. She knew he wasn't home, but all their phones had a device that registered on a small strip of paper each time the phone rang, and he would know from the codes that he was to call her back at one of her public phone contacts.

She left the department store and, skipping lunch, briskly set about dropping off the envelope Stephen had given her in the museum. It took some time. Her letter-drop location was a movie theater in one of the outlying neighborhoods, far from the central city, a good half-hour's subway ride away. By the time she was finished, she knew that three o'clock would be the earliest she could expect to talk to Petroff.

At two-forty-five, Sonya finished her second cup of tea and walked up to the mezzanine floor of the central bus terminal. There were several public phone booths against one wall, but they weren't often used since this level wasn't as crowded as the main waiting room one floor below. She

chose a specific booth and closed the door.

At two minutes to three, the phone rang. She lifted the receiver. "Hello?"

"Hello, Miriam. Do you recognize my voice?"

"Yes, I do," she said. "And Miriam is not my name."

"Fine. What is it, Sonya?"

"Can you talk, Stephen?"

"Yes. I'm in a phone booth. Please, what is it?"

She paused just a fraction of a second, but only to steady her voice. She had made her decision. Right or wrong, moral or immoral, she knew exactly what she wanted to do.

"Stephen, listen. I called in, as usual, to say that the transfer had been satisfactorily completed. But instead of the usual acknowledgement, I was asked some strange questions. About you, Stephen. I was asked if I had recently noticed any unusual behavior on your part. If you had seemed nervous, or tense, depressed, excited—anything out of the ordinary. They said I should let them know if anything unusual occurred in my contacts with you. I said nothing, of course, merely that I would remember for the future. Stephen, I must say they sounded very suspicious, as though they thought you were about to do something. Naturally, they wouldn't let on. But we have known each other for eleven years now, and while I don't now if you're in any trouble, I felt as though I should tell you. I'm not sure I'm doing the right thing, Stephen, but eleven years is a long time, and I know we've been occasionally helpful and supportive to one another. I don't know exactly what it is I want to say."

She paused a few seconds. "I think I want to say something like...." She paused again. "Stephen, if you have any means of protecting yourself, any ways of handling hazardous situations—situations that might now be coming to a head.... Look, I can't put any of this into more concrete terms. It's just a feeling, and it may be all wrong. Maybe we should just leave it at that. Except that I did want to tell you, you know?"

She stopped talking. There was a long silence at the other

end of the phone. There was no telling how he would react. She could almost hear the questions running through his mind. Was she a plant? Was she sincere? Was her feeling accurate? Did she know more than she was saying?

"Stephen, are you there? Are you all right?"

"Yes, yes, I'm here, Sonya."

She could well imagine the terrible combination of fear and indecision that must afflict him now. A few more seconds passed.

Then, "Sonya, it was very good of you to call. Very, very good. Eleven years *is* a long time, and I am going to respond in the strongest way I can to those years, and to you, Sonya. I am going to believe you. Sonya. Comrade Sonya Pyotrovna Rogovin. I will say good-bye to you now. I hope to God you have been sincere, because I am going to act on what you have said. If what you have said is not true, then it will be up to God to have mercy on both our souls." There was an air of finality in his voice.

"Good-bye, Stephen. My wishes and my luck go with you wherever you may go."

There was a click and the phone went dead. Sonya hung up. She was drenched with perspiration and breathing very hard. A few people hurried past the booth. If they only knew, she thought. If they only knew what she had just done—what a life-shaping act she had just performed. For the first time in many, many years she had generated her own logic, and had herself pressed the levers of her life. It was strange and a little frightening. She wiped her brow and forced herself to breath deeply. The adrenaline flow slowed somewhat but didn't disappear completely. Sonya Rogovin permitted a modest exhilaration to displace some of the strangeness and the fright. It had gone just fine, she thought. It had been easy, after all.

In a little while she felt better and left the booth. Again, she knew just what she wanted to do. First to the coffee shop for another cup of tea and to make out her list. Then to the markets to buy and taste, for perhaps a last time, all the smoked salmon, whipped cream cakes, Italian spaghetti,

and so many more things that, once in Russia, she would probably never again have. Besides, she needed provisions for her wait by the telephone.

As she rode the taxi downtown, her mind turned inevitably to Michael. A soft smile lit her face. He would come from Kiev to see her when she reached Moscow. They would celebrate. Her first meal for him would, of course, be his favorite, *kapushniak* with pieces of thinly sliced smoked pork floating on top, accompanied by a half-dozen potato pancakes and a large bottle of that Czechoslovakian beer he liked. She hugged herself inside her warm coat and sighed happily.

In the secret headquarters, deep in the Russian Embassy in Washington, Petroff's defection stirred a minimal response.

"All we know," said Viktor, "is that the letter-drops were cleared, and the papers reached Stelchov's office on time. They had not been tampered with. Not a thing to indicate anything wrong or that anything like this had been in the offing. It's no great loss, of course. He was really only a cipher, an innocuous link. Tell me, is there any connection at all you can make between his defection and Comrade Rogovin?"

The section chief put a hand under his chin and shook his head. "I can't think of any, Viktor. The reports here indicate that she fully understood that she'd be returned to Russia—she was resigned to it. There is no indication at all of any suspicious behavior or motive, not a thing to suggest disloyalty. For her eighteen years in communications, she has been nothing but a dependable, conscientious, unimaginative functionary. As a matter of fact, that pretty much sums up her character as far back as I can remember."

"Well, you should know, Michael," said Viktor. "She is, after all, your mother." ST

A LITTLE FLY TOLD ME

"The first living thing at the scene of a killing is a fly," explained Bernard Greenberg, University of Illinois entomologist, in a recent interview. "A fly can target a dead thing from a mile away." When called in by prosecutors asking for assistance in murder cases, Greenberg receives a specialist's fee of $300 for each consultation.

By microscopically examining photographs of the dead bodies and checking old weather records to establish the development rate of fly pupae, Greenberg learns what his tiny "private eyes" have to say. "There could be at least six to eight common species of the fly, each telling its own story." Noting the stage of egg development in the body, he can pinpoint the time of the murder—and often, if the corpse has been moved, the exact location of where the murder took place.

Greenberg's expertise has been instrumental in helping law enforcement agencies obtain ten convictions, one for a double murder that had remained unsolved for four years.

Can it be that man has at last found a use for that perennial pest, the common fly?

PHONY

Early Irish sharpers enriched the language with the word *phony.* A favorite ruse of early bunco men was the "fawney rig," the "ring game." This consisted of planting a ring (fawney) with an impressive (but imitation) stone in a public place. Then the swindler would hide and watch until someone picked it up. He would then step forward and persuade or frighten his victim into paying him to keep quiet about the find. Making off quickly with the hush money, the con man would leave the sucker holding an apparently valuable, but actually worthless, ring.

So many people were defrauded by means of this game that *fawney* lost its original meaning and came to stand for *spurious.* Careless pronunciation and an ignorance of Irish spelling quickly changed *fawney* to the now-familiar *phony.*

JAMES D. BOATMAN

Mr. Boatman has an interesting background, which has obviously contributed much to the realism and authenticity of his writing. After becoming a member of the California State Bar, he declined to practice law in favor of becoming a postal inspector—working mail fraud cases, with a narcotics investigation thrown in from time to time. He later gave up law enforcement when he discovered more joy in writing about crimes than in investigating them.

THE MEXICAN NEWSPAPER is based on a real incident. Given the author's expertise in these matters, it's easy to understand the completely believable characters and situations depicted in this undercover drug operation.

THE MEXICAN NEWSPAPER

It didn't take Postal Inspector McAllister long to discover that some Latin-American newspapers use lumpy newsprint. He discovered it just after he had leafed through the entire newspaper a second time and still couldn't find the heroin.

He shook the newspaper, looked under the chain-of-custody form, looked around on the floor. He re-read the confiscation report. It was from Customs and it was specific: the heroin was in the twenty-first page of newspaper. But Inspector McAllister had gone through the whole thing twice now, and he still couldn't find it. He was thinking he should have had a witness when he opened the registered package, thinking how bad it could look if the heroin had been ripped off by someone in Customs and he'd been left holding....

He noticed the line typed under the word "in." The heroin was *in* page twenty-one. He sighed, then carefully pulled the entire page out of the newspaper—and he still couldn't find the stuff.

But he did discover the lumpy newsprint.

Page twenty-one was thicker than page six, although printed on the same long sheet of newsprint. Definitely thicker. And it had lumps all over it. He held it up to the light and saw a thin line running along the center fold. He peeled the paper back. A duplicate page twenty-one had been painstakingly glued over the original page twenty-one. Sandwiched between them was a thin layer of white powder. He had found the heroin.

McAllister felt better.

He dialed the assistant inspector in charge and, when Radner was on the line, said, "It's in the middle of a Mexican newspaper."

"Can we prove it went through the mails?" asked Radner.

McAllister turned the newspaper wrapping over in his hands. "There's a postmark from Mexico City and cancelled Mexican postage. We also have the testimony of the Customs officer who intercepted it from the mails at the exchange post office. It should be enough."

"Maybe," said Radner. As head of Prohibited Mailing, he would give the go-ahead for the controlled delivery. "Foreign mail's touchy. The courts don't like. . . ."

"This guy's hauling in five to ten thousand bucks a week. That's a lot of money."

"Yeah," Radner agreed. "But what good will it do if the courts won't . . . ?"

"Look," said McAllister into the phone, hating to beg, especially from a desk-jockey like Radner who hadn't handled a case in years. "Let me check out the address, talk to the carrier. You never know, it might be an easy one."

Radner was silent for a few seconds, then said, "All right. But only if you get a positive crime lab report on the heroin, and then only if you can get your probable cause past the U.S. Attorney's office. Bring me a search warrant and I'll authorize the men for the controlled delivery. Okay?"

"Okay, but the stuff's. . . ."

"Just get the search warrant."

McAllister drove past the address three times and still couldn't believe it. The house was small, a one-bedroom stucco out in the Valley, freshly painted, the lawn mowed and edged—not exactly the kind of place the average heroin dealer uses as home base.

The mailbox, with the street numbers painted in bright red, was next to the sidewalk. At least that would help in surveillance, thought McAllister, if he could just talk Radner into it. He jotted down a description of the house, color of paint, the location of the door and windows, anything that would help describe the dwelling in sufficient detail to satisfy a magistrate.

McAllister headed for the carrier annex, a small station three miles from the main post office. He wanted to get there before the carrier clocked out for home. Maybe he'd know something about Simon Herrera, the name on the mailing wrapper of the newspaper.

Sam Broughton, a carrier foreman, looked up when McAllister came through the employee's door. "Well, if it ain't Postal Inspector McAllister." Broughton pronounced postal as posthole. "What do you want, McAllister?"

Side-stepping past several tubs and hampers filled with mail, McAllister made his way to the supervisor's desk. "We heard someone's been pocketing toothpaste samples, and I naturally thought of you."

Broughton's handshake was firm, his laugh good-natured. "What's up?" he asked.

"Who's carrying the seven-hundred block of Green Street tomorrow?"

Broughton turned to his desk and swept several inches of paperwork to the side, saying, "You wouldn't believe the reports we have to. . . ." He pulled out a sheet of paper. "Here it is. Route sixteen. That'll be . . ." His finger ran down a column of names. " . . . Lattimore."

"Is he off the street yet?" asked McAllister, noticing a group of carriers standing near the timeclock.

"You missed him by half an hour. Why?"

"I may need him to make a delivery for me tomorrow or

the next day. Is he reliable?"

Broughton stared at him for a moment. "He can keep his mouth shut, if that's what you mean."

McAllister nodded. "What time will he be on Green Street?"

"Around ten. But he's one of the better carriers here, so don't be late if you want to catch him. And, one more thing. . . ." Broughton grinned. "Don't smile at him with that pretty mug of yours."

"Why?"

"Some of the guys are complaining he's been making passes at them."

At nine-thirty the next morning, McAllister and his partner, Ernie Fanlon, were parked at a corner gas station two blocks south of Green Street. Ten minutes later, a post office jeep pulled into the station and drove up to their car.

"You the guys?" the carrier asked warily.

McAllister passed his credentials through the window. The carrier studied the photo, held it up in line with McAllister, and compared it to him. He returned the credentials.

McAllister asked, "What time do you get to the seven hundred block of Green Street?"

"Fifteen minutes, maybe twenty. Why?"

McAllister ignored the question and handed the newspaper, neatly replaced in the mailing wrapper, to him. The carrier stared at it.

"We're going to watch you deliver this paper," said McAllister. "Just do everything your normal way. Don't change your delivery habits for us. Understand?"

The carrier nodded, a questioning look in his eyes. "But what if . . . ?"

"Don't think about it. Forget us. Just deliver the mail." McAllister passed the chain-of-custody form through the window. "Sign this where I put the check mark. It shows you have possession of the newspaper."

"Why do I have to sign anything?"

Fanlon asked, "You ever see any newspapers like that

before?"

"Well, . . ." The carrier examined the paper. "It looks like one that comes every week or so for Mr. Herrera. He meets me at the mailbox sometimes, asking for the paper. A nice guy—friendly, you know?"

"Yeah," said McAllister, remembering Broughton's warning about Lattimore.

A few minutes after the carrier drove back to his route, McAllister and Fanlon left the parking lot and went straight to Green Street, positioning their vehicle across the street and down several houses from the Herrera mailbox.

McAllister picked up the mike, pressed the button, and said, "You ready, Hawlser?"

Hawlser's voice sounded bored. "I've been ready for an hour."

"Where are you?"

"In the alley, right behind the place."

Ten minutes later, the carrier left his jeep at the head of the block and started his walking loop to the usual chorus of barking dogs. When the carrier was two mailboxes away, a man came out of the Herrera house and walked to the curb.

"There he is," said Fanlon.

The carrier smiled at the man, stopped to hand him the newspaper, and headed for the next mailbox. The man glared at the carrier's back for a few moments, then walked back to the house. When the carrier was even with their car, he nodded with obvious relief.

"Let's give Herrera five minutes," said McAllister. "He'll have the paper spread out by then, the heroin on the table."

They were silent for a few minutes, then McAllister picked up the mike again. He said, "Let's go."

They crossed the street and walked straight to the Herrera house, spotting Hawlser in the back yard. McAllister knocked three sharp raps on the front door.

A few quick words were fired in Spanish, then the door opened a couple of inches. "*Quien es?*"

"Federal agents! We have a search warrant!"

The door started to close. McAllister shouldered it open, his revolver in hand but held next to his pants leg. Fanlon sprang inside to cover the rest of the room, though there was not much to cover—a few pieces of furniture, a television set, a kitchen table with a newspaper spread out.

McAllister turned to the young woman who had opened the front door. She was in her early twenties and attractive, even though dressed for factory work. "What's behind there?" he asked, pointing to a closed door in the middle of the back wall.

She stared at him, eyes wide, mouth clenched tight.

"Where does . . . ?"

"*No comprendo*!" She spit the words at him, black fury in her eyes.

Fanlon pressed his back against the wall next to the door and twisted the doorknob. It was a bedroom, and in it stood the same man they had observed meeting the carrier at the mailbox. In one hand was a page of a newspaper; in the other, a small plastic bag of white powder. The man charged at them, windmilling his arms, slapping the newspaper against Fanlon's face, stopping only when he saw the revolver in McAllister's hand.

"*Immigracion*?" the man asked in a trembling voice, his shoulders slumping. Page twenty-one fell to the floor.

Fanlon glanced at McAllister. "He thinks we're Immigration agents. Ten thousand dollars worth of heroin, and all he's thinking about is deportation." Fanlon laughed nervously. He rubbed his cheek where the newspaper had stung him.

Hawlser came through the kitchen. McAllister said, "Walt, see if you can find a neighbor who speaks Spanish. I want to make sure Herrera understands his rights."

The woman had quieted down enough to say, "I speak English."

"Does he?"

"No. He is my husband, Simon. I am Serafina Herrera. I've lived here much longer than. . . ." She paused, looking at them apprehensively. "Please, what is this about?"

As Fanlon searched Herrera for weapons, McAllister explained the reason for the search warrant and why her husband was being arrested. He reached behind his back, under his coat, and pulled out handcuffs. He motioned for Herrera to put his wrists together. Herrera did not move.

"Please," said the woman. "My husband did nothing. He knows nothing about. . . ." She put her hands over her face and cried.

"They never do," said McAllister, twisting Herrera's arms behind his back and cuffing him. Hawlser put the heroin and newspaper in an evidence bag.

The interview room at the U.S. Marshal's office was as dirty as the county sheriff's drunk tank. McAllister was deciphering some of the more interesting scribblings on the wall when Herrera was brought in with his public defender, Henry Chavez.

"I'm not sure this is a good thing for my client," said Chavez. He did not take McAllister's outstretched hand. "You could have questioned him two hours ago at his house. Why now?"

McAllister knew Chavez had no options. His client's only hope was deportation; and to get it, he would have to cooperate all the way. "I thought he might want to clear up a few things," said McAllister.

Chavez smiled. He shrugged with shoulders and hands. "Okay, but off the record for now."

McAllister agreed. "How do you want to handle it?"

"What kind of case do you have?"

McAllister told him just how good it was, from the Customs report of confiscation, right down to the carrier's statements about Herrera meeting him at the mailbox and asking for the newspaper.

"A pretty good case," admitted Chavez. He turned to his client and spoke in Spanish for a couple of minutes. Herrera was silent through most of it, erupting once with some sharp words aimed at McAllister. Chavez calmed him down and turned back to McAllister.

"I'm in a little bit of a bind here," Chavez said.

"Really?" McAllister had been around lawyers long enough to know that truthfulness was not a prerequisite for membership in the legal profession.

"Mr. Herrera tells me he's not guilty. I'm inclined to believe him, except for the small matter of the evidence against him."

"Always a problem," admitted McAllister.

Chavez contemplated some of the more lurid writings on the wall. "What do you think of his chances?"

McAllister was ready. "He doesn't have any."

"Will you oppose a request for deportation?"

"He'll have to help us go after some people."

Chavez and Herrera huddled for more Spanish, one or the other glancing infrequently at McAllister. Finally, Chavez squared around at him.

"Mr. Herrera still says he never saw the newspaper before."

McAllister nodded, but said nothing.

Chavez asked again, "How about deportation?"

"So he can return to Mexico a sadder, but wealthier man?"

Chavez nodded. "I was afraid of that." He flipped his briefcase shut. "I'm sorry, but my client will be unable to answer your questions."

McAllister shrugged. "Whatever you say. There's already enough evidence to convict him."

Henry Chavez saw his client through the door, then turned to McAllister. "There is one thing he asks of you. Keep your carrier away from his wife."

"His wife?" asked Assistant Inspector in Charge Radner. "What's that all about? I thought you said the carrier didn't like women."

"He doesn't," said McAllister. "It's just Chavez's way of discrediting Lattimore's testimony. Once he throws that in, the jury will have their doubts about the carrier, especially if their mail was late the day before."

"Foreign mail cases!" Radner threw his pencil down in disgust. "I knew I should have refused the controlled delivery." The pencil rolled off the edge of his desk, and he bent over the retrieve it.

"It's still a good case," argued McAllister, who was surprised at the genuine pleasure he felt in seeing that Radner's hair was really quite thin on top.

Radner looked up. "Where have I heard that before?"

McAllister poured a cup of coffee and carried it down the hall to his office, pondering Radner's parting remark about cleaning up the case. *Clean up what?*

Of all the lawyers in the country, federal public defenders had the toughest jobs. Virtually all their clients were guilty, by simple reason that the U.S. Attorney's office chose only the most favorable cases for prosecution. Preferring to avoid questions of guilt or innocence, most public defenders spent their time searching for violations of constitutional rights or weak witnesses. And Henry Chavez was a master at muddying the waters.

McAllister decided he'd make sure the case was clean. He called Sam Broughton at the carrier annex.

"*Jeez*! Don't you guys ever give up? Okay, I admit it, I took the toothpaste samples."

McAllister laughed dutifully. "Next time I'm in the neighborhood, I'll arrest you. But for now, maybe I can just ask a few questions?"

"Go ahead," said Broughton. "I don't have anything but three or four hours of paperwork, then measure the afternoon mail, then. . . ."

"Is Lattimore there?" cut in McAllister.

"No. The poor dear was so upset after doing your dirty work, he took off sick. I had to send another carrier out to finish the route."

"What time will he be in tomorrow?"

"He won't be back until Monday. It's his long weekend off."

McAllister paused. *Make sure it's a clean case*! "Give me his address."

The apartment directory, above the cluster of mailboxes in front of the swimming pool entrance gate, listed a Phillip Lattimore on the second floor. There was no answer when McAllister knocked at the door. The apartment manager was not impressed with McAllister's credentials and definitely suspicious of his thumb-sized badge. "You're no cop!" he said accusingly. He eyed McAllister's suit. "FBI?"

"Only for the post office," said McAllister, putting on the fake grin reserved for those citizens who think all federal agents are with the FBI. "I'm trying to locate one of our carriers."

"Phillie?"

Phillie? "Yeah. Phillip Lattimore."

"He's not here," said the manager. "Hasn't lived here for months."

"His name's on the directory." McAllister still wore the same smile.

"Oh, it's still his apartment. I check on it for him every couple of weeks, get his mail. He's. . . ." The manager tilted his head as he reappraised McAllister. "Say, are you sure I should be telling you all this?"

"It's all right," McAllister answered, nodding his head. He offered one of his business cards. The manager took it. "Where does Lattimore live now? With his girl friend?"

The manager laughed a short bark. "Girl friend? *Phillie Lattimore*?" He winked. "He probably keeps this apartment for one of his boyfriends." The manager walked away, laughing at being able to shock the "FBI" man.

Assistant Inspector in Charge Radner was angry. He bounced his thumb off his desk as if trumping an opponent's ace. "The public defender will tear Lattimore apart!"

McAllister agreed. He'd seen it happen before.

Radner went on. "How about the crime lab report? The Customs agent?"

"No problem.It's a strong case, with or without thecarrier. I saw the heroin in Herrera's hand. I'll testify to that."

Radner seemed mollified. "Well . . . since we've gone this far. But make sure of this one. I don't want to lose it. Understand?"

"Yeah," answered McAllister, trying to convince himself that Henry Chavez could not pick any more holes in the case. "The whole thing, including witnesses, will be presented to the federal grand jury on Tuesday. I still have to serve a subpoena on Lattimore. I'll catch him Monday morning at the carrier annex."

Monday morning, at nine-thirty, Sam Broughton said, "He's gone."

"What do you mean, he's gone?" asked McAllister.

Broughton smiled apologetically. "When I told him about the subpoena and testifying before the. . . ."

"Told him!"

Broughton's eyes widened. "Careful, Inspector. This is my office, and he's my. . . ."

McAllister cut him off with a heavy wave of his hand. "Yeah, I know. I shouldn't have mentioned it to you this morning when I called. When did he leave?"

"If that's your apology, I accept." He smiled weakly. "Lattimore left about five minutes ago. He might still be in the parking lot."

"Thanks, Sam." McAllister hurried to the back door, then ran for his car and drove to the guard's shack at the entrance to the parking lot. He flashed his credentials. "You know a carrier by the name of Lattimore?"

"Phillie? He just left. Going west on the boulevard. A red Porsche."

McAllister followed after the carrier, hoping to catch him and serve the subpoena. Clean up the case, Radner had told him, and now he couldn't even find his star witness. Herrera's meeting the carrier at the mailbox and asking for the newspaper would nail down the case for the grand jury. It would. . . .

A red Porsche was on the ramp to the San Diego Freeway, ready to merge with traffic. McAllister yanked the steering

wheel hard right. The surveillance vehicle responded by cutting off a city bus and narrowly missing a teenager on a ten-speed bike. When he got to the top of the ramp, McAllister could see the Porsche a half-mile ahead. He punched the gas, took it up to sixty-five, and followed after Lattimore, who was now almost to the Ventura Freeway interchange. He kept the Porsche in view all the way to the Mulholland exit, where Lattimore turned toward the Encino Hills area.

McAllister was tempted to give it up. The case was strong enough for the grand jury to return an indictment against Simon Herrera, even without Lattimore's testimony. There'd be plenty of time to line him up as a witness for the trial, if it went that far. After all, he could only tell the grand jury about meeting Herrera at the....

Lattimore turned north on a narrow road, where several condominium units clung precariously to canyon walls. By the time McAllister located the Porsche again, Lattimore had parked it and was nowhere in sight. McAllister stopped a few cars away, behind a blue Cadillac, and waited. Since he'd come this far to serve the damned subpoena, he might as well see it through. He scrunched down in the front seat, keeping the doors to three condominiums in view. Probably in there with his boyfriend, thought McAllister.

It took long enough. It was after twelve-thirty when the door to the middle condominium opened. Lattimore was halfway to the Porsche—and McAllister halfway out of the surveillance vehicle—when someone yelled. Lattimore turned back. The someone ran into his arms and kissed him, right out there in the open, in front of McAllister and everyone. McAllister would have been disgusted if he had not been so surprised. Lattimore's boyfriend turned out to be a girl friend, and she turned out to be Serafina Herrera.

McAllister stayed in his car and held on to the subpoena.

At nine-thirty the next morning, after Lattimore left the carrier annex for his route, McAllister and Fanlon knocked on the front door of the Herrera house. The door opened a few inches and Serafina Herrera looked out at them.

"We'd like to talk to you, Mrs. Herrera," McAllister said. "Maybe help your husband."

She looked questioningly at them, then said, "Please come in." The living room was as neat and clean as it had been during the arrest. Everything was the same, except that this time Mrs. Herrera was wearing designer jeans and a sleeveless blouse. She was, McAllister decided, quite attractive.

"We hate to bother you, Mrs. Herrera," he began, "but we need your help. It's possible that your mail carrier is responsible for the heroin your husband found. Your husband may be innocent."

"He's . . . innocent?" Serafina Herrera looked at both of them.

"Yes. We discovered that Phillip Lattimore, that's the name of the carrier, owns an expensive house up in the Encino Hills area. We watched his place last night, waiting for him. He finally arrived, just before dark, driving a very expensive foreign car. He also. . . ." McAllister paused. "Excuse me, Mrs. Herrera. He also had a very pretty blonde with him. They . . . ah . . . spent the night together."

"Together?" she asked.

McAllister nodded. "So, how does Lattimore afford all this on post office pay? We think it could be the heroin. And, if that's true, then your husband is innocent." He leaned back, spreading his hands. "Isn't that great?"

"Yes," she said. There were tears in her eyes.

"Well, what we need to know is this: Is it true what your husband told us? That he had never seen the newspaper, or any like it, before?"

"Yes," she answered softly. "It is true."

They stood up. "Thank you, Mrs. Herrera. You've been a great help to us. Starting tonight, we'll watch every move Lattimore makes. I'm sure it's only a matter of time before your husband is released."

"Are you sure it will work?" Fanlon asked. "It could backfire."

McAllister shrugged. They were sitting in the back of a

surveillance van, next to the electronics technician, who gave them the thumbs-up sign. They saw the carrier park his jeep at the corner, get out, swing his satchel of mail on his shoulder, and start his loop of the Green Street block.

"There she is," said Fanlon.

Serafina Herrera walked slowly to the mailbox. The carrier was a few houses away.

The electronics man said, "You want this recorded?"

McAllister nodded.

Serafina said, "Hello, Phillip."

"Hey, why the long face?" Lattimore's voice boomed over the speaker, and the technician adjusted the volume. "We've got it made. Like I told you yesterday at my place, we're rich."

"I thought you loved me," she said. They could see her lips moving as she stood next to him.

"What is this? You know I do. Didn't I go along with your idea to make everyone think I was queer? And didn't I trust you to keep any of my newspapers that got through?"

"That's it!" yelled Hawlser. "Let's take him!"

"No!" McAllister held him back. "He has to mention the heroin." *And it has to be a clean case*, he thought.

" . . . you were the one who opened the newspaper," Lattimore was saying, his voice rising. "You couldn't wait until he left for work."

"What about the blonde?" she asked.

"What blonde?" He stepped closer and grabbed her arm. "What are you talking about?" He twisted her arm, and they heard her gasp in pain.

"Get ready," said Fanlon, reaching for the door handle just ahead of Hawlser.

"Not yet!" ordered McAllister.

"I want half," she told Lattimore. "Half of the stuff."

"Are you crazy?" He twisted her arm again. She moaned. "You don't even know how to get rid of it. You don't just sell heroin to the first guy on. . . ."

"Now!" said McAllister. He sighed heavily as Fanlon and Hawlser bolted through the door. It was finally a clean case. ST

HARRY PRINCE

Harry Prince, a product of Boston University, has spent much of his life in the business world—which he hated. Since his retirement, he has devoted his full attention to writing and claims it's the only fulfilling work he's ever done.

His travels have included six of the seven continents of the world, and he often draws on these foreign locales for his stories. Mr. Prince has been published in ***Alfred Hitchcock, Cavalier,*** *and* ***Short Story International.***

His culturally formative years, however, were spent in New York, which possibly explains the Runyonesque-type flavor of his story, BLUE, SKY, AND THE MARK.

We dare you to keep from smiling as you meet the charming and delightful characters and watch the clever scam unfold.

BLUE, SKY, AND THE MARK

One of our brokers who sell our bonds," Blue said, "is downtown in the D.A.'s office answering questions regarding some duplicate numbers. It's only a matter of time till these questions start moving north in our direction. The New York heat is more than we can stand, and we are packing to spend a spell in California."

I was in the office of the Blue & Sky Investment Counselors on East Forty-Third Street in Manhattan. I often go there to transact a loan or to play them gin for the money. They are old friends.

Blue was tall, with a sour-looking face that hid a sentimental heart. However, he was capable of a deadly charm when larceny and the suitable mark became the catalyst. He was stuffing rolls of twenties into his socks before stowing them in his flight bag.

I said, "It is spring and the weather is still cool in New York."

"The heat will be here sooner than you think," Sky said. He was also shovelling bundles of twenties and fifties into his kit. I was happy to see that he threw out a pair of orange-plaid slacks to make room for more moolah. Orange-plaid will not improve the appearance of a short, fat, bald-headed man. The Blue & Sky Investment Counselors needed a more dignified front than most to make up for the smell of fresh ink on their negotiables.

So far as I know, Blue and Sky had never met up with a hard-earned dollar. It was apparent they'd had a good season, as there was more green here than you'd see in a Saint Patrick's Day parade.

Blue said, "I have an old business chum in Los Angeles; to wit, Loney Hawkins. I owe him a visit, and Sky hasn't seen his niece since she damped on his white suit nineteen years ago. Why don't you come along with us?"

"How can I? It's the season. The horses will be running all over the place."

"We need a third for pinochle, and you can repay the fare, which we'll underwrite, out of your winnings. We don't like playing with strangers on the plane when we're carrying heavy bread."

"My bookie won't like it. I owe him. But keep selling. I'm interested." Who doesn't want to go to California? "I'll go pack a bag."

"No time for that," Sky said. "I can already hear the hounds baying at Thirty-Fourth Street. Besides, I hear you can buy prettier clothes in California."

"You have the right to make one phone call," Blue said. So I called my bookie and told him I had a couple of live ones and to watch the mail for the twenty I owed him.

Although the turf advisor is my sworn friend, the low, evening telephone rates might be too big a temptation for him to call a head-breaker in L.A. to collect the twenty—the hard way. So it was better to make the call and ward off a serious headache in California.

In Hollywood, we holed up in a suite at the Roosevelt Hotel. After we found out which way was the coffee shop and which way was the bar, Blue asked me to help him visit his old croney, Loney Hawkins.

Sky put on his Scotch-Gard suit and headed for Long Beach to pick up his niece, Bonnie. As the girl was now twenty and presumably housebroken, I wondered if Sky wasn't overdoing the insurance.

Loney lived in the Hollywood Hills somewhere off Laurel Canyon. We rented a car and I found myself driving up a winding dirt road that would have baffled an active snake.

Finally, we arrived at this "Tobacco Road" setting. There was a sign that read "Shanty Acres." Loney was sitting on the floor of the porch, his legs dangling down to where a pig was licking his bare toes. Chickens were pecking all around and getting nothing but pebbles. Loney explained that stones were good for them.

Loney's blond-gray hair and beard had gone to seed and nettles, but this did not bother the livestock, who seemed to be fond of him. He was about forty-five, slim and wiry. With a barbershop treatment and a few days in a Turkish bath, I could not see why he shouldn't pass for a regulation-type human being.

After the greetings and backslappings were over, Loney told us, "Mabel, my sister, always takes care of the place, and when she runs off with a neighboring commune hustler, I am left to shift. And Mabel did not even tell me which end of the chicken has the milk. Just before you arrive, I am figuring that if I join the poultry in their rock diet, I will soon be delivered of this unhappy vale."

I asked if it was allowed to keep livestock so close to the city.

"I don't know," Loney said. "They move in when I buy the shack, and I am not in the habit of questioning the ways of providence. Besides, they are company. But I will gladly sell my soul to Old Nick himself—and throw in the pig—for two weeks in the old life again. I want to wear a clean shirt—and a tie. I am beginning to look as bad as the guy which

grabs Mabel."

I could see that Blue was touched. He said to Loney, "I think I have an idea, old friend. How would you like to live in a good hotel at the beach for a while. Just sign tabs and have an occasional female caller?"

Loney's eyes crinkled and he started to cry. "Don't put me on, Blue," he said. "I'd sell my soul to Old Nick. . . ."

"Buck up, old pal," Blue said, "and let me think about it. Maybe you can have your vacation, and Sky and me can make expenses for the trip. I'll see if I can work out the gritty with Sky."

We left Loney down on all fours, blubbering with joy and petting the pig's snout. But the chickens paid no attention and went on picking out the shiniest stones.

When we got back to the hotel, Sky introduced us to Bonnie, and she was like her name—bright as a sunrise on a hot summer morning. She was well-mannered and shy—healthy-pretty as only a twenty-year-old can be without being beautiful. We all had dinner together, and then Bonnie drove home in her own car.

Blue and Sky discussed Loney and his problem. Then they drew up an ad.

> Lady wanted—beauty secondary—object matrimony—name Loney—have Hollywood Hills estate—live Seacliff Hotel, Santa Monica—have $25,000—need love and affection and someone to handle money—PO Box # . . .

Blue said, "That should bring out every greedy, small-time, female grifter over age seven and under one hundred, from San Diego to Frisco—that is, provided they can read. The Sunday Classified will be best."

"We'll move Loney to the beach tomorrow," Sky said.

The next day, Loney shaved his beard and took his suit out from under the mattress, where the chickens couldn't lay eggs in the pockets. There were tears in his eyes, and he was as happy as a boy with a new toy to break. On the way to the beach, he said, "You use my name in the ad. What do

I do with the dames who come courtin' in person?"

Blue said, "I'm your friend, not your father. But in the end you must throw them away and tell them that they are not at all satisfactory."

We checked Loney in at the hotel and left him on the beach, where he was counting bikinis and trying to make up his mind if he liked yellow or green.

We stayed in Hollywood, as Blue did not wish to be too close to the gaff. I asked Sky if niece Bonnie was in the know about Loney and the scam.

"I don't think so. She did see the ad in our suite, so I told her we were helping a friend in his search for a mate, and that is all I told her. I don't think she would understand this kind of transaction anyway." Sky scratched his head. "Her father, my brother, Phil, was tops in his day—could sell luggage in Sing Sing's death row. I don't know how he ever managed to raise such a four-square daughter."

The mail started coming in. There were over four hundred letters the first day. And would you believe it, not even one applicant was unpleasant, ugly, or greedy. Instead, they were kind, loving, sympathetic, and very efficient in handling money, although most admitted they did not have any to handle at the moment.

Blue and Sky wrote answers to all the letters but did not mail them. They just chucked them into a closet.

The mail stepped up to twelve hundred a day for a couple of days and then tapered off. He was so busy answering letters, Sky didn't have time to entertain his niece, so I was elected to take her shopping and lunching, which I found very pleasant—except that I had to launder my thoughts and language. She did not stay for dinner anymore, saying that she had a new boyfriend who invited her to dine every night.

One morning there was a knock at the door and Blue opened it. Two very square-looking joes in gray tweed suits stood there with unfriendly looks on their faces. One showed something in a wallet to Blue, like they were FBI characters. It turned out I was dead wrong. They were U.S.

Postal Inspectors.

They said, "May we come in?" and they did. And they said, "May we sit down?" and they did. I began to find that I was not at all comfortable in the presence of Post Office cops. Then the big tweed said, "You boys receive a lot of mail."

Sky said, "We enjoy reading letters."

"But you get such an unusual number," the cop said.

"Is there a law against liking lots of mail?" Blue asked. I was beginning to feel closed-in-on and was wondering if I should make a try for the door. But to do this, I would have to pass between the gray suits.

"We like to go into these things," the small gray tweed said, "as Uncle Sam does not like for there to be any hanky-panky with his mail."

"We are very law-abiding citizens," Blue said. "You can ask anybody at all."

The big tweed suit pulled a sheet of paper, with the ad pasted on it, from his pocket and showed it to Blue.

"Did you run this?"

"I did."

"Who is Loney?"

"Loney is a dear friend whose mind is mostly on matrimony. He does not write good, and he is backward in penmanship and spelling. It was the least we could do to help, so we offered to handle his mail."

"Would you mind showing us his ranch?"

"Oh, you mean Loney's estate?" Blue asked. "Of course. It would be our pleasure."

I was hoping the tweeds would not notice that I was bent over double with nerves and that my neck and my right eye were twitching.

We all piled into their car and off to Shanty Acres we went. The Feds kicked their way through the chickens who had gathered around like they thought the law had brought them some fresh stones to eat. The pig looked at the cops, grunted, turned, and walked away.

"I suppose Loney has a deed for this . . . this . . . what you

call . . . estate?" said the big tweed.

"Deed? Indeed," Blue said. "That should be easy for you to check."

"Right," said the little tweed suit. "Now, let's go see Loney and his twenty-five thousand dollars."

This turn of events did not help my twitch at all, but Blue and Sky seemed to be taking the roust in stride. So we all got back into the car and were off in a cloud of chicken feathers.

I expected to find Loney on the beach coaxing bikinis to jump rope and to perform other daredevil feats, but he was sitting on the veranda, all alone, looking quiet again like when we first found him.

"This is Loney," Blue said to the tweeds. "Loney, please show these gentlemen your bankbook. They think you are dishonest and are looking for a fish." The humming birds in my stomach were flying again, but Loney reached into his inside pocket and handed over a passbook. The Feds looked at it and handed it back to Loney.

Then the little tweed asked, "Have you answered the letters yet, Loney?"

"No," Blue said quickly. "Loney never learned to read good, either. He wants us to choose the best ones and only show him the pick of the litter."

"OK, OK," said the big tweed, and he busted out laughing. "Loney, I hope they find you a good one—and if there are any choice rejects, please save a couple for us." By then, the small tweed was laughing, too. Everybody shook hands all around. As I had already been shaking, I went to the bar to get myself a drink of cold water—with three fingers of bourbon.

When we got back to our hotel, Sky said, "That's over. Now we can get to work." They gathered up all the letters and we headed for the Post Office.

"Where did Loney get the bank account?" I asked. "He was naked as a sparrow when we found him."

"I let him use it, temporarily," Blue said.

"What did you say in the letters?" I asked.

"Nothing much. We merely thanked them, one and all, for their concern in Loney's welfare. Then we told each one that Loney appreciated their sincerity and to send him more personal information and a recent photograph—and not to forget to enclose twenty dollars to cover costs of handling the details for Loney."

"That seems fair to me," I said. "I, too, would like to meet a jill with an estate and twenty-five grand for me to manage—for only a double sawbuck. Even my track advisor would finance such a project. "But," I said, "I noticed that Loney did not look so chipper anymore. He seemed to have something on his mind. I expected to find him on the beach, buried in bikinis."

"Maybe he misses the chickens and the pig," Blue said. "I once knew this stock broker who walked his pet skunk in Central Park every night. And you know, never once did this broker get mugged."

Personally, I think Blue and that broker should mingle more with psychiatrists, as I never before met guys who preferred skunks and chickens to bikinied jills, especially playing volley ball, like I saw on the beach.

In a few days, the letters started rushing back in again, but now they had twenties in them. Some had checks—which were no problem, as Sky had opened a checking account in a bank on Hollywood Boulevard. The paper was all good, as no Simon looking for twenty-five easy "G"s would queer his play with a rubber check.

I never saw so many twenties since Blue and Sky were in the money-printing business. That was before inflation. They went into bonds, which take up less room and are almost as easy to pass today. So the flight bags began to fill again.

Then Blue got a call from Loney, who said, "My rent here is about up and I'm ready to go back to Shanty Acres—but there's a little something I must talk to you about."

"The gaff paid off like a rigged slot machine," Blue said. "Sure, I'll talk to you, or even your friend, Old Nick himself, if you like."

We picked Loney up, and on the way back he said, "I do

not wish to be greedy, as I have a fine time at the beach with the bikinis and all, but I have a large problem and a larger favor to ask."

"Ask," Blue said.

"I fall in love with one of the girls who come to see me, and she falls in love with me, too. We are so much in love that she will be happy on Shanty Acres even with the pig and the chickens. But she insists that I turn over the twenty-five "G"s to her so she can manage it, like it said in the ad. I want to marry her, and maybe someday I can return the twenty-five grand."

Blue and Sky already took fifty thousand, give or take, out of the envelopes, so Blue looked at Sky and Sky nodded.

"OK," Blue said, "you can keep the front money in the passbook, old friend, and we hope you will be very happy with your dish on Shanty Acres. But please stop conning the livestock and buy them some real feed before the chickens start laying petrified eggs."

We spent another week in Hollywood, which is like Manhattan but with *enchiladas* instead of *blintzes*. Then the mail trickled down to a stop and it came time to leave.

At the airport, Bonnie had tears in her eyes, and she kissed each one of us and said, "You must all come back when you do not have so much to keep you busy. Promise."

Blue said, "I'm sorry Loney's affairs took up so much time."

"Uncle Sky," Bonnie said, "I have a confession to make. When I saw the ad, I visited Loney at the beach—out of curiosity. He kept asking me back. He didn't know who I was. I'm the girl he told you about."

"You're marrying Loney?"

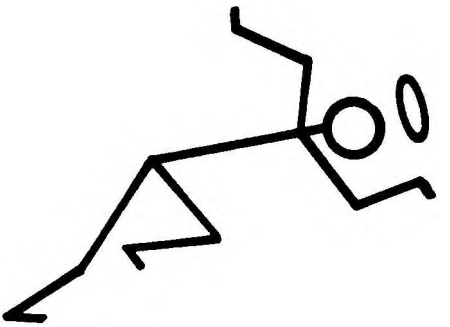
"Well, it wasn't exactly the way he told it to you. Loney said he had this plan to pick up some fast money so we could go to Acapulco and live it up for as long as the money lasted."

"No wedding, Bonnie?"

"I figured if it wasn't me, it would be some other girl, so I said yes."

"You're really going away with him, Bonnie?"

"Don't be a rube, Uncle Sky. Here are your twenty-five thousand dollars. What made you think I'd let you disgrace the family by becoming the mark?" ST



"DIAL-A-MYSTERY" DEBUTS IN LOS ANGELES

Two enterprising young men in Los Angeles have developed a unique entertainment service called "Dial-A-Mystery."

Listeners dial *976-CLUE* daily, for which they pay 45¢ plus any applicable toll charges for each call. This entitles them to hear a 90-second episode which provides them with cryptic clues—and red herrings. The first caller to mail the correct name of the guilty person and the murder motive to a Los Angeles box number wins $1,000.

A new crime unfolds each month. In February, 1984, the first mystery was *Murder by Heart,* followed by *The Ides of Murder,* an apt title for the month of March.

"Dial-A-Mystery" is the brainchild of Ron Segerstrom and John Patrick Day, both 34 years old. Segerstrom is president of R. P. Segerstrom, Inc., a Los Angeles architectural design/furniture firm. This is his first venture into the entertainment field.

Day is a professional writer. He's also the author of the April "Dial-A-Mystery," *Death by Design,* and the May offering, *Lady on Ice.*

LAW & DisorderR

Robert L. Snow

Officer Snow seems to have had more than his share of humorous experiences on his Indianapolis "beat." And fortunately, for all of us, he relates them extremely well.

You'll remember his "Old Salt" two issues ago as being a very funny revelation of the little slip-ups that can occur to even the most conscientious police officers. In TELETYPE, we see the little gremlins that bedevil us all at work again. Our laughter may be a bit nervous when we realize that, given the same circumstances, any pair of us might have come out with the same shade of egg on our faces.

TELETYPE

by Robert L. Snow

Sergeant Higgans set aside the bulletin he'd just read. Adjusting the drooping gun belt, almost hidden by the overhang of his paunch, he picked up a yellow teletype report and scanned it, then looked across the lectern at the group of police officers lounging in the roll call room, no one seeming anxious to go out into the hot summer evening.

"Got a report here from the state police," he said, arching one eyebrow at an officer who tapped his foot against a wooden partition with a steady thump, thump, thump that vibrated the chairs nearby. The officer seemed to shrink under the look, stopped, and set his foot flat on the floor.

"Had an escape this morning at the state prison," the sergeant continued. "Two prisoners on a work detail killed a guard and hurt another one real bad. There's some copies of this over there." He pointed a stubby finger at the orders table

by the door. "Be sure and get one on your way out." Sergeant Higgans picked up the papers on the lectern and shook them together, then tapped the bottom even, signalling that roll call was over.

I grabbed a copy of the teletype and handed it to Mike as we trailed the bottleneck of officers leaving through the single door to the parking lot.

"Looks like a couple of real bad guys," Mike said, studying the sheet of paper and pursing his lips. "One of them doing life for murder, and the other doing eighty years for robbery and kidnapping."

We turned sideways and squeezed between two older officers standing in the doorway talking, neither seeming to notice us trying to get by.

"Old farts," Mike grumbled as we walked across the gravel parking lot. "Some guys think that because they've got fifteen or twenty years on they can treat us new guys like dirt."

I waved my hand in a "forget it" gesture. "I wonder if those escapees are in a car yet?"

"Uh . . . ," Mike squinted at the teletype in the dim light of the parking lot. ". . . it says here that a couple of witnesses saw them get into a late model blue Oldsmobile with two women, both in their twenties, one blonde and one brunette. There's only a partial plate number: 49M76."

I opened the rear driver's-side door of a dark blue Ford LTD and tossed my hat and PR-24 into the back seat, then walked around the outside of the police car, checking for damage, my armpits beginning to feel sticky already in the hot evening air. Circling back around to the driver's door, I shook my head and held out my hand for the key as Mike grabbed the door handle. "My turn."

Mike hesitated a moment with his hand resting on the handle, seeming to be trying to recall whether it really was my turn to drive or not, then gave me the key and walked over to the passenger's side. I climbed in behind the wheel and began testing the emergency equipment. A few moments later, we pulled out of the parking slot and headed toward Washington Street, stopping suddenly when another police car cut in front of us.

"Jesus Christ!" Mike nearly shouted, catching himself on the dash. "They need to take some of these old guys off the street before they hurt someone."

Four hours later, after our fifth domestic run, we both plopped back down onto the

front seat of the police car and let out long breaths. I started the engine and flipped the air-conditioner switch up to maximum, directing the cool flow onto my face and neck, trying to stop the itching that always accompanied a run to an especially dirty house. Our last one had made the state university's insect collection look impoverished. I held up my hand as Mike lifted the radio mike off the dashboard clip to mark us back in service.

"Hold on. Let's get a sandwich first."

Mike shrugged and hung the mike back up, humming and tapping out some unidentifiable tune on the arm rest as we slipped over to the Dog and Suds.

I pulled into a slot between two cars and looked up through the windshield at the menu, knowing it hadn't changed for years, but looking anyway. "I think I'm going to have the super chili dog and fries," I said, wanting to get rid of the sour taste that always seemed to come with the tension of a busy night. "How about you?"

Beginning to feel chilled, I flipped down the air-conditioner switch and turned to Mike, finding him jerking his eyebrows up and down at me and tilting his head back toward his window. Looking around him, I saw four people in the next car piling half-eaten sandwiches and half-empty cola cups back onto the window tray. A man and woman in the back seat sat with their faces turned away from me, while the driver had his left hand up covering his profile, his head blocking most of my view of the woman sitting next to him. The reflection of the car's headlights blinking on and off flashed in the windshield of the red Buick across from them.

Jan, one of the high school girls who worked the drive-ups on weekends, her peroxided hair sticking out in all directions, sauntered over to the car and asked the driver if they were finished. He mumbled something, keeping his hand up to his face. Jan had hardly gotten the tray off the window before he dropped the car into reverse and gunned it, making her jump back.

Mike twisted around in the seat as the car pulled away. "That's them! Come on, let's get 'em!"

"That's who?"

"The escaped convicts. Come on!"

"What are you talking about? That car wasn't blue. It was green."

Mike gave me an exasperated look, eyes wide, the skin of his

face drawn back. He snatched the copy of the teletype off the clipboard and jabbed his finger at it. "Look. Two males in their twenties, one with black hair and one with brown. Supposed to have been picked up by a blonde and a brunette. It all fits. Didn't you notice how they were trying to keep us from seeing their faces? Come on, get this car moving!"

I backed out of the slot as Jan started toward us, order pad in hand. She stopped and slammed her fists to her sides and said something I was glad I didn't hear. After a rolling stop at the curb, I headed north on Emerson, glancing over at Mike. "I'm not even sure that was an Oldsmobile, and I tell you it was green."

He gave me another drawn-skin look. "When was the last time you had a witness give you a description that was a hundred percent correct?" Leaning forward in the seat, he rubbed his hand across the dash as we overtook the tail lights a half-block ahead.

As we pulled up behind the green Oldsmobile Cutlass, a young blonde in the rear seat rubbernecked us several times until the man sitting next to her, only the top of his head visible, reached an arm up and yanked her down in the seat.

"Holy shit," Mike said when we got close enough to read the plate, "49N6711. I told you so. It's them!"

Waves of icy numbness radiated out from my stomach. "Hit the dispatcher and have her send us some assistance."

Mike looked over at me as if I'd just said something incredibly stupid. "And let one of the old farts down here steal the arrest? No way. Let's stop them first. We can call for assistance after we've got them out of the car and on the ground."

I gave him the same look he'd just given me. "You must be nuts. These two guys killed a prison guard this morning and you want us to stop them by ourselves? Not hardly. Hit for some help." I pointed toward the radio mike.

Sticking out his bottom lip, Mike moved a hand toward the dashboard clip just as the Oldsmobile took a tire-squealing left onto Aloda Street and into the first driveway on the south side, flipping out its lights.

"They're going to bail out!" Mike yelled, reaching down and unsnapping the Remington 12-gauge.

Electricity filled my chest cavity as I pulled into the driveway. The man in the back seat leaped out and started across the front lawn, not running, but moving fast. He kept his hands in front of him so that I

couldn't see them—something that brought a sick, coppery taste to my mouth. The driver and the two women scrambled to get out of the Oldsmobile as Mike jumped from the police car and ran toward them. I started after the man crossing the yard, pulling my .357 Magnum as I ran.

"Hold it!" I yelled, my voice almost a high-pitched scream. The man hesitated a second and then continued on, seeming ready to break into a sprint at any moment. I fired a shot in the air as he neared a cluster of lilacs and rhododendrons. My stomach churned at the thought of creeping through an area full of dark hiding spots looking for a murderer. A second later, a chill shot up and down my spine when I heard the blast of Mike's shotgun and him shouting for everyone to keep their hands where he could see them.

The man stopped in mid-step when I fired my revolver, and at the boom of Mike's shotgun collapsed to the ground as if someone had magically removed all the bones from his body. My heart leaped up into my throat, and I raced over and stomped a foot on his arm, pressing my revolver against the back of his head when he reached into his rear pocket.

"If that hand comes out with anything more than five fingers, you can kiss your ass goodbye," I growled as threateningly as I could.

"It's . . . it's . . . it's just my wallet," he stuttered. His hand, trembling as though palsied, came out empty, fingers spread.

I reached into his pocket and pulled out the contents: a brown leather, Pierre Cardin wallet. I looked at it a second, wondering whose it was, then stuffed it back into his pocket and jerked my handcuffs from their pouch and cuffed him.

"Look, Officer, I . . . I can explain this," he said. "I swear, I don't know anything about these girls. We just met them a little while ago at the Panther Club. I swear, I didn't know they were hookers until just a couple of minutes ago. I'm a married man. I've got a family. I swear, I didn't. . . ."

"Knock it off," I growled again, yanking him to his feet. "We know all about you guys. Don't try to pull that stuff on me." I patted him down, cringing when I found the front of his trousers wet, then grabbed him by the arm and hauled him back to the car. Mike had the other three out and lying face down in the grass next to the driveway, hands clasped behind their heads.

The area reeked with the smell of gunpowder from Mike's

shotgun blast, and an almost invigorating feeling rushed over me as I sucked it up my nose. "On the ground," I ordered, dropping my suspect down next to the other three.

"Now let's have Control send us some back-up," Mike said, smiling like a big-game hunter standing over fallen prey. "Okay, you watch them."

Mike winked at me. "Don't worry," he said in a mock-macho voice that made me roll my eyes. "The first one that tries anything will just be another notch on my gun."

The four people on the ground, however, flinched, and despite the warmness of the summer evening, the two men began to shake.

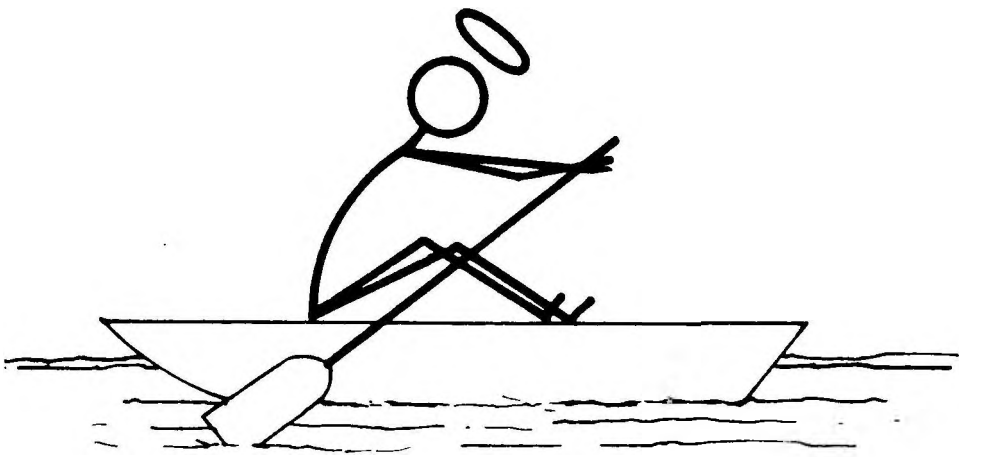
Slipping my revolver back into the holster and climbing into the front seat of the police car, I snatched the radio mike off the dashboard clip and keyed it.

"Car 23 to Control."

"Go ahead, Car 23."

"Ma'am," I said, trying to make my voice sound calm and almost bored, my fingers tingling with excitement. "We've just apprehended those two escapees from the state prison. We're on the southwest corner of Emerson and Aloda. Would you send us the wagon and some back-up please?"

Several seconds of silence passed before the dispatcher finally answered, clearing her throat several times. "Uh, sir, the state police have cancelled that wanted. Those subjects were captured earlier this evening in Oaklandon." ST



CRIME SCENE

LOCATION: FBI ACADEMY AT QUANTICO, VA
CRIME: TERRORISM
SUBJECT: FBI HOSTAGE RESCUE TEAM
REPORTER / HOSTAGE: A. E. MAXWELL

A. E. Maxwell's intriguing nonfiction account, "The Man in Ed Cates' Grave," appeared in the June, 1984, premier issue of the new SAINT Magazine.

Now, this top reporter for the Los Angeles Times is back to tell us of a recent "invigorating" personal experience while playing the role of a "hostage" foreign ambassador during a precision-perfect FBI Hostage Rescue Team exhibition. Adjust your bulletproof vest and join him in...

THE SHOOTING HOUSE

by A. E. Maxwell

The door exploded.

A cookie-cutter-perfect, four-foot-high oval panel came cartwheeling into the room like a leaf blown by the wind. The concussion hit me, a slap of sound and light.

That's why they call them "Flash-bangs," I guess, I thought to myself. I hadn't been expecting the explosion. I figured somebody would kick in the plywood door, like cops usually do. The blast and the shock wave disoriented me. As I found out later, that was the whole idea.

The pieces of door still seemed to be in the air, floating toward the frozen ground in the Shooting House, when the first operator hurdled through the breach. He landed in a crouch, an impressive man wearing the implements of his trade, the implements of war, the implements of death: black body-armor and black balaclava hood; ammunition clips; black-holstered sidearm and knife.

As the operator turned toward me, the muzzle of his Heckler and Koch MP-5-A3 sub-

machine gun turned with him. He and the weapon were one. The gun muzzle looked big enough to walk through. He fired once, twice, the deadly double-tap. The MP-5-A3, with its sound suppressor, sounded more like a gallery gun, but I could hear the thumb-nail-sized 9-millimeter slugs rip past and thud into the wall a foot to my right.

Then the muzzle of the most sophisticated close-range weapon in the world began to move toward my head. Oddly enough, it didn't frighten me.

I won't say it was comforting to look into that gun muzzle, but I trusted the man in the black hood. I knew even before I sat in the shooting chair that the operator had sat there, too. Not once, but many times. And I was counting on the fact that the FBI wouldn't want to ruin their own version of carefully staged guerrilla theater by blowing my brains out.

Whap-whap! The double tap again, this time a foot to my left, ripping through the paper figure of Carlos Fernandez, international terrorist. By now the room seemed swarming with Kabuki-like men in black. I heard more gunfire, another explosion as a wall in another part of the Shooting House was breached, shouts and orders.

"Come on, move!" the operator in front of me commanded. "Keep your head down. Move! Move!" His manner was rough, forceful.

I wouldn't have been tempted to argue, even if I had been a real ambassador being held captive by real terrorists. I was out of the door of the People's Prison and to safety in something under ten seconds from the instant the door had exploded.

As soon as I was out, my only regret was that I couldn't join the rest of my journalistic colleagues in the tower beside the roofless Shooting House. I couldn't watch as the operators of the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team cleared the other rooms of the Shooting House with the lethal efficiency of a black tidal wave.

But I couldn't complain, really. I had just gotten the closest view a civilian had ever received of the methods that will be used to combat the most serious criminal threat of the modern age. Terrorism. Even without the blood and gore that would result from real life, there was a savagery to the experience, a frightening and unsettling power.

I came to be in the Shooting House as part of what can only be described as a calculated effort on the part of the civilized

world to inspire fear in the men and women called terrorists.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation, which has the prime responsibility for combatting terrorism in the United States, had invited 50 members of the national press to a carefully choreographed demonstration of that agency's newest law-enforcement tool, the HRT (Hostage Rescue Team). It was an audacious ploy for the normally stolid FBI. For one thing, no similar special-weapons team in the world had ever put its capabilities and tools on such public display.

"There were some very important people inside the Bureau who thought we shouldn't do it," said Bill Baker, the newly appointed assistant FBI director in charge of public affairs. "We even consulted our behavioral sciences people to make sure it was a sound idea."

What finally tipped the scales for FBI director William Webster, who oversaw the demonstration on the open ranges of the FBI's National Academy at Quantico, Virginia, was the belief that such a demonstration might give pause to the average armed political zealot. Contrary to popular perception, terrorism experts say that most terrorists are rational. They are not suicidal, and they will not take on well-defended targets. Terrorism is the tactic of the weak, and a genuine show of strength is a rational method of defeating it.

"We wanted the demonstration to carry a message to terrorists—to let them know that they could try whatever they wanted, but they would pay a price for it," said one of the strongest advocates of the demonstration, Ed Best. Formerly a senior FBI official, Best now is chief of security for a Los Angeles corporation which has a deeply vested interest in preventing terrorism, the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee. At the demonstration, FBI director Webster said that the 50-member Hostage Rescue Team's first full-scale mobilization will be for the Summer Games in Los Angeles.

The two-hour demonstration was also based on a fundamental, if unexpressed, appreciation of the fact that terrorism is theater, conceived and produced for the international media network of print and television journalism. While none of the dozens of senior federal law enforcement officials who attended would say so, it was clear from the outset that the HRT show was intended to be theater every bit as good, every bit as compelling, as was the Munich massacre or the Teheran em-

bassy takeover.

One of the brightest stars of the show was Danny O. Coulson, a SMU-trained lawyer who joined the FBI 18 years ago and is considered one of the best young executives of the agency. When Coulson says, with force, that he is five feet six inches tall, the five-foot, seven-inch reporter who stands a few inches taller is not likely to quarrel. When Coulson, in a three-piece business suit, steps to the front of a briefing room, everybody—even the press corps—listens. The leader of the HRT has presence.

At the outset of the demonstration, Coulson described the process by which the team was assembled. A total of 250 candidates selected from every division of the FBI was narrowed during a number of two-week evaluations. Physical conditioning and, more importantly, stamina and endurance were crucial.

"We were more interested in the guy who could do sixty push-ups, and then force another ten or fifteen than we were in the guy who did a hundred easily and then stopped," said Coulson.

Psychology was important. "We had to have risk-takers, guys who were willing to take a chance. But we could not tolerate risk-*seekers*."

Women were sought for the team for tactical as well as political reasons; but the physical criteria, particularly the emphasis on upper-body strength for rappelling and climbing ropes while carrying heavy loads of equipment and weapons, washed all the female candidates out. One woman is on the staff of the team, however, and other female FBI agents can be called upon in specific situations.

Once the team was selected, more than a year of intensive training took place. Included were physical conditioning and teamwork drills, firearms training, and an extraordinarily detailed course of medical instruction. The Hostage Rescue Team has been trained to emphasize the saving of lives, even in the midst of the ability to take them. As a result, 13 of the 42 operators, as they are called, qualify as Emergency Medical Technicians. They regularly ride ambulance runs and work shifts in emergency rooms in the Washington, D.C. area to keep their medical skills intact, Coulson said.

In describing the development of the team, Coulson made what was a rare admission, but perhaps a heartening one. The FBI, as an organization, usually likes to take the position that they are second to

none. Arrogant and probably often true. But in the field of counterterrorism, the FBI had some lessons to learn, and they showed a surprising willingness to do so.

Coulson, his assistant team leader John Simeone, and other members of the team travelled all over Europe, picking the brains and memories of the most experienced counterterrorism units in the world. The British 22nd Regiment, Special Air Services; the German GSG-9, which pulled off the spectacular rescue of PLO hostages at Mogadeshu; the Italian police units which have battled the Red Brigades for years; the French GIGN; and the Royal Dutch Marines. All of these groups trained and advised the FBI's HRT.

In an odd way, the recent history of counterterrorism can be charted in the equipment the HRT developed. O.B. (Buck) Revell, assistant FBI director in charge of the criminal division, said that the assault pack the team uses includes SAS body armor, German and Belgian weapons, and pack rigging developed by the French GIGN unit.

Even the U.S. Army's Delta/Blue Light Team—which might have been naturally resistant to the FBI's efforts to create the crack U.S. counterterrorist unit—contributed generously, according to Coulson. In truth, the two units were not competitive, since Delta, as a military unit, could only be deployed in the U.S. in the event of a national emergency. But FBI officials, including Webster, had been saying for several years that the HRT concept, with its college-educated operators and its emphasis on force as the last resort, was superior to the military approach (which has been characterized as "Kill Them All and Let God Sort It Out").

At the HRT demonstration, however, the emphasis was on firepower rather than brain power.

The practical demonstration began on the indoor range at Quantico. Coulson showed the press corps into a marked gallery in front of a desk with a high-backed executive chair. Three paper-target figures—two glowering male terrorists and a guerrilla Amazon with a pistol—surrounded the chair.

"Mr. Revell, would you mind stepping up here?" Coulson asked.

Revell, looking a bit uneasy, came forward and allowed himself to be seated in the executive chair. The lights in the room were lowered to near-total darkness, and the reporters were told to stand still.

Four flat reports rang out. The shots seemed to come from the middle of the press corps. After about 30 more seconds of darkness, the lights came up just in time to reveal two HRT operators in dark fatigues and helmetlike night-vision goggles slipping out the door. The operators had passed through the press corps, fired perfect two-shot patterns through two of the paper targets, and then had pasted paper tags to the third target figure and on several of the reporters.

The tags were intended to demonstrate the finesse the operators were capable of—the tagged target figure was only armed with a knife, and his tag signified that the operators expected to be able to subdue him without killing him. The reporters were tagged to demonstrate the stealth with which the operators moved.

Revell, still seated at his desk, was a bit ruffled by the proximity of the shots, but was otherwise unhurt.

The demonstration then adjourned outside, where a pair of operators moved through five firing positions over a 75-yard course, firing double-tap volleys from submachine guns and then from Browning semiautomatic pistols. A dozen rounds each, fired over a twenty or twenty-five second span, all dead on target.

A camouflaged pair of snipers rose up out of invisible positions to show off their skills, and then a sharpshooter armed with a Heckler and Koch assault rifle with open sights fired a dozen quick shots, ringing a dozen bells at a hundred meters. The press corps was not particularly impressed with the latter display, but the few shooters in the crowd were.

The television crews revved up their videotape units for the helicopter assault, the first-act closer for the demonstration. The scene had previously been set up by Coulson: a gang of terrorists had been trapped inside a mock bank with hostages; two terrorist snipers were silhouetted in upper-story windows with their rifles; the terrorist leader, one Carlos Fernandez, "Commando Ten," was issuing demands and had already killed one hostage to show his determination. A command decision was made to assault the bank.

The assault was pure television. First, a Jet Ranger helicopter, one of the HRT's own air-support units, swung in behind a knoll. Before the chopper had even begun to slow, ropes were dropped and eight black-suited operators began rappelling to the ground. In less than 30 seconds, they had

descended, regrouped, and made their way to the rear of the mock bank. A final effort was made (via loud-hailer from in front of the bank) to persuade Commando Ten to surrender. He replied by dragging a hostage out the front door and preparing to shoot her in the back of the head.

As the terrorist leveled his pistol at the woman's head, two things happened almost simultaneously. First, HRT marksmen with customized sniper rifles killed the terrorists in the upper-story windows. Commando Ten had protected himself from that ploy by shielding himself with the hostage, but he fell victim to part two of the plan. In basketball terms, he went for the fake, a diversionary explosion fifty yards away.

Human curiosity is universal and reflexive. No matter what the situation, a great *BANG* accompanied by a roiling red fireball draws the human eye for at least an instant. Commando Ten looked away from his hostage and toward the ball of flame for just a second. It was enough. As Commando Ten's head swiveled, two HRT operators sprang from hiding, grabbed him by the throat, and disarmed him.

At the same time, the other members of the assault team stormed through the door. A few seconds of heavy firing could be heard inside the bank, and the action was over. Coulson said that if the attack had been real, three terrorists would have died, and Commando Ten would have been in custody. Some of the reporters felt that the hostage at the door would have died in the assault as well, but all of the conjecture was less compelling than the demonstration of surgical shooting and combat choreography.

The demonstration then moved on to the Shooting House, where, at close range, I personally experienced the ability of the HRT. I was covering the demonstration as a staff writer for the Los Angeles Times, and was selected more or less at random to play the role of a VIP hostage—in this case a foreign ambassador in a besieged Washington embassy —whose rescue was crucial.

The Shooting House is an esoteric practice course tucked into one corner of the Quantico grounds. It consists of several adjacent rooms with ten-foot high walls made of dirt-filled radial tires. The rooms are stocked with tattered furniture, mostly chairs and sofas, and human-form paper targets—grimacing terrorists—only some of whom are armed.

The thick walls of the Shooting House have swallowed

thousands of 9-millimenter slugs during live-fire practice of the sort that is continual for HRT operators. Because the place has no roof, spectators and instructors can look down from an overhead tower and observe the action inside. It's a sweaty-palms kind of place, not only for spectators, but even for some of the HRT operators in training.

Assistant team leader John Simeone said that the Shooting House is designed for more than target practice and tactical training. Live "hostages" are regularly placed in the rooms to accustom the operators to firing in close proximity to human beings. The philosophy is that operators ought to be conditioned to avoiding human hostages in practice before they are asked to do so for real.

Usually, the "hostages" are other team members. "We have a rule: if you're going to shoot, you also have to sit," Simeone said. "We've never had anyone leave the team because he was unwilling to sit, but we have had several operators who just could not get used to the idea of firing live rounds a few feet away from living bodies."

Coulson said no operators have ever been hit accidentally during live-fire demonstrations, but I went around and checked the Shooting House props, especially the chairs, for bulletholes—just to be sure. I couldn't help remembering a comment from a friend of mine, a Special Forces reservist who said that he knew a number of Delta Team operators.

"Counterterrorism types aren't overly fond of the international press," my friend once told me. "In fact, one of their Shooting House setups involves a hostage who is supposed to be a well-known liberal journalist. That sorry son-of-a-bitch is the only hostage who ever dies in the Shooting House." And then he laughed.

I could find no holes in the props, no obvious sanguinary signs of mishap. I figured I was in no real danger of accidental assassination, what with the press corps of the Free World looking on, so I approached the Ambassador's chair. There was a bit of "good-news, bad-news" when Simeone gave me my costume: ear protectors, a pair of goggles, and a bulletproof vest, just in case. The goggles clearly weren't bulletproof, but I took some comfort from the fact that the vest was Simeone's own.

"Now stay in the chair, no matter what happens, until a member of the rescue team tells you otherwise," Coulson said firmly. "If you move around, you'll be taken down. Hard. Do not move. Am I

clear?"

As a bell.

Flanked by paper targets, I sat in the thin winter sunshine and waited while the rest of the Shooting House was cleared of civilians. I kept my eyes on the door that Coulson had told me was the entry point. But he hadn't told me about the explosive method of entry. I could feel the hair on my neck stand up when the charge went off. My ruff was still raised as the operator vaulted in and started shooting. My pulse rate was full-max when I was hustled out of the room, less than ten seconds later.

That ten-second span brought to mind an excerpt from George Washington's private journal wherein he reported, following his first exposure to enemy fire, that the sound of bullets passing close by was, to put it mildly, "invigorating."

I would second that impression. When the operator fired to my right, then swung the muzzle of the H&K in a graceful arc over my head before firing to my left, the increase in adrenaline was marked—and remarkable.

But, in retrospect, I recall something more than adrenaline about the experience. The Quantico demonstration was a modern morality play. Good versus evil, with good ultimately victorious. That's a point of view that the media and the American society rarely consider. We are not at the mercy of terrorists. From Munich and Lod Airport to the thousands of smaller incidents in the past two decades, the proponents of terror have told us again and again that sudden and capricious violence is the central fact of modern life, that terrorism is inevitable, and that modern man must surrender to those willing to use terror as a tactic.

That is no longer true.

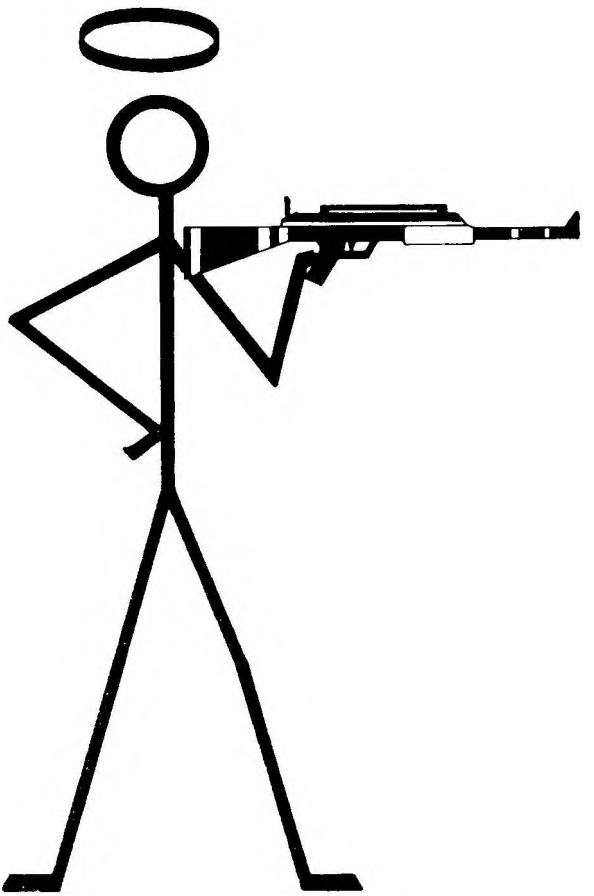
The existence of the Hostage Rescue Team, and of the handful of other such counterterrorist units and special-weapons teams around the world, is a flat statement in behalf of the rule of reason and human ingenuity. Terrorists are, whether we like to acknowledge it or not, human beings. They aren't ten feet tall, nor are they endowed with superhuman abilities. Terrorists can be had, just like Commando Ten was had.

The demonstration on the ranges at Quantico was damned close to perfect. Perhaps a hundred shots were fired, including the four that whistled past my ears, and, so far as I know, not one of them missed its intended target. I would like to think that the Hostage Rescue Team will be as skilled the

first time they are called up for intervention in an actual terrorist takeover. I don't expect that kind of perfection in a true emergency, though. The first time the HRT operators are called out, there will be real fear—and there will be real death.

Yet, at least this is now a fact: There are some deadly, determined fighters on our side, too. Violence is not the sole prerogative of the forces of darkness.

Not an entirely pleasant truth, I know. But comforting just the same—especially to the man in the hostage chair. ST



As Crime Goes By...

John Ball

Despite the formidable reputations of Dame Agatha Christie and many of her contemporaries, it is widely acknowledged that the absolute best mystery author in the pure puzzle, impossible crime category was John Dickson Carr. He wrote very well, and sometimes brilliantly. One mark of his work was a verging on the supernatural, which almost always turned out to have a perfectly rational explanation. Examples are *The Burning Court* and *Below Suspicion*. Unfortunately, most of his works have been very difficult to obtain. But now, MacMillan is reprinting a whole series of the Carr classics in paperback. The latest addition is *The Mad Hatter Mystery*, which features his renowned Chestertonian detective, Dr. Gideon Fell. If you don't already have it, get it. Carr is an absolute must for every mystery reader. $3.50.

Another major reprinting project, this one in hardback, comes from Garland. The series is called *50 Classics of Crime Fiction, 1950-1975*. The works to be reprinted were chosen by the widely known team of Jacques Barzun and Wendell Hertig Taylor, the coauthors of *A Catalog of Crime*. Many of the fifty titles are virtually unknown, but some of the best things ever written fall into that category. The volumes are well made and bound in real cloth. However, there are no dust jackets and the type has been reproduced rather than reset, which reduces readability to some degree. But on the plus side, the paper used is acid free and intended for a 250-year life span. This is a program for real mystery aficionados and for libraries building a permanent collection. It follows Garland's previous series, *50 Classics of Crime Fiction, 1900-1950.*

Joseph Wambaugh returns to true crime in his new book, *Lines and Shadows*. In it he recounts some of the exploits of the San Diego Police Department's Border Crime Task Force. Many of the illegal immigrants who make up a continuous flow coming into the United States from Mexico are cruelly victimized by their own countrymen who prey on them. It is a sad and sometimes sickening story of ruthlessness and greed—men robbed and beaten and women raped when they are most vulnerable. Wambaugh's account is detailed and

specific. He tells his factual story in narrative style, which enhances its impact. Morrow, $15.95.

John Minaham brings back detective "Little John" Rawlings in *The Great Diamond Robbery*. There is another massive heist, this time by an unexpected starter who makes off with a pile. An elaborate stakeout fails to foil the thief, who flees to England with Rawlings in pursuit. The story then becomes unexpectedly exotic; the last part could have been plotted by Sax Rohmer. This is an escapist thriller that goes from the very realistic toward the opposite end of the spectrum. If you are willing to suspend disbelief a little, you will probably enjoy it very much. Norton, $13.95.

R. B. Dominic is a by-line used by two professional women who apparently aren't afraid to take on anyone. They gave it to the medical profession right between the eyes in *The Attending Physician*. Now the Pentagon is on the receiving end in *Unexpected Developments*. When an advanced fighter plane for the Air Force crashes, the surviving test pilot seeks out investigative Congressman Ben Stafford, who appears regularly in the Dominic books. When a second crash at the Paris Air Show takes place, cover-ups begin to evaporate, and Stafford goes into action. The whole book moves swiftly and with impact as yet another Washington scandal rapidly unfolds. The authors won a recent major award from the Mystery Writers of America which, unfortunately, they were not able to accept in person. St. Martin's, $11.95.

Anthea Cohen, who has had wide professional experience in British hospitals, debuts as a novelist with *Angel Without Mercy*. The setting, not surprisingly, is a British hospital. Miss Cohen is well known as a short-story writer. In this new work, she spends considerable time building her background and people before she begins to reveal her plot. It is well done and very readable, but most of what she has to tell us comes in the last quarter of the book. In revealing her criminal, she uses a fresh device that may be new to the literature. Doubleday Crime Club, $11.95.

Paperback notes: The long-running series about superspy Sidney Reilly on public television's "Mystery" has a tie-in book, Robin Bruce Lockhart's *Reilly: Ace of Spies*. Penguin offers it at $3.95 . . . The impressive Walker British Mystery series is continuing to offer uniform paperback volumes of some excellent material. Among the authors represented in the

newest volumes are Josephine Bell, Desmond Cory, June Drummond, Jeffrey Ashford, Emma Page, Brian Ball, William Haggard, W.J. Burley, J.G. Jeffries, Estelle Thompson, and John Creasey (as Anthony Morton). This is quite a lineup for any publisher. The volumes are all in a uniform brown backstrap with black-and-white lettering, making a nice way to build a library. The uniform price for the series is $2.95 each ...If you are a serious collector, here is a tip for you: Academy Chicago is offering a paperback edition of *Lady Molly of Scotland Yard* by Baroness Orczy, the creator of the Scarlet Pimpernel and the widely known Old Man in the Corner. The Lady Molly stories were written around the turn of the century, but believe it or not, this is the first American trade edition. $5.00 ...A good, well-written thriller is always welcome. Bantam has one in *The Omega Deception* by Charles Robertson. Once again, we are back in World War II. A British commando team attempts to recover some sensitive nuclear documents left behind in occupied Europe by a defecting scientist. The plot sounds a little old hat, but it's good escapist reading just the same. $3.50 ...Avon offers *Hunter and the Ikon*. Someone is stealing Russian art from American churches, which is a bit unlikely, but Hunter meets the challenge and the KGB along the way. $2.95 ...Paul Benjamin's *Squeeze Play* is about baseball, murder, and a tough New York private eye. All this from Avon for $2.50.

At the suggestion of Ellery Queen, Nan Hamilton has been writing a series of short stories about Lt. Isamu "Irish" Ohara, her Japanese-American detective. The most recent one was nominated for the prestigious Edgar Award. Now Ohara makes his first appearance in a full-length novel, *Killer's Rights*. Iris Bancroft consented to do the review. *(In case you wonder why, it's because Nan Hamilton is Mrs. John Ball. IB)*

Ohara, Nan's Japanese detective (Ohara is Japanese; O'Hara is Irish), works with his usual skill, combining his intimate knowledge of the traditional Japanese psyche with a thorough grasp of modern investigatory techniques to cut through to the solution of a crime which, at first, appears to be a simple, gang-related "execution." Nan shows the same skill in this full-length novel as she has demonstrated so well in her short stories, creating an interesting plot with twists that are sure to delight any reader. Walker & Co., $12.95. ST

GERRY MADDREN

Miss Maddren, an elegant and fashionable lady, was born and reared in the fog-shrouded, steep-hilled city of San Francisco. She credits her becoming a writer to several seemingly diverse factors—among them an astute and suspicious Oriental, an association with a grimly isolated federal prison, her father's comely redhaired secretary, and frequent access to an old typewriter. For more details, you'll have to ask the lady herself. However, the result has been the publication of 38 short stories and a play.

In TRAVELING LIGHT, Gerry Maddren paints a realistic picture of the turmoil and anguish befalling the wife of an unfaithful, bullying man. How she goes about remedying the situation makes for suspenseful reading.

TRAVELING LIGHT

Selene watched with a few tears and an enormous amount of pride as the university chancellor called out "Kenneth Lewison," and her twenty-year-old son climbed, long-legged, up the steps to the platform and accepted his diploma.

"It's over," she thought, leaving her seat and apologizing her way through to the aisle. She meant the waiting. She had intended that all three children would be well-educated and able to stand on their own. Up to now, she'd been vigilant that no act of hers would hurt them in any way. They'd had enough hurts from their father—not physical hurts, but psychological ones. It had been far from easy for them to face their schoolmates when, time after time, their father's infidelity and sexual antics were plastered over the newspapers. His partners in these affairs had usually been strikingly beautiful actresses, when the children were in grammar school, but tended to run more to very young girls and

then to young men as Maureen and Miles reached junior high. Maureen had been a sophomore in high school when Lance had to leave the country for three months to avoid prosecution for a particularly unsavory morals charge. But his lawyers had managed to find a loophole and, as usual, Lance had come out of it smelling like a rose. The publicity, for some perverse reason, brought him dozens of calls beseeching him to direct this picture or that. He finally picked a script called "The Girl Who Wanted To Be Summer." It won an Academy award. Its star, Victoria Olson, won best actress. Lance won best director.

For years and years Selene had dreamed, longed for the day when she could pick up the L.A. Times, entirely sure that her husband's exploits wouldn't be splashed over the front page—the day they could be an ordinary family, not one that was constantly whispered and tittered about.

The cab swept along the curb and stopped in front of her, on schedule. She stepped inside and leaned back contentedly. In another hour or two, Kenny, who'd just gotten his degree in archeology, would be leaving with his friend, Mark, to study the ruins of Tikal. And she would be taking her first trip to Europe. She'd had a great curiosity about "the Continent" ever since Lance had started making pictures there. She'd tried to imagine the various film locations (Genoa, Cannes, Venice, and Paris) while she stayed at home with the children—taking them to school, to the dentist, the doctor, the orthodontist, Little League, dancing class, basketball games, birthday parties, and swimming lessons. It had somehow become her total resonsibliity, the home front, the extended family.

The cab dropped Selene at the TWA entrance of International Airport. She handed her ticket and passport, both with her fictitious name on them, to the check-in clerk. The man's only surprise seemed to be that she had no luggage. The false I.D. had been expensive, but well worth it.

She smiled. "I'm traveling light. My handbag . . ." She held it up. " . . . holds everything I need." And it did. Toothbrush

and paste in one compact little plastic case, a pair of folding binoculars, a nightgown, a pocket flashlight—and a small brown bottle filled with cyanide.

She decided on a Scotch and water on the plane. Lance drank only wine. He insisted it was healthier. He would drink a wine aperitif before dinner and two glasses of wine with his meal. Never more. Selene looked at her watch and calculated that in Toledo, Spain, he was probably, at this very minute, swallowing his afternoon medley of pills—magnesium, triptophan, and vitamin B—and would soon, regardless of the heat, go for a two-mile jog. His habits were very dependable, even if he was not. She declined a headset the stewardess offered, closed her eyes instead, and lay back with the certainty that sleep would bring her pleasant dreams. She felt very relaxed. If she had been a cat, she would have purred.

The concierge at the Parador could have doubled for Oscar Werner, the German actor, Selene thought. He was handsome, multilingual, and very charming. He assured her he had held, as she had requested, room 36A.

"Friends of mine had that room," she lied with a blush. "They said it was lovely, with a beautiful view." He smiled—a warm, friendly, attractive smile—and signaled the boy who was to escort her upstairs. She followed, her pulse racing. This was the only dangerous moment in her scheme. This was the moment that, if by some unaccountable change in schedule Lance caught sight of her, her plan would fall through.

A door opened as they reached the landing, but it was 34B. A young laughing couple, dressed in blue jeans and message t-shirts, came out. In another moment, she was able to shut the door to 36A behind her.

She unzipped her handbag and took out the binoculars. The bellhop had already opened the doors which led to her balcony, separated from that of the rooms on either side by less than two feet of space. A woman in shorts and halter sunned on one. A middle-aged man with sparse hair and

reading glasses perused a magazine on another.

From her balcony, Selene looked down the hill to the Tajos River and smiled. There was the boat the movie company was using. She raised the binoculars and easily picked out Fred Roster at one camera, Poochy Boyd at another. And there, slim and muscular, made distinguished-looking by his light, well-trimmed beard, was Lance. He was, as usual, bullying his actors, just as he had always bullied her and the children. But the actors could walk away after a film was finished—she and the children had no such escape. Selene sighed. It was fortunate that much of his work had taken him away from home and given the family a respite.

Selene stayed on the balcony a long time, relishing the sight of Toledo with its medieval stone buildings, its meld of paved streets, and its winding dirt pathways. She could see the Alcazar and the ancient San Martin bridge. She lingered till the sun set, heard the bells echoing from the cathedral. Then she went inside, ordered a light meal from room service, and took a shower. In the bathroom mirror she saw herself, tired-looking, with faint but unmistakable lines etched on her forehead and under her eyes. She turned away with a nearly silent sigh.

It was almost eleven-thirty when she heard Lance open the door to the neighboring room. He was, of course, not alone. There had been a time when Lance's infidelity had wounded her, a time when she was ashamed to go to a party and see the pity in her friends' eyes. But now she listened to the muffled sounds of love-making without emotion.

She sat and looked at her hands, focusing at last on the wedding ring. She tried to think back to a time when the sight of the ring on her finger had made her happy. The day of the wedding, of course. She had thought herself so lucky, at nineteen, to be in a white satin gown at Lance's side. Because Lance didn't have any money then, only supreme confidence in himself, her father had paid for the honeymoon.

Her most vivid recollection was of the evening they sat in the moonlight, gazing at the lake and the snow-capped crest of Grayback beyond. She'd snuggled into his arms and innocently asked if he loved her. His reply, while it might have been truthful, wounded her sorely. "I don't know," he'd said, turning away. And she'd felt, in that flawless mountain spot, overwhelmingly lonely.

They were saying their good-byes next door. Selene heard the door open and close, the lock turn. Lance moved, in her mind's eye, as though there were no partition between them. He would brush his teeth again and then shower. He would squeeze a small rubber ball for three minutes in each hand to keep his grip strong and the muscles in his forearm firm. He would massage his scalp for five minutes. He had a horror of losing his hair. A little Vaseline would be dabbed on his lips before he set the travel alarm. She heard him cross to the balcony doors and throw them open. Ah yes, Lance believed in fresh air. Now he would take a few deep breaths, stretch, and climb into bed. In less than ten minutes he would be asleep.

Selene waited twenty. Then she took the necessary items out of her handbag and went barefooted onto her balcony. It was just a matter of being careful as she climbed from her railing to his. She slipped into his room, passed his bed, and entered the bathroom. There, as she knew it would be, was Lance's bottle of cod-liver oil. He believed it lubricated his joints and kept him young. *It's true* . . . Selene smiled as she unscrewed the two bottle caps and added the cyanide to the cod-liver oil. . . . *when you drink this, you won't get any older.*

She had just switched off her pocket flashlight when the telephone rang. A breath caught in her throat. She'd overlooked such a possibility. She heard Lance swear as he fumbled for the unfamiliar receiver.

"Hello," he said gruffly. He swore again and hung up. It must have been a wrong number.

Selene was ready to climb into the tub and hide herself behind the shower curtain if she heard Lance step out of

bed. She stood on the other side of the bathroom door, listening for what seemed like half the night. Finally she picked up the sound of steady, rhythmic breathing and knew that Lance slept again.

She tiptoed slowly, fearful of a creaky floorboard that would give her away. A drop of sweat fell from her temple. Lance turned over when she was only as far as the middle of the room. She crouched and froze in an animal-like position, her heart hammering in her ears. When his regular breathing resumed, she resisted the impulse to make a dash for it and, instead, moved forward again with measured step—out to the balcony, over the railing, and into her own room once more.

She did not sleep, but waited for the dawn in the big, old-fashioned armchair by the common wall. Next door, the alarm went off at six-thirty. In her mind, Selene checked off Lance's movements item by item. Running in place ten minutes. Twenty-five sit-ups. Forty push-ups. Five minutes of jumping jacks. Into the bathroom. Eyedrops.

Selene moved closer, put her ear against the wall. She thought she could hear him unscrew the bottle cap. She imagined him pouring the cod-liver oil into a glass, lifting it to his lips, and tossing it down as fast as possible to minimize the disagreeable taste.

She waited. The tap water gushed on. He began to brush his teeth. Selene's hopes fell. She sank back into the chair and put her head into her hands. And then she straightened as she heard the glass fall and splinter—Lance staggering, groaning, his feet heavy on the floor as he left the bathroom and zigzagged toward the bedside table. *He's trying to reach the phone,* Selene thought dully. She was not terribly afraid for herself. But if things went wrong, there would be all those awful pictures and lurid stories in the papers. And the children, painfully accustomed to their father's behavior, would be newly harassed because of her. She bit her lip nervously, straining for the next sound. And then it came—the ponderous thud of Lance's body hitting the floor.

Selene sighed, a long-held-in sigh of relief. She scooped

up her handbag and headed for the door. *It feels good*, she thought as she left the Parador and filled her lungs with the balmy early-morning air. *After all these years of seeing to others' wants, I've finally done something for myself.*

She drove back to Madrid in a rented car and boarded a TWA flight to Los Angeles. She was tired. Still, despite the grainy eyelids and weary arms and legs, there was a feeling of exhilaration.

After she got home, the excitement was replaced by a sense of contentment and security that persisted even after Lance's death was announced on television news and his face was plastered on the covers of tabloids. The Spanish authorities were quoted as "having no clues" and suggested the possibility of suicide.

Selene, who had ordinarily felt slightly depressed on sunless days, was now unaffected by the changes in the weather, the cooler days, the unusually frequent rains. She used the damp ground as an excuse to plant chrysanthemums. And when the weather cleared a bit, she took their straggly, beloved dog on long walks.

It was on one of these morning strolls that she passed a small market with a newspaper-vending machine at its entrance. Her breath caught in her throat. Her fingers scratched frantically into her coin purse for change. The next moment she was holding the thick L.A. Times in her trembling hands. Her eyes filled with tears. SCREEN DIRECTOR'S SON, it said under a wirephoto of Kenny, ARRESTED IN GUATEMALA ON SEX AND COCAINE CHARGE. A great noise came rumbling out of the darkening sky.

"Thunder," a woman said, opening her umbrella as she emerged from the market.

But Selene knew it wasn't thunder. It was Lance's laughter, shaking apart the safe little world she'd hoped to build. She and the dog moved down the street. Selene's face was wet with both rain and tears. ST

RON GOULART

Ron Goulart sold his first mystery short story over twenty years ago. His first mystery novel appeared somewhat later. In 1971 he received an "Edgar" award from the Mystery Writers of America for a book-length work. Since then—and under a variety of pseudonyms—he has produced dozens of novels, short stories, and nonfiction pieces.

In WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS?, Mr. Goulart presents an unusual twist on the familiar "released murderer" theme. Will the vengeful convict kill again before a cub reporter can stop him?

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS?

The knocking on the downstairs door didn't stop.

Finally, skirting the fallen lamp, I ran over to the bedroom window. Opening it, gingerly, I thrust my head out into the crisp autumn morning. "Go away," I shouted in the direction of the red brick porch. "I'm a recluse."

"Well, I know that, Mr. Humbard. That's why I truly appreciate your granting me this interview."

He was plump and young. About thirty at best, beaming up at me with awe and admiration writ on his windbuffed face.

"What interview?"

"I'm Steve Lewbers," he yelled, hopefully, up at me.

"So?" I started to tug the window shut.

"From the Brimstone *News-Pilot*, Mr. Humbard. I drove fifty-six miles to interview you. We set it up last week."

Through the narrowing opening of the window I told him, "I have no recollection of you. Good-bye."

"But you must've been expecting me. The side gate's open, just like you promised. And you seem to have locked

up your guard dogs."

That was, more or less, true.

I shut the window, glanced around the bedroom, and decided there wasn't enough time to tidy up.

The plump reporter was thumping, politely, on the door as I started downstairs. Only one stain on the runner. I'd let him in, make sure he didn't use these stairs. He might prove to be more of a nuisance if I shooed him away now.

Before I went to the front door, I ducked into the study. Two stains there, but by rearranging the throw rugs I hid them both well enough.

"An awful lot depends on this interview," said the plump young Lewbers when I opened the door. "I mean, not only is my editor at the *News-Pilot* excited, but the wire services are, too. The first interview with C. G. Humbard in fifteen years. It's . . . ."

"Seventeen years," I corrected. "C'mon in, Mr. Lewton."

"Lewbers. Steve Lewbers. I don't have business cards yet, because I've only been a reporter with the *News-Pilot* for six weeks and . . . ."

"What were you before that, a delivery boy?"

After a few seconds, he chuckled. "That's an example of the fabled C. G. Humbard wit, isn't it?" Chuckling again, he followed me into the den. "Boy, I can't begin to tell you how much your books have meant to me over the . . . ."

"Sit down." I nodded at an armchair that was next to the rug I'd moved, then settled in behind the big oaken desk. "I don't have much time, so let's get on with it." Glancing at my wristwatch, I noticed the crystal was cracked and the hands frozen at 10:17.

"There wasn't a kid in our high school who hadn't read *The Stranger In The Barley*." Lewbers fished a thin notebook out of the breast pocket of his tweedy sportcoat. "That novel came to grips with the zeitgeist of my . . . ."

"Came to grips with everybody's zeitgeist," I told him. "The damn thing's sold 17 million copies since 1953."

Lewbers whistled appreciatively. "It isn't every American author who can write brilliantly and honestly and still make

big money."

"No, I'm one of the few." I glanced again at my dead wristwatch.

Lewbers, a dreamy smile on his pudgy face, was gazing around the room, nodding at the shelves of books. "So this is where you wrote *Rudy And Tootsie*, and *Put Out The Road Closed Signs, O Highway Repairmen?*"

"Yep."

He made a scribble in his notebook. "I didn't bring a camera, since you mentioned you haven't allowed your picture to be taken since . . . um . . . . "

"Since I became a hermit."

He was watching my face, frowning slightly. "You don't look much like you did in the photo on the dust jacket of *The Stranger In The Barley*."

"That was actually my high school yearbook photo. I'm older now. I'm fifty-four."

"Your bio in *Contemporary Authors* says fifty-seven."

I laughed. "You've caught me in a fib, Mr. Lewis. Yes, it's fifty-seven. I was shaving a few . . . . "

"Lewbers. Steve Lewbers."

"Did you have any further questions, Mr. Lewbers?"

"I guess I won't ask you where you get your ideas," he said, grinning. "Because that's a dumb one."

"It is," I agreed.

"Would you mind if I inquired as to why you . . . well, withdrew from life?"

I leaned back in the swivel chair, steepling my fingers. "I suppose enough time has gone by," I began thoughtfully. "It was seventeen years ago, as you may know. I was living a much more open life, had a pleasant home in Westport that was much different from this fenced-in hideaway in the Connecticut woodlands. I had a neighbor who was also . . . who fancied he was also a writer. His name was . . . . "

"Nat Greenberg," supplied the pudgy reporter. "I was going to bring up his name. He was, you know, released from prison just a few days ago."

"Yesterday, actually."

"As I recall . . . well, I checked this out in the *News-Pilot* morgue, too . . . Greenberg swore he'd get you when he got out of prison. Doesn't that scare you any?"

Shrugging, I said, "Greenberg was a schnook."

"A what?"

"A schnook . . . a nebbish . . . a born loser. All talk and no guts."

"He did shoot and kill his wife," Lewbers reminded me. "And nearly got you."

I lowered my head. "That was the most embarrassing moment of my life," I said. "Climbing out of that second floor bedroom window and running across the roof."

"He winged you, didn't he?"

"Winged is not the apt word. The slug hit me in the hip."

Lewbers was frowning again. "You know, you and Greenberg looked quite a lot alike then," he said. "Both tall and dark."

"I was quite a bit better looking," I said, touching at the grey at my temples. "Smarter, too. As his wife certainly agreed."

"You mentioned Greenberg was an author, too?"

I snorted. "A hack," I said. "What else can you call a man who wrote seventy-seven novels in less than ten years. All paperbacks, mind you, and forty-three of them about a private detective named Slaughterhouse Smith."

"He mentioned at his trial that his wife . . . I've forgotten her name."

"Tippi," I said, with a touch of disdain. "Tippi Greenberg."

"He claimed she was his main inspiration and that since you'd taken her away from him, he could no longer write."

"He never could write."

Lewbers turned to a fresh page in his notebook. "Let's get back to your own work."

"At last." I consulted the watch.

"Is it true that, although you haven't published a book since *Poppy and Charlie* in 1971, you are still writing?"

"Yes."

"About how much material do you do in a day?"

"Sometimes a line, sometimes a page. I'm not a hack like Greenberg," I replied. "He could bat out 10,000 words a day. All tripe."

"I've always been curious about your final story in the *Knickerbocker* magazine," he said, eying me. "When Mrs. Crystal drowns herself in the bathtub while reading a paperback edition of the *I Ching*, why is Mr. Arends listening to Guy Lombardo on the radio?"

"It's a symbol," I explained.

He nodded, but didn't write anything in the book. "And was Tootsie really pregnant?"

"Oh, yes. I thought I'd made that quite plain."

Lewbers snapped his notebook shut. "I don't think you're playing fair with me," he said.

"Hum?"

"You're acting as though you don't know a damn thing about C. G. Humbard's later works at all," he accused, pudgy face reddening. "Mrs. Crystal isn't even in the story I mentioned, and Tootsie is a male sheepdog. I only asked that because for the past few minutes I've been getting the feeling you may not even be C. G. Humbard."

"I'll tell you why you're feeling perplexed, Mr. Lewbers." I pushed back in the chair.

"At least you got my name right that time."

"To be sure. Now let me explain why I've been leading you, as it were, up the garden path." I unbottoned my coat and tugged the .32 revolver out of my belt. "You really arrived at a very unfortunate time. I'd just finished killing C. G. Humbard, after having tussled with him here in his den and then chasing him upstairs."

I aimed the gun at the young man. "When you commenced raising such a fuss, I decided to grant you your damn interview and then get rid of you as soon as possible. Nobody's seen Humbard's damn face for nearly twenty years, and we did, as you mentioned, vaguely resemble each other. If you'd gone away contented .... But now I'll have to lock you in a closet until I get away clear. Sorry you didn't get to interview C. G., but this'll make an even better story

for your nitwit newspaper."

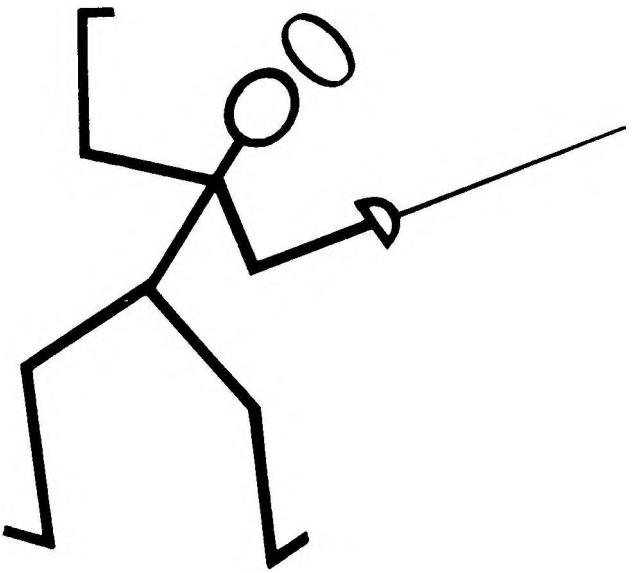
Smiling, Lewbers stood up. "It really doesn't matter, Mr. Greenberg. I'm not a reporter anyway. I'm a cop," he said. "Been following you since you got out yesterday. Unfortunately . . . . " He gave a rueful shrug. "I lost you for a few hours, and that gave you the chance to get here way ahead of me. I knew, once I saw you up in that window pretending to be Humbard, that I was already too late to save him."

I kept my gun aimed at his midsection. "Then why all this business about wanting an interview?"

"You're a dangerous man, Mr. Greenberg," he explained. "I wanted to keep you here until my backup arrived."

A deep, authoritative voice behind me interrupted my confused thoughts. "Don't make any sudden moves, Mr. Greenberg. Place your gun—slowly—on the floor and kick it away from you. Then put your hands behind your back."

With a shrug, I complied with the order. "Once a schnook, always a schnook," I said. ST



EDWARD D. HOCH

Anyone with even the most rudimentary knowledge of the mystery field is acquainted with Ed Hoch's remarkable outpouring of quality short stories. He's been featured in every issue of the ***Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*** *for years. His inventiveness seems inexhaustible.*

In PRISON BUS he once more displays his keen knowledge of human nature, his flair for believable characterization, and his ability to weave a fascinating tale.

PRISON BUS

Sunny Entro had been waiting in front of the Park Edge Hotel for more than an hour when John Minster finally appeared. He was an imposing figure of a man, even taller and more handsome than he appeared on television. Sunny checked to make sure there were no other fans waiting and then crossed the sidewalk quickly to intercept him.

"Mr. Minster! Forgive me for bothering you, but could I have your autograph?"

He looked down at her with a resigned smile. "I'm not a rock star, only a news commentator."

"I watch you every night! You're great!" She pushed the autograph book toward him.

"Thank you." He accepted her pen and started to write, looking only a little annoyed when she pressed her body against his. He wrote *Best wishes, John Minster*, handed her the pen and book and backed away.

"I do appreciate this, Mr. Minster!"

"Any time."

She turned and walked away fast, stuffing the square autograph book into her purse. Rounding a corner out of sight, she entered the back door of another hotel and proceeded

to the ladies' room off the lobby. Safe in one of the stalls, she slipped Minster's wallet out from under her blouse and went quickly through it. Two fifties, five twenties, and three ones. Not bad! There were credit cards, too, but she ignored those.

She stuffed the twenties into her bra and put the ones in her own wallet. She'd stop at the hotel cashier on her way out and change the fifties for fives and tens. That left only Minster's wallet with its credit cards and identification. On her way out of the ladies' room she dropped it through the slot for used paper towels. Maybe it would be found and maybe it wouldn't. She didn't care. She'd been careful about fingerprints.

After leaving the cashier's window, she exited the hotel through the main entrance on the park side of the building, heading in the direction away from the Park Edge. By now Minster might have discovered his loss and come back searching for her. She found a taxi at the next corner and started to get in.

Suddenly, a slender young man with a hard face pushed his way in beside her. "What the hell . . . ?"

"Don't scream and I won't call the police," he said quietly. Just tell the driver your destination and we'll go there together.

"Who are you? What do you want?"

The driver was growing impatient. "Where to, folks?"

The man smiled at her. "Where to?"

She decided that he wasn't a cop, whoever he was. "I'm on my way to lunch. You want to buy it for me?"

"Certainly." He gave the driver the address of a restaurant near the Civic Center.

"Just what do you want?" she asked as the taxi got under motion.

"I saw your little stunt back at the hotel."

"I don't know what you mean," Sunny told him.

"Don't play dumb. You had your hand in Minster's pocket and you got his wallet along with his autograph. A neat trick. I'll bet you've pulled that one before."

The cab pulled up in front of the Civic Center, and Sunny got out without saying a word. The slender man paid the driver and followed her. "In here," he suggested. "It's a good place for lunch." As if he'd suddenly remembered, he added, "Oh, my name is Cal Suggar."

"Sunny," she said, accepting his hand with some reluctance.

"No last name?"

"Sunny Entro." What the hell, she thought, names are easy to change.

They settled into a booth as the café began to fill with workers from the city offices. "How long you been picking pockets, Sunny?" Cal Suggar asked.

"I don't pick pockets! I was getting the guy's autograph."

"Sure you were! Look, let's level with each other. I'm not a cop, and I might be able to throw a little work your way."

She studied his dark eyes and sharp features, thinking that he might be halfway handsome if he ever allowed himself to smile. "What sort of work?"

"Ever take the weekend bus up to the state prison?"

"Why should I do that? I don't know anyone up there."

"Think you could ride the bus, get friendly with someone, and maybe lift something for me?"

Sunny gave a snort of laughter. "You want to hire me to pick a pocket?"

"That's the idea, more or less," he admitted.

"Look, Mr. Suggar..."

"Cal. Everyone calls me Cal."

"...I told you I wasn't a pickpocket."

The waitress arrived and took their order. When she'd departed, Cal Suggar started talking again. "I suggested we level with each other, remember? I happened to spot you at work on the street, and I admired your talent. I want to hire that talent. Can we do business, or can't we?"

"How much?" Sunny wanted to know. "What sort of money are we talking about, *if* I was this person you think I am?"

He shrugged. "How does five hundred sound?"

It sounded damn good to Sunny, but she kept her face frozen. "You can do better than that, Cal. This thing sounds risky. Aren't there police on those buses?"

"No, no—just the driver and family members who've got no other way of reaching the prison. Mexicans, mostly, but there are enough others so that you won't stand out in the crowd. Especially if you wear jeans and no makeup. The guards do a careful search for contraband at the prison, but that needn't worry you because you won't be entering the prison. When the bus drops you off at the gate, you simply slip away and wait in a little bar down the block. Then, in three hours, you take the same bus back. If anyone sees you leave the group and questions you about it, you simply say you just couldn't face your brother or husband or boyfriend without a drink first."

"You want me to pick someone's pocket and then wait three hours to ride back on the same bus with them?" She eyed him as if he were insane.

"No, no. You pick the pocket on the way back! Or more likely the purse. There'll be a woman on the bus, returning from a visit to her husband."

"A thousand dollars," Sunny decided.

"What?"

"You offered me five hundred. I'll do it for a thousand."

"That's a bit steep for me."

She shrugged. "Take it or leave it. I'll be giving up a whole day and taking a big risk. I have to locate the woman, find where she's carrying what you want, lift it, and then get off the bus before she discovers it's missing."

"Seven-fifty," he said finally.

She could tell he was just bargaining. "A thousand or nothing."

"All right."

"Half in advance."

"God, you drive a hard bargain!"

Their food—club sandwiches and beer—arrived then, putting an end to conversation for the moment. After a time, Cal Suggar resumed it. "You from around here?" he asked.

"Is anyone from California? I grew up here but I was born back east, near Chicago."

"What made you become a pickpocket?"

Sunny shrugged. "It beats being a hooker."

"Got a boyfriend?"

"What business is that of yours?" she asked, annoyed at his prying. What did he want for his thousand bucks? "Maybe I'm married with three kids."

"I don't think so."

She finished her sandwich in silence. After drinking half her beer, she said suddenly, "I gotta be going. Thanks for lunch."

"What about our deal?"

"What about it?"

"Come by my place and I'll give you the information plus your cash advance."

"Not now," she decided, almost ready to back out of the arrangement entirely.

"Tonight, then, or tomorrow? It has to be before Sunday."

"Tell me something. What would you have done if you hadn't spotted me with Minster?"

"I'd have worked out another plan, obviously. Here's my address. I'll look for you tonight around eight. OK?"

"We'll see."

Sunny spent the rest of the afternoon trying to score a big hit. Somewhere in the back of her mind she was thinking that a wallet with five hundred dollars in it would mean she should skip that night's appointment with Cal Suggar. But the Minster score was to be the day's record. Despite four hours in and around hotel lobbies, the best she could do was a wallet lifted from an untended purse. It contained fifty-one dollars and some change.

So that night around eight she drove up to the address he'd given her. It proved to be one of those neo-modern condos on the west side of the city, and she figured he'd paid a small fortune for it. After the doorman had announced her and she'd taken the smooth, silent elevator to

the ninth floor, she found Cal Suggar himself waiting at the door to greet her. He'd changed into a casual blue sport shirt and slacks, and his first words were, "Don't let the place impress you. I'm borrowing it from a friend who's out of town."

"I'm still impressed." She swung her shoulder bag onto an oversized chair and sat down next to it. Through the wide picture windows, the view of the darkening city was spectacular.

"Let me get you a drink."

"Just some white wine, if you have it."

He poured one for her and made himself something clear, with ice cubes. She guessed it might be a gin and tonic.

"Here's the advance on Sunday," he said, handing over an envelope. "In addition to the five hundred, you'll find a photograph of your target—a woman named Helma Lloyd."

Sunny opened the envelope and took out the ten fifty-dollar bills. Then she studied the color snapshot of the woman. Brown hair, pleasant in appearance, probably in her mid-thirties. "All right, tell me the story."

"She goes to visit her husband every Sunday afternoon. No car, so she has to take the prison bus."

"What's he in for?"

"Fraud and embezzlement. It had to do with campaign contributions in the last state election. Nothing to concern you."

She laughed. "A white-collar criminal! Maybe I picked his pocket once."

"I'd suggest you make friends with Helma Lloyd on the bus going out. It shouldn't be too difficult to sit with her. Then you do the same thing on the ride back, and you take some papers from her purse. At least I think she'll have them in her purse."

"How many papers?"

"Probably a few sheets of notepaper. I don't know what size. They'll be covered with handwriting, like a letter."

"What do I do with them?"

"I'll be parked down the block in a red Buick when the

bus gets in. You bring me the papers and you get the other five hundred. Simple enough?"

"I guess so," she answered. Now that the business part of the evening was out of the way, she waited for him to make his move. She'd been to enough men's apartments to know what came next.

But Cal Suggar merely stood up and shook hands with her. "Till Sunday?"

"Ah, till Sunday."

Sunny left the apartment and rode down in the elevator alone.

She had three days to wait till Sunday, and more than once the idea crossed her mind that she should simply keep the five hundred and do nothing. Cal Suggar didn't look like the sort of hood who'd come after her for it. And if he did, she could always claim she'd been ill on Sunday.

But when the day arrived, bright and not too warm and perfect for a bus ride to the state prison, she decided to go through with it. It was another five hundred dollars, after all, and Cal Suggar intrigued her. Maybe he was waiting till she finished the job before he made his move.

The bus was parked at the curb in front of the county office building, the only vehicle on the all-but-deserted block. Some twenty-five or thirty people, mainly women, were gathered by it, talking among themselves as they waited for the driver's arrival. Much of the conversation was in Spanish, and Sunny could only catch an occasional word. It took her but a moment to spot Helma Lloyd, who stood by herself near the back of the group.

"Hello there," Sunny said, strolling up to her and trying to act casual. "This your first time?"

The woman shook her head. She looked just like her photo, but in person her smile was a bit wider, as if she welcomed the chance for conversation. "No, I come every Sunday."

"No car, huh? Like me."

"My husband did the driving. That's who I'm going to see.

I'm from New York City, and back there it's no big deal if you can't drive. Not like California."

"I'm glad to have someone to talk to," Sunny said, making her meaning clear with a glance toward the others. "I've never taken the bus before, and I didn't know quite what to expect."

The driver arrived then and opened the door. The women and a few men crowded on. By the time Sunny and Helma boarded the bus, there were no two seats together. Sunny thought her plan was ruined, but Helma came surprisingly to the rescue. "José," she said to one of the men, "could you move so we can sit together?"

He gave her a gap-toothed grin. "Sure, Señora—for you, anything!" He shifted to a seat across the aisle.

"You take the window," Helma insisted to Sunny. "The view is good."

Sunny took her seat, wondering how much of anything she'd be able to make out through the dusty glass. "You make this trip every week?" she asked her new companion.

"Every Sunday," Helma replied. "I really must learn to drive."

"What's your husband in for?" Sunny asked casually, turning back to the dusty window as the bus got under motion.

"A political thing. They said he took some money. He got one to three years. His lawyer tried to get him assigned to a minimum-security prison, but there were no openings. So he's up here for at least three months." She paused and then asked, "What about you?"

Sunny shrugged. "It's my boyfriend. He got caught robbing a liquor store." That wasn't completely a lie. She'd known a fellow once who was caught robbing a liquor store. He hadn't gone to the state prison, though. He'd ended up dead in a police stakeout.

"That's too bad. My name's Helma. What's yours?"

"Sunny. Like the weather."

"A nice name. It's good to have someone to talk to on this trip. Mostly I just read or kid a little with José. You get tired of the scenery after a few weeks."

"How long does the ride take?"

"Nearly an hour," Helma said.

They chatted about the weather, and prison life, and the loneliness of being without a man. For a time, Sunny almost forgot what she'd have to do on the return trip. But she wouldn't be stealing money from the woman, after all—only some pages of notes that her husband would give her.

When they reached the prison, Sunny saw that it was a stark walled enclosure much like the ones in the movies. It was located in a small town whose main street was lined with shops and bars—most of them open on Sunday, perhaps to attract dollars from the weekly visitors.

"I need a drink first," Sunny told her new friend. "I'll see you on the ride back."

"Are you all right?" Helma asked. "Want me to come with you?"

"No, no. I'm fine."

She ordered a sandwich and beer and settled down to wait in the bar. Finally, when one of the customers started eyeing her alone at the table, she paid her bill and left, drifting aimlessly along the street as she gazed in the shop windows. Somehow, they reminded her of the gift counters at hospitals, and she wondered just how much of this junk would even be allowed into a prison cell. But maybe they weren't for the prisoners at all, but only for the relatives to take back home with them.

It was nearly five o'clock when the first of the visitors started returning to the bus. Sunny boarded it at once and took an aisle seat, saving the window one for Helma. She was one of the last to return, and she seemed pleased that Sunny had been so thoughtful.

"I always have to unwind after being in there," she confessed.

"How was he today?"

"Oh, about the same. His spirits are pretty good, considering that he's penned up with a lot of hardened criminals. He heard he may be moved next month, and that boosted him a bit. At least in a minimum-security prison he'll have a few more privileges."

"I'm glad," Sunny murmured, glancing at the brown leather shoulder bag that rested on the seat between them.

"How about your boyfriend?"

"He's OK." She tried to think up the proper lies, but they weren't coming as easy as usual. Helma was a hard person to lie to.

"Dick—my husband—took the rap for some other people. They promised him things and then didn't deliver. I suppose I can understand why he's bitter at times, but it's hard on me all the same. Today wasn't bad, though."

Sunny's fingers were busy. "Do you ever watch that newscaster on TV?" she asked, making conversation to cover her movements. "John Minster? He's the West Coast anchorperson for one of the networks."

"I've seen him. Nice looking guy."

"I got his autograph the other day. Right in front of the Park Edge Hotel."

"Yeah? You collect autographs, Sunny?"

"Some."

"I'd like to see them."

"Maybe I'll bring them along next Sunday," she said, telling the biggest lie of all. Her fingers were clutching sheets of folded paper as she withdrew them from the purse.

The bus, fortunately, hit a pothole at that moment, and Sunny was thrown against Helma. That was all she needed to slide the papers safely under her blouse. It was done.

When the prison bus finally reached its destination in front of the county office building, Sunny and Helma parted like old friends. "I'll see you next week," Helma promised.

"Sure," Sunny agreed. "'Bye now!"

She caught a cab around the next corner, wanting to be far away before Helma decided to check her purse. Able to relax for the first time in an hour, Sunny slipped the folded notepapers out from under her blouse and read the first few lines. They were handwritten in pencil, obviously by Helma's husband, and the first page was numbered *38*.

"Following our third meeting, the senator proposed that I keep a duplicate set of books on campaign contributions, in

which...."

So Helma's husband was writing about it, blowing the whistle on the people who'd let him take the rap. Well, good for him, Sunny decided. They probably deserved it.

"Where to, lady?" the driver asked. "You just said to drive around a few blocks."

"What? Oh—take me back where you got me."

"It's your money."

There was no sign of Helma now, but she spotted the red Buick waiting down the block as Cal had promised. She paid the driver and hurried over to get in.

"What happened to you?" Cal asked. "You got off the bus and then you disappeared."

"I decided it was too dangerous to head straight for your car, in case she picked that moment to check her purse."

"Did you get it?"

"Right here." She handed over the pages and watched while he skimmed them. "Good work! This is just what we feared."

"Her husband's writing a book, huh?"

"He's writing something, but we'll put a stop to it. Here's the rest of your money."

"Thanks," she said, accepting the envelope. "What are you going to do about it?"

"That's for other people to decide. My job was to check the rumor that he was smuggling pages of a manuscript out of the prison with his wife."

"He's being moved to a minimum-security prison soon," she volunteered, and was sorry as soon as she'd said it.

"That'll make it easier."

"God, you make it sound like you're going to kill him!"

"No, no. Don't worry about it. You got your money. Where do you want me to drop you?"

"The next block is fine," Sunny answered glumly. Cal wasn't going to move on her at all. He'd gotten everything he was after.

He pulled over and stopped. "Thanks, Sunny. You did a good job."

She got out and stood watching as he drove away.

Sunny awoke with a start the following morning. Something had been gnawing at her subconscious and at last it had surfaced.

Page 38.

Helma Lloyd had already smuggled out 37 pages of her husband's book, or exposé, or whatever. She had those 37 pages, and Cal Suggar would be going after them. If her husband's life was in danger, Helma's life was in danger, too.

Sunny got up and started pacing the floor of her small apartment. She'd gotten to like Helma Lloyd during their bus ride, and she didn't want anything bad to happen to the woman. Stealing from her purse was one thing. Causing her death, even indirectly, would be something far different.

She got out the phone book and searched through the column of Lloyds until she found one on Del Rio Drive, where Helma said she had taken an apartment. The phone was listed under Mark Lloyd, and Sunny realized she hadn't known the husband's name until that moment. She dialed the number, not quite certain what she'd say.

There was no answer.

Forget it, a voice told her. You're being foolish. Nothing's happened to Helma. Walk away from it, the way you walked away from the prison bus, the way you walked away from John Minster after you picked his pocket.

Maybe that was the trouble. She'd walked away from too many things in the past.

Sunny dressed quickly and left her apartment. She hailed a cab and gave the driver Helma Lloyd's address. She'd made her decision.

It was not yet nine o'clock when she reached the building, a low stucco structure that probably dated from the 1930s. The rent could not have been very high here. Helma certainly wasn't living off the profits from her husband's crime.

She found the buzzer for Helma's apartment and pressed

it, not really expecting an answer.

"Who's there?" a voice asked through the intercom.

"Helma? It's me, Sunny! From the prison bus. Are you all right?"

There was no response, but the door buzzed and swung open at Sunny's touch. She climbed the stairs to Helma's apartment and found the door ajar. She stepped inside and, by the light from the windows, could see Helma Lloyd seated at the dining room table, facing the door. Her face was bruised, and one eye was swollen shut.

She held a small automatic pistol pointed at Sunny's stomach.

"Helma...."

"See what you've done? See what your friends did to me?"

"Helma, I swear I didn't know.... Did they get the rest of the manuscript?" Sunny asked, trying to keep her voice even and ignore the gun.

"Wouldn't you like to know? Isn't that why they sent you back, because they discovered there were missing pages?"

"You've got to listen to me! A man named Cal Suggar hired me for this job only, to ride the prison bus with you and take those pages out of your purse. When I got thinking about it last night, I realized they'd come after the rest of it and possibly hurt you. That's why I'm here—because I tried to warn you!"

"I'm nothing to you. Why bother?"

"You're a friend," Sunny insisted. "Maybe I haven't had enough of them."

Helma Lloyd sighed and put down the gun. "I don't know why I should believe you."

"What about your husband? Should he be warned?"

"It's too late for Mark. He was stabbed to death by another prisoner last night."

"My God!"

"They don't waste any time. Suggar told me the news as he was beating me this morning."

"Can't you do something? Call the police...."

"The senator has a lot of power in this state. Mark found

that out."

"Can't...."

She was cut short by a noise from the doorway. Sunny turned to see Cal Suggar standing there. He was holding a revolver in one gloved hand.

"You shouldn't have come here, Sunny," he said. "I paid you off. You were out of it."

Helma's eyes went to her gun, but Cal Suggar was faster. He swept it onto the floor near Sunny's feet. "Don't try it, Helma. I came back for the rest of the pages. If I don't get them, I'll kill you."

He raised the gun to strike her with it, and that was when Sunny bent to retrieve the fallen pistol and shot him through the head.

Helma Lloyd was speechless for an instant, staring at the fallen man on the floor in front of her. "How could you do it, Sunny?"

"Wasn't hard."

"I guess you saved my life. What'll we do about the police?"

"Call them, I guess."

"The senator...."

"I just might have a friend who's more powerful than the senator." She looked up the number in the phone book and then called the television station. That first, then the police.

Luck was with her. He was in his office, and they put her through when she promised a big story. "Mr. Minster? You probably don't remember me. I'm the girl who asked for your autograph last week while I picked your pocket."

Sunny Entro was waiting patiently at the gate when the prison bus drove up and the Sunday afternoon crowd of visitors alighted. She saw Helma Lloyd at once and waved cheerily. It was some minutes before Helma could pass through security and join her in the prison yard.

"Great day, isn't it?" Sunny said, hugging her friend.

Helma smiled. "You must have seen the papers."

"Damn right I saw them! The senator resigned!"

"It'll all come out now, what hasn't come out already. But how about you? I never thought I'd be riding the bus to visit you like I used to visit Mark."

Sunny shrugged. "Eighteen months isn't so bad. John Minster says I'll be out in less than a year."

Helma began unloading things from her shoulder bag. "Here, I brought you some candy and a couple of paperback books."

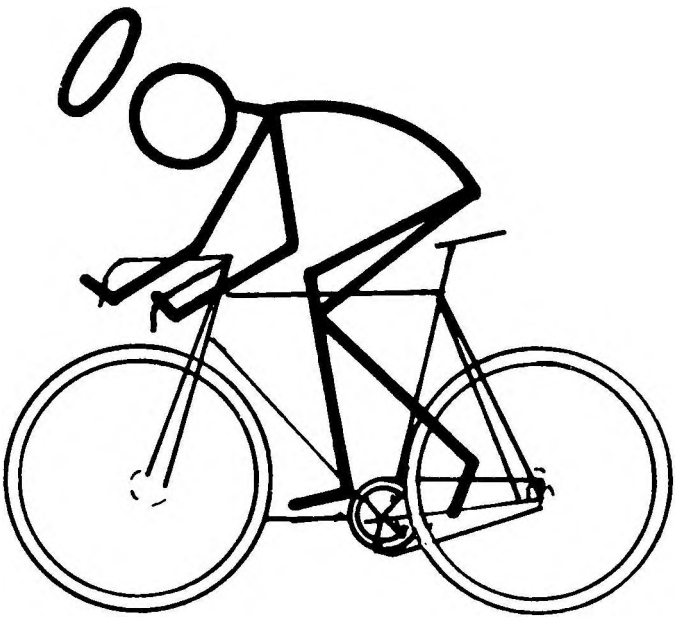
"Thanks, Hel—I appreciate it."

"You saved my life. I don't think you should have to spend a single day in prison."

"Don't worry about it. I've been locked up before."

"What will you do when you get out?"

Sunny thought about that. "Who knows? Maybe I'll write a book." ST



WHO KILLED LENORE?

by Edward D. Hoch

Poe with his raven was pacing the floor,
Mourning the passing of lovely Lenore.
No one had seen her for most of the week;
And now she lay dead, with a killer to seek.

Friends all came quickly and stayed until night,
Full of despair at the dolorous sight.
But Ligeia and Helen and Annabel Lee
Had all hated Lenny with great jealousy.

"One of you poisoned my lovely Lenore,"
Poe said with a fury they could not ignore.
Ligeia answered, all gentle and fair,
"Not I," she cried, "I was braiding my hair."

"Nor I," said Helen, so vibrant and bold.
"I made some soup to help cure Lenny's cold."
"I was preparing my house for a tea.
And Lenny was coming," said Annabel Lee.

"Please send for the cops," said the sad Mister Poe.
"Anyone reading this poem should know
What the killer's name is, for the clues are all here.
It's obvious now who has murdered my dear."

* * *

Then Poe turned to Helen, his eyes sad and old,
"None of the rest of us knew of her cold.
You did—and you killed her." She ran for the door,
But was stopped by the raven, who loved sweet Lenore.

Jury and Judge brought an end to the strife;
They locked her in jail "for the rest of her life."
Though Helen was sure she'd be out in a score,
The raven eyed Poe as he quoth, "Nevermore."

JOE L. HENSLEY

Joe Hensley, the fine writer who is also a circuit court judge, gives us in FINDER the third and final installment of the Cannert saga. In the continuing quest for his lost Martha, our "hero" uncovers a vicious narcotics ring that must be dealt with before he can finally learn the truth about his wife's disappearance. But the biggest obstacle, as always, is the deadly and relentless illness gnawing away at him. Will there be time...?

FINDER

Cannert was northeast of Tampa when the state cop turned flashing lights on him. Instinctively, he looked down and saw he was doing only fifty. He fought panic. Maybe someplace back along the line he'd left something behind, enough for them to trace him. He'd always known that getting caught was a possibility. He pulled over on the berm of the road and waited stoically. He thought about Martha and those he'd come across and disposed of while seeking her. He thought also about the time that was left and hoped he'd not spend it in some jail or prison hospital. The last three nights had been almost sleepless because of the pain. But watching the officer approach his car, he prayed for a little more time.

The state cop leaned in his window. "Man, it's hot on this road, and then I see you driving with your windows down. You got to be crazy."

"Air conditioner's out," Cannert said. It wasn't, but the cold air made him hurt. The warm air did, too, but not as bad.

"Your name Arnold Cannert? You from Chicago?" the state cop asked.

"Yes, sir." Cannert thought of the dynamite in the trunk and hoped the man wouldn't search the car.

"We've been looking for you for days, Mr. Cannert. You're supposed to contact the sheriff at Inland City. Something about your wife and her car."

"I see. Thank you. I've been looking for her for a while. Do you know anything about her, whether she's okay? Anything?"

"I'm sorry, but I know nothing more than I've told you. I'm going to radio in and tell them I found you so that no one else will be looking for you." The state trooper shook his head. "It's got to be a hundred out. You better get your air conditioner fixed, sir."

"I will," Cannert promised.

"Yes," Cannert said positively as they stood in the storage lot, "that's her car."

Sheriff Farmer nodded without meaning. "Me and the state boys pulled it up out of a deep spot in the lake five days ago. They got your name by checking out the license plate. The state man called through to Chicago and someone up there who checked said you'd come down here looking for her. We got her body in the county morgue. Another week or so and we'd have buried her. Now you can take care of that little chore."

"Can I see her body?" Cannert asked.

"Sure. If you want. She don't look good after all that time in the water."

"Did she drown?"

"I don't know. You ask the people at the morgue. She was in the car when we drug it up."

The sheriff was a strong, youngish-appearing man with Indian black hair. He wore the gun on his belt low, like an old-time gunfighter. He watched Cannert.

A Florida cowboy, Cannert thought. *Mean, too. He don't give a damn about me or Martha.*

"It might have stayed in there longer," the sheriff continued, "but a fisherman carrying scuba gear hooked onto it

and got curious. He told a state cop, and we come out together and found her."

The day was hot and muggy. Cannert wiped his face with a handkerchief. He felt empty inside. A wave of sickness rolled over him.

"You okay?" the sheriff asked stolidly.

"I'll be all right," Cannert said. He got out a stomach tablet and chewed it and watched the sheriff. This man should know about his own area, but Cannert instinctively decided against asking too many questions.

"You sure do look sick."

Cannert nodded. The stomach tablets helped some, but not much. Even the strong pain pills were no longer completely effective. He hurt all of the time.

"I'll make arrangements about her and stick around for a few days," Cannert said.

"Suit yourself," the sheriff replied. "But you look like you ought to check into the local hospital after you visit the morgue."

The morgue was one small room off the side of Inland City's hospital. Cannert found it after driving through the town—a town of maybe six thousand that lay along the northern border of a good-sized lake. It was a flower town, rather pretty, but rather faded in the heat of summer.

The woman in the morgue was his Martha. Her face was puffy and she was bloated and bruised heavily, but it was Martha. Cannert touched her cold, decaying hand gently and nodded at the attendant who'd shown her.

"That's my wife," he said. He fought to keep the room from spinning away from him. For a long time he'd been sure she was dead, but seeing her dead was still bad. The room smelled of formaldehyde.

"What killed her?" he asked.

The attendant rustled through some papers. "It says here she died of multiple abrasions and contusions and shock. Her right arm was broken, and there were some signs she'd been sexually molested. Someone, in other words, raped her

and beat her to death." He looked at Cannert. "I'm sorry, Mr. Cannert. I'm just reading what it says here."

"Sure," Cannert said. *And after she was dead, someone dropped her in the lake.*

"Would you like to see the doctor?" the man asked. "There's one on duty in the emergency room."

"No, I'll be okay," Cannert said, knowing he'd never be okay again, not in the little time that was left.

Cannert found a rooming house. The money was almost gone. He was economizing.

Mrs. Tilden owned the place. She was old but still seemingly alert. She rented him a spotless room at a modest, summer price.

"How long will you be with us, Mr. Cannert?" she asked, fanning herself.

"Until I can make some arrangements about my wife. She was found in her car in the lake."

"I read about that in the paper," she said sympathetically. "It's a bad area out in the county around that lake."

"How's that?"

"Drugs," she said, nodding sagely. "Our lake is right in the center of the worst of it. They truck it in, and they fly it up from some of them foreign countries where they cultivate it. They even grow it themselves on some of those backroads farms. And most of them hang around right out in the open in their funny vans and expensive trucks at the Main Bar. Bold as brass."

"Oh?" he responded, interested. "The sheriff told me about finding her in the lake, but I didn't know anything about drugs."

She sniffed. "Why would *he* mention them? He lives in a big house and drives a fine car. I never heard anything about him inheriting money."

"You're saying he might be involved?"

"Not me. I'm not saying anything. He's part Indian. Lots say he's a good-enough sheriff." She shrugged, unwilling to speculate further. "Maybe it was something else out there.

Locals say that lake is haunted. When I was a girl growing up here, no one would go close to certain spots in the lake. That was back in prohibition times."

He thought for a moment about that. He found that he didn't believe in ghosts, but did believe in drugs. His stomach churned.

"You look real poorly, Mr. Cannert."

"Just a little tired," he said.

' Let me warm you up some of my homemade vegetable soup. You're so thin, I think the summer wind will blow you away."

"Thanks very much for the offer, but I ate something earlier at a drive-in," he lied. Thinking of food made him feel sicker.

Later, after calling Chicago and making arrangements for Martha, and after listening at his door and hearing Mrs. Tilden's snore, he slipped out and checked the box in the back of the Ford, being dead quiet about it. He'd stolen the dynamite and caps at a construction site across the Georgia line. There was almost a full case of the explosive. There were also two empty ten-gallon cans of gasoline. Those should be filled.

He didn't like having been found by the state police. If they'd found him once, he wondered how long it would be before someone, feeding things through a smart computer, would decide to check him out. He'd executed a lot of people while seeking Martha. He knew, no matter how careful he'd been, that there were people who'd seen him in areas where he'd killed. Not much time, one way or the other.

He slipped quietly back into his room and went to bed. Sleep was elusive no matter what combination of pills he took. He lay in bed and thought about Martha as a young girl, remembered her as she'd been when they'd first met, her brown hair, soft lips. It had been a good marriage. Now it was done.

He lay awake and twisted and turned, plotting against those who'd probably done it. Someone had ravaged her, raped her, then killed her. He felt her pain merge with his

own. Someone had pushed the car into deep water. Someone. . . .

"Drugs," Mrs. Tilden had said. "The sheriff," she'd implied.

The last doctor had told him the cancer had spread alarmingly and that it wouldn't be long. He thought about ways of doing what needed to be done and hoped there'd be time enough. He'd had the feeling, for days now, that someone was behind him, tracking him, someone faceless, but wearing a uniform.

Finally, with bad dreams, he slept.

In the morning, he visited the local library and read what he could find on drugs. He learned that cocaine was a white, bitter, crystalline alkaloid obtained from coca leaves, a "social" drug. He saw color pictures of marijuana and read it was the most widely used of the drugs.

When he tired of reading, he went to a nearby restaurant and managed some soup and crackers, choking the mess down, then fighting to make it stay. He drove to two gasoline stations, filling a ten-gallon can at each. Then, making certain he wasn't followed, he drove the Ford to a lonely area down a deserted road ten miles from town. He could smell the lake, but not see it from the spot. There, with screwdriver and pliers, he removed the insides of the car doors, lined sticks of dynamite in the hollows this opened, and ran a central wire back from an attached blasting cap to the car trunk. When he'd put everything back together in the car, things looked about as they had before. The Ford looked a little more beat up, but the door sides didn't bulge. It would do. The central wire to the trunk needed only to be attached to an electrical source.

He sat in the car and sweated. He thought about ways to tie the central wire to an electrical outlet. Some he discarded as unlikely, some as too obvious. A diabolical one occurred to him and he smiled. He took a separate wire and hooked it to the left turn-signal light socket, removing the bulb first. He switched on the ignition and flipped the turn signal down for a left turn. By attaching a test kit he kept in

the glove compartment, he could see the light in it blink off and on. It ought to work. Once, long ago, he'd used dynamite in a highway construction job he'd held for three years. He hoped he still remembered how to wire it. If not, the loss was small. A chance.

He went to the Main Bar that Mrs. Tilden had mentioned. It was small-town typical and uncrowded in the late afternoon. Behind the bar, an old, bald man in a white apron polished glasses. A few other men, clad in bright shirts and fancy jeans, played boisterous pool at a table in the rear, cursing when they missed shots, laughing triumphantly when they made them. A jukebox played country-western music interminably. The place smelled of mildew and booze and sweat.

Cannert took a seat at the far end of the bar, away from the action, and waited until he was noticed.

"Hot out there," he said to the bartender. "Bring me a Canadian and water in a tall glass."

The bartender got it for him and then waited pointedly to be paid. When Cannert paid him, he retreated to his stack of glasses.

Cannert sipped the drink warily. The first swallows almost made him retch, but then he got past that, and the whiskey warmed and burned his stomach and it got easier.

Outside, two four-wheel-drive king cab pick-up trucks stopped. Men got out of them and came boisterously in.

By five in the afternoon, the place was almost full. The crowd was mostly men, but there was a sprinkling of well-painted women. The smell in the room had changed to one of paint and powder—and the sweet smell of what Cannert assumed to be marijuana smoke. Cannert was on his second drink and could feel and see himself perspiring—a cold, clammy feeling. He took out a pain pill and popped it into his mouth while the bartender watched.

"You look like the sun's done got you, old timer," the bartender said.

"Got sick up north. A lung cold I couldn't beat. I'm hop-

ing to get rid of it here where it's hot. The doc says it ain't contagious no more. Up north, a little weed helped when I'd get dizzy with it, but down here I haven't been able to find any."

The bartender smiled. "You're either kidding me or you're brand new in town. You can buy weed around this area on damn near any street corner. Half the guys in this room would sell it to you. It ain't considered a crime in this county. It's kind of protected." He gave Cannert a knowing smile.

"Can you get someone in here to sell me a little? I'd sure appreciate it." The bartender examined Cannert again. "I guess you're harmless enough. You better hope so anyway. Some of these boys is mean. The state cops patrol the highways some, but they stay off our side roads."

"Do they now?" Cannert said, interested.

In a short while, a thin, youngish man without much hair, but deeply tanned by the sun, sidled up to Cannert.

"You want something?"

Cannert nodded and they bargained for a few moments. Cannert brought out two twenty-dollar bills. The man made them vanish. He handed Cannert a small, plastic-wrapped package. He smiled indolently.

"Any time, pops."

"I've maybe got something of my own of value I can offer to sell at a bargain," Cannert said, low-voiced.

"I ain't no buyer. I'm a seller," the man said.

"Could you maybe pass the word if I gave you another twenty?" Cannert asked. He got another twenty out, and the man made it disappear like the previous bills.

"What's a plug horse like you got to offer?"

"Two kilos of cocaine, give or take a little."

The marijuana pusher eyed him in total disbelief. "Where would you have gotten something like that?"

"I lived in Chicago before I retired. Other people bought life insurance. I got sick and no one would sell life insurance to me. Then, a year or two back, I got a chance to buy some distressed merchandise from a police lieutenant in

Chicago. He was a friend. My deal was that it must not go back on the streets in Chicago and maybe cause us both problems. I promised him I'd put it away for retirement time." Cannert nodded. "Now, I'm retired."

"You don't look like the real article to me," the man said doubtfully.

"Sick. Still sick. That's the main reason I need to sell it."

"Stay in your seat," the man ordered. "I'll pass the word. Lord help you if you're feeding me lies."

Cannert sat quietly in his chair and waited.

In a while another man came. He was fortyish, dressed in jeans and an expensive t-shirt. His nails were manicured, but his eyes were obsidian hard.

"I'm told you have something to sell."

Cannert nodded.

"Take out your wallet and hand it to me," the man ordered.

Cannert got it out and handed it to the man, who flipped carefully through it.

"Well, you own an Illinois license and it gives your address as Chicago. That part's true at least. Where you keeping the stuff you got for sale?"

"In a safe place," Cannert answered. "We make us a deal on it and I stay with you while someone gets the first little piece of it and tests it. Or I'll bring it all where you tell me."

"What keeps me or us from just taking it and burying you?"

Cannert thought on it. "I didn't tell the other guy everything. There's more where it came from, lots more. And I'm hoping you're a businessman and not a thief."

The man smiled without meaning. "I'm lots of things. So are my associates. We already have our own suppliers. I'd only pay you half what we pay them."

"I'm not greedy. Half might just be fine."

"I'll be in touch. Tell me where I can get hold of you. And I'll set the delivery rules."

"Okay with me." Cannert supplied Mrs. Tilden's phone number. "You can call me there." He waited for a moment.

"Could Sheriff Farmer be a part of this?"

The man looked at him with something more than contempt in his eyes. "You wired or something?"

"No. Check me if you want." He waited patiently while he was patted down. "I only want you to tell Sheriff Farmer it's funny I wound up here. He'll know the joke."

The jean-clad man nodded noncommitally. "Maybe he'll laugh if he hears about it. I wouldn't know."

When Cannert got back to Mrs. Tilden's house, it was full dark. He opened the trunk and hid the in-sight wire. He pushed the two cans of gasoline to one side, then pulled the car up close to the house, locked it, and went on in.

He waited. He napped and waited, too excited to sleep. All the next day he waited. Finally, when she became insistent, he let Mrs. Tilden fix him some tomato soup and a toasted-cheese sandwich. He managed, with pills, to hold it down. Once, the phone rang to tell him that Martha had been picked up and would be delivered to the funeral home he'd specified in Chicago. On the first day, that was his only call.

In the privacy of his room and in darkness, he took discarded newspaper and some soiled clothes from his suitcase and made up a small package, trying to make it appear to be what he guessed two kilos of cocaine might look like. He wrapped his package in plastic wrap supplied by Mrs. Tilden.

On the second day, the call came.

"You take the Pike Road south from town," a hard voice advised. "Five miles south you'll see a big mailbox on your right with the name Machen on it."

"Near the lake?" Cannert asked.

"Yeah. Shut up and listen. Turn into the lane past the mailbox and drive back to the big barn. Park your car and get out. Bring the stuff. You don't bring the stuff and you're dead. You try to run and you're dead. There'll be people around. Some of those people are watching you. So start now."

"Okay," Cannert agreed.

He went to his room and got the fake package. In his suitcase there were ten lonely one-ounce gold pieces left, the last of two rolls he'd once owned. He took those also. Additional bait. He kept five and put five where Mrs. Tilden would see them. Five should be enough to bury Martha. He put one of his five in each pocket of his pants and let the other three clink against each other in his shirt pocket.

Outside, he opened the Ford trunk, restored and hooked up the hidden wire, and dropped the package inside. He counted as he did it. He'd only counted to forty when it was completed.

He started the Ford and drove carefully over the route he'd been given. Behind him, as he traveled, he thought he saw a sheriff's car following.

He found the mailbox and drove down a narrow, graveled lane to a large barn. When he got to the barn, he did several more things. He found a spot where he could back the trunk of his Ford flush against the side of the barn. When he was against it, he turned the wheels as far as they would go to the right, turned off the motor, took the keys out, and turned down the left turn signal. *Set*. He felt anxious and feverish.

The bartender he'd met at the Main Bar came out of the barn and eyed him curiously. "Why'd you park it like that?"

Cannert touched his shirt pocket and listened to the coins jingle. "I guess maybe I thought it'd help me dicker before I open up."

"Ain't nothing on God's earth going to help you now, pops," the bartender said amiably. He reached behind him and drew a pistol. He patted Cannert down and appropriated the three gold pieces in his shirt pocket, but missed the ones in his pants.

"My wife vanished out here," Cannert said. "They found her car in the lake. Who knows about that?"

The bartender shrugged. "We heard that you was related to her from the sheriff. She came bumbling in here with a flat tire. She saw too much. Feisty woman, and built good

for one her age. By the time me and the rest had enough of her, she was dying. So we popped her back in her car, fixed the tire, and dropped her in the lake." He smiled. "The sheriff did that. Buried her deep. Then that damned fisherman who found her told his cousin on the state police first, so we got stuck with her again."

Cannert watched Sheriff Farmer's car drive up. The sheriff got out. Two other men got out of the back seat. One was the man Cannert had talked to about the cocaine in the bar. He smiled at Cannert. He was holding a shotgun loosely.

"He got a gun or anything, Jed?" he asked the bartender.

"Nah. Just an old man with dreams of glory."

"You got stuff for us, old man?" the buyer asked.

Cannert nodded. "In the trunk."

Sheriff Farmer nodded. "We saw you put it there. What else did you put in the trunk?"

The bartender nodded wisely at Sheriff Farmer. "Could be some more gold coins. He had some in his shirt pocket. His shirt was so thin I could see them right through the pocket." He clinked them and moved a step closer to Cannert. "You got more gold in your car?"

Cannert looked around but didn't answer. He took his car keys and raised his arm, as if to throw them. The sheriff caught him in a strong grip and removed the keys from his hand as easily as if he were taking them from a child. He said to the man with the shotgun, "If he moves again, kill him. But let's try to keep him alive until we see his stuff. Maybe he didn't bring it all."

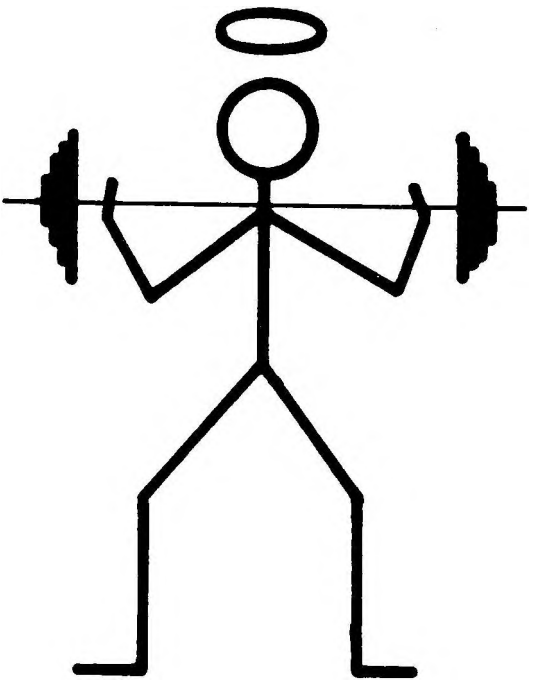
"I brought it," Cannert said. "I was dealing straight." He watched the double eyes of the shotgun.

Cannert could hear other men working in the barn. Four came to the door and watched curiously. A big operation.

The sheriff tossed the keys to the bartender. "Move the car, Jed. Let's open her up and see what we got."

The bartender entered the car and inserted the key. Cannert kept his eyes on the sheriff, but he could hear the key being turned. He braced himself, keeping his face impassive. A faintness came, but he fought it.

The blast and the immense fireball lifted him high in the air. For one final instant, Cannert was still alive, and he could see Martha in the flames. She was young again and so was he and there would be, he hoped in that moment, another time for soft lips and brown hair, another time for them. Sight and sound and pain vanished as he called to her and sought her hand. ST



MEMO FROM SIMON TEMPLAR . . .

SUBJECT: **Hair Examination**

Crime lab specialists, examining a single hair, can ascertain whether it's from an animal—and if so, the species. If human, a hair can reveal the person's race; the body area it came from; whether it fell out naturally or was forcibly removed; whether it was damaged by cutting, burning, or crushing; whether it was bleached or dyed; and whether its wave, if any, is artificial or natural. But no procedure is perfect. The lab men *cannot* determine the age or sex of the owner.

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S.T.

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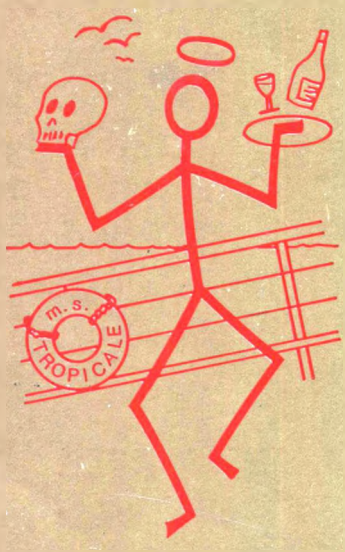

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