MORE STORIES - MORE PAGES!

The saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE

MAY

50c

Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS

In this issue

DOROTHY L. SAYERS

L. G. BLOCHMAN

STEVE FISHER

PHILIP KETCHUM

LESLIE CHARTERIS

WATCH FOR The saint ON TV

ask a stupid question

A NEW Story by LAWRENCE TREAT

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION

One of the questions I am asked most frequently by interviewers and readers is "How did you come to think of the Saint figure?"

Perhaps I can reduce the number of these queries by issuing a public and definitive reply.

When I was seven years old, I received as a birthday present my very first typewriter. It was a far from pristine Oliver, even at that time, a make which only the more ancient of you will remember, with two banks of type standing up above the carriage like large ears; but I was fascinated by the neat and uniform facsimile of printing which it produced. With the aid of this mechanical device, perfection became excitingly attainable, and thus writing and composition became an achievement which brought its own immediate reward in pride. I would like to recommend this psychological bait to more parents and teachers whose pupils are held back and discouraged by the tedious chore of mastering calligraphy.

Since this machine enabled me to produce pages that looked something like books, it was a natural second step to try to give them a similar content to what I had seen in print. So I began to write things like I had read—and my reading was already advanced and voracious.

By the time I was ten, my material desires and mercenary instincts were beginning to emerge. I coordinated these with my literary efforts by producing a weekly magazine, which I peddled to my parents, aunts and uncles, tutors and governesses, and anyone else who could be badgered or blackmailed into forking out for it. Since, somehow, I had still not been told about or discovered the magic of carbon paper, each identical copy was separately typed on the faithful Oliver, each illustration painstakingly traced from the original. Twenty years later I saw a copy which my mother had preserved, and was solemnly astounded, as impartially as if it had been the product of another child, by the perfection of spelling, the professionalism of phrase, and the breadth of knowledge which could only have been acquired by swiping ideas from everything I had read.

For the whole of that Magazine was authored entirely by myself. It contained all the ingredients I had ever seen: articles, very short stories, poems, an installment of a serial, and editorial—and a comic strip. And since drawing came harder to me than writing, I cheated the comic strip by doing it entirely in matchstick figures (could they possibly have been first suggested by the Sherlock Holmes story of *The Dancing Men?*) which I differentiated from each other with such elementary characteristics as mustaches, beards, balloon bellies, special hats, and so forth.

And so, many years and a few typewriters later, when I wanted a calling-card device for a character whom I had already called "The Saint", I recalled those primitive little figures of long ago; and the rest was easy.

All it took was a halo.

Leslie Charteris

The saint®
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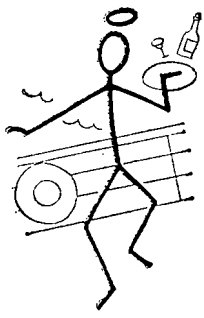

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instead of the saint

by LESLIE CHARTERIS

WHEN THIS MAGAZINE was launched, 11 years ago, we never thought about what we would have to put in it if it lasted as long as this. In fact, I doubt if we thought much about what would go in it if those two digits were simply added, in one-plus-one years. The prospects of our mere survival for such an eon were too breathlessly vague for heavy contemplation.

Nevertheless, we have managed, somehow, to survive the slings and arrows of some pretty outrageous fortune. And the result now is that we find ourselves in the position, if not of having bitten off more than we can chew, at least of a serpent which has started to swallow its own tail.

In other words, having started off with the blithe premise that each issue would contain, among other offerings, a story about the Saint, new or resuscitated, we have continued long enough to consume not only every new story I have written during that time, but also to reprint such an interspersion of my pre-Magazine stories that the end of the stock of Saint material of magazine length is now within the most myopic sight. So close, indeed, that in roughing out the schedules for a year ahead, as we do, we find ourselves definitely scraping splinters from the bottom of the barrel.

Confronted with the stark and irreversible arithmetic of this computation, cold logic offers us only the following possible solutions:

1) I should retire into a concrete bunker, drench myself with dexedrine, and devote my waking hours exclusively to churning out more Saint stories, at the regular rate of one a month, holding doomsday to an indefinitely postponed deadline, but maintaining all the old verve, spontaneity, originality, and enthusiasm.

ANSWER: *Are you out of your ever-loving minds, or do you just want me out of mine?*

2) I should hire a corps of ghosts to perpetuate Saint legends under my supervision. Even such immortals as Dumas are said to have done it—not to mention some of my contemporary competitors.

ANSWER: *Maybe Dumas was easier to fake. I have no moral objection to such a technique, but I feel that the Saint, as I see him, is too special to be imitable. Some quite commercially successful writers have tried it, under their own names, which some readers may be able to think of. But, in all vanity, they would not satisfy me. So I should have to rewrite everything, and end up working harder than if I'd done it all myself, but with less satisfaction.*

3) Then we must face the facts, take the subscribers into our confidence, tell them frankly about the change of policy and why it just isn't our fault but an inevitable result of marching time, and hope that the same intellectual distinction which got them hooked in the first place will keep them on the line.

ANSWER: *What other out you got, Buster?*

Having thus intellectually arrived at this top-level policy decision, we had the choice of holding back the harrowing news until the last possible issue, when we were going to press with the very last possible reprint before we were reduced to reprinting reprints, or coming right out and telling our readers what they had to expect, and breaking them in gently by spacing out the residue of unused material we have left so that they get used to an occasional issue with no Saint story at all, rather than confronting them suddenly with an indefinite vista of solidly Saintless months.

Our transcendent natural honesty, encouraged by our sublime faith in the intelligent maturity of our readers, inevitably dictated the latter course. And so here we are bringing you the facts of life, without more ado, in this first issue of the *Saint Magazine* without a Saint story.

I admit that this seemed an especially propitious moment to take the plunge, when you have just been gorged with four consecutive

months of brand-new Saint material, in the form of the full-length novel VENDETTA FOR THE SAINT which we completed serializing last month, and when even the greediest addict may well be ready for a short respite from the perfections of his idol.

This does not mean that from now on there will be no more Saint stories. Far from it. Indeed, only next month we shall be reviving another old classic novelet. And before long there will be another brand-new short story for which I have just been doing some interesting research down Mexico way. And within another year, quite possibly, we shall again inflict on you a serialized novel or new two-part novelet. But there will also be a number of issues from which I shall be totally absent, except in the guise of Supervising Editor.

At that, I am not innovating anything. Our most important competitor in this field, "Ellery Queen", has contributed very little fiction at all to the magazine of the same name, for a great many years. And if they can get away with it, I only hope I can.

At any rate, I must refuse to be forced, in desperation and dearth of inspiration, to grind out a stream of pot-boilers in which I would have no pride and give no satisfaction, merely in order to claim that every issue continues to contain something calling itself a Saint story.

It may be true, as has been slickly cliché'd, that genius is ten per cent inspiration and ninety per cent perspiration. But that leaven of inspiration is still the vital ingredient, like the garlic in a salad. Unfortunately, unlike garlic, it is not always available on demand. It is the one thing which no amount of perspiration can be guaranteed to produce. On the contrary, it has a tendency to become more elusive as the pursuit becomes more frenzied. And hobbling the pursuit, moreover, is the remorselessly cumulative burden of any conscientious craftsman: the ever-increasing total of his successful captures. Each one of which leaves him deprived of one more way to make the catch without repeating the same trick. . .

Unless I finally made a stand, you could ultimately find yourselves reduced to reading something like this (but under my signature) which came to my wife in the mail only this morning, under a fetching picture of a lass and a lad in naval uniform at the rail of some mystic seaborne vessel—and, on my honor, I have not changed a word:

"Must the voyage end?" she asked wistfully, as the coast-line appeared dimly on the horizon. His voice was tender. "It need never end . . . for us," he replied, gently placing his hand on the sleeve of her Cos Cob shirtdress, a brightly flowered print on white. Tailored with dressmaker touches in Dacron and Avril. Also in solid tones.

An issue of the *Saint Magazine* without Simon Templar is one thing. But an issue without Charteris would be something else again, which the Publishers (who are more powerful even than Editors) say would be going too far. They admit that an author might not be able to produce a new story at the drop of a hat, or even once a month; but they maintain that an Editor should always be able to editorialize. Also they claim that they receive more favorable comment on my Introductions, which appear on the inside front cover, than on any other feature of the Magazine.

Well, if that is true, it is certainly gratifying. Even a lesser ego than mine would be flattered to hear that his opinions and anecdotes were not only read, but read with interest and some approval. So the suggestion that in future Saintless months I should substitute some rambling observations on anything else that occurs to me, in the same vein as those front Introductions but with more length and scope, offers an opportunity to pontificate and puncture which it would be hard to resist. And I must admit that it seems considerably easier to find subjects of general interest to burble about than to find a new story background or invent a new plot twist. To anyone who has been around as much and as long as I have, almost any word picked at random should be enough to cue at least a few paragraphs of prejudice or reminiscence.

For instance, what theme does that last item I quoted lead to?

Advertising.

All right, what does that bring to mind—out of hundreds of things?

That immortal but so silly slogan: "Your best friend won't tell you." Why not? It should be practically the duty of a good friend to tell, and it should be taken without offense, because no one can tell for himself what aromas he may be exhaling. On the other hand, anyone who needs to use more soap presents a much greater problem. To mention the fact is to accuse him of slovenliness, and the

affront is all the greater because he cannot help knowing that he is guilty, and guilt is a sure stimulant of indignation.

The only safe solution I can think of would be to mail him a cake of deodorant soap, anonymously. He could not fail to get the message, but he would have nobody with whom to take umbrage. In fact, it seems to me that some smart manufacturer should hit the market with a soap already packaged in a box suitable for mailing. Of course, it might become a teen-age fad to deluge unhappy victims with these subtle hints; but they would at least have the consolation of ending up with a good supply of soap. I present this idea, gratis, to the makers of Dial.

What happened to "subliminal" advertising? You remember the gimmick: it was claimed that a message like DRINK PETER DAWSON SCOTCH could be flashed into a television picture and out again faster than the eye could consciously see, but it would still imprint itself on the subconscious, so that the viewer would be left with a kind of post-hypnotic compulsion to call for Peter Dawson next time he ordered scotch. Alarmists were soon aroused to panic at the prospect of invisible brain-washing; but the idea still seems preferable to me in some ways to the bullying blasts of the hard sell with which some advertisers try to bludgeon potential customers between installments of electronic entertainment. At least the victim would not suffer while he was being wooed.

I myself commit a sort of subliminal advertising every time the Saint takes a swig of Peter Dawson. There is no tedious sales pitch, but simply the painless implication that the Saint wouldn't be drinking it unless it was a damn good scotch, and if you admire the Saint you accept his judgment. And I certainly wouldn't let him choose it if I didn't approve his taste, not for any emolument. I have the fortunate privilege of being subliminal only about products I really like.

Way back in the 30's, I once had the Saint drink a glass of Carlsberg beer. I was honestly and naively surprised and delighted when this incident came to the attention of the brewers, and they wrote me a letter saying that in appreciation they were sending me a dozen lager glasses and a case of Carlsberg, and would I only let them know when the empties could be picked up. In due course I let them know when they could have their bottles back, and they promptly came for them—but left another case of full ones in ex-

change. This went on for several thirst-free years, until I moved from England and perhaps too far from the source in Denmark.

However, I shall not deny that the promoters of Peter Dawson, and other beverages which you may have noticed from time to time, have since then kept my whistle reasonably wet. But, I repeat, only because I chose them first, spontaneously; not because they hired me.

And don't let this give any of you the idea that I am sitting here wallowing in payola, needing only to drop a name to receive a free sample.

More than two years ago, I published a Saint story here in which I spoke quite glowingly of a fancy English sports car, the Jaguar. But all I have in my own stable, as of today, is a middle-aged Ford station wagon (the best vintage), a three-year-old Peugeot 403 (the cheapest of the seven best-made cars in the world, according to some connoisseurs) and last year's Triumph Vitesse. And I paid for all of them.

That was too easy.

Okay, suppose I just stuck my thumb in a dictionary, and went to work on whatever plum I pulled out. We could try that.

HADES.

No, not the bowdlerized expletive. That was the word I hit.

H'mm. . .

This one might call for a little more meditation.

I'll have to take it up on the next of these occasions. If, in the meantime, I haven't thought of some more entrancing subject, I promise nothing, except to make a mild effort not to be dull. Even, I hope, to tread on a few toes.

Like: Suppose the abolition of slavery (and let's none of us get insular: in the ancient world, slaves came in all colors, including white) was one of the worst setbacks that ever happened to civilization?

We'll see, in another month or two or three.

What shall we call this feature?

How about: THROUGH THE HOLE IN MY HEAD. . . ?

Leslie Charteris

ask a stupid question

by Lawrence Treat

THE EVENING PAPERS whipped out the story in banner headlines. RACKETEER FANTELLI SHOT—CONDITION CRITICAL—GUNMAN ESCAPES AFTER SHOOTING IN SAN MARCO LOBBY—GANG WAR FEARED.

And that last business was the chief reason why the top brass in the police department were holding this full dress conference in the commissioner's office. Reprisals. You couldn't laugh them off.

Matt Parker, detective first grade, sat in the corner of the room and listened, mostly. He'd had the bad luck to have it happen in his precinct and to be catching squeals when the call came in. So the case was his baby, he was the officer of record. He was tagged.

He was a heavy-set man with dark gray eyes and a busted nose and domestic troubles, and he wasn't sure what he was really sore at—the way these guys piled up work for him, or at Kate, his wife.

He sat thoughtfully, cleaning his finger nails. When the commissioner noticed him, kind of

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Fantelli had been killed. It was Matt Parker's job to, as one of a team, find out who had wanted the racketeer dead—and had done something about it—and to get the killer. Veteran novelist Lawrence Treat, whose VENUS UNARMED should be remembered by many of you (and INSTRUCTIONS FOR MURDER in the June 1962 SMM) returns with this story of the very human people whose job it is to catch men such as this.

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wondering how Matt got in and who he was, Matt stared back. Then he rubbed the dirt off the end of the nail file and flipped it on the carpet. What else was he supposed to do, huh?

Kate always rode him when he cleaned his nails in public. She said it wasn't nice, so he told her that people had to clean their nails some time, and why be ashamed of it? Did she want him to keep them dirty? And after a crack like that, they were off, clawing away at each other.

It was a funny thing with a wife. After you had a couple of kids, you stuck it out because that was how you were made and you couldn't change. Still, he hadn't intended to marry any red-headed cyclone that tore his head off every time he opened his mouth. The girl he'd gone for, she was full of excitement and game for anything. And why she hadn't won that beauty contest a few years ago was a black mark in the history of America.

Matt licked his lips. Kate, his wife. If she'd only lay off scrapping with him. But how in hell could he stop her?

The desk phone rang and the commissioner picked it up and listened a few seconds before putting it down and making his announcement. "Fantelli's still unconscious, they say they can't operate yet. Maybe tomorrow, if he's still alive. One of our men is right there with him, and if Fantelli comes to and talks, we'll be ready."

So what? Matt asked himself. They all knew what had happened, and they knew Fantelli would clam up. Or come out with a whopper, which was his usual style. So why horse around and pretend he might tell them anything?

As far as facts went, Matt and the lieutenant had gotten them from the doorman in those first few minutes, before the various other police units had arrived and jammed up the lobby of the big apartment house. The plain truth was that "Rhode Island Red" had come home in a taxi at two-thirty p.m. The doorman had rushed over to help him climb out of the cab, and had followed him inside. The gunman either walked in behind them or else was waiting behind the tall, green velvet curtains that lined one whole wall of the lobby. The doorman didn't know which. All he could say was that someone slugged him, and he hadn't even heard the shot that followed. When he opened his eyes, it was all over.

The druggist next door and the guy at the newsstand had seen the gunman run out and get in a blue sedan that was waiting at the curb, with the motor running. A man in a dark suit was at the wheel, and the car shot off. Neither of the witnesses noticed the license num-

bers, and it wouldn't have mattered if they had. A hundred to one, the car was stolen.

The only other thing was the blonde. The doorman said she was probably in her thirties, she might have been a hot number a few years ago but she looked faded, washed out. She'd asked for Fantelli, and when the doorman said Fantelli was out, she'd said she'd wait.

She'd waited a couple of hours. The doorman said she was nervous. She sat down, she got up, she went out to the sidewalk and came right back. He was worried because she was too fidgety, couldn't stay put. About five minutes before Fantelli showed up, she finally left. She didn't say anything to the doorman. She just left.

The big brass were talking about her now. Nobody had any idea who she was. Maybe one of Fantelli's ex-girl friends. They'd look into that. But the chances were she'd had nothing to do with the shooting. If she had, she wouldn't have hung around like that and let herself be seen. She obviously didn't know when he was due home. And the fact that she'd disappeared about five minutes before the shooting just about cleared her. She probably wanted money or some kind of favor, so she hung around a while and finally gave up. How could you tell?

Kate would have jumped on that. She'd say something about grown men sitting around talking, instead of going out and getting busy. She'd say the killer was seen and therefore could be identified. She always knew what the police should have done, she always saw the mistakes. She told Matt about it every time, after the case was solved. When he asked her why she hadn't told him in the first place she always said she had, only Matt hadn't listened. And then they'd fight about that.

He wondered what the kids thought of those arguments. They were Kate's fault, she always started them, while Matt tried to hold them down. But she had a knack of pushing him until he blew his top.

"I didn't marry a man," she'd say. "I married a uniform."

"I haven't worn a uniform in five years."

"Well, you ought to. Why they let you go around and make all those mistakes, I don't know."

"I just do a job."

"Job!" she'd say, in a tone of voice that always got him. "You sit in an office and answer the telephone. You say, 'Sure, we'll tend to it,' and then you sit back and think how smart you are."

"What about the time I got shot? You heard about it on the radio and went out of your mind, worrying."

"We were just married, and I didn't know it was just a flesh

wound. Later on I found out you'd been hiding behind a garbage pail and knocked it over. All I remember is how you smelt when you came home that night. My hero!"

He'd wanted to slap her when she'd said that, but he'd held off. Instead, he told her what he thought of her. She came right back at him, and the scrap they had that time was a lulu.

Matt frowned and put the nail file back in his pocket. The meeting was about to break up, and the commissioner reviewed the evidence and said the important thing was to clamp down and keep this from developing into a gang war. Call in the key people in Rhode Island Red's outfit and in Barry King's, and throw the book at them. Cool them off in jail, maybe. And meanwhile the police would go into every angle they could turn up, no matter how much footwork it meant.

Matt sighed. His feet. His work. And Kate would be on his neck, telling him about all the boners he pulled. Sure. After he made them.

Back at the precinct, the lieutenant took him aside. "I got a hunch, Matt," he said.

"Yeah," Matt said. The lieutenant was full of hunches, and once in a while one of them panned out.

"I got a hunch you can locate that blonde," he said. "Just keep at it."

"How?"

"Talk to those witnesses," he said. "The druggist and that newsstand man. They saw the killer. Maybe they noticed that woman, too."

"I'll take them down to Identification and let them look at pictures," Matt said, trying to sidestep the blonde. "Maybe they'll spot our man."

"Homicide's taking care of that," the lieutenant said. "You try and get a line on the woman. Check your stoolies, you might hear something."

"Sure," Matt said. What the lieutenant meant was, Homicide was handling the case, they'd cover all the likely angles. Matt could try for the long shot. If it worked out, the lieutenant would take the credit. He'd had a hunch.

So Matt went over to the San Marco and checked with the witnesses. They were sick and tired of telling the same thing over and over again, and all Matt accomplished was to get home late.

Kate was full of questions. What had Matt found out? What did they say and what was he going to do next, and who did he think shot Fantelli? And what made him so late for dinner?

Matt explained, and all Kate said was, "I thought you talked to them earlier this afternoon."

"Sure, but I wanted to find out if there was anything else."

"You mean you forgot something? I thought you knew the right questions to ask."

"Skip it, honey. I'm tired, and I'm hungry."

"I'm tired, too. From taking care of the children and from cooking and waiting for you. But *I* didn't forget anything."

Matt shoveled more of the stew onto his spoon. "You sure forgot something in this stew," he said.

"If you came home on time—"

"I told you I couldn't. The lieutenant wanted me to check with those witnesses."

"You mean *he* forgot something, too?"

"Why don't you call him and tell him what to do? And the commissioner, too. He's having a real tough time, he needs advice."

She burst out laughing, and Matt began laughing, too. This red-headed tornado of his was quite a dame.

"What the hell!" he said. "You're a lousy cook, but I can't have everything." And that started it all over again.

The next day was standard for a case like this. They piled up a lot of evidence that corroborated what they already had, but didn't turn up anything new. Rhode Island Red regained consciousness briefly, the doctors operated and gave him a fifty-fifty chance of pulling through. The gang war didn't start. The druggist and the newsstand guy looked at pictures and couldn't identify. They said maybe if they saw the killer, the way he walked, the way he looked from the back, they might be able to recognize him, but they couldn't do it from pictures.

A stolen car that tallied with the description of the get-away car was found, but it had no fingerprints. Red's movements yesterday were traced, and revealed nothing. Matt talked to some of Red's mob and to the lieutenant and to the Homicide boys, and it was the same old malarkey, round and round the mulberry bush, saying all the things they'd said yesterday. There was no clue to the blonde and none of Rhode Island Red's boys admitting knowing anything about her.

Matt came home fairly early, and he played with the kids until it was time for them to go to bed. Then he and Kate hashed over the case, like they always did with his tough ones.

"This woman who was in the lobby," Kate said. "Have you spoken to her?"

"We don't know who she is."

"You mean the whole police department can't find her?" Kate asked. "I thought that was their business, tracing people."

"Sure, but we got to get a

lead. She was hanging around the lobby for a couple of hours, but what do we know about her? She had blonde hair and looked kind of washed out, and she couldn't sit still."

"Of course not," Kate said. "She had to go to the bathroom. Two hours is a long time to wait."

"So she went," Matt said drily. "Shows she's human, that's all."

"And you never even thought of asking where she went to a washroom?" Kate asked with a smug look.

"Waste of time," Matt said.

"I suppose you won't bother looking. Just because it's my idea, you think it's no good."

"It's a wonderful idea," Matt said. "It's brilliant. Only a mind like yours could think of a thing like that. So what?"

"I'm not running the police department," Kate said.

"Damn good thing, too," Matt said.

"Why? Do you think I don't have brains enough?"

"What you got ain't brains, and never will be," Matt said. And that was the beginning of another real nice donnybrook.

The next day, after talking to the druggist for the fourth or fifth time and getting nowhere, Matt decided to follow up Kate's idea. He'd tell her about it tonight, and maybe she'd quit bothering him with her brainstorms.

"Some brain," he'd say. "And some storm." And wouldn't that shut her up!

The nearest restaurant with facilities was the hamburger joint about a block away. The place was just a counter with a couple of burners and a coffee urn behind it, and the machine that paddled the orange juice and kept it stirred up. Matt went in and asked the spread-eared counterman whether a blonde had been here the day of the shooting and asked to use the bathrroom.

"Somebody was," the counterman said, "and I guess maybe she was blonde, at that. You come for that glove she lost?"

Matt blinked and wondered how he'd handle this with Kate, in case her idea panned out. "Yeah," he said. "She dropped it, huh?"

"I found it later on, and kept it." The counterman opened a drawer underneath the cash register and took out a light-colored, suede glove. "Funny thing," he said. "She was back in there when the excitement started. I tell her about that car going by so fast you could hardly see the color of it, and you know what she says?"

"What?"

"She says why tell her, she certainly had nothing to do with

that. Funny thing to say, wasn't it?"

It was funny enough for Matt to question the counterman for a full ten minutes, but that was all the guy could remember.

The glove, though, was something else again. It had been cleaned, and it had a tag inside it with the cleaner's mark. Which meant the police could check and find out the name of the cleaner who had handled it.

Back at the precinct, the lieutenant examined the glove. "Those hunches of mine usually pay off," he said with satisfaction. "I told you, didn't I?"

Matt let his head nod, and he thought, "In the pig's eye, you told me. This was the wife's idea, and it's going to get nowhere."

Matt hung around and rested while the lieutenant personally got in touch with the technical lab and had them look up the cleaner's mark. It was from a place way downtown, and Matt went there and this dark-skinned babe that ran the joint treated him like he was the commissioner's personal representative. She had a soft voice and she couldn't do enough for Matt. It took her about an hour to go thrugh the slips and pick out the one she thought Matt wanted. A Mavis Belsen who lived around the corner had had some gloves cleaned a month ago, and she answered Matt's description.

He phoned into the precinct to tell where he was in case they had to get in touch, and then he went to the address.

Mavis was faded all right, and she practically passed out when Matt explained his errand. She had to sit down and he was afraid she'd have a heart attack, but she got over it and she made no bones about admitting she was the gal Matt was after.

"I used to work for Red Fantelli," she said in a high, singsong drawl. "But I'm married now, I'm respectable, and my husband doesn't know about my past."

"Yeah," Matt said, thinking she was laying it on a little thick. But what with those movie magazines and the true confession stuff lying around the room, he supposed she'd picked up some of the lingo. So she had a past. So what?

"Red managed to locate me," she said, breathing hard, like it hurt to tell this. "He wanted me back in the rackets. I begged him not to destroy my life, I said my husband respected me and thought I was pure. But Red wouldn't listen. He didn't care what he did to me."

"So you went to see him?" Matt said.

"To make a final plea," she answered. "For the sake of the child I'm going to have. I waited and waited. I was nervous, I thought I was going to faint. I

finally left, I was too wrought up to face Red. After I'd gone, he was shot."

It checked, so far, and Matt could look into the details of her story later on. "This husband of yours," he said.

She interrupted. "Please—I don't want him to know. And you won't tell the reporters, will you? It means everything to me. All I want is my husband's respect, and the right to live a normal, decent life. Is that too much to ask?"

"I'll tell the lieutenant," Matt said. "If you weren't mixed up in the shooting, we'll do our best."

"Oh, thank you!" she said. "I knew you'd understand."

Matt hoped the lieutenant would understand, too, and not grab the chance to tell the world how smart *he* was in finding the mysterious blonde that the papers were playing up. And in a way, Matt wondered whether Mavis really wanted to stay out of it, or whether in the back of her mind she wasn't after her day of glory and glamor. Still, that wasn't up to Matt.

He was still talking to her when the radio-patrol cop came in and told Matt he was wanted up at the hospital, Red was doing better and the doctors said he could be questioned. So Matt beat it. There was a small crowd downstairs trying to find out why the police were here and what they wanted with the Belsens. Matt shoved his way past, and the patrol car took him uptown to the hospital, where the doctors were waiting for him.

They gave Matt a couple of minutes and warned him against any high pressure stuff. Just a few simple questions, that was all.

Red was lying there in his hospital gown, he had a mean look in his eyes and Matt knew right off he wasn't going to get anywhere.

"I just saw Mavis," Matt said.

Rhode Island Red blinked. "Who?"

"Mavis Belsen. That's her married name. The blonde that used to work for you."

"Never heard of any Mavis," Red remarked. "Never hire blondes."

Matt let it go. "Who shot you?" he asked next. Red didn't answer and Matt said, "We got a line on him, we'll catch up to him, so don't act so smart. Who shot you?"

Red yawned. "A little man in a green hat," he said. The hate and contempt were in his eyes as he spoke. "With a chicken feather in the side of it."

"Who is he?" Matt asked.

"Never saw him before." Red smiled broadly and tried to turn away. The smile faded, and he groaned. Then the doctor came in and told Matt that that was all for now.

The announcement that Red Fantelli had died and the case was now a homicide came over the radio in the evening, while Matt and Kate were building up to their evening brawl.

"You mean to say you saw that woman," Kate said, "and you believe what she said?"

"I don't believe her, and I don't not believe her. I got called away before I could finish up."

"But that's all you found out?" Kate said. "Just what you told me?"

"You got something else you would have asked her?" Matt said.

"Of course, but why tell you? You wouldn't listen, anyhow."

"Lay off," Matt said. "You and your stupid questions."

"Thank you," Kate said. "But this is the first time you ever followed my advice, and look what happened. You found this mysterious woman. Maybe next time—"

"What I found was a red herring. She was at the San Marco, and she left. We knew that before, didn't we?"

"Then why did you spend the afternoon tracing her, if it wasn't important?"

"Because the lieutenant told me to. So I got a crazy blonde, and this story about a little man in a green hat. Red's got a sense of humor, and from now on, every hood we pull in is going to sing the same song. He didn't do it, it was a little man in a green hat."

Kate hummed a tune, and Matt loosened his tie. "Any beer in the refrigerator?" he asked. "I'm thirsty."

"I don't know," she said. "I have other things to think of."

"Like pretending you thought of a question, huh?"

And that was the start of a real honey of an argument, and it lasted late.

The break in the Fantelli case came the next morning, and it came the way the breaks usually do. One of Matt's stoolies called and said he had something big, leave the dough in the usual place, but he didn't want to be seen with Matt. So Matt said okay, shoot, and the stoolie said that a hood by the name of Butts Seager had shot Fantelli, that Barry King had hired Butts, and a Chicago mobster had driven the car and last night somebody had dumped this mobster in the river.

Matt went into the lieutenant's office, and after talking it over, the lieutenant decided to go all out.

"Forget about Mavis Belsen," the lieutenant said. "She'll keep. Matt, I don't want to see you again until you show up with Seager."

"Yeah," Matt said. "You want me to find him all by myself?"

"Hell, no. But it would be

nice if you happened to be the one to make the pick-up."

Matt wasn't. Somebody else found him, and all Matt did was to go without sleep for a day and catch cold because he got caught in the rain.

He spoke to Kate on the phone, and she told him to come home and get some sleep, because he couldn't think straight when he didn't get his rest. Matt said he'd grab some shut-eye at the precinct and she said he belonged at home, with his wife and children, and he said that was a hell of a place to rest, all he ever got was arguments. She said fine, stay away as long as he felt like it, maybe he thought she liked to have him snoring away on the other side of the bed, but now he knew the truth. He said he just snored in self-defense so he wouldn't hear her doing it, and she said she didn't want to be insulted on the phone, and she hung up on him. So he had another scrap waiting for him, whenever he managed to get back.

He cat-napped on a cot at the precinct but he coughed so much he woke up tired, and that was when they told him the Homicide boys had found Seager. They had him on Twentieth Street and had kicked off on the interrogation, and had left word for Matt to come right down.

When he arrived, they'd been at Seager for a while and hadn't gotten anywhere. He'd been cocky at first and laughed in their faces and given them that gag about a little man in a green hat. He laid off that line, though, after they got tough, but he was still giving them the run-around.

They put him in the line-up, and Matt was there and saw the druggist and the newsstand guy pick out Seager. But the witnesses weren't any too sure, they hadn't seen Seager's face, the best they could say was that Seager looked like the man they'd seen running out of the San Marco lobby.

Later on, when the interrogation was resumed, Matt took his turn hammering away at Seager. He was a tall, bony guy with blue eyes and a chin you could use for a paper knife. Mostly he sat there and spat on the floor and kept his trap shut, but every once in a while they got a rise out of him. Outside in the corridor, Matt talked to the Homicide boys and they all agreed that Seager wouldn't hold out indefinitely, he was losing confidence. They could feel it.

They were right about him, too, and late in the afternoon the string that held him together broke, and he came apart. They had him crying and blabbing away. He got all mixed up, admitting everything and maybe more than he knew. And although he'd probably back down tomorrow, deny everything and

claim duress, that would be the D.A.'s worry.

So the police were feeling good. Seager was still acting cute about admitting the actual firing of the shot, but the police had most of the important information. They knew Barry King had hired Seager to mow down Fantelli. Seager had waited on the block until he saw Fantelli step out of the taxi. Then Seager had followed him in and slugged the doorman. Al Wentz had driven the get-away car, and Seager had heard that Al was in a slab of concrete somewhere. So Seager was scared, and that looked like the reason he was singing so loud. He was afraid of what would happen to him if the police turned him loose.

Anyhow, it was practically over now, and Matt washed up in the men's room and figured how much time off was coming to him. He'd have the usual blow-up with Kate this evening, and tomorrow they could park the kids with Kate's aunt and take the day off and do something special. Kate was usually okay and then some, once she blew off steam. And she'd popped off plenty, these last few days.

So Matt was whistling as he came out of the men's room. A cop called out to him and said there was a phone call, take it in that room to the left. Matt nodded and went in. He figured this was the lieutenant wanting to know what had happened.

Matt picked up the phone and said crisply, "Parker, Fifty-Four."

Kate's voice said, "Oh, Matt, come home. Quick."

He'd never heard that frightened, almost hysterical note in her voice, and it went through him like a chill. "Sure," he said anxiously. "What's the trouble? One of the kids?"

"No. There's someone here to see you."

"Who?"

"I don't know his name." Her voice sunk to a whisper, and he could tell she was jamming the mouthpiece against her lips. "Matt, he has a gun, I saw it, and he's in there with the children. A little man in a green hat."

"What?" Matt gasped. "He—" Matt broke off. "Take it easy, Hon. I'll be right there."

He got a squad car with a driver, and they raced uptown with the siren wide open, and how they got there without being side-swiped by a car or rammed by a truck, he never knew. He wasn't looking, anyhow. He was on the phone, explaining and asking for a precinct car to meet him, just in case. Because this was the nightmare he dreamed of, sometimes. A demented crook, a junkie or a psycho, finding out his home

address and going there to take it out on the family.

The precinct boys were waiting in front of Matt's house, and he told them to follow him up but to keep out of sight and not come in until he told them to. Then he went slamming up the stairs, taking them two at a time. On the third floor he stuck his key in the lock and waited a couple of seconds to calm down so he wouldn't scare the guy into blasting away.

He made himself stroll in like he'd just finished work and was through for the day, nothing to worry about and everything normal. He saw Mathew Junior and Catherine playing on the floor, and Kate sitting in a chair and talking a blue streak at a little man who looked tired out from listening to her. A green hat with a chicken feather was stuck on the table, and the guy was pacing up and down and one side of his face kept twitching.

Matt walked right up to him and said, "I'm Parker. You wanted to see me?"

The little man seemed relieved. "Yes. My name is Charles Belsen and I want to give myself up."

Matt crowded him and lowered his arm to where he could handle the little guy in case he went for the gun. "Let's take a walk," Matt said. He made a sudden grab for Belsen's wrist and twisted it. "The gun," Matt said. "I just want the gun."

The little man didn't resist. "I shot Fantelli with it," he said. "I was telling your wife."

"Tell me, too," Matt said, and practically carried Belsen out of the apartment.

Matt sent the gun down to ballistics, and they reported that it had fired the murder bullet. The rest of the case was routine, and Matt wrapped it up at the precinct and got the signed statement. Belsen had used the basement entrance, walked upstairs and hidden behind the curtain until Fantelli showed up. It was just dumb luck that nobody had seen Belsen.

He had the gun with him and he kept peeking through a crack in the curtain. When Mavis came in and asked to see Fantelli, Belsen thought she'd guessed his idea and wanted to head him off and warn Fantelli, but she left before Fantelli arrived. Belsen saw Seager follow Fantelli in and slug the doorman, but the little man didn't realize that Seager would have done the job for him.

Belsen was too keyed up to think straight. He stepped out, shot Fantelli and left the same way he'd come. And the reason he confessed was that the cops had located Mavis and questioned her, and he'd be next. He'd been hiding out the last day or two, hadn't even gone to

work. He said he couldn't eat, he couldn't sleep, he was sick with worry. He said his conscience made him confess.

At first he claimed he'd killed Fantelli for the sake of his beloved Mavis, but Matt wasn't buying that kind of stuff. After a little pounding, Belsen admitted he had another reason.

"I work in a bank," the little man said. "If they ever found out Mavis had been in the rackets, I'd lose my job. I couldn't stand the disgrace, either. I had to get rid of Fantelli. I had to."

So they had Belsen for homicide and Seager for felonious assault, which was a pretty fair wind-up. About all that was left was Mavis's statement, and Matt went to her place to get it.

He told her about her husband's confession, and it threw her. She'd figured this gunman had gotten to Fantelli first, and that her husband was innocent.

"He did it for me," she said, making like she was the heroine of one of those magazines that were still spread all over the room.

Matt asked her a couple of questions about what she used to do for Fantelli, but she was so vague that Matt smelt something fishy. Then the answer hit him like a forty-five slug slamming into his chest.

Here Fantelli had said a little man in a green hat shot him. The truth. And Fantelli had said he'd never even heard of Mavis. The truth, too.

"You made it all up," Matt said flatly. "Like in those magazines. You never even knew Fantelli, you pretended you did so that you'd look glamorous to your husband. Maybe you wanted more attention from him. But it kicked back. He shot Fantelli for nothing."

Mavis tried to faint, but she flopped on that one, too.

It was pretty late when Matt finally got home. The kids were in bed and Kate was waiting for him and she was all hopped up.

"He told me the whole story while I was waiting for you this afternoon," she said. "Is that all that detective work is? Just listening?"

"Sometimes," he said.

"Because I can't understand why you didn't question him long ago. If you'd only asked Mavis about her husband, the way I told you to."

"The hell you did."

"You just don't remember," Kate said smoothly. "You never do."

Matt shrugged, and held his fire. This was going to be good, and he wanted to call his shots.

"I feel so sorry for Mavis," Kate said, dreamy-eyed. "She didn't deserve all this trouble."

"Nuts," Matt said, and he burst out laughing.

Kate's face went white with anger. "You think it's funny?"

she asked, with the light of battle in her eyes.

"Not funny. No. Her story just isn't true." And he told her.

"Oh!" Kate said, as if something hurt. "How awful, how terrible. And I never even guessed. I'm such a fool." She burst into tears, and for the first time all week, they had no argument.

Matt didn't sleep too good. About four in the morning he woke up. Kate was sleeping quietly, but somehow, her very peacefulness bothered him. Staring at her, remembering how his whole world had collapsed this afternoon when she was in danger, he decided he and Kate were okay, maybe they liked to explode, it was the way they were made.

Frowning, not quite certain why he was doing it, he gave her a poke in the shoulder and said, "Quit snoring."

She woke up fighting mad. "Me?" she said. "I haven't slept a wink all night. Not with the racket you make."

"You're crazy," he said. "Never snored in my life." And the scrap they had after that was a beauty.

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the haunted policeman

by Dorothy L. Sayers

"Good God!" said his lordship. "Did I do that?"

"All the evidence points that way," replied his wife.

"Then I can only say that I never knew so convincing a body of evidence to produce such an inadequate result."

The nurse appeared to take this reflection personally. She said in a tone of rebuke: "He's a *beautiful* boy."

"H'm," said Peter. He adjusted his eyeglass more carefully. "Well, you're the expert witness. Hand him over."

The nurse did so, with a dubious air. She was relieved to see that this disconcerting parent handled the child competently; as, in a man who was an experienced uncle, was not, after all, so very surprising. Lord Peter sat down gingerly on the edge of the bed.

"Do you feel it's up to standard?" he inquired with some anxiety. "Of course, *your* workmanship's always sound—but you never know with these collaborate efforts."

"I think it'll do," said Harriet, drowsily.

"Good." He turned abruptly

Though arguers for the more basic school of detection may dispute this, Peter Death Bredon Wimsey is one of the half-dozen names that come close to being a part of our folklore even in these less leisurely times. A distinguished classical scholar, dramatist and theologian, Dorothy L. Sayers will always be remembered for her novels and stories about the inimitable Lord Peter. *H.S.S.*

to the nurse. "All right; we'll keep it. Take it and put it away, and tell 'em to invoice it to me. It's a very interesting addition to you, Harriet; but it would have been a hell of a rotten substitute." His voice wavered a little, for the last twenty-four hours had been very trying ones, and he had had the fright of his life.

The doctor, who had been doing something in the other room, entered in time to catch the last words. "There was never any likelihood of that, you goop," he said cheerfully. "Go to bed," he advised him in kindly accents; "you look all in."

"I'm all right," said Peter. "I haven't been doing anything. And look here . . ." He stabbed a belligerent finger in the direction of the adjoining room. "Tell those nurses of yours if I want to pick my son up I'll pick him up. If his mother wants to kiss him, she can damn well kiss him. I'll have none of your infernal hygiene in *my* house."

"Very well," said the doctor, "just as you like. Anything for a quiet life. I rather believe in a few healthy germs myself. Builds up resistance . . . No, thanks, I won't have a drink. I've got to go on to another one, and an alcoholic breath impairs confidence."

"Another one?" said Peter, aghast.

"One of my hospital mothers. You're not the only fish in the sea by a long chalk. One born every minute."

"God! what a hell of a world."

They passed down the great curved stair. In the hall a sleepy footman clung, yawning, to his post of duty.

"All right, William," said Peter. "Buzz off now; I'll lock up." He let the doctor out. "Good night—and thanks very much, old man. I'm sorry I swore at you."

"They mostly do," replied the doctor philosophically. "Well, I'll look in again later, just to earn my fee, but I shan't be wanted. You've married into a good tough family and I congratulate you."

The car, spluttering and protesting a little after its long wait in the cold, drove off, leaving Peter alone on the doorstep. Now that it was all over and he could go to bed, he felt extraordinarily wakeful. He would have liked to go to a party. He leaned back against the wrought-iron railings and lit a cigarette, staring vaguely into the lamplit dusk of the square. It was thus that he saw the policeman.

The blue-uniformed figure came up from the direction of South Audley Street. He, too, was smoking, and he walked, not with the firm tramp of a constable on his beat, but with the hesitating step of a man who has

lost his bearings. When he came in sight, he had pushed back his helmet and was rubbing his head in a puzzled manner. Official habit made him look sharply at the bare-headed gentleman in evening dress, abandoned on a doorstep at three in the morning, but since the gentleman appeared to be sober and bore no signs of being about to commit a felony, he averted his gaze and prepared to pass on.

"'Morning, officer," said the gentleman, as he came abreast.

"'Morning, sir," said the policeman.

"You're off duty early," pursued Peter, who wanted somebody to talk to. "Come in and have a drink."

This offer reawakened all the official suspicion.

"Not just now, sir, thank you," replied the policeman guardedly.

"Yes, now. That's the point." Peter tossed away his cigarette-end. It described a fiery arc in the air and shot out a little train of sparks as it struck the pavement. "I've got a son."

"Oh, ah!" said the policeman, relieved by this innocent confidence. "Your first, eh?"

"And last, if I know anything about it."

"That's what my brother says, every time," said the policeman. "'Never no more,' he says. He's got eleven. Well, sir, good luck to it. I see how you're situated, and thank you kindly, but after what the sergeant said I dunno as I better. Though if I was to die this moment, not a drop's passed me lips since me supper beer."

Peter put his head on one side and considered this.

"The sergeant said you were drunk?"

"He did, sir."

"And you were not?"

"No, sir. I saw everything just the same as I told him, though what's become of it now is more than I can say. But drunk I was not, sir, no more than you are yourself."

"Then," said Peter, "as Mr. Joseph Surface remarked to Lady Teazle, what is troubling you is the consciousness of your own innocence. He insinuated that you had looked on the wine when it was red—you'd better come in and make it so. You'll feel better."

The policeman hesitated.

"Well, sir, I dunno. Fact is, I've had a bit of a shock."

"So've I," said Peter. "Come in, for God's sake, and keep me company."

"Well, sir . . ." said the policeman again. He mounted the steps slowly.

The logs in the hall chimney were glowing a deep red through their ashes. Peter raked them apart, so that the young flame shot up between them. "Sit down," he said; "I'll be back in a moment."

The policeman sat down, removed his helmet, and stared about him, trying to remember who occupied the big house at the corner of the square. The engraved coat of arms upon the great silver bowl on the chimneypiece told him nothing, even though it was repeated in colour upon the backs of two tapestried chairs: three white mice skipping upon a black ground.

Peter, returning quietly from the shadows beneath the stair, caught him as he traced the outlines with a thick finger.

"A student of heraldry?" he said. "Seventeenth-century work and not very graceful. You're new to this beat, aren't you? My name's Wimsey."

He put a tray on the table. "If you'd rather have beer or whisky, say so. These bottles are only a concession to my mood."

The policeman eyed the long necks and bulging silver-wrapped corks with curiosity. "Champagne?" he said. "Never tasted it, sir. But I'd like to try the stuff."

"You'll find it thin," said Peter, "but if you drink enough of it, you'll tell me the story of your life." The cork popped, and the wine frothed out into the wide glasses.

"Well," said the policeman. "Here's to your good lady, sir, and the new young gentleman. Long life and all the best . . . A bit in the nature of cider, ain't it, sir?"

"Just a trifle. Give me your opinion after the third glass, if you can put up with it so long. And thanks for your good wishes. You a married man?"

"Not yet, sir. Hoping to be when I get promotion. If only the sergeant—but that's neither here nor there. You been married long, sir, if I may ask?"

"Just over a year."

"Ah! And do you find it comfortable, sir?"

Peter laughed.

"I've spent the last twenty-four hours wondering why, when I'd had the blazing luck to get on to a perfectly good thing, I should be fool enough to risk the whole show on a damned silly experiment."

The policeman nodded sympathetically.

"I see what you mean, sir. Seems to me life's like that. If you don't take risks, you get nowhere. If you do, they may go wrong, and then where are you? And 'alf the time, when things happen, they happen first, before you can even think about 'em."

"Quite right," said Peter, and filled the glasses again. He found the policeman soothing. True to his class and training, he turned naturally in moments of emotion to the company of the common man.

Indeed, when the recent domestic crisis had threatened to

destroy his nerve, he had headed for the butler's pantry with the swift instinct of the homing pigeon. There they had treated him with great humanity and allowed him to clean the silver.

With a mind oddly clarified by champagne and lack of sleep, he watched the constable's reaction to Pol Roger 1928. The first glass had produced a philosophy of life; the second produced a name—Alfred Burt—and further hints of some mysterious grievance against the station sergeant; the third glass, as prophesied, produced the story.

"You were right, sir," said the policeman, "when you spotted I was new to the beat. I only come on it at the beginning of the week, and that accounts for me not being acquainted with you, sir, nor with most of the residents about here.

"Jessop, now, he knows everybody, and so did Pinder—but he's been took off to another division. You'd remember Pinder—big chap, make two o' me, with a sandy moustache. Yes, I thought you would.

"Well, sir, as I was saying, me knowing the district in a general way, but not, so to speak, like the palm o' me 'and, might account for me making a bit of a fool of myself, but it don't account for me seeing what I did see. See it I did, and not drunk, nor nothing like it. And as for making a mistake in the number, well, that might happen to anybody. All the same, sir, thirteen was the number I see, plain as the nose on your face."

"You can't put it stronger than that," said Peter, whose nose was of a kind difficult to overlook.

"You know Merriman's End, sir?"

"I think I do. Isn't it a long cul-de-sac running somewhere at the back of South Audley Street, with a row of houses on one side, and a high wall on the other?"

"That's right, sir. Tall, narrow houses they are, all alike, with deep porches and pillars to them."

"Yes. Like an escape from the worst square in Pimlico. Horrible. Fortunately, I believe the street was never finished, or we should have had another row of the monstrosities on the opposite side. This house is pure eighteenth century. How does it strike you?"

P.C. Burt contemplated the wide hall—the Adam fireplace and panelling with their graceful shallow mouldings, the pedimented doorways, the high round-headed window lighting hall and gallery, the noble proportions of the stair. He sought for a phrase.

"It's a gentleman's house," he pronounced at length. "Room to breathe, if you see what I mean.

Seems like you couldn't act vulgar in it."

He shook his head. "Mind you, I wouldn't call it cosy. It ain't the place I'd choose to sit down to a kipper in me shirtsleeves. But it's got class. I never thought about it before, but now you mention it I see what's wrong with them other houses in Merriman's End. They're sort of squeezed-like. I been into more'n one o' them tonight, and that's what they are; they're squeezed. But I was going to tell you about that.

"Just upon midnight it was," pursued the policeman, "when I turns into Merriman's End in the ordinary course of my dooties. I'd got pretty near down towards the far end, when I see a fellow lurking about in a suspicious way under the wall. There's back gates there, you know, sir, leading into some gardens, and this chap was hanging about inside one of the gateways. A rough-looking fellow, in a baggy old coat—might a-been a tramp off the Embankment.

"I turned my light on him—that street's not very well lit, and it's a dark night—but I couldn't see much of his face because he had on a ragged old hat and a big scarf round his neck. I thought he was up to no good, and I was just about to ask him what he was doing there, when I hear a most awful yell come out o' one o' them houses opposite. Ghastly it was, sir. 'Help!' it said. 'Murder! Help!' Fit to freeze your marrow."

"Man's voice or woman's?"

"Man's, sir, I think. More of a roaring kind of yell, if you take my meaning. I says, 'Hullo! What's up there? Which house is it?'

"The chap says nothing but he points, and him and me runs across together. Just as we gets to the house, there's a noise like as if someone was being strangled just inside, and a thump, as it might be something falling against the door."

"Good God!" said Peter.

"I gives a shout and rings the bell. 'Hoy!' I says. 'What's up here?' and then I knocks on the door. There's no answer, so I rings and knocks again. Then the chap who was with me, he pushes open the letter-flap and squints through it."

"Was there a light in the house?"

"It was all dark, sir, except the fanlight over the door. That was lit up bright, and when I looks up, I see the number of the house—number thirteen, painted plain as you like on the transom. Well, this chap peers in, and all of a sudden he gives a kind of gurgle and falls back. 'Here!' I says, 'what's amiss? Let me have a look.' So I puts me eye to the flap and I looks in."

P.C. Burt paused and drew a

long breath. Peter cut the wire of the second bottle.

"Now, sir," said the policeman, "believe me or believe me not, I was as sober at that moment as I am now. I can tell you everything I see in that house same as if it was wrote up there on that wall. Not as it was a great lot, because the flap wasn't all that wide, but by squinnying a bit, I could make shift to see right across the hall and a piece on both sides and part-way up the stairs. And here's what I see, and you take notice of every word, on account of what came after."

He took another gulp of the Pol Roger to loosen his tongue, and continued: "There was the floor of the hall. I could see that very plain. All black-and-white squares it was, like marble, and it stretched back a good long way. About halfway along, on the left, was the staircase, with a red carpet, and the figure of a white naked woman at the foot, carrying a big pot of blue and yellow flowers.

"In the wall next the stairs there was an open door and a room all lit up. I could just see the end of a table with a lot of glass and silver on it. Between that door and the front door there was a big black cabinet, shiny, with gold figures painted on it, like them things they had at the Exhibition. Right at the back of the hall was a place like a conservatory, but I couldn't see what was in it, only it looked very gay.

"There was a door on the right, and that was open, too. A very pretty drawing-room, by what I could see of it, with pale blue paper and pictures on the walls. There were pictures in the hall, too, and a table on the right with a copper bowl, like as it might be for visitors' cards to be put in. Now, I see all that, sir, and I put it to you, if it hadn't a-been there, how could I describe it so plain?"

"I have known people describe what wasn't there," said Peter thoughtfully, "but it was seldom anything of that kind. Rats, cats, and snakes I have heard of, and occasionally naked female figures; but delirious lacquer cabinets and hall tables are new to me."

"As you say, sir," agreed the policeman, "and I see you believe me so far. But here's something else, what you mayn't find quite so easy.

"There was a man laying in that hall, sir, as sure as I sit here, and he was dead. He was a big man and clean-shaven, and he wore evening dress. Somebody had stuck a knife into his throat. I could see the handle of it—it looked like a carving knife, and the blood had run out, all shiny, over the marble squares."

The policeman looked at Peter, passed his handkerchief over his

forehead and finished the fourth glass of champagne.

"His head was up against the end of the hall table," he went on, "and his feet must have been up against the door, but I couldn't see anything quite close to me because of the letter-box. You understand, sir, I was looking through the wire cage of the box, and there was something inside—letters, I suppose, that cut off my view downward. But I see all the rest in front and a bit of both sides; and it must have been regularly burnt in upon my brain, as they say, for I don't suppose I was looking more than a quarter of a minute or so.

"Then all the lights went out at once, same as if somebody had turned off the main switch. So I looks around, and I don't mind telling you I felt a bit queer. And *when* I looks round, lo and behold! my bloke in the muffler had hopped it."

"The devil he had," said Peter.

"Hopped it," repeated the policeman, "and there I was. And just there, sir, is where I made my big mistake, for I thought he couldn't a-got far, and I started off up the street after him. But I couldn't see him, and I couldn't see nobody.

"All the houses was dark, and it come over me what a sight of funny things may go on, and nobody take a mite o' notice. The way I'd shouted and banged on the door, you'd a-thought it'd a-brought out every soul in the street, not to mention that awful yelling.

"But there—you may have noticed it yourself, sir. A man may leave his ground-floor windows open, or have his chimney afire, and you may make enough noise to wake the dead, trying to draw his attention, and nobody give no heed. He's fast asleep, and the neighbours say, 'Blast that row, but it's no business of mine,' and stick their 'eads under the bedclothes."

"Yes," said Peter. "London's like that."

"That's right, sir. A village is different. You can't pick up a pin there without somebody coming up to ask you where you got it from—but London keeps itself to itself . . . Well, something'll have to be done, I thinks to myself, and I blows me whistle. They heard that all right. Windows started to go up all along the street. That's London, too."

Peter nodded, "London will sleep through the last trump. Puddley-in-the-Rut and Doddering-in-the-Dumps will look down their noses and put on virtuous airs. But God, who is never surprised, will say to his angel, 'Whistle 'em up, Michael, whistle 'em up; East and West will rise from the dead at the sound of the policeman's whistle.'"

"Quite so, sir," said P.C. Burt;

and wondered for the first time whether there might not be something in this champagne stuff after all. He waited for a moment and then resumed: "Well, it so happened that just when I sounded me whistle, Withers—that's the man on the other beat—was in Audley Square, coming to meet me. You know, sir, we has times for meeting one another, arranged different-like every night; and twelve o'clock in the square was our rendyvoos tonight.

"So up he comes in, you might say, no time at all, and finds me there, with everyone a-hollering at me from the windows to know what was up.

"Well, naturally, I didn't want the whole bunch of 'em running out into the street and our man getting away in the crowd, so I just tells 'em there's nothing, only a bit of an accident farther along. And then I see Withers and glad enough I was.

"We stands there at the top o' the street, and I tells him there's a dead man laying in the hall at number thirteen, and it looks to me like murder.

"'Number thirteen?' he says, 'you can't mean number thirteen. There ain't no number thirteen in Merriman's End, you fathead; it's all even numbers.' And so it is, sir, for the houses on the other side were never built, so there's no odd numbers at all, barrin' number one, as is the big house on the corner.

"Well, that give me a bit of a jolt. I wasn't so much put out at not having remembered about the numbers, for as I tell you, I never was on the beat before this week. No; but I knew I'd seen that there number writ up plain as pie on the fanlight, and I didn't see how I could have been mistaken.

"But when Withers heard the rest of the story, he thought maybe I'd misread it for number twelve. It couldn't be eighteen, for the numbers only go up to sixteen in the road; nor it couldn't be sixteen neither, for I knew it wasn't the end house. But we thought it might be twelve or ten; so away we goes to look.

"We didn't have no difficulty about getting in at number twelve. There was a very pleasant old gentleman came down in his dressing-gown, asking what the disturbance was and could he be of use. I apologized for disturbing him and said I was afraid there'd been an accident in one of the houses, and had he heard anything.

"Of course, the minute he opened the door I could see it wasn't number twelve we wanted: there was only a little hall with polished boards, and the walls plain panelled—all very bare and neat—and no black cabinet nor naked woman nor nothing. The old gentleman

said, yes, his son had heard somebody shouting and knocking a few minutes earlier. He'd got up and put his head out of the window, but couldn't see nothing, but they both thought from the sound it was number fourteen forgotten his latchkey again. So we thanked him very much and went on to number fourteen.

"We had a bit of a job to get number fourteen downstairs. A fiery sort of gentleman he was, something in the military way, I thought, but he turned out to be a retired Indian Civil Servant. A dark gentleman, with a big voice, and his servant was dark, too.

"The gentleman wanted to know what the blazes all this row was about, and why a decent citizen wasn't allowed to get his proper sleep. He supposed that young fool at number twelve was drunk again. Withers had to speak a bit sharp to him; but at last the servant came down and let us in.

"Well, we had to apologize once more. The hall was not a bit like—the staircase was on the wrong side, for one thing, and though there was a statue at the foot of it, it was some kind of heathen idol with a lot of heads and arms, and the walls were covered with all sorts of brass stuff and native goods—you know the kind of thing. There was a black-and-white linoleum on the floor, and that was about all there was to it.

"The servant had a soft sort of way with him that I didn't half like. He said he slept at the back and had heard nothing till his master rang for him.

"Then the gentleman came to the top of the stairs and shouted out it was no use disturbing him; the noise came from number twelve as usual, and if that young man didn't stop his blanky Bohemian goings-on, he'd have the law on his father. I asked if he'd seen anything, and he said, no, he hadn't. Of course, sir, me and that other chap was inside the porch, and you can't see anything what goes on inside those porches from the outer houses, because they're filled in at the sides with coloured glass—all the lot of them."

Lord Peter Wimsey looked at the policeman and then looked at the bottle, as though estimating the alcoholic contents of each. With deliberation, he filled both glasses again.

"Well, sir," said P.C. Burt, after refreshing himself, "by this time Withers was looking at me in rather an odd-fashioned manner. However, he said nothing, and we went back to number ten, where there was two maiden ladies and a hall full of stuffed birds and wallpaper like a florist's catalogue.

"The one who slept in the front was deaf as a post, and

the one who slept at the back hadn't heard nothing. But we got hold of their maids, and the cook said she'd heard the voice calling 'Help!' and thought it was in number twelve, and she'd hid her head in the pillow and said her prayers.

"The housemaid was a sensible girl. She'd looked out when she'd heard me knocking. She couldn't see anything at first, owing to us being in the porch, but she thought something must be going on, so, not wishing to catch cold, she went back to put on her bedroom slippers.

"When she got back to the window, she was just in time to see a man running up the road. He went very quick and very silent, as if he had galoshes on, and she could see the ends of his muffler flying out behind him. She saw him run out of the street and turn to the right, and then she heard me coming along after him. Unfortunately, her eye being on the man, she didn't notice much which porch I came out of.

"Well, that showed I wasn't inventing the whole story at any rate, because there was my bloke in the muffler. The girl didn't recognize him at all, but that wasn't surprising, because she'd only just entered the old ladies' service. Besides, it wasn't likely the man had anything to do with it, because he was outside with me when the yelling started. My belief is, he was the sort as doesn't care to have his pockets examined too close, and the minute my back was turned he thought he'd be better and more comfortable elsewhere.

"Now there ain't no need," continued the policeman, "for me to trouble you, sir, with all them houses what we went into. We made inquiries at the whole lot, from number two to number sixteen, and there wasn't one of them had a hall in any ways conformable to what that chap and I saw through the letter-box. Nor there wasn't a soul in 'em could give us any help more than what we'd had already.

"You see, sir, though it took me a bit o' time telling, it all went very quick. There was the yells; they didn't last beyond a few seconds or so, and before they was finished we was across the road and inside the porch. Then there was me shouting and knocking; but I hadn't been long at that afore the chap with me looks through the box. Then I has my look inside, for fifteen seconds it might be, and while I'm doing that, my chap's away up the street. Then I runs after him, and then I blows me whistle. The whole thing might take a minute, or a minute and a half, maybe. Not more.

"Well, sir, by the time we'd been into every house in Merriman's End, I was feeling a bit queer again, I can tell you, and

Withers, he was looking queerer. He says to me, 'Burt,' he says, 'is this your idea of a joke? Because if so, the 'Olborn Empire's where you ought to be, not the police force.'

"So I tells him over again, most solemn, what I seen—'and,' I says, 'if only we could lay hands on that chap in the muffler, he could tell you he seen it, too. And what's more,' I says, 'do you think I'd risk me job playing a silly trick like that?' He says, 'Well, it beats me,' he says. 'If I didn't know you was a sober kind of chap, I'd say you was seein' things.' 'Things?' I says to him, 'I see that there corpse a-layin' there with the knife in his neck, and that was enough for me. 'Orrible, he looked, and the blood all over the floor.'

"'Well,' he says, 'maybe he wasn't dead after all, and they've cleared him out of the way.' 'And cleared the house away, too, I suppose,' I said to him.

"So Withers says, in an odd sort o' voice, 'You're sure about the house? You wasn't letting your imagination run away with you over naked females and such?' That was a nice thing to say. I said, 'No, I wasn't. There's been some monkey business going on in this street and I'm going to get to the bottom of it, if we has to comb out London for that chap in the muffler.'

"'Yes,' says Withers, nasty-like, 'it's a pity he cleared off so sudden.' 'Well,' I says, 'you can't say I imagined *him*, anyhow, because that there girl saw him, and a mercy she did,' I said, 'or you'd be saying next I ought to be in Colney Hatch.' 'Well,' he says, 'I dunno what you think you're going to do about it. You better ring up the station and ask for instructions.'

"Which I did. And Sergeant Jones, he came down himself, and he listens attentive-like to what we both has to say, and then he walks along the street, slow-like, from end to end.

"And then he comes back and says to me, 'Now, Burt,' he says, 'just you describe that hall to me again, careful.' Which I does, same as I described it to you, sir. And he says, 'You're sure there was the room on the left of the stairs with the glass and silver on the table; and the room on the right with the pictures in it?' And I says, 'Yes, Sergeant, I'm quite sure of that.'

"And Withers says, 'Ah!' in a kind of got-you-now voice, if you take my meaning. And the sergeant says, 'Now, Burt,' he says, 'pull yourself together and take a look at these here houses. Don't you see they're all single-fronted? There ain't one of 'em has rooms *both* sides o' the front hall. Look at the windows, you fool,' he says."

Lord Peter poured out the last of the champagne.

"I don't mind telling you, sir," went on the policeman, "that I was fair knocked silly. To think of me never noticing that! Withers had noticed it all right, and that's what made him think I was drunk or barmy.

"But I stuck to what I'd seen. I said there must be two of them houses knocked into one, somewhere; but that didn't work, because we'd been into all of them, and there wasn't no such thing —not without there was one o' them concealed doors like you read about in crook stories. 'Well, anyhow,' I says to the sergeant, 'the yells was real all right, because other people heard 'em. Just you ask, and they'll tell you.' So the sergeant says, 'Well, Burt, I'll give you every chance.'

"So he knocks up number twelve again—not wishing to annoy number fourteen any more than he was already—and this time the son comes down. An agreeable gentleman he was, too; not a bit put out.

"He says, Oh, yes, he'd heard the yells and his father'd heard them, too. 'Number fourteen,' he says, 'that's where the trouble is. A very odd bloke, is number fourteen, and I shouldn't be surprised if he beats that unfortunate servant of his. The Englishman abroad, you know! The Outposts of Empire and all that kind of thing. They're rough and ready—and then the curry in them parts is bad for the liver.'

"So I was for inquiring at number fourteen again; but the sergeant, he loses patience, and says, "You know quite well,' he says, 'it ain't number fourteen, and in my opinion, Burt, you're either dotty or drunk. You best go home straight away,' he says, 'and sober up, and I'll see you again when you can give a better account of yourself.'

"So I argues a bit, but it ain't no use, and away he goes, and Withers goes back to his beat. And I walks up and down a bit till Jessop comes to take over, and then I comes away, and that's when I sees you, sir.

"But I ain't drunk, sir—at least, I wasn't then, though there do seem to be a kind of swimming in me head at this moment. Maybe that stuff's stronger than it tastes. But I wasn't drunk then, and I'm pretty sure I'm not dotty.

"I'm haunted, sir, that's what it is—haunted. It might be there was someone killed in one of them houses many years ago, and that's what I see tonight. Perhaps they changed the numbering of the street on account of it—I've heard tell of such things—and when the same night comes round the house goes back to what it was before. But there I am, with a black mark against

me, and it ain't a fair trick for no ghost to go getting a plain man into trouble. And I'm sure, sir, you'll agree."

The policeman's narrative had lasted some time, and the hands of the grandfather clock stood at a quarter to five. Peter Wimsey gazed benevolently at his companion for whom he was beginning to feel a positive affection. He was, if anything, slightly more drunk than the policeman, for he had missed tea and had no appetite for his dinner; but the wine had not clouded his wits; it had only increased excitability and postponed sleep. He said: "When you looked through the letter-box, could you see any part of the ceiling, or the lights?"

"No, sir; on account, you see, of the flap. I could see right and left and straight forward; but not upwards, and none of the near part of the floor."

"When you looked at the house from the outside, there was no light except through the fanlight. But when you looked through the flap, all the rooms were lit, right and left and at the back?"

"That's so, sir."

"Are there back doors to the houses?"

"Yes, sir. Coming out of Merriman's End, you turn to the right, and there's an opening a little way along which takes you to the back doors."

"You seem to have a very distinct visual memory. I wonder if your other kinds of memory are as good. Can you tell me, for instance, whether any of the houses you went into had any particular smell? Especially ten, twelve, and fourteen?"

"Smell, sir?" The policeman closed his eyes to stimulate recollection. "Why, yes, sir. Number ten—where the two ladies live, that had a sort of old-fashioned smell. I can't put my tongue to it. Not lavender—but something as ladies keep in bowls and such—rose leaves and what not. Potpourri, that's the stuff. Potpourri.

"And number twelve—well, no, there was nothing particular there, except I remember thinking they must keep pretty good servants, though we didn't see anybody except the family. All that floor and panelling was polished beautiful—you could see your face in it. Beeswax and turpentine, I says to meself. And elbow-grease. What you'd call a clean house with a good, clean smell.

"But number fourteen—that was different. I didn't like the smell of that. Stuffy, like as if the dark chap had been burning some o' that there incense to his idols, maybe."

"Ah!" said Peter. "What you say is very suggestive." He placed his fingertips together and shot his last question over

them. "Ever been inside the National Gallery?"

"No, sir," said the policeman, astonished. "I can't say as I ever was."

"That's London again," said Peter. "We're the last people in the world to know anything of our great metropolitan institutions. Now, what is the best way to tackle this bunch of toughs, I wonder? It's a little early for a call. Still, there's nothing like doing one's good deed before breakfast, and the sooner you're set right with the sergeant, the better.

"Let me see. Yes—I think that may do it. Costume pieces are not as a rule in my line, but my routine has been so much upset already, one way and another, that an irregularity more or less will hardly matter. Wait there for me while I have a bath and change. I may be a little time, but it would hardly be decent to get there before six."

The bath had been an attractive thought, but was perhaps ill-advised, for a curious languor stole over him with the touch of the hot water. The champagne was losing its effervescence. It was with an effort that he dragged himself out and reawakened himself with a cold shower.

The matter of dress required a little thought. A pair of grey flannel trousers was easily found, and though they were rather too well creased for the part he meant to play, he thought that with luck they would probably pass unnoticed. The shirt was a difficulty. His collection of shirts was a notable one, but they were mostly of an inconspicuous and gentlemanly sort. He decided at length upon a blue one, bought as an experiment and held to be not quite successful. A red tie, if he had possessed such a thing, would have been convincing.

After some consideration, he remembered that he had seen his wife in a rather wide Liberty tie, whose prevailing colour was orange. That, he felt, would do if he could find it. On her it had looked rather well; on him it would be completely abominable.

He went through into the next room; it was queer to find it empty. A peculiar sensation came over him. Here *he* was, rifling his wife's drawers, and there *she* was, spirited out of reach at the top of the house, with a couple of nurses and an entirely new baby, which might turn into goodness knew what.

He sat down before the glass and stared at himself. He felt as though he ought to have changed somehow in the night; but he only looked unshaven and, he thought, a trifle intoxicated. Both were quite good things to look at the moment,

though hardly suitable for the father of a family.

He pulled out all the drawers in the dressing-table; they emitted vaguely-familiar smells of face-powder and handkerchief sachet. He tried the big built-in wardrobe; frocks, costumes, and trays full of underwear, which made him feel sentimental. At last he struck a promising vein of gloves and stockings. The next tray held ties, the orange of the desired Liberty creation gleaming in a friendly way among them. He put it on, and observed with pleasure that the effect was Bohemian beyond description.

He wandered out again, leaving all the drawers open behind him as though a burglar had passed through the room. An ancient tweed jacket of his own was next unearthed, together with a pair of brown canvas shoes. He secured his trousers by a belt, searched for and found an old soft-brimmed felt hat of no recognizable colour, and, after removing a few trout-flies from the hatband and tucking his shirtsleeves well up inside the coatsleeves, decided that he would do.

As an afterthought, he returned to his wife's room and selected a wide woolen scarf in a shade of greenish blue. Thus equipped, he came downstairs again, to find P.C. Burt fast asleep, with his mouth open and snoring.

Peter was hurt. Here he was, sacrificing himself in the interests of this stupid policeman, and the man hadn't the common decency to appreciate it. However, there was no point in waking him yet. He yawned horribly and sat down.

It was the footman who wakened the sleepers at half past six. If he was surprised to see his master, very strangely attired, slumbering in the hall in company with a large policeman, he was too well-trained to admit the fact even to himself. He merely removed the tray. The faint clink of glass roused Peter, who slept like a cat at all times.

"Hullo, William," he said. "Have I overslept myself? What's the time?"

"Five and twenty to seven, my lord."

"Just about right." He remembered that the footman slept on the top floor. "All quiet on the Western Front, William?"

"Not altogether quiet, my lord," William permitted himself a slight smile. "The young master was lively about five. But all satisfactory, I gather from Nurse Jenkyn."

"Nurse Jenkyn? Is that the young one? Don't let yourself be run away with, William. I say, just give P.C. Burt a light prod

in the ribs, would you? He and I have business together."

In Merriman's End, the activities of the morning were beginning. The milkman came jingling out of the cul-de-sac; lights were twinkling in upper rooms; at number ten, the housemaid was already scrubbing the steps.

Peter posted his policeman at the top of the street.

"I don't want to make my first appearance with official accompaniment," he said. "Come along when I beckon. What, by the way, is the name of the agreeable gentleman in number twelve? I think he may be of some assistance to us."

"Mr. O'Halloran, sir."

The policeman looked at Peter expectantly. He seemed to have abandoned all initiative and to place implicit confidence in this hospitable and eccentric gentleman. Peter slouched down the street with his hands in his trousers' pockets, and his shabby hat pulled rakishly over his eyes.

At number twelve he paused and examined the windows. Those on the ground floor were open; the house was awake. He marched up the steps, took a brief glance through the flap of the letter-box and rang the bell. A maid in a neat blue dress and white cap and apron opened the door.

"Good morning," said Peter, slightly raising the shabby hat. "Is Mr. O'Halloran in?" He gave the "r" a soft Continental roll. "Not the old gentleman. I mean young Mr. O'Halloran."

"He's in," said the maid doubtfully, "but he isn't up yet."

"Oh!" said Peter. "Well, it is a little early for a visit. But I desire to see him urgently. I am —there is a little trouble where I live. Could you entreat him —would you be so kind? I have walked all the way," he added pathetically and with perfect truth.

"Have you, sir?" said the maid. She added kindly. "You do look tired, sir, and that's a fact."

"It is nothing," said Peter. "It is only that I forgot to have any dinner. But if I can see Mr. O'Halloran it will be all right."

"You'd better come in, sir," said the maid. "I'll see if I can wake him." She conducted the exhausted stranger in and offered him a chair. "What name shall I say, sir?"

"Petrovinsky," said his lordship, hardily. As he had rather expected, neither the unusual name nor the unusual clothes of this unusually early visitor seemed to cause very much surprise. The maid left him in the tidy little panelled hall.

Left to himself, Peter sat still, noticing that the hall was remarkably bare of furniture and was lit by a single electric pendant almost immediately inside

the front door. The letter-box was the usual wire cage, the bottom of which had been carefully lined with brown paper. From the back of the house came a smell of frying bacon.

Presently there was the sound of somebody running downstairs. A young man appeared in a dressing-gown. He called out as he came: "Is that you, Stefan? Your name came up as Mr. Whisky. Has Marfa run away again, or—What the hell? Who the devil are you, sir?"

"Wimsey," said Peter, mildly, "not Whisky; Wimsey, the policeman's friend. I just looked in to congratulate you on a mastery of the art of false perspective which I thought had perished with the ingenious Van Hoogstraaten."

"Oh!" said the young man. He had a pleasant countenance, with humorous eyes and ears pointed like a faun's. He laughed a little ruefully. "I suppose my beautiful murder is out. It was too good to last. Those bobbies! I hope to God they gave number fourteen a bad night . . . May I ask how you came to be involved?"

"I," said Peter, "am the kind of person in whom distressed constables confide—I cannot imagine why. And when I had the picture of that sturdy blue-clad figure, led so persuasively by a Bohemian stranger and invited to peer through a hole, I was irresistibly transported in mind to the National Gallery.

"Many a time have I squinted sideways through those holes into the little black box, and admired that Dutch interior of many vistas painted so convincingly on the four flat sides of the box. How right you were to preserve your eloquent silence! Your Irish tongue would have given you away. The servants, I gather, were purposely kept out of sight."

"Tell me," said Mr. O'Halloran, seating himself upon the hall table, "do you know by heart the occupation of every resident in this quarter of London? I do not paint under my own name."

"No," said Peter. "Like the good Dr. Watson, the constable could observe, though he could not reason from his observation; it was the smell of turpentine that betrayed you. I gather that at the time of his first call the apparatus was not very far off."

"It was folded together and lying under the stairs," replied the painter. "It has since been removed to the studio. My father had only just time to get it out of the way and hitch down the number thirteen from the fanlight before the police reinforcements arrived. He had not even time to put back this table I am sitting on; a brief search would have discovered it in the dining-room.

"My father is a remarkable sportsman; I cannot too highly recommend the presence of mind he displayed while I was haring round the houses and leaving him to hold the fort. It would have been so simple and so unenterprising to explain; but my father, being an Irishman, enjoys treading on the coat-tails of authority."

"I should like to meet your father. The only thing I do not thoroughly understand is the reason for this elaborate plot. Were you by any chance executing a burglary round the corner, and keeping the police in play while you did it?"

"I never thought of that," said the young man, with regret in his voice. "No. The bobby was not the predestined victim. He happened to be present at a full-dress rehearsal, and the joke was too good to be lost. The fact is, my uncle is Sir Lucius Preston, the R.A."

"Ah!" said Peter, "the light begins to break."

"My own style of draughtsmanship," pursued Mr. O'Halloran, "is modern. My uncle has, on several occasions, informed me that I draw like that only because I do not know how to draw. The idea was that he should be invited to dinner tomorrow and regaled with a story of the mysterious 'number thirteen' said to appear from time to time in this street and to be haunted by strange noises.

"Having thus detained him till close upon midnight, I should have set out to see him to the top of the street. As we went along, the cries would have broken out. I should have led him back—"

"Nothing," said Peter, "could be clearer. After the preliminary shock he would have been forced to confess that your draughtsmanship was a triumph of academic accuracy."

"I hope," said Mr. O'Halloran, "the performance may still go forward as originally intended." He looked with some anxiety at Peter, who replied, "I hope so, indeed. I also hope that your uncle's heart is a strong one. But may I, in the meantime, signal to my unfortunate policeman and relieve his mind? He is in danger of losing his promotion through a suspicion that he was drunk on duty."

"Good God!" said Mr. O'Halloran. "No—I don't want that to happen. Fetch him in."

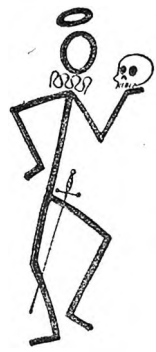
The difficulty was to make P.C. Burt recognize in the daylight what he had seen at night through the letter-flap. Of the framework of painted canvas, with its forms and figures oddly foreshortened and distorted, he could make little. Only when the thing was set up and lighted in the curtained studio was he at length convinced. "It's wonderful," he said. "It's like Maske-

lyne and Devant. I wish the sergeant could a-seen it."

"Lure him down here tomorrow night," said Mr. O'Halloran. "Let him come as my uncle's bodyguard. You," he turned to Peter, "you seem to have a way with policemen. Can't you inveigle the fellow along? Your impersonation of starving and disconsolate Bloomsbury is fully as convincing as mine. How about it?"

"I don't know," said Peter. "The costume gives me pain. Besides, is it kind to a p.b. policeman? I give you the R.A., but when it comes to the guardians of the law—damn it all! I'm a family man, and I must have *some* sense of responsibility."

PEKING'S INTRIGUES IN JAPAN



Reports of the periodic anti-American riots in Japan, and for that matter elsewhere, seldom go on to underline the reality that these rioters rarely represent popular opinion in their country. K. V. Narain, writing in *The Hindu* of Madras for October 21, 1963, elaborates on what might be called "the high cost of rioting" in his description of the considerable financial assistance furnished by Peking to both the Japanese Communist Party and a number of leftist or fellow-traveler organizations.

This includes the much publicised Council for the Prohibition of Atom and Hydrogen Bombs; more than half the cost of their annual conventions is borne by China and the Soviet China. The Peking-Moscow rift is however reflected in the extent of the assistance rendered the Council by the two countries. In 1955 they received almost the same amounts from China and the Soviet Union—7,225,578 yen and 7,184,000 yen respectively; China's aid in more recent years has been almost double the 1955 figure while the amount received from Russia has dropped by over half.

Every time issues arise which can be exploited, China's contributions have of course increased. In 1960, when the issue of the revision of the Security Treaty with the United States prompted riots by leftist groups, China is reported to have contributed One Hundred and Seventeen Million Yen (more than Three Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars) to the fight. Japanese security authorities, reports Mr. Narain, estimate that "China has poured close to five hundred million yen in known funds to encourage subversive activities during the past twelve years."

This breaks down roughly a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars a year.

In *one* country. . . . H.S.S.

wait for me

by Steve Fisher

HER NAME WAS ANNA, and she was beautiful, with golden blond hair that came to her shoulders and turned under at the ends, and a face like an angel, soft and aglow with color; gray-green eyes, and the slim traces of sunlight that were eye-brows.

She knelt there in the Shanghai street, and bowed her head, so that her hair fell a little forward, and like that, kneeling, there was both grace and divinity in her.

The sunset drifted across her red jacket and the shadow of her slim figure fell across the cobblestone street, causing even the fleeing Chinese to stop and turn and look, though they did not pause long. Now and again a white man stopped, and glanced at her, then went on when he recognized that she was Russian.

Anna leaned down and kissed the bleeding girl, kissed her cooling cheeks, and said softly:

"We will have no more sailors together, eh, Olga? Drink no more Vodka." She smiled faintly and shrugged, for Olga was gone, like yesterday's breath. Gone, Anna thought, quite for-

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Steve Fisher, as so many have done over the years, can be said to have lived two lives. Perhaps more. Now in Hollywood, he has worked on films such as DESTINATION TOKYO and I WAKE UP SCREAMING, but he is best remembered (watch the eyes light up when you mention his name) for his many stories in the magazines which did so much for the development of the genre. *H.S.S.*

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tunately and painlessly. A merciful stray bullet—and who is to tell if Japanese or Chinese?—had ended her troubles. But Anna, living, must go on.

She looked around, looked through the streets for the man who had been following her, but she did not see him, and by now had forgotten the corpse of the girl.

She rose and moved on, gracefully, her feet accustomed to the cobblestones, her face and eyes dry. She paused at each corner and looked up and down the street. Mostly she was looking for the man who had followed her from her apartment. She did not know who he was. He was wearing a coat with its collar turned up around his face; a white face with bleak, desperate eyes. He had called after her and she had run, losing herself in the fleeing crowd. She was terrified. Everything terrified her.

Since the evacuation order had come through to send all foreign white women to Hong Kong, and from there to their own countries, Anna felt that her time to die would come at any moment.

There was no escape for Russian exiles. There was nowhere they could run to get away from war. No passports would be issued to them; no country wanted them. Russian women were at the mercy of the mob, the armies, of every band of men that came along. The evacuation order clearing white women had come two hours ago; in another sixteen hours huge transports would sail away with all those women; except the Russians . . .

Ah, the Russians. Anna laughed into the clatter of the frightened street; and then she clenched her teeth and fled on, shadows and torchlight beating against her running figure. It was quieter in the International Settlement. She did not slacken her pace, though she was breathing harder.

When she came to the hotel she swept inside the doors, and in that instant she saw the man who had been following her, the man whose coat collar was turned up. She saw him running past, and not waiting to see if he would miss her, then stop and come back, she went to the desk.

"I wish to see Mrs. Turner."

The clerk bowed. "You may call her on the house phone, madame."

Anna moved nervously to the house phone and picked it up. When Rita Turner's silky voice came on the wire, Anna said: "I have a message from your husband. It is very important and most confidential."

Except in highly excitable moments, Anna could speak English without an accent, for

her finishing school had been a night club called the Navy Sport Palace, which was little more than third rate, and located on the Bund. There she had learned all the American and English and French slang; and she had learned other things, too. How to darken her eyes, and redden her mouth, and wink her eye, and toss her head; how to drink without becoming drunk, how to muffle her sobs with laughter; the art of light love with a deep touch.

Rita Turner said nervously: "Please come up."

Anna moved gracefully into the elevator. She sighed as the doors slid quietly closed. Though she had been too young to remember Moscow, she thought it might be like this; the comfort and ease the White Russians had known; the old lost life about which she had heard her parents talk.

When she arrived on the fourth floor, she walked down the heavily padded hall and stopped in front of the room number Rita Turner had given her. She knocked, and the door was immediately opened.

A tall, dark girl; her hair in a heavy roll on her neck, her skin pale, and her eyes bright and black and vivid, stood there, then stepped back. Anna walked in.

It was a beautiful apartment. A radio tuned to Hong Kong was playing *"The Lady Is a Tramp";* from the window there was a magnificent scene of fire sweeping across the eastern section of Shanghai, and it was so vivid, Anna almost thought she could hear the shrill despair of the screams beneath the flame.

The rug in the room was oriental, the furniture quietly rich. Three bags lay open, light plane baggage, brown and smart and new. They were half packed. Women's clothes were strewn everywhere.

Anna turned slowly, as though she wished to take her time and enjoy this setting slowly without rush and hustle.

Rita Turner said, "What is your message, please? And who are you?" She was impatient.

Anna smiled with her teeth. "Your husband has been sent up the Yangtze?"

The dark-haired girl nodded.

"He will not return for three days?"

"That's right," answered Rita Turner, "but we're wasting time. What *is* the message?"

Anna flopped down on the divan and reached for a cigarette. She put it in her mouth and lit it.

"Your husband is an army officer," she went on, "and you have been ordered to evacuate? Is that not right?"

"Of course it's right."

Anna, only three puffs into the cigarette, snuffed it out. "I got

the information from a man who sells such information to White Russians." She smiled again. "I will tell you that it cost me all I had been able to save during these meager years in Shanghai. Four hundred mex."

"Just what are you getting at?"

Anna rose. "It is easy, isn't it? The obvious thing. I kill you and transfer my picture to your passport. Then I can escape Shanghai." She raised one eyebrow. "Otherwise, I shall be left."

Rita Turner stared at her for a moment, then she dove for one of her bags. But a gun glittered in Anna's slim hand. Rita Turner saw the weapon and paused, terror draining her pale skin. Her eyes widened, and then she continued for the bag, stooping, fumbling with a large automatic, turning toward Anna.

The sound of Anna's shots did not penetrate the soundproof walls.

Rita Turner stood very still for a moment. Then the heavy gun slipped from between her slim fingers. Her lips twisted, as though she were about to laugh; and then blood welled from a hole just below her neck, and she crumpled, her figure like a question mark.

Anna looked down at her, neither pity nor compassion on her face, though it was the first person she had ever killed. Perhaps seeing so many dead and suffering had made her hard like this. She thought only: I will not be trapped here and die like the others. I will escape. I will have an evacuation order, and I will go aboard one of the big transports, and be taken to Hong Kong, and then to the United States. Freedom, peace! Murder has given me wings!

She was lucky, she thought, that the man who had sold her this information about an army wife whose husband was up the Yangtze River had not tricked her; for false information was sold for prices as great as the genuine. But then she had been "good" to her informant, plus the four hundred mex. He had known she would have to steal another woman's passport to escape the horror that was Shanghai. All he had done was supply the name of a woman —a woman who would surely be alone when Anna went to see her . . .

Anna must change that passport now, put her picture in, and get the sailing orders. She must do a million and one things, she must go through all of Rita Turner's papers and learn everything about her.

Last of all, least of all, she had but to take the bags and get aboard the transport. Murder was easy!

She had found some wine,

and at midnight, Anna still sat in the room, feeling no glow but only half sick from the too sweet wine. She sat facing a desk full of papers, important documents with fancy seals, plans, blueprints, messages in French and German, even some in Chinese. Anna knew all about Rita Turner now. She knew what she hadn't known.

Rita Turner had been an international spy.

That meant only one thing: Anna, in taking over Rita Turner's name and identity, would have to pretend to be that same spy.

Anna's course had been clear, she had planned each last detail. She was to put the corpse in a steamer trunk and then send for the Chinese boys to come and get it with the other baggage; and later at sea she would put the corpse into a navy sea-bag and during the night drag it to the side of the ship and dump it over. There would be no trace of murder; only the living, breathing, the new Rita Turner.

But this new complication frightened and confused Anna. She knew no way in which to turn. If she fled the hotel and left the corpse here, she still could not escape the city and murder would catch up with her. They would find her in Shanghai sooner or later, perhaps shivering in a hovel, and then for the murder they would put a gun to the back of her head and blow out her life.

She must make the transport with the corpse in the steamer trunk. But how? As a spy Rita Turner had definite orders to deliver some papers before her departure from the city, and even though Anna knew little about espionage, she was aware that counter-spies checked on the activities of a spy; that people ordered to contact Rita Turner would be on the look-out for her. There was this alone, even if she didn't think about the risk of being captured as Rita, as the spy, and being punished in the ruthless manner of war.

To go straight to the boat was impossible. She must board it just before it sailed, and keep entirely to herself in case someone on board should know the real Rita Turner. Meanwhile there was the chance that she would be recognized as an impostor by other members of the espionage ring by which Rita Turner had been employed.

Anna poured herself a drink. She took it down, then she lighted a cigarette and got up and moved over to the window. She looked down at the street seething with torch-light.

She heard the music of the radio and she thought of her night club back on the Bund and wished that she was back in it—even what was left of it.

There had been happiness there, a hard kind. Sailors saying: "Listen, babe, you're a tramp, but I'd die for you; a guy's gotta have someone to love, and when he loves he wants to make believe it's the real thing."

She remembered that now, those words, and other words; the quaint, tough, laughing Shanghai she had known before the invasion. But all of that had gone past her, and she was alone here with the body of a woman she had murdered—a woman who by dying had put her problems on Anna. The sailors were gone, and her girl friends were gone, even Olga who was her closest.

Anna dropped the cigarette and rubbed her foot over it.

The telephone rang.

She stood and looked at it, petrified, feeling fear crawl up into her, making her sick. She held her hands out and watched them tremble. And the phone rang again. She moved toward it, only a foot, and it rang for the third time.

Then suddenly she leapt over and snatched up the instrument. She had dared herself, and now she had plunged.

"Hello?" She tried to remember the sound of Rita Turner's voice.

"Rita?"

"Yes."

It was a man's voice and went on now: "I know I shouldn't call at the hotel like this, but we had an appointment to—ah, go dancing. Have you forgotten? I've been waiting here quite a long time."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Anna. "Where have you been waiting?"

"*You* know where."

Anna laughed. "Oh, yes, of course. I will be there at once."

"Will you? Nothing's gone wrong, has it? You weren't going to sail without your packet—ah, that packet of . . ." The voice trailed off.

Anna was quick on the uptake, her voice caught: "Oh, you mean that money you drew from the bank for me." She laughed gaily. "Oh, yes, I get that tonight for—for—"

"Careful," said the man. "Ah—I'll be glad to get to meet you."

Anna took a chance: "How will I know you?"

"I'll be by the telephone booth," he said promptly. "It was prearranged." He sounded a trifle irritated. "Don't you remember anything? Frenchie's isn't so difficult to reach, I mean—"

"If anybody was listening in," said Anna, "they've had an earful by now." She had an earful herself. "I'll see you later," she finished.

"All right," the man replied.

She hung up and her blood tingled. Money. They were pay-

ing Rita Turner off before the sailing. Money! Hers, to have and to spend. So easy! What had seemed to be a difficult situation was turning into a paying adventure. She had imagined espionage work was like this: Agents, strangers to one another, contacting each other. Nor was spying the highly clever profession she had been given to believe for, fortunately for her, the man had even tipped his position over the phone: Frenchie's.

Anna had now but to send the baggage, with the corpse in the trunk, to the boat; and then to contact this man and turn over Rita's papers to him —for money. After that, praise the great St. Peter, she would be free; possibly rich!

She gathered all of Rita's spy papers, put them down her dress. Then she looked down at the corpse of Rita Turner which she had dragged to a corner, and now for the first time a shiver ran through her. She remembered that she had committed murder; she had never once forgotten, but now her conscience remembered, and she tried to laugh.

She remembered once a French sailor coming into the night club bragging that he had just stabbed a man. He had laughed; he had been so hard and carefree. Murder was really nothing. Not when there was war going on and people dying.

She was a fool even to think of it. She should laugh like the Frenchman. So she did laugh. She would kill twenty Rita Turners if she herself could escape with the living.

She set about to put the corpse in the trunk and to do hastily all the other things she had to do.

It was almost forty minutes before Anna could leave the hotel. A tenseness had come to her again. She had sent the baggage out without arousing suspicion because she had used Rita Turner's money to give the boys big tips so that the baggage would not have to go through the routine of being checked.

She knew that in this skelter of evacuation there would be no customs at the boat, for the boat was going first to Hong Kong. What she feared was trouble with the desk, though ordinarily there should be none. If anybody was curious, she had been visiting Rita Turner.

The elevator door swung open and she alighted on the main floor. It was crowded with people and she saw now that her escape, the escape from the hotel people would be easy.

What she did not see at once was the man whose coat collar had been turned up—the man who had been following her.

He was sitting in a leather chair in the lobby, waiting for her.

His coat collar was down now, and she could see his face clearly. It was white and looked very frightened. She stopped, straining to remember where she had known him. Surely, she had known him some time in the past. Perhaps in the night club, but then she had known so many . . . Why had he followed her?

He saw her and, rising, came toward her. Panic seized her. There could be no scene here. She must get to the street and away from him. She must talk to no one except the man who waited at the telephone booth in Frenchie's—perhaps with money, but certainly she must see him so that counter-spies would not trail the new Rita Turner from Shanghai.

The man followed her, however, and at the door he caught her arm, turning her halfway around. She looked again into his face, and for a moment his name, or his place in her past, was on the tip of her tongue; but it escaped her.

"Please," she said, "please, don't touch me."

"But listen, I—"

"Please!"

She jerked away from him, and in a moment she was in the street. He followed her out the door. She ran and turned a corner. She could hear him chasing.

Her heart shoved against her side, and sharp pains from running came so that it was difficult for her to breathe. The man would kill her perhaps. No one meant any good in this mess. Her flight was instinctive. She heard him call out—then she was flinging herself out through the gates of the International Settlement, climbing into a rickshaw.

"Frenchie's," she said.

There was no other conveyance, and when she looked back, she saw the man standing there, waving at her to come back. Then, in the flare of a torch, she saw that he had begun running; he meant to follow the rickshaw. She heard him yell, "Wait for me! Wait!

The wooden wheels of her cart clattered over the road, putting murder and the unknown man behind her. But she saw presently that the coolie was running like a fool with no sense of direction. She called at him to stop. Her voice grew frantic. The coolie kept running. She was terrified lest this be a trap of some kind, and yet common sense told her that it could not be that.

They turned up a street that was tumult of noise and light, and then suddenly she saw that the crazed coolie was running right into the middle of a com-

pany of marching Japanese. She held on to the side and waited. The crash came. She saw a bayonet flash, and then she saw the blade sever the coolie's head, so that it fell off easily, like the loose knob on a door.

Then she was on the ground, struggling to escape. Desperate, like a rabbit, and somehow she squirmed away from them, shouting all the time: "I am English! I am English! You don't dare touch me! I'm English!"

She was running again, then telling herself she must keep her mind or be lost in this confusion.

She found herself on an open street, and somehow she had stopped and was looking up. She didn't know at first why she had done this; she didn't know until she heard the throbbing of giant plane engines, and saw the bright lights, and the wings that seemed to descend on her. She thought then that it was all over.

But it wasn't. It had just begun. A store, across from her, rose in a ball of streaked fire, and then Anna was crouching, holding her hands over her head, and the debris was coming down everywhere.

Just ahead of her she saw another bomb tear out the street and shower bricks everywhere. She could hear the bricks falling, one by one, like drops from a monster hail storm. And through all this, an ear-splitting roar of plane motors, and bursting bombs.

Anna could hear the steady, never-ending blend of screaming people . . . people dying . . . people lying all around her, some of them resignedly holding their arms in their laps.

She got up and stumbled, kept trying to run. She saw a little baby sitting in a pool of blood, crying. She saw two little girls running and crying and dragging the corpse of an old Chinese woman.

She told herself she must keep sanity, she must keep going. Her murder—the murder she had committed—must not converge upon her. This couldn't be her punishment. Men died with guns in the backs of their necks, not from the debris of bombs, when they committed murder.

She must not die! What she must do is escape Shanghai. Escape war!

She ran into someone suddenly. She looked up and saw the man who had followed her from the hotel. She didn't care now who he was. She threw herself into his arms; she pressed her shuddering body against his protecting one and waited for the noise and the death that was everywhere.

"We must escape. We must

get away from here!" shouted the man.

"Frenchie's," she shouted back, "Frenchie's! We must go there."

"Kid," said the man, "I—"

"Don't talk. We must get to Frenchie's!"

"Anna!" he said. She looked up, terrified; so he knew her. Oh, good sweet God, that was funny, because she didn't know him from Adam.

"Don't talk," she said. "Frenchie's! Take me there." She was used to the easy companionship of men, and this did not seem strange, that she should make this request of him; he was here to use.

He started to talk to her again, but another bomb exploded, and he picked her up and began running with her. She knew it was only a thousand to one chance that they would get through, get off this street alive.

But they did.

Anna did not know how much longer it was, nor how many blocks they had come. She knew only that when the stranger who knew her set her down, it was in front of Frenchie's. He was sweating, and there wasn't much left of his suit. He was laughing, and half crying, and that way he looked much more familiar. He was saying:

"Babe, I love you like seven hundred dollars on Christmas day, and—"

"I must go in here," she said, "wait for me until I come out. I won't be long." She realized he could help her get to the transport; he was big and he was strong, and like so many men at many times, he loved her.

"Anything you say, babe, but you will come out?"

"Of course I will," she was a bit impatient. It did not occur to her to thank him for saving her life.

"You know why I'm here?"

"No," she said, "I don't know."

"Because I love you," he said.

She laughed bitterly. "How very nice! But I must go in here now—"

"I'm AWOL," he went on, "and I'll get socked behind the eight ball for two months for this, but, geez, a guy—"

"So you're a sailor?"

"Of course," he said.

"Why didn't you tell me? Why are you wearing those clothes?"

He laughed. "How long do you think I'd last on the streets in uniform? They'd pick me up before I could move."

"And you risked all this to tell me you loved me?"

"Of course. You must have known how I've felt that time in—"

"I knew you at the Navy Sport Palace?"

"Sure. Aw, come on, baby,

don't tell me you've forgotten. You're not that hard."

"Aren't I?" she thought; but what she said was: "Of course I didn't forget you, darling. Now wait for me. Wait here for me."

She turned and went inside and the last she heard from him was when he leaned back against the building and began to whistle. She had heard the tune earlier this evening and it gave her a start. It was *"The Lady Is A Tramp."*

She looked a wreck and she knew it, but she was past caring. She moved from table to table, went to the back of Frenchie's where there was the bar. She stopped here and had a stiff drink. It made her feel better.

She heard soft muted music, and she saw people who were still trying to look gay. You'd never know there was a war; or that ten minutes ago bombs were raising merry hell, she thought. Human beings can play the damnedest games, and keep their nerve, or what looks like nerve from the ivory polish surface of their skin.

She went at last to the telephone booths. She spotted the contact man almost at once. He was tall and had iron-gray hair. He was wearing a white mess jacket, and highly polished black shoes. She could not distinguish his nationality; he looked cosmopolitan, smooth. He smiled when he saw her: one of her own kind of smiles, with his teeth.

"Ah, my dear," he said.

She looked arch. "Pardon me?" This was a come-on; there had to be some come-on, she thought. Marlene Dietrich had always had one in those films that played down by the Bund.

"But my dear Rita," said the man, which gave the perfect rhythm to everything.

She nodded and he went on: "Shall we go upstairs to the balcony?"

"All right."

"You have the papers?"

"Yes," she said.

She allowed him to escort her up a flight of steps to a room over the main part of the club. It was rather dark and the windows faced the street. He turned on a light, but it was only a colored oriental lantern. His face seemed softer, somehow flushed in this illumination.

She lifted the packet of papers from her breast and handed them to him. He inspected them briefly in the half light, and then he looked up smiling.

"Everything is here, I believe," he said.

"Then I can go? I can have some money, and then I can go—"

He bowed slightly from the waist. "But of course."

It was then that she saw the

small automatic in his hand. She turned to run from it. But another man was walking slowly up behind her.

"We've waited for this a long time, Rita," one of them said.

She saw now what it was. These men were agents from a government which opposed the one for which Rita Turner had been working. They had deliberately set a trap for her.

Bitterly in that flashing, horrible second, she remembered the entire telephone conversation. She had thought she was leading the man out; in reality he had been leading her, he had tipped her to Frenchie's to get her here. He had believed she was Rita, and he believed it now; the rest of these men believed it.

Rita must have been an illusive secret agent whose identity had never been entirely revealed, but the papers Anna had just handed the man with the iron gray hair were sufficient to sign her death warrant.

This realization came to Anna quickly, suddenly, even as the men were closing in on her, and it did her ego no good to look back upon it and reflect that the real Rita Turner would never have fallen so blindly into an enemy trap. It was only she, Anna, the fool; playing a game she knew nothing about.

"It is too bad, Rita," she heard one of the men saying.

She knew it would do no good to protest that Rita Turner was already dead. They would merely laugh at her, deride her protestation. She saw from their expressions that Rita Turner must have been dangerous to them, for they meant now to kill Anna. They intended wasting no time or effort.

Anna saw a knife flash, and knew in a moment that it would pierce her throat. There was no way she could turn. There was nothing she could do. She hadn't time even to cry out, for all the good that would do her . . .

For a moment there was only silence here in the half light, and then the men closed in so that they facaded up about her in a wall. And in this moment Anna was looking back at murder and wondering now what had ever finally happened to the Frenchman who had stabbed a man and laughed—for she knew now about crime and punishment, and that punishment wasn't something in story books so that little boys would go to Sunday school.

She knew, too, that there was no escape from murder, even in war. She knew that she had come to her last second on earth, and even in that there was too much time, to reflect, to listen to the echo of laughter down the long memory of years, to hear the screams of dying

Chinese which would seem like a song now by comparison.

She saw again the baby sitting in a pool of blood, and a sailor, AWOL from his ship in a suit of clothes that were half torn off his back.

And she knew suddenly why the sailor downstairs had followed her. He had fallen in love with her at the club, poor fool, and he had ditched off from his ship *to come and marry her;* to come and marry her because he knew that she was a White Russian and she couldn't get out of Shanghai unless she was a Navy wife!

He had been sorry for her, and he had been willing to marry her so that she could be evacuated honestly as Anna on the big transport that was going to America by the way of Hong Kong.

It was all clear now, in this final instant of life, that he had been following her to tell her, to marry her and take her away; and if she had remained at her apartment, if she had not gone to commit murder, this would have happened, and she now would be safe and free!

She remembered the sailor saying: "Babe, I love you like seven hundred dollars on Christmas Day," and then she felt the point of the knife at her throat; and as she slid to the floor, the only sound that came through the silence was the familiar whistling of someone leaning in front of the building outside and whistling: *"The Lady Is A Tramp."*

SEA RUSTLERS

The Senate Commerce Committee warned, earlier this year, of a new and dangerous source of conflict—the Soviet "rustlers of the sea".

Russia's fishing industry has by now surpassed the United States in a drive for domination of the world markets. Russia now ranks third, behind Japan and Norway, as a producer of fish.

But this is not the reason why the committee held that "fisheries are one of the major battlefields in the cold war". The rough tactics of the Soviet fishermen have helped—hit and run collisions, crowding out other fishermen with trawler flotillas, destroying pots and lines of other fishermen, using nets with tighter mesh than allowed under fishing treaties and ignoring fish conservation plans. But there is also evidence that Soviet trawlers are engaged in espionage activities, particularly along the eastern coast of this country, in the Caribbean and in the Gulf of Mexico. The move to build a fishing port in Cuba, to be financed through a Soviet loan, would provide a base for these trawlers as they "explored" the Caribbean.

the man who confessed too often

by J. Francis McComas

THOMAS H. MCMONIGLE, gassed in 1948 for the murder of teen-aged Thora Chamberlin, set unique standards of criminal conduct that have never been equalled by California's most aspiring murderers. For example, consider the matter of his victim's body. That was never found, a circumstance not rare in criminous annals. *But,* the hulking McMonigle led FBI agents, police and sheriff's deputies of three counties, and even U.S. Navy divers in a number of futile quests for his victim's remains. Once, while awaiting execution in San Quentin prison, McMonigle was even permitted to leave Condemned Row on a court-authorized excursion in search of Thora's body!

Or consider his *post*-execution plans. In these McMonigle surpassed even himself. Some students of his career still think it was a pity that the unfeeling law didn't permit him to carry them out. If he had been so permitted, Mac just might still be with us today.

But it was for the number and variety of his confessions that McMonigle is most warmly remembered by connoisseurs of murder. He confessed before, during and after his trial. Au-

J. Francis McComas here tells about a man who is remembered by connoisseurs of murder not for the way or ways in which he murdered—but for the number and variety of his confessions. The author, who lives in California, is a writer and editor long prominent in this field.

thorities stopped the official confessional count at eight; there must have been at least half a dozen more. In tones of awe, District Attorney Steve Wyckoff, of Santa Cruz county, told newsmen, "He's the talkingest prisoner I've ever seen. Anywhere." The DA's description was never challenged by anyone who encountered the garrulous Thomas McMonigle.

There is nothing amusing about the fate of Thora Chamberlin, of course. She was an attractive youngster, aged fourteen years, eleven months and ten days at the time of her disappearance, November 2, 1945. A somewhat shy girl, who had not yet had an evening date with a boy, she lived in the small town of Campbell, in Santa Clara county. (It *is* important to keep counties in mind in this case; *three* of them sought jurisdiction over McMonigle!) By training and inclination Thora seemed the last girl in the world to enter an unprepossessing stranger's automobile. But she did. It was shortly after 3:00 p.m. that she was seen getting into what was later positively identified as McMonigle's car, close by Campbell Union High, the school she attended.

Thora has never been seen again, alive or dead. Her parents have been denied even the consolation of her grave.

It was not a clever abduction. McMonigle had been openly parked at the spot—on a busy street—for some time. He had asked other, luckier girls to come with him and help "take care of some children while my wife is away." These girls had wisely—or instinctively—refused.

Before parking near the schoolground, McMonigle had spent a couple of hours in the nearest bar. The proof of this was ludicrously easy; not only was the murderer-to-be a big, red-haired man, noticeable even in a crowd, he also wore most distinctive garments. He was clad in a stolen T-shirt and grey, navy-type pants. The T-shirt bore the design of a North Ireland naval base. McMonigle had bedecked it with medals and campaign ribbons! In the days to come, waitresses in the bar had no trouble recalling such a bizarre figure.

In due time, local police enlisted the aid of the FBI in solving Thora's puzzling, almost meaningless disappearance. There were no ransom notes, so authorities were forced to assume that it was a sex crime. Thereafter, it was just a case of putting two and two together. From the schoolgirls' and waitresses' descriptions, FBI and police guessed the abductor might have been Thomas H. McMonigle. And did they have a file on McMonigle!

He had been questioned in May, 1945 concerning the attempted rape of a sixteen-year-old San Bruno girl, but the girl's parents, fearing the effects of publicity on their daughter, had refused to prosecute. Unfortunately. Moreover, he had attempted twice to persuade teen-aged Belmont girls to enter his car during October, 1945.

(To get the geography straight, it should be borne in mind that Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties are located at the base of the peninsula that has as its tip the city of San Francisco. Belmont, San Bruno, San Mateo and Burlingame are cities along that peninsula.)

Checking *their* files, the FBI agents discovered further pertinent facts. Thomas H. McMonigle, a native of Illinois, had been arrested in 1934 for assault to commit rape and had been sentenced to Menard prison with a one-to-fourteen-year jolt. Released in the spring of 1943, he had come immediately to California. He had married and had held a variety of jobs, largely of the unskilled type. His latest had been that of a construction labourer. Significantly, McMonigle had been absent from his job with the Blair Construction Company, of Burlingame, from October 29 to November 3.

Now, in December, he was gone again. The FBI traced McMonigle back to Illinois, whither he had travelled by bus. Why had he made the trip? We don't know. If it was an attempt at a getaway, McMonigle flubbed it, as he had everything else connected with the crime. Once in Peoria, he bought a ticket to Mexico. But he never used it. For a reason known only to this inexplicable man, McMonigle hitch-hiked back to San Francisco where the FBI arrested him on December 6, 1945.

The confessions started immediately. There was just no stopping McMonigle's limber tongue. And with his garrulity came jurisdictional problems for three district attorneys. I shall not attempt to give McMonigle's admissions in any kind of orderly sequence; no magazine could spare the space for his effusions in their entirety. Suffice it to say that the man said, at various times, that he had picked up Thora in Campbell, in Santa Clara county, driven her to Santa Cruz, seat of the county of the same name, killed her in or about that town by assorted means, then driven to the Devil's Slide, a particularly forbidding rock formation on the Pacific Ocean coast of San Mateo county. There he had consigned the girl's body to the sea. At one time or another, McMonigle stated that he had shot Thora, that he had choked her to death, that she had fallen out of his car

and had broken her neck, that he had smothered her with ether, et cetera, ad nauseam.

Authorities had no trouble whatsoever in substantiating *parts* of these confessions. Police gathered up McMonigle's car, where he had left it in his garage, and gave it a going-over with the traditional fine-toothed comb. They found blood-stained seat cushions and, behind a cushion, a spent revolver bullet. Ballistics proved the bullet belonged to McMonigle's pistol, which had been traded to him by a San Mateo florist in October, 1945. The florist quickly identified the gun. The above-mentioned schoolgirls and waitresses identified both the car and its driver.

Hundreds of spectators, newsmen and law officers watched as divers borrowed from the U.S. Navy plunged into the boiling waters at the foot of the Devil's Slide in quest of Thora's remains. After several days of daring, but fruitless endeavour, the divers abandoned the search.

However, McMonigle may have been telling the truth when he said he had tossed Thora's body over the Slide. November 2 having been a cold day, for California, the girl had been wearing two pairs of bobby socks. A pair of red socks, described as hers, were found on the rugged ground near the top of the Slide. And, such is the power of the tide at the bottom of the Slide, it would have been very easy for Thora's body to have been washed far out into the Pacific, beyond any chance of recovery.

On the other hand . . .

McMonigle, still in custody of the FBI in San Francisco, now came up with his fourth confession. He announced that he had been taking Thora to San Francisco to "turn her over to some white slavers." She struggled in the car and he suffocated her with "ether." Then, said McMonigle, he buried her in a drainage pit near the Blair Construction Company yards in Burlingame.

The pit, a ditch-like affair, was thoroughly excavated. Investigators found Thora's schoolbooks, brief-case, shoes and a cowbell she was going to use at a school basketball game that November afternoon. They also found that pair of grey, navy-type pants, now blood-stained, which witnesses identified as being the kind he was wearing in the bar the afternoon of Thora's disappearance. McMonigle cheerfully admitted the trousers were his. The brief-case contained the girl's pen, pencil, ruler and protractor. Nothing else was discovered. The presence of these articles has never been explained; it remains as one of the many puzzles McMonigle has left us.

By December 15 authorities

decided that they had enough evidence on which to prosecute Thomas H. McMonigle for kidnapping and murder . . . but the question immediately arose, just where should he be tried? The pattern of the crime seemed to be established thus: McMonigle had kidnapped Thora in Santa Clara county, murdered her in Santa Cruz county, and disposed of her body somewhere in San Mateo county.

At last, for reasons undisclosed—and that certainly don't seem reasonable today—the FBI turned their prisoner over to William J. Emig, sheriff in San Jose, county seat of Santa Clara county.

Now, Mr. Emig was having his troubles. He was under indictment for conspiring with gamblers and was due to stand his trial on those charges almost immediately. (He was found guilty, by the way.) Moreover, he had been sheriff when, a dozen years before, a San Jose mob had battered in his jail, seized two of his prisoners, and lynched them from an oak on the courthouse lawn. Emig declared feeling in his city was running very high against Thomas McMonigle . . .

So the nervous sheriff promptly sought and received permission to house his infamous prisoner in San Quentin prison, across the bay. It probably wasn't kind, this business of giving the kidnap-murderer a foretaste of his ultimate fate—they placed him in residence on Condemned Row—but at least he was safe.

Curiously, on the way from San Jose to San Quentin, McMonigle reversed his field and categorically denied his confessions. Wasn't a word of truth in them, said he. This was the only time that McMonigle—the talkative, the loquacious, the far-from-reticent McMonigle—ever claimed, if indirectly, that he was not involved in Thora's death. Why? Again, the one answer: we know so much about him and his crimes, we know so little.

On December 18, McMonigle was indicted in San Jose for kidnapping, penalty 25 years, and child-stealing, penalty 20 years. No death penalty was requested on these charges because no ransom had been asked for Thora.

Steve Wyckoff, aggressive, tough-minded DA of Santa Cruz county, was not going to let McMonigle get off so lightly. Mr. Wyckoff announced that *he* would request from *his* grand jury an indictment for first-degree murder which, of course, carries the death penalty in California. The request was based, obviously, on McMonigle's many statements that he had killed Thora in or near the city of Santa Cruz. Mr. Wyckoff's request was granted. On December 19, the Santa Cruz county grand jury

formally indicted McMonigle for the first-degree murder of Thora Chamberlin.

Leonard Avila, the Santa Clara DA, said that he would give his neighbouring county precedence in jurisdiction over McMonigle. So, on December 20, the hulking, sandy-haired, talkative killer bade San Quentin a temporary farewell and was taken to the Santa Cruz jail, where he spent a quiet, if somewhat restricted Christmas. No one came round to try and lynch him.

McMonigle started the new year right with yet another confession! On January 3, 1946 he announced that he had killed Thora, by shooting her, *in San Mateo county,* and had thrown her body into the Pacific about three-quarters of a mile north of the previously-designated Devil's Slide. Was this confession designed to raise the problem of jurisdiction all over again? Psychiatrists have said McMonigle was far from unintelligent. Or was he just having fun in the macabre way? It doesn't matter, the confession was ignored.

On January 5, McMonigle came up with something entirely —and fantastically—new. A confession, it is now thought, that was largely true. Wholly gratuitously, he confessed to the murder of a Negro waitress in San Francisco! He did not name the girl then, nor did he give many details. Her unhappy story will be dealt with at its proper chronological place in this narrative.

As McMonigle waits through the month of January in the Santa Cruz jail for his forthcoming trial, we should, I think, take a quiet look at this baffling personality. Not that it will do us much good. Physically McMonigle is always described by police and penologists alike as "hulking," or "burly." They also make a point of his "shaggy" hair, either "sandy" or "sandy-red" in colour. A reporter most accurately (judging from photographs) described his bony face as a "series of planes, all heavily slanting downwards toward his chin . . ." It was a heavy, impassive face, oddly belying his compulsion to loquacity. He was somewhere in his early thirties; inconsistent newspaper reports list his age as anywhere from 31 to 35.

He looked like a stolid labourer. No psychiatrist has yet delineated what he *behaved* like.

McMonigle had never been much good. Before his assault conviction in Illinois, he had been arrested several times for petty crimes, vagrancy and the like. After his release from prison and advent in California, in 1943, he had held a number of jobs; he had been an orderly in several hospitals in the peninsula area, a truck and bus driver, *and* (of all things) a guard on an ar-

moured truck. Thomas McMonigle, rapist, child-molester and murderer, had a perfectly good reputation for honesty. Most recently, as we have seen, he had been working as a construction labourer.

It should be remembered that the period covered by McMonigle's California employment was wartime, and jobs were begging for men to fill them. Still . . .

Oddly, this unprepossessing rolling stone had managed to marry Ena Izzard, of an old, highly-placed San Mateo family. Mrs. McMonigle gave birth to a daughter the day before Thora Chamberlin's disappearance.

On the surface, Thomas McMonigle was a routine criminal, a rapist who eventually committed the ultimate violence of murder. How then, shall we account for the incredible number and variety of his confessions? Confessions all the more puzzling because: (*a*) they were needless in the first place; and (*b*) they told all . . . but not quite all. Usually a criminal says nothing, or he says everything.

The recklessly voluble McMonigle, basically a very clumsy criminal, still kept his secrets. Driven by some unfathomable urge to confess, he still held back the last precious bit of information that would have given comfort to so many people. He would talk . . . up to a point. Beyond that point he would not go. In a twisted way, he got even with a society I think it is obvious that he despised.

Thomas H. McMonigle shambled into the Santa Cruz courtroom one morning in February, 1946. Steve Wyckoff, fully prepared, was waiting for him. So were quiet FBI agents. So were the police. So were Thora's grieving, yearning parents. Save for an inevitable couple of confessions by the defendant, the trial was uneventful, routine, a workmanlike job by the prosecutor, its result a foregone conclusion.

Against the advice of his counsel, McMonigle took the stand in his own defense. His "testimony" was largely a diatribe against the FBI, whom he claimed had bullied and starved him. McMonigle claimed his many confessions had been extorted from him by the FBI keeping him awake to the point of exhaustion. He had been so tired, McMonigle claimed, that he didn't know what he was saying.

On the evening of February 10 (while still on the stand during the day!) he made, without coercion from anyone, his eighth confession.

He had kidnapped Thora, McMonigle said, as previously described, shot her, then hurled her blanket-wrapped body into the

Crystal Springs lakes in San Mateo county.

McMonigle did not sign this confession and resumed his "testimony" against the FBI February 11 as if it had never been made!

On February 18, just as his case was going to the jury, the defendant apparently at last realized, at least to some extent, just what he was up against. For, that evening in his cell, he made what seemed to be a desperate effort to save his neck. McMonigle said that Thora Chamberlin had died in Santa Clara county, near Campbell. He, McMonigle asserted, had picked her up quite innocently to get guidance to a street in Santa Cruz. On the way to Santa Cruz, he averred, Thora had become frightened and jumped from the moving car. She had fallen to the highway, breaking her neck and dying instantly. Panicking, McMonigle had buried the girl in a shallow grave, in Santa Clara county; if permitted, he would gladly show judge and jury the exact location of Thora's grave.

As for the blood in his car? Well, that had been shed by a Negro couple, passengers of McMonigle's while he was using his car as a "jitney" cab in San Francisco. This couple had gotten into a bitter fight while McMonigle was driving them and had shed each other's blood all over the vehicle.

With the haunted, lonely faces of Thora's parents before them, both judge and jury were eager to grasp any story that might lead to the girl's last resting place. So court convened an hour early on February 19 to go with McMonigle to "the grave near Campbell." But this erratic killer flatly refused to make the trip.

"I do not feel safe," he gave as his excuse. "They may take my life in Santa Clara county. I am afraid of mob violence."

And not another word would he grant his angry audience. It was hardly a tactful thing to do to a jury that was about to decide his fate.

At 3:57 that afternoon the jury of five women and seven men retired and after only two ballots returned a verdict of murder in the first degree. There was no recommendation of mercy.

There remained only the determining of the question of McMonigle's sanity.

On February 21 this strange man elaborated upon his previous confession to the slaying of the Negro waitress in San Francisco. To San Francisco police, summoned to his cell for the occasion, McMonigle admitted that he had strangled a girl named Dorothy Rose Jones "sometime in October, 1945" and

had thrown her body into his favourite disposal unit, the Devil's Slide.

The San Francisco officers were convinced, after a short investigation, that McMonigle was telling the truth. Shown pictures of thirteen Negro girls, he immediately picked the one of Miss Jones as his victim. Dorothy Jones had been reported missing in October. A trustworthy witness was produced who had seen Dorothy Jones talking to McMonigle on the corner of Third and Market Streets in San Francisco. So the San Francisco police department issued a hold order on Thomas McMonigle, just in case he managed to extricate himself from his Santa Cruz dilemma.

In further announcements from his cell, McMonigle advised that he had killed yet another San Francisco waitress, a white girl "with beautiful blonde hair," when "she tried to steal my wallet." Too, there was "an elderly couple in Oklahoma" who had died by McMonigle's busy hands. These two cases were never investigated.

It should be noted that McMonigle made these confessions in the interim between his conviction and the jury's convening to determine his sanity.

If he hoped, like John George Haigh, to convince the authorities of his insanity by admitting a multiplicity of murders, McMonigle hoped in vain. On February 26 his jury took only three minutes to declare him sane and fit to suffer for his crimes. Psychiatrists had reported that McMonigle was "of better than average intelligence . . . with an excellent memory."

On March 1, 1946 Thomas H. McMonigle was sentenced to die in the gas chamber for the murder of Thora Chamberlin. They took him back to Condemned Row in San Quentin Prison on March 4 to await the result of his automatic appeal. And there we might leave him . . . save for the fact that, while residing on The Row, McMonigle created a whole new career for himself and gave the prison administration such headaches as it had never dreamed possible.

In the first place, he was actively disliked, both by his fellow prisoners and by his guards. It is not usual for a resident of The Row to discuss his crime or crimes (beyond the routine claim of complete innocence) but McMonigle, full of offensive bombast, boasted continually about the law's inability to find Thora's body. His resultant unpopularity didn't seem to bother him a bit.

Then, one day while his various appeals were dragging their way through the courts, McMonigle announced once again he would lead police to the spot where Thora was buried, in

Santa Clara county. Once again he was believed. A court order was issued, permitting McMonigle to leave Condemned Row for the purpose of guiding Santa Clara deputies to the spot.

On the day of his excursion, McMonigle summoned San Quentin's then warden, the great penologist, Clinton J. Duffy, to his cell.

"You gotta go along, Warden," he pleaded. "You've got to be there, because when we find the body, one of these cops will put a bullet through the girl's head and then claim that's how they found her. They never had a thing on me."

(In short, McMonigle was now confessing he knew where the girl's body was, but was denying that he killed her!)

The kindly but shrewd Duffy wasn't fooled for one minute by McMonigle's act but he humoured the killer because, as he put it, he thus might finally persuade McMonigle to talk.

The car full of deputies, warden and convicted slayer drove for more than two hours through the thickly wooded Santa Cruz mountains, through some of the most beautiful vacation land in California. Late in the afternoon, as the car passed an abandoned quarry, McMonigle yelled out, "Stop! This is the place! You'll find her down there!"

The searchers did not find her, of course.

McMonigle shook his shaggy head with vast regret and allowed as how maybe he had picked the wrong place today, but next time . . .

All concerned made sure there was no "next time." But McMonigle had a fine time in ensuing days, describing the delights of his outing and bragging how once more he had fooled the cops. As much as they probably disliked cops, such behaviour didn't endear the loudmouth to his fellow condemned.

Finally, all of McMonigle's appeals were rejected and his execution date was set for February 20, 1948. A few days after being advised of this fact, the murderer once again asked for Warden Duffy and, as was his duty, the warden answered the call. Much to Duffy's amazement, the condemned man opened their conversation by asking bluntly, "What happens after the execution?"

Since McMonigle had repulsed any attempts at spiritual consolation or clerical discussions of an after-life, Duffy thought that the irritating prisoner had devised some new way of baiting him. But the warden soon discovered that McMonigle had very serious concerns on his mind.

"After I'm dead, my body belongs to me or whoever claims it. Ain't that so?"

The warden conceded that it was.

"And if a guy wants to bring me back to life, that's O.K. too, huh?"

The astounded Duffy gazed closely at the impassive face of his prisoner. He knew that all recent medical reports had indicated that the big man was perfectly normal, both physically and mentally. Still, when time begins to run out on a man on The Row, he sometimes just can't take it . . .

"You feel all right, Mac?" the warden asked cautiously.

"Why sure, Warden. You probably think I'm kiddin', but I ain't. I know a guy who can do it. He's got a machine that'll bring me out of it after I get the gas."

Now convinced that his charge had indeed gone off the deep end, Warden Duffy made a soothing answer and hastened off to order an immediate psychiatric examination of the doomed man. The doctors reported McMonigle normal and next day Duffy was visited by Dr. Robert Cornish, of Berkeley, California.

Dr. Cornish was almost as strange a character as Thomas McMonigle himself. His obsession was restoring the dead to life. He had spent most of his career in developing techniques to achieve that strange goal. For a long time he had experimented on dogs, to the great disgust and anger of his Berkeley neighbours. Once, this experimenter had actually been prosecuted for cruelty to animals.

Now, Cornish told the warden he had received a communication from McMonigle (not specifying how it had been sent), suggesting that the doctor use the killer's freshly-gassed body in a revival attempt. This seemed a splendid idea to Cornish and he had come, he said, to obtain the warden's consent to the procedure.

The doctor planned to take McMonigle's body from the gas chamber immediately the prison doctor pronounced him dead. Then Dr. Cornish planned to inject various medications directly into the veins and after that, place the corpse into some sort of machine, his own invention, that would set the blood in motion and eventually induce a heartbeat.

Dr. Cornish stressed the fact that his great problem had always been getting to the defunct while they were . . . shall we say *fresh* enough . . . "I've tried half a dozen times," he told Duffy, "but I can never get to them soon enough. I must have the body immediately."

Ah, countered Duffy, there was the rub. Didn't Dr. Cornish realize, he asked politely, that McMonigle's body would have to remain in the gas chamber for

at least an hour before it could be *safely* removed? The concentration of hydrocyanic gas in the small cubicle is so dangerous that powerful blowers are kept running for half an hour after an execution to pump out the deadly fumes. At the same time, the chamber and its apparatus are neutralized with ammonia. There's another half-hour waiting period, Duffy continued, for absolute safety; even after these precautions the men who enter the chamber to remove the condemned's body wear gas masks and rubber gloves.

Still unconvinced, the good doctor argued longer with the patient warden and finally left in a huff.

He did not return.

When Duffy told McMonigle his "experiment" was banned, the shaggy-haired killer brooded for a long time. Finally, he came up with his final nose-thumbing at authority. State law in California permits a condemned man to invite *any* five witnesses to his execution that he may choose. McMonigle calmly advised the San Quentin administration that he wished to invite his now divorced wife and a former mistress to observe his passing.

The rules of San Quentin forbid women to witness executions.

So once again Thomas McMonigle had representatives of organized society in a quandary. Fortunately for the prison officials, both ladies refused his kind invitation. At ten o'clock on the morning of Friday, February 20, 1948, an end was put to Thomas McMonigle's lies, boastings . . . and confessions.

But even in death he set a standard. The number of witnesses that attended his execution, 75, has never been equalled at San Quentin.

LESLIE CHARTERIS'

The saint on TV

ROGER MOORE meets an old friend

As we said last month, a lot of hard work goes into the filming of anything seen on the screen or TV today! A lot of hard, grueling and exhausting work!

There is one actor in "The Saint" series who would agree wholeheartedly with this—if he could talk.

This is an old friend of Roger Moore's—Shane, the horse he rode so many times in "Ivanhoe" and now rides in the "Teresa" episode in the present series.

When he was about to film the scene he discovered, to his astonishment, that he was once again astride Shane.

Actually he needn't have been surprised. Whenever you see a horse in a principal role in a British film or TV production, the odds are that it will be Shane. The seventeen year old horse is England's busiest and most famous equine actor.

Dermot Walsh rode him when playing the title role in "Richard the Lionheart". Peter O'Toole rode him in "Becket". Sir Laurence Olivier rode him in "The Devil's Disciple". Vivien Leigh rode him in "The Roman Holiday of Mrs. Stone".

Shane, who is on neighing terms with all the big-name stars, is understandably popular with the directors. He has never been known to talk back, or to protest that he'd been handed an impossible assignment. He has in fact never been known to throw a rider, to show any signs of temperament or to balk at a difficult task. There is of course no way of knowing what his private opinion has been of some of the actors he has worked with, but then this may be just as well. . . . He has continued to fall when he was supposed to fall, without harming either himself or his rider,—to lie down when he was supposed to, to canter up steps or to charge through fire. In "Cleopatra", in

the scenes shot in England before production was switched to Italy, he had to race up a lot of steps and through fires. He had a narrow escape from injury that time when he slipped off a barge and plunged into water.

Shane, who has cantered into London's swank Dorchester Hotel and around Marble Arch on publicity stunts, was a hunter until being trained for the films. His first job in his new career was in "The Black Knight", with Alan Ladd as his rider. It was an exciting movie debut which meant going to Spain on location; Shane, it so happens, is of Spanish stock.

Ater this came quieter times, except perhaps when Peter O'Toole rode him in "Becket", and there is reason to believe that Shane did not object too much to this change of pace. Horses, more than their riders at times, have a sense of the proprieties after all, and a British horse, even if he is of Spanish stock, cannot be expected to take calmly this type casting of him as someone who enjoys dashing through fires and battles and such brouhahas. It's undignified, that's what it is.

But one can appreciate old friends.

When Shane and Roger Moore met again, Roger Moore remembered the time, when they were doing the "Ivanhoe" series, when the stirrup broke, and he went right under Shane. "He was very gentlemanly and didn't step on me".

This may have been the reason. . . .

"But Shane cost me a small fortune in peppermints. I had to give him some every time we worked together, and he came to expect them from me. But it was worrying to work with him. He was always a real camera-hog, trying to steal the scenes."

In other words, there *are* fringe benefits in the profession. . .

As we go to press, there is still no word from Simon Templar on this subject of actors who do not talk back. There is in fact reason to believe that he approves more of some other in "Teresa", such as Lana Morris, the British actress who plays the title role opposite Roger Moore, and who portrays (as readers of this magazine will remember) a Mexican beauty who sets out to discover whether she is a widow.

But then this may be mere hearsay.

At least Shane hopes so.

He prefers the brand of peppermints Roger Moore buys. . .

derelict

by Richard Hardwick

EXCEPT FOR the long ground swell that came from the southeast, the sea was glassy-smooth as a mill pond, and had been for two days. The bos'n, at the tiller of the launch of the freighter *S.S. North Star*, grumbled as they drew closer to the trawler. He was not at all in accord with the ship's stopping. They should be on their way to Jacksonville, where a dark-haired girl with flashing white teeth waited for him.

"See anybody yet, Barnes?" the mate said.

"No sir," the bos'n said. "Probably asleep, or drunk. Damn waste of time, I say."

The two seamen nodded their assent to this. The mate, Mr. Ward, ignored the opinion and concentrated his attention on the drifting shrimpboat, which was now close enough for him to make out the name on her stern.

"*Belle Marie*, out of Brunswick," he said. "Watch those lines when you come alongside, bos'n."

The launch eased alongside the shrimper and one of the seamen went aboard and made fast a line. The bos'n cut his

There are communities in this country which we in the cities do not really know—communities such as the one which Armand Mendenez belongs—where life has not changed much in these last generations. There may have been "improvements" in the tools used to wrest a livelihood from the sea, but there has been no change in the ability of man to hate man—

engine. In the sudden quiet there was only the faint sloshing of water below decks and the creaks and clank of the boat's gear as she rolled to the slow swells.

"Ahoy!" Mr. Ward shouted. "Ahoy aboard the *Belle Marie!* Are you in trouble?"

No answer came, nor had the mate expected one. He had shrimped in his younger days and when his ship had come upon the boat he had known something was wrong. She was too far at sea for one thing. And she was drifting with her net out. The ship had been unable to raise her by radio and several blasts of the ship's whistle had failed to produce any response.

Mr. Ward went into the pilothouse. The wheel was held by a becket, indicating that the boat had been in a gentle turn. The throttle was advanced, leading him to believe she had run until her fuel was exhausted. A light jacket hung from the bulkhead behind the helmsman's stool, swinging slowly like a pendulum as the boat rolled.

He went through into the stateroom in the centre of the deckhouse. The radio was off, the two bunks made up. Directly aft of that was the galley. Two cups of coffee stood on the table and a coffee pot was on the stove. Mr. Ward poked a finger into one cup of coffee. It was cold.

"Take a look below in the engine room, bos'n. Watts, you have a look aft in the fish hold."

Mr. Ward went back into the stateroom, found a manila envelope stuffed behind the radio. He opened it and, half-aloud, he read from the registration papers. "*Belle Marie,* Brunswick, Ga. Owner, Armand Mendenez . . ."

"Nobody in the engine room, Mr. Ward," Barnes reported. "Engine's cold, too."

"Some shrimp on ice in the fish hold," Watts said. "Nothing else."

The bos'n swallowed, feeling a sudden chill at the back of his neck. "Whatdya suppose happened to 'em, Mr. Ward?" He looked out at his ship standing two hundred yards off, and he wished again that they were on their way to Jacksonville. He thought of the dark-haired girl. . . .

Captain Armand Mendenez met Tony Vasquez for the first time at the northeast corner of the building occupied by the Southern Shrimp Packing Co. The two men met head-on as they rounded the corner going in opposite directions.

Captain Armand, a peaceable and generally even-tempered man, backed up from the impact, a grin already beginning

to form on his creased face. But Vasquez moved forward and grabbing the older man by the front of his shirt, growled, "Why don't you look where you're going, old man! I ought to teach you something!" With a violent motion he flung Captain Armand against the side of the building. The old man's head smacked the clapboard planking, knocking his hat off. Vasquez shook him once, and as if dismissing it, threw him aside.

But Armand Mendenez had regained his balance and had overcome the surprise of the younger man's assault, and he was not a man to let such an affront pass lightly. As Vasquez continued on his way, Captain Armand eased out his left foot. It caught Vasquez in midstride. Vasquez pitched forward on the rough planking of the dock barely saving his handsome face a skinning by cushioning the fall with his arms.

The small group of men who were talking together at the far end of the dock laughed. Captain Armand sensed that the encounter was not ended. Having never backed away from trouble in his sixty-five years, he stood his ground and waited to see what the younger man was going to do.

"O.K., old man. O.K. You asked for this." He came at Captain Armand in a rush. Armand waited until the last fraction of a second and side-stepped as lightly as a man a third his age. One hand went out and gave just the proper amount of assistance to Vasquez's forward motion. Vasquez went by, off-balance, and suddenly found himself flat on his belly ten feet away.

"Maybe it is just your temper and not your manners," Captain Armand said. The group of men had moved down the dock and were all looking at Vasquez and laughing.

Vasquez got up again, his eyes never leaving Captain Armand's face. He brushed himself off very deliberately, and then he reached a hand into his pocket and came out with a knife. With a slight clicking sound a long shining blade sprang out of the handle.

"None o' that!" one of the men in the group said. "Put the knife away, Vasquez!"

Vasquez waved the knife, his eyes still on Captain Armand, "Nobody does that to Tony Vasquez and gets away with it. Nobody."

"You started the whole business yourself, Vasquez," one of the other men said.

Another of the men had picked up an oar from beside the building and was positioning it on his shoulder like a baseball bat. Vasquez's eyes darted to the group, then he muttered something under his

breath and with both hands closed the knife. He jammed it into his pocket, and turning, walked rapidly away in the direction from which he had come.

"You O.K., Captain Armand?" one of the men said.

Armand looked after the retreating form. "I am all right," he said. "Who is that fellow? I don't think I have seen him before."

"Guy by the name of Tony Vasquez. He's been in town a couple of months." The man gave a chuckle. "You showed him a thing or two, you sure did!"

Captain Armand straightened his cap. "Well, I had better be getting home. Marie will be looking for me."

The incident passed quickly from Captain Armand's mind. The thing that occupied his thoughts now, three days later, was the appointment with Dr. Phillips which Marie had insisted upon. He sat across the desk from the doctor, fidgetting, wanting to get out into the open air. He did not like the antiseptic smell of hospitals and doctors' offices.

The examination had been completed, and the doctor looked across the desk at Armand. "I hear you've been brawling down around the docks. Don't you think you're a little old for that sort of thing?"

"You hear——" Then he remembered the incident with the young man, Vasquez. He laughed and nodded his head. "This is a town of gossipers."

Dr. Phillips leaned forward, resting his elbows on the desk. "Armand, why don't you retire? Your boats would bring you in a good income without you having to go out. You're only sixty-five, and there are a great many years still in you—*if* you slow down."

Armand waved a hand, dismissing the idea.

"I mean it," the doctor went on. "It isn't your age that's against you. It's this . . ." The doctor tapped his chest meaningfully. "You could get a captain for the *Belle Marie,* the same as you have for your other two boats. Or you could lease her out. You could sit in a rocking chair on your front porch and take life easy."

"I would drop dead in a week sitting in a rocking chair," Mendenez said, making a face. "And you know it."

"You've had three coronaries, my friend——"

"*Two!*" Mendenez said authoritatively. "Two small ones. And I am still not convinced it was not simply something I ate."

Dr. Phillips tapped the manila folder on his desk. "Three.

And they were not little, nor were they indigestion. You could digest an anchor without a twinge. I'm telling you this as your doctor and your friend. There are not many more left in that heart of yours."

Armand Mendenez got up from his chair. He took the small vial of pills from his pocket and grinned at the doctor. "Maybe next year I will retire. In the meantime I will carry these with me just in case you really went to a medical school as you say, and know what you are talking about!"

He went out and walked down Gloucester Street. The heart held no terrors for him. His had been a useful, happy and full life, and when one more thing was done he would be as ready to die as he ever could be. But he would not die sitting in a rocking chair.

His thoughts went to Marie. She was his only child and had come along when Armand was forty-three and after he and Stella had become accustomed to the idea that they were not to be blessed with children. Stella died in childbirth and so the daughter meant more to Armand than she perhaps would have otherwise.

Young Joe Franco was a slow and deliberate man, but it could not be long before he asked Marie the question. And Marie, of course, would say yes. . . .

Captain Armand smiled to himself and took a deep breath of the pungent air of the waterfront as he reached the wharf where the *Belle Marie* lay tied alongside.

"Mornin', Cap'n Armand." Charlie Odum, his striker, slouched in the open door of the pilothouse, a mug of black coffee in one hand. "Ready to pull out?"

"I want to call Marie first. Is everything ready?"

Charlie nodded and scratched under his left arm. Captain Armand walked down the wharf towards the packing house.

"Hi, Captain Armand!" Joe Franco greeted him. Franco was a tall young man with prominent features and thick black hair which was closely cut. His usual grin was lacking.

"Good morning, Joe."

"Fixing to go out?"

"As soon as I telephone Marie. I promised to call her after I saw the doctor this morning. That is the way women are, always worrying. By the way, you got a date with Marie tonight?"

Joe Franco scratched his head. "I—I thought I did. We had a sort of understanding about Friday nights, you know. But I talked to her myself just a few minutes ago and she said she had other plans."

Armand Mendenez frowned. "What does she mean?"

"Search me. Women I don't understand." He scratched his head again. "I kind of had something I wanted to ask her, and . . ." He shrugged resignedly. "I got to get a move on, Captain Armand. See you later."

Armand Mendenez went quickly into the building and called the bank where Marie worked.

"Baby," he said when he had her on the line, "what is this I hear that you are not going out with Joe tonight? Don't you feel good? Maybe I better not take the boat out today."

"Joe is not the only boy in the world, Papa."

He could not answer right away. Over the phone he heard the clicking of machines in the bank.

"What did the doctor say?" she asked him.

"The doctor—oh, he said I will live to be two hundred, at least. Are you *mad* with Joe?"

"No. Papa, I'm not mad with Joe. I'm just going out with someone else tonight."

Again there was the pause and the distant clicking of business machines.

"You are certain you are not mad with Joe?"

"Papa, we're very busy this morning."

Eddie Moriera? Maybe it was Eddie she was going out with, just to make Joe jealous. Women! "You and Eddie have a good time, baby."

"Papa!" she said, laughing. "You've got the curiosity of a hundred cats! All right, so that you won't wear out your brain wondering, I'm going out with a new boy, a very handsome boy, I might add. His name is Tony Vasquez. Now, are you satisfied?"

For a moment the name did not register, though he knew he had heard it somewhere recently. Then he remembered. He remembered the temper and the glistening knife and the hatred in the man's eyes.

"I've got to go now, Papa. Mr. Aiken is giving me very fierce glances. See you tomorrow. 'Bye."

The phone clicked and began to buzz in Armand Mendenez' ear. Slowly he hung the receiver up and walked outside.

The *Belle Marie* pulled away from the dock and headed down-river towards the bridge. Charlie Odum brought two mugs of coffee into the pilothouse and handed one to Mendenez.

"Charlie," he said when he had taken a deep swallow of the steaming coffee. "Charlie, do you know a man by the name of Tony Vasquez?"

Charlie laughed. "I heard you and him already met, Cap'n."

"Do you know anything about him?"

"Just heard a few things. He's been around town two, three months. Before that he put in a stretch at Raiford down in Florida. He hangs around the pool hall and some of the bars. I ain't heard nothing good about him yet."

Armand Mendenez stared ahead. "He's a—a *convict*?"

"Ex-con." Charlie finished his coffee. "Say, Cap'n, there's something I been wanting to talk to you about. My old lady's been after to me to get work in town. She don't like me being gone for long." He chuckled. "Guess she don't trust me. Anyhow, I hear tell they're going to be hiring out at the pulp mill in a week or two and I thought I might check on it. 'Course, I wouldn't do nothing till you got you another striker, but I thought I'd mention it to you."

"Sure. Charlie. Sure." But he was not thinking about what Charlie Odum had said. He was thinking about Tony Vasquez. And Marie.

For two weeks Marie saw Tony Vasquez every night. He never came to the house for her, but she would meet him somewhere.

One night at dinner, Armand Mendenez looked up from his plate. "What sort of a fellow is this you are going out with? Why doesn't he come here to get you, the way any decent boy would?"

"Tony is a decent boy, Papa. It's just that . . . well, he says you don't like him. He said you got mad at him one day when he accidentally bumped into you down at the wharf. He said you wanted to . . . to *fight* him! You know you shouldn't do things like that, Papa! Dr. Phillips says——"

"*Me*? Want to fight *him*?" He put his fork down on his plate. His face hardened. He would do it the direct way. "What do you know of this fellow, baby? Do you know that he was——"

"That he was in prison in Florida?" she interrupted. "Yes, Papa, I know about that."

Armand Mendenez' eyes widened in surprise. "How did you know about that?"

"Tony told me himself. He doesn't believe in holding things back. He admits he made a mistake. He ran with the wrong crowd and they stole an automobile."

"The wrong crowd!" Mendenez said, almost shouting. "It takes people to make a crowd. How can you say who is the crowd and who is just running with them?"

Marie got up from the table and began the dishes. "I may as well tell you now, Papa. Tony wants to marry me." She kept her eyes on what she was doing,

but he could see the flush that crept into her cheeks.

"Wants to——" He pushed his chair back and stared at his daughter in disbelief. "How can he—how can you——" He threw his napkin down onto the table. "You have known this fellow for only a few *days*, baby! He is much older than you! He does not even *work*! How can you——"

"*Papa!* Remember your heart!" She turned away quickly and carried some of the dishes into the kitchen. When she turned she said to her father, "Tony is not so old, he is barely thirty-two——"

"And you are *twenty*-two!"

"Mama was twelve years younger than you," she said gently.

"That was different," he said, turning away. He stared out the window of the old house, listening to Marie as she continued clearing away the dinnerware.

"Papa . . ." she said tentatively. "Maybe you don't understand him."

"I understand him all right! He is a loafer!"

"No. You're wrong. Tony wants work. It's hard to find for a man who has been in . . . prison."

"They're beginning to hire at the pulp mill," her father said. "I know one or two people out there I could speak to."

"I heard Charlie Odum is going to work out there, Papa. You need a striker on the *Belle Marie*."

He looked at his daughter for a moment as though he were seeing her for the first time. It suddenly occurred to him that perhaps he really did not know her. She was twenty-two. She was a woman, not a little girl. He wondered if all fathers were like that, thinking of their daughters not as women, but as little girls.

He turned away and went into the living-room. He picked up the newspaper and slumped down into his reading chair. After a while he peeled the cellophane wrapping from a cigar and soon was almost enveloped in a cloud of blue smoke. For some time there was only the sound of dishes being washed in the kitchen and the rustle of paper as Armand Mendenez turned the pages of the newspaper. Suddenly he threw the paper aside and got up, walking very erect into the kitchen.

"Marie."

"Yes, Papa?"

"Call this—this Vasquez. Tell him to come here to pick you up."

"Papa . . ." she said apprehensively.

"Tell him I want to talk to him. I want to find out if this fellow really wants to go to work because I need a striker aboard the *Belle Marie*."

Marie's eyes flashed. She dried

her hands and went quickly to the telephone in the hall.

Tony Vasquez stood in the centre of the room, his hands clasped behind his back. He was a handsome fellow, Armand Mendenez said to himself. But behind that smile, behind the dark eyes, there seemed to be contempt.

"I appreciate it, Captain Mendenez," he said. "I was hoping I could get a job on one of the boats."

"Well, we will see how it works out. You be at the dock at four in the morning. And I do not mean five minutes after four."

Vasquez nodded. "I'll be there." He turned to Marie. "Ready?"

She came to her father's chair and kissed him lightly. "We're going to a movie, Papa. I mustn't keep Tony out late tonight."

When they had gone Armand Mendenez sat staring at his newspaper. He read the same column three times and still did not know what he had read. He laid the paper aside and lit another cigar, grinning wryly at what Dr. Phillips would say if he saw him.

He watched the smoke drift towards the ceiling. Perhaps he was wrong about Vasquez, he thought. Perhaps he was simply a stupid old man who was afraid of being alone. He listened to the silence of the house. With Marie there, even if she were reading, or sleeping, there was the feeling of life.

Why then did he not have the same feeling about Joe Franco? He would have been pleased for Marie and Joe to get married. Where was the difference? The difference was in this man who had been to prison and who had some secret just behind his eyes and who loafed around poolhalls rather than trying to get a job at the pulp mill.

He picked his paper up again and tried very hard to interest himself in the news.

It went well the first week. Vasquez worked hard and seemed to know his business. They went out for a day or two at a time, speaking little, both men remembering that first encounter.

Then, one day as they were heading for the area they were to trawl, Vasquez stepped into the pilothouse from the stateroom.

"You don't want me to marry Marie, do you, Cap'n Armand."

"I want what is right for Marie. I am not sure you are."

"What have you got against me? You still sore about what happened that day at the docks? I was in a bad mood that day. I didn't know who you were. I'm sorry it happened."

Armand Mendenez leaned back on the helmsman's stool

and looked at the sea before him. The sea was calm and the ground swell long and smooth. Suddenly he felt very tired and old.

"We put the net out here," he said.

"You didn't answer me. You don't want me to marry Marie. Why?"

Amand Mendenez turned and looked at the younger man. "I said we put the net out here. You know what to do, now do it."

Vasquez glared at him for a moment, that same contemptuous shadow behind the black eyes, then he turned abruptly and went aft. Mendenez sighed. He was solving nothing. Perhaps he should not meddle, let Marie do as she pleased.

They pulled the net all that morning, speaking only the essential words to each other. By midmorning, the day had grown warm and Armand Mendenez hung his light jacket on the bulkhead behind his seat. He stood in the open door of the pilothouse disinterestedly watching several large sharks that trailed the boat for a free meal. The becket held the wheel slightly to port, holding the boat in a long radiused turn. Hardly a whisper of a breeze rippled the sea. After a while the aroma of brewing coffee reached him. He turned to go through the stateroom into the galley.

At that instant it hit him. It came suddenly, like a great vice gripping his chest, crushing the breath out of him. He took one step and slumped down on the helmsman's stool, his hand fumbling in his trouser pocket for the vial of nitroglycerin capsules. His hand dug in the pocket, touching only a few loose coins.

He remembered—The vial was in the pocket of the jacket hanging there on the bulkhead. The pain spread, swelling, and with it the terrible apprehension that this was *the* one, that death was here on the boat, impatiently waiting.

Armand Mendenez opened his mouth to call out to Vasquez, but no sound came. He turned, saw the jacket, reached a hand out for it. The boat rolled gently and the jacket swayed away.

". . . Tony . . . Tony . . ." his voice came as a constricted whisper.

"You looking for this, Captain?" Tony Vasquez' handsome, swarthy face swam up before him. His hand was extended and in the palm of it lay the little bottle.

Armand Mendenez reached out, but Vasquez danced back just out of reach. "What you got in here, Captain? You taking dope? Marie wouldn't like that." The smile broadened and he held up the bottle and regarded it curiously. "Come on, Captain, tell me what you got in here?

I'm a guy who likes kicks. Maybe I'd like some of this myself."

The pain grew immense, constricting, crushing like an invisible metal band. Death was close by now, swarming about him. He felt the beat of the engine, mild and far away now compared to the roar of his own heart. "Vasquez . . . medicine . . ." But all he saw in the eyes now was contempt.

"That's right, Captain. You don't get these. I know about that ticker of yours. Marie told me how you have to have these little pills." He tossed the bottle carelessly in the air. "I've been waiting for this day. You tried to mess me up with that homely daughter of yours. You tried to bust us up, and you might have done it if you had enough time. Your time's run out, Captain Mendenez. Now I'll marry your precious little girl and Mendenez' boats will be mine, and Mendenez' house on Bay Street and all his life insurance and his money. How do you like that, *Cap*tain!"

The torment being flung at him by Vasquez was worse than the physical pain he was enduring. With great clarity, he saw what was being done. There would be no way to know what had happened here. All Vasquez would have to say was that Mendenez had lost his pills and had died of a heart attack.

But if his body were gone . . .

If that were true, then something more than vague suspicion would fall on Vasquez. For in a calm sea who would believe for a moment that a fisherman such as Armand Mendenez could possibly have fallen overboard? How would Vasquez explain that! There would be no body to recover; the sharks would see to that.

Mendenez said a silent prayer, and summoning his strength against the killing pain that possessed him, pushed away from the helmsman stool and out the open door to the deck.

But Vasquez instantly realized what was happening. He dropped the vial of capsules and hurled himself after the old man.

Mendenez was at the rail, his back to the water, and he was falling when Vasquez reached him.

"No you don't, old man! No you *don't*!" His fingers clutched the front of Mendenez' shirt, just as they had on that first day. But then the old man's hands came up, the fingers bent like talons, and grabbed the arms. He pulled. With all his dying strength, Armand Mendenez pulled. . . .

Mr. Ward, third mate of the *S.S.North Star*, finished reading the registration.

"Where—where are they?" the bos'n said, looking longingly out

through the open door towards his ship.

The mate slowly shook his head.

"I—I don't like it, Mr. Ward," the bos'n said. "Whatdya say we get on back to the ship. We can take her in tow and call the Coast Guard."

The mate nodded. They went out through the galley, and Mr. Ward paused a moment, looking down at the cold coffee.

"The *Belle Marie*. . . . You know, Barnes, there was another vessel by the name of Marie. You ever heard of the *Marie Celeste*?"

He touched the cold cup of coffee, then turned and went out to where the launch lay alongside.

WORLD-WIDE RESEARCH PROJECT ON BLOODSTAINS

Scotland Yard's scientists have been asked by Interpol to take charge of a world-wide research project to determine the age of bloodstains. Police scientists of seventeen participating countries are agreed that the discovery of reliable physical and scientific methods would be a significant advance in the detection of crime.

England has been chosen to co-ordinate the project because of the work done by her forensic scientists in this field. Dr. Barbara Dodd, lecturer in forensic medicine at London Hospital, and Mr. Robin Coomb, of Cambridge University's department of pathology, have found a way to identify the group of a bloodstain too small to be seen by the naked eye. Dr. Lewis Nickols, who has just retired as director of Scotland Yard's laboratory, and Miss M. Pereira, his serologist, adapted the method for "everyday use" at the Yard. Dr. Nickols' successor, Dr. H. J. Walls, has also taken over from his predecessor as director of the Interpol research project.

A world-wide research programme is planned. Close contact is maintained with laboratories in France, Holland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Although no Communist country is a member of Interpol (since Czechoslovakia's resignation after the War), Hungary is one of the countries which will help, as will authorities in Switzerland, Germany and Japan. It is expected that by 1966, possibly even earlier, a report will be ready for presentation to Interpol.

An example of the practical application of what the Yard laboratory is pioneering in is the case this winter when Dr. Nickols estimated the age of a bloodstain at a murder trial. The man being tried was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment.

the triumph of chowderhead doon

by Lawrence G. Blochman

IT WAS TOO BAD about the forty or fifty innocent strangers who would have to die. It was too bad, too, about Chowderhead Doon—in a way. It was not at all too bad about Jim Benjamin who was, after all, an ex-cop and an insurance investigator. He was well paid to risk his life and had always made a career of rubbing elbows with death. Chowderhead, though, bothered Mickey Ewing a little. Chowderhead had been a rather nice hood, useful in a stupid, strong-arm sort of way, until his nerves had started to crack—but Chowderhead was expendable and it couldn't be helped. When his own skin was on the line, Mickey Ewing was not a man to worry about fifty lives more or less. Or when two hundred thousand dollars was on the line.

The execution was Rhoda's idea. So was the original scheme for the armored-car robbery—one of those little burps of genius that kept coming up every so often, as she was at pains to point out. Rhoda may have been a little worried about her own skin, but there was no doubt that her greater concern

Some months ago we featured Lawrence G. Blochman's latest story about Detective Sergeant Pete Potrero, the big broadshouldered Yaqui with the dark eyes of the born cop (THE DEAD MEN LAUGHED, SMM, Dec. 1963). Now meet Chowderhead Doon, a rather nice hood and useful enough in a stupid strongarm way. Mr. Blochman, a past National President of the Mystery Writers, is a longtime officer of the Overseas Press Club.

was for the two hundred grand. Rhoda may have been momentarily infatuated with Mickey Ewing, but her deep and lasting love was money.

Rhoda was the lovely, loved, and unloving wife of the graying, sedate dispatcher for an armored-trucking firm, a mousy, absent-minded paragon of virtue named Caesar Greene. Caesar's wife considered herself above suspicion. So, apparently, did Caesar Greene, who did not even remember that Rhoda had casually milked him of pertinent details of the $200,000. pickup.

Rhoda, however, remembered enough to pass on to Mickey Ewing, and the interception had gone off so smoothly that even the driver of the parked armored car, snug in his steel-clad stronghold, did not know what was going on until after the guard and the money had been spirited into the stolen get away car and were lost in traffic. By the time the police had moved in, the stolen car had been abandoned, Frankie Tasker and the money were at Idlewild airport on their way to Puerto Rico, and Chowderhead Doon was in the quivering depths of the profound indigo funk which was to prove his undoing.

Chowderhead's panic had been brought on by one unscheduled incident in the otherwise neatly-planned operation: the guard who had been snatched along with the money died suddenly in a back street of Queens. His death was an accident. Chowderhead and Frankie Tasker had meant only to silence him, but they did not know their own strength. They had not meant to break his neck.

While Chowderhead and Frankie Tasker were carrying out the active details of the robbery, Mickey Ewing and Rhoda had remained discreetly aloof on the executive level. Remaining aloof was Ewing's new pattern of life. He had originally been a garage mechanic and part-time safe-cracker. He had been successful in both careers, but his safe-cracking had been outstanding. Not only had he never been caught, but he was practically ready to retire at such an early age that his Draft Board made other arrangements for him.

Mickey Ewing served the U.S. Army well and faithfully and for once the Army made full use of a man's special talents. He was eminently fitted for bomb-detonation and mine-clearance squads. And when he returned to civilian life, he took with him a few souvenirs, just like any other G.I. But instead of Mausers or Leicas or samurai swords or oriental dildoes, Ewing collected fulminating caps, time fuses, and representative samples of enemy high explosives which he stored away carefully in the workroom of his Greenwich Vil-

lage apartment against the day when he might have to go back into business.

Ewing had practically decided to give up his life of crime and make a career of marrying for money when he met the black-haired, black-hearted Rhoda. He had picked her up in an expensive cocktail lounge. As she was groomed with an elegant simplicity that spelled opulence, he could hardly have been expected to guess that she was already married and to a man whose honesty far exceeded his net cash worth. However, Rhoda was such a lively and luscious pixy that Ewing did not really regret having allowed his eye to stray momentarily from the ball. At least, he had no reason to regret it until she came to his apartment three nights after the robbery.

He had categorically forbidden her to visit him until the police had abandoned their inside-job theory and stopped questioning Caesar Greene. He had been wasting his breath. Rhoda took orders from no man. She kissed him lightly as she sailed through his front door, breezed into the living room, tossed her soft felt cloche to the divan and sat down beside it. As Ewing glared at her, she crossed her shapely legs and shook out her wavy black hair until her coral earrings swung like twin pendulums. The coral was the exact shade of her lipstick.

"Didn't I tell you, Rhoda—?" Ewing began.

"I had to talk to you, darling, and I don't trust telephones." Rhoda lit a cigarette.

"Aren't the cops still working on your husband."

"They've still got him in that hotel room, if that's what you mean."

"Then you've been followed, sure as hell."

"I've often been followed, darling." She blew a smoke ring at him. "I'm used to it. So I know I wasn't followed here tonight. Darling, we'll have to get rid of Chowderhead Doon."

Mickey Ewing sat down beside her. "Why?" he demanded.

"The cops found the getaway car in a Queens parking lot."

"That was in the morning papers. So what? They didn't find any prints, did they?"

"Not on the car, no. The boys wiped it clean. But they didn't wipe the guard before they pushed him out. Frankie Tasker left a perfect set of prints on the guard's belt—and Frankie's pinkies have been on file for years."

Ewing stiffened. Then he leaned back and smiled. "Nobody will look for Frankie Tasker in Puerto Rico," he said.

"The cops won't." Rhoda blew another smoke ring. "But Jim Benjamin will. Our smart little

insurance dick went over the stolen car with the cops, and he found something the law missed —that airline schedule you marked up for Frankie with the Puerto Rico flight. It must have dropped out of his pocket. It was wedged down behind the driver's seat."

Ewing swore. "Who told you all this?"

Rhoda smiled coquettishly. "Benjamin," she said.

"Rhoda, have you been—?"

"Not what you think, darling. Benjamin is a very sweet guy, but a little sentimental for a dick. He thinks I'm upset about the way the cops are giving Caesar the going-over, so he encourages me by dropping a few hints about how he's going to clear my poor husband and put the finger on the real culprits."

"What's all this got to do with Chowderhead?"

"Look." Rhoda's slim white fingers played piano on Ewing's lapels. "The big lunk is scared spitless. If they pick up Tasker, Chowderhead will snap like an old garter. He doesn't mind a little good clean robbery as long as he gets his cut, but murder slays him. He's terrified of the chair, and he'll sell us down the river to stay out of it. He'll turn state's evidence. That you can count on. He practically told me so this afternoon."

"You mean you saw—? Didn't I tell you to say away from—?"

"Relax, darling." Rhoda mussed his hair. "The big stiipe phoned me. His voice was half dead. He was obviously such bad news that I had to see for myself. I met him for a drink. Mickey, he's a total loss. He hasn't slept since Monday. He's been drinking like a school of kippered herring."

"So?"

"So I had another slight burp of genius. Two birds with one tombstone. We put Chowderhead on the plane that takes Jim Benjamin to Puerto Rico tomorrow, and the plane blows up over the ocean with no survivors. It worked in Montreal."

"It worked in Montreal," said Ewing slowly, "only they caught the guy that worked it."

"The Canadian was a stupid jerk," Rhoda said. "He never heard of oceans. You're not stupid, darling. You know about oceans. Besides, you're very clever with your hands and you know all about explosives. Can't you make a cute little time bomb that will go off when the plane is way out there over the Atlantic? They can't find evidence at the bottom of the Atlantic, can they? They can't even find that submarine. So Chowderhead Doon will carry your cute little bomb aboard the eleven o'clock plane tomorrow in a briefcase."

Ewing stood up. He was frowning as he went to the sideboard and fumbled for a bottle

and glasses. He poured two drinks in silence. As he handed one to Rhoda, he asked: "How do you know Jim Benjamin is taking the eleven o'clock plane tomorrow? Why isn't he leaving tonight?"

"Because Jim Benjamin is a little sentimental, like I told you," Rhoda replied, "and he's a good family man. He won't leave tonight for two reasons: it's his fifth wedding anniversary and it's his little boy's third birthday. And I know he's got a seat on that eleven o'clock plane because I called all the airlines."

Ewing gulped his whisky and made a face. He walked to the telephone, came back, gestured silently at Rhoda with his empty glass, then walked to the sideboard and poured more whisky. His handsome chin jutted forward half an inch as he pointed the glass at Rhoda.

"All right, suppose we get rid of Chowderhead Doon and Jim Benjamin," he argued. "What makes you think we can shake the whole New York police force? It's a cinch that Benjamin has told the cops what he's up to."

"It's a cinch he hasn't told the cops the time of day!" Rhoda laughed. "And you know why not."

Ewing grunted. Rhoda was right. He did know why Jim Benjamin would want to crack this case—any case—without and before the police. Benjamin had once been on the force himself: detective, second grade. He had been demoted three years ago when, during a graft investigation, he had refused to testify against his superiors who were making him the scapegoat. He would certainly welcome the chance to repay his current employers for their faith in him by recouping the loot single handed. And playing the lone wolf in this case would give him the satisfaction of beating his former colleagues at their own game.

"Okay," said Mickey Ewing at last. "I'll phone Chowderhead."

"You whip up that cute little gimmick I mentioned," Rhoda insisted, "and I'll phone Chowderhead. He's suspicious of you. He thinks you're ready to throw him to the wolves. He'll be here at nine-thirty tomorrow morning. So will I."

Ewing was quite proud of his handiwork. It had taken him most of the night to assemble. He rather regretted sacrificing an expensive travelers' clock, but the cheaper model alarm clocks had an audible tick. The alarm release closed the circuit connecting a portable-radio battery, an induction coil, two lengths of fine wire imbedded in a percussion cap, and a generous charge of high explosive—enough to tear the bowels out of any commercial plane on the Caribbean run.

The package had been neatly fitted into an anonymous-looking briefcase he had bought at an all-night Broadway bazaar. The timing mechanism was set for noon, when the eleven-o'clock flight would be well out over the Atlantic.

Rhoda Greene arrived promptly at nine-thirty. For ten nervous minutes she made light-hearted banter to assure Ewing that Chowderhead Doon would certainly turn up. He just couldn't fail. Ewing, however, paced the floor non-stop until the front-door buzzer announced Chowderhead Doon.

Chowderhead was a big, pasty-faced man with a little-boy's mouth, a moose jaw, pig eyes, and no forehead. He was somewhat less than enthusiastic about his Caribbean mission. Despite the hour, he was a little drunk—and more than a little apprehensive. His hands shook as he took off his raincoat. He refused to sit down, as though the word "chair" was enough to unnerve him completely. His lips worked for a full ten seconds before they could form words.

"What . . . what are you trying to do to me, Mick?" he stammered.

"I'm doing you a big favor," Ewing said. "You know very well the cops and that insurance dick are breathing down your neck. Things are pretty hot around here since that guard died, so we thought you ought to take a little vacation till they cool off. Wouldn't you rather sit under a palm tree and drink rum, instead of sitting down on fifty thousand volts?"

"No soap," said Chowderhead defiantly. "I ain't going. If I run away they'll say I'm guilty and I ain't. I didn't kill that guard."

"Of course you didn't," said Rhoda sweetly. "We know Frankie Tasker did it. But you know the law. You were in on the hijacking. You took part in a felony in which a man was killed. That's first-degree murder in this state." Rhoda put her arm around his shoulders. "Besides, Mickey wants you to take this briefcase to Frankie."

"What's in it?" Chowderhead hefted the case. "It's kind of heavy."

coin. It's hot, so I want to get it out of town. The cops may subpoena my safe-deposit box."

"Gold," said Ewing. "Gold

"It's locked," Chowderhead whined. "Where's the key?"

"Airmailed to Frankie Tasker. You know our agreement. Nobody opens any locked community property unless two of us are on deck."

Chowderhead Doon made a face. He shook his head. "I bet Frankie's already got his mitts on that two hundred G's. I bet he's got most of it stashed away in a mattress and is blowing the

rest on booze and those tropical dames."

"That's another reason we want you to go down there, Big Boy," Rhoda said, toying with Chowderhead's tie. "We want you to keep an eye on our interests, just in case Frankie gets ideas. And you'll have to hurry. Your plane leaves in about an hour. You'll just make it."

She draped Doon's raincoat over his left forearm and handed him the briefcase.

"Here's a hundred bucks," Ewing said. "That'll cover your taxi to Idlewild and some clean shirts and underwear. And in case you can't raise Frankie until tomorrow, it'll pay your hotel in San Juan tonight. We'll send you your ticket home as soon as the heat is off."

"In a week or two." Rhoda kissed him on the cheek. "Unless we come down to join you—in the Paradise of the Caribbean."

"That's a hot one." Chowderhead grinned at last. "Reunion in Paradise."

"Goodbye and good luck," Ewing said.

"I'll see you to your cab, Big Boy," Rhoda volunteered. "It's stopped raining."

Mickey Ewing rarely took a drink before the sun was over the yardarm, but when Rhoda returned from outside, he was sloshing rye into a water tumbler.

"Well, that's that," Rhoda said listlessly. "I wanted to make sure the cabby got our friend to the right place." She sat down heavily. She brushed a wisp of dark hair back from her forehead. "At least as far as his first stop," she added, staring into space. She laughed briefly, mirthlessly. Her eyes focused suddenly on Ewing. "Don't be such an anti-feminist, darling," she said. "Give the girl a drink. It's getting very dry around here."

They played gin rummy for half an hour while the level in the bottle sank steadily.

At ten past eleven Ewing went to the phone.

"The plane got off on time," he said, as he hung up. "Another hand of gin?"

"Another three fingers of rye, if it's all the same to you, darling." She held out her glass.

"Here's to Chowderhead," Ewing said.

"Poor old Chowderhead. And here's to poor old Jim Benjamin, too. He really was a very sweet guy."

At five minutes to twelve Ewing got up to turn on the radio. A soprano was singing something sentimental.

"I want to catch the twelve o'clock news," Ewing said.

"It's still too early for news," Rhoda said. "Didn't you set your gadget for noon?"

"Noon exactly. I synchronized

it with Meridian Seven. But I want to listen anyhow. Suppose the plane had to put back to Idlewild with engine trouble or something."

At three minutes to twelve the front-door buzzer whined. Rhoda went to open.

Chowderhead Doon stood on the threshold, his raincoat draped over one arm. There was a moment of silence. The radio was singing Tosti's *Goodbye Forever.*

"You damned double-crossers!" roared Chowderhead as he strode into the apartment. "I might have known you'd try to frame me!"

"Come in and relax, Big Boy," Rhoda said, "and tell us what's up."

Sweat suddenly spangled Ewing's brow as he stared at the scowling giant. "Where . . . where's the briefcase?" he croaked.

Chowderhead ignored the question. "You knew that insurance dick was going on my plane," he shouted. "If I hadn't spotted him going up the ramp, I'd have walked right into his arms. But I high-tailed it out of there before he recognized me. You tipped off Jim Benjamin that I was taking that plane, you damn—."

"The briefcase!" screamed Ewing. He lunged at Chowderhead Doon, snatching for the rain coat hanging over his left arm.

Chowderhead swung a looping right that had two hundred pounds behind it when it smacked against the point of Ewing's jaw. Ewing staggered backward, spun around, knocked over a chair, and crashed into the card table which promptly collapsed. He lay motionless in a litter of playing cards and broken glass. The last of the rye dripped on his outstretched hand from the upset bottle.

"Take it easy, Big Boy!" Rhoda licked her dry lips. "Tell us what you did with the briefcase."

"I got it right here," crowed Doon. He stepped back and lifted the raincoat to reveal a gleam of new leather. "What's more, I'm going to keep it. The gold's mine, now. The hell with you double-crossers!"

Rhoda's composure vanished. Here eyes were wide, her face ashen. She shrieked: "Get out of here! Quick! Get out!"

Frantically she pushed him toward the door. He dug in his heels and stood his ground, puzzled.

"Now wait a minute," he said. "You can't push me around any more. You can't. . . ."

"When you hear the signal," the radio was saying, "the time will be twelve noon exactly."

Nobody in the room heard the signal. It is even doubtful that any of them heard the roar of the explosion.

AN EDITORIAL ASIDE

This is the 110th issue of this magazine.

This month we are again bringing you stories, distinguished stories, which in a sense hold up a mirror to our times, or to the times which we have so recently known. For instance, Steve Fisher could have been there as Anna leaned down and kissed the dying girl, moments before the planes were once more to strafe war-town Shanghai. Anna's problem that evening was and is the problem of the stateless, those persons who have no country to return to and so often, as in her case, only vague memories. And no hope. . . .

As for Matt Parker, detective first grade, in Lawrence Treat's story, he is a human being, one of those thousands of men whose job it is to protect the rest of us. And so is Armand Mendenez, Captain of the *Belle Marie*, out of Brunswick, in Richard Hardwick's story. And so for that matter is Chowderhead Doon, "that rather nice hood, useful in a stupid strong-arm way", whom we meet, all too briefly, in Lawrence G. Blochman's story.

And so of course is Thomas H. McMonigle who is remembered by connoisseurs of murder not for the way or ways in which he murdered—but for the number and variety of his confessions—about whom J. Francis McComas writes. These are all flesh-and-blood people.

And so, though those who prefer the more rugged school of detection may disagree, is Peter Wimsey.

There is undoubtedly a "quality of yesterday" to the world of Lord Peter and to some extent it must be admitted that this is so. Manners and *mores*—particularly public *mores*—have most certainly changed in the generation since, for instance, THE HAUNTED POLICEMAN was written, and it is to be doubted that Lord Peter would quite approve of some of the extra curricular interests of the students at his own College. But who among us, unless very young, will argue that this is necessarily progress?

Next month, as announced elsewhere, we are featuring Wenzell Brown's thrilling novel of Havana in 1969, "a city outwardly gay, filled with music and joyous laughter—but inwardly torn with strife." And also Edgar Wallace's unusual THE BLACK GRIPPE, Stuart Palmer's story of THE PLUPERFECT MURDER, and Robert L. Fish's wicked little vignette, LADY IN THE SOUP. All this and also Leslie Charteris' exciting Saint story, THE REVOLUTION RACKET.

See you next month! H.S.S.

game of skill

by Edward D. Hoch

BERTHA bustled in from the telephone, interrupting their chess game with a mumbled message. "Man wants to talk to the head priest."

Father Malloy looked up from the contemplation of his next move. "I guess that's you, Dave."

Father David Noone nodded unhappily. "Afraid so. Don't cheat while I'm gone now." He followed Bertha out to the little telephone room that served as the rectory office and general working space for a score or more projects. Sitting down carefully at the desk he cleared his throat and picked up the waiting phone. "This is Father Noone. The Monsignor is away for a week. Perhaps I can be of service."

The voice, a man's, said only ten words. "I'm going to blow up your church on Sunday morning."

"What? Who is this, please?"

But the click in his ear told him the man was gone. He stared at the phone in his hand for a moment and then hung it up as the dial tone began to buzz. Funny. Some sort of nut.

He went back to the front room where Father Malloy and

The man who'd phoned had threatened to blow up the Church that Sunday. The problem was not only to find the man. If they could anticipate his next move, they might be able to stop him—in time. . . . And then and then only they might be able to help him! Edward D. Hoch, a frequent contributor to this and other magazines in the field, lives in upstate New York.

the chess board waited. Jimmy Malloy was always ready with the questions, and this time was no exception. "That was fast. Who was it?"

"Some nut. Said he was going to blow up the church Sunday morning."

"Oh, yeah? What'd he sound like? Like he meant it?"

Father Noone shrugged and resumed his seat. "I wish I could have talked to him longer. Kidding or not, there's a man with a problem."

Father Malloy moved his knight, and David Noone's attention returned to the board before him. The strange caller was forgotten. That was on Monday night. . . .

Tuesday was always a busy day in Saint Monica's parish, and this Tuesday was no exception. With the Monsignor away on a week's visit to his aged and dying mother, there were a certain number of regular tasks that fell by virtue of seniority to Father Noone. One of these was a visit to the good sisters across the street at the grammar school, a call that he did not exactly relish. Sister Xavier, an ancient nun of undoubted piety and unfailing memory, had taught him in eighth grade some twenty years earlier, a fact she never allowed him to forget now that she was the principal of St. Monica's and he was Monsignor's first assistant. Often, when meeting him, she would call him *David*, as in the old days, and only half-heartedly correct that to a more formal *Father Noone*. To her, he was still one of her boys, one of the more successful ones.

Sometimes, on days like this, he could envy Father Malloy, only two years out of the seminary. Jimmy Malloy, a husky handsome ex-quarterback who'd had two years at Notre Dame before deciding on the priesthood, was still young enough to attract teen-age girls who clustered about him after Sunday mass with the same smiles and giggles usually reserved for screen idols or recording stars. Father Noone, with his business-like approach and middle-aged appearance, could not hope to compete. Nor did he really want to, except at times like this when he thought with a certain sadness that he might have missed something out of life.

Every night while the Monsignor was away the two of them played chess, perhaps as a sort of respite from all those other nights of listening to the endless stories of the "old days." At chess they could be as silent as they wished, reflecting only on their secret thoughts or simply relaxing after a busy day. This Tuesday night the game was late in getting started, because Father Noone had been out on a sick

call and Father Malloy had a weekly discussion group. It was after nine when they settled down at the board, and David Noone observed that the game would have to be a short one.

Father Malloy smiled, flexing the muscles of his arms. "It won't take me long, Dave."

The housekeeper, Bertha, had already left for the night, and when the phone rang in the outer office Father Noone went to answer it. "Saint Monica's," he said into the receiver.

"Is this Father Noone, the one in charge?"

"Yes, can I help you?" Already, in a sudden chill of memory, he had placed the voice. It was the caller from the previous night.

"I'm going to blow up your church Sunday morning. Stop me if you can."

"Please, don't hang up! Listen to me! Why are you doing this?"

The voice came again. "Why? Because I hate you, I hate you all! Hate! Do you know what that means, good Father? Do you know what it means to hate as intensely as Christ loved? You'll find out Sunday morning. You and all those people kneeling in prayer. You won't stop me, you *can't* stop me. Pray well, Father Noone." Then there was a click as the connection was broken.

He went back to the chess board, thinking troubled thoughts which were all too obvious on his face. "You're white!" Father Malloy said, getting quickly to his feet. "Who was that? Not the man with the bomb again?"

"It was," David Noone admitted. "He told me again that he's going to blow up the church. During mass, apparently."

"I think we should call the police."

Father Noone pondered this, wishing with all his heart that the Monsignor was back. "Let's wait another day. I have a feeling he'll call again tomorrow. If he does, we go to the police. It's just that I think he needs help . . ."

"Sure—he needs help to blow up our church!"

"No, he's a sick man, Jimmy. An injured man."

"Maybe he's too sick to be serious."

"I wish I could believe that. Last night I laughed it off. Tonight I'm not laughing. . . ."

Wednesday passed uneventfully, with Father David Noone busy most of the morning with routine errands. The sidewalk was beginning to crumble in spots and he had to arrange for its repair. Then there was the drive downtown to the Bishop's residence to meet a mission priest from Brazil who would be speaking at local churches dur-

ing the coming weeks. For a moment Father Noone was tempted to tell the Bishop of the threatening phone calls, but the presence of the foreign priest held his tongue. No need to go into this problem now.

In the afternoon he visited several patients at the Catholic hospital, spending the most time with a woman of sixty who was dying of cancer. He felt when he left her that here was a person with a real reason to hate, not like that nameless, faceless voice on the phone who only talked of hate as one might speak of the weather. He left the hospital finally late in the afternoon, buoyed by a certain strength he couldn't quite explain.

The call came as he expected, but a bit earlier, so that Father Malloy was still in church conducting the Wednesday night novena service. This time the voice was harsh and angry, and spoke with a bitterness grown more intense. "Sunday's the day, Padre. Sunday the church and the people and you and maybe me too—we all go boom."

"Why?" Father Noone asked again. "Why kill innocent people?"

"Innocent! None of them are innocent, none of them!"

"If you'd come here to me, we could talk."

"We can talk on the phone."

"I want to help you."

"You'll help me Sunday, when you die along with the rest." The voice was a rasping cauldron of hatred now, reaching depths only hinted at in the previous calls. It was a voice David Noone felt he would remember to the end of his days."

"I don't believe anyone could do a thing like that."

"Don't believe it! Then I'll show you proof. Out in the church right now! Go out there and look under the last pew. Look and learn, and prepare to meet your God, Father Noone."

Almost before the connection was broken David Noone was out of the rectory, running, feeling a nameless terror twisting his insides. It was a terror for the people, for Father Malloy, but perhaps mostly for the great stone church which he realized now had become almost part of him. Already though the church was emptying, even as the silent prayer was forming deep within him. Already Father Malloy would have left the altar after the final prayers, and would be changing his priestly garments in the sacristy.

Father Noone went to the back door, calling out as he did so. "Jimmy!"

"What . . . what's wrong?"

"Our telephone friend. I think he left something for us." Then he was off down the aisle, with only a fleeting glance at the few worshippers still kneeling in prayer within the silent, nearly

darkened church. By the vast centre light that still glowed in the ceiling over the altar, he could see the empty back pews, and under the last one he found what he sought. It was stuck there to the bottom of the seat, like a huge obscene glob of whitish clay or putty. And David Noone knew he was staring at death. . . .

In the morning a man came from police headquarters, a man very different from the patrol car cop and the bomb expert who had arrived the night before. He was tall, handsome, and had about him an air of quiet efficiency. "Father Noone? I'm Detective Stephens. They sent me out to talk about this bomb."

David Noone nodded. "You analyzed it?"

"There's no doubt. Composition C–2, a mixture of TNT and hexogen, sometimes called plastic bombs."

Father Noone nodded. "Like they were using in France during the recent troubles. Could it have gone off?"

"Not the way it was. No detonator. C–2 is quite stable without a detonator. You can pound it with a hammer."

"The man on the phone didn't sound French."

"It was used by American troops during the closing days of World War II. The man needn't be French."

Father Noone pondered. "He must have at least an amount equal to the blob he stuck under that seat. How powerful would it be if it went off?"

"There was a pound of it in that chunk. It would have torn a good-sized hole in your floor, broken those stained glass windows, and killed maybe one or two people sitting right nearby. Of course the panic would be a problem too." He spoke matter-of-factly, as if discussing a baseball score.

"He'd use more than that," David Noone said with a sigh. "He spoke of killing many people, even himself."

"How many do you get here on a Sunday, Father?"

"About nine hundred in the spring and fall," he said with a smile. "Unfortunately there's bad weather in the winter and vacations in the summer to cut into that total a bit. Right now, with summer just beginning, we're averaging maybe eight hundred on a Sunday morning, split up among six Masses—at seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, and twelve."

"Which ones have the biggest crowds?"

Father Noone chuckled. "I can see you're not a church-goer. The last two Masses are always the most crowded. At the seven and eight, we're usually lucky to get a hundred people. But there'll be better than two hun-

dren at those last Masses. On a Sunday in Lent we're likely to have three hundred, which is about all our little church could hold at one time anyway."

"I understand the Monsignor is away."

"That's correct. His mother, a saintly woman close to ninety years old, is quite ill. He'll be back Monday or Tuesday, and in the meantime Father Malloy and myself are taking care of things. We have a priest from the high school who helps us on Sunday mornings."

"So this bomb could kill as many as two hundred persons," the detective said, more to himself than to Father Noone.

"You said a one-pound charge like he left last night would have a limited range. How big a one would he need to destroy the entire church?"

Stephens shrugged. "Probably fifty or sixty pounds. But if you're thinking that's too much for a man to conceal on his person you're quite wrong. This stuff is called plastic because you can mould it into any shape. Even without a topcoat he could simply mould it to his body, right under his shirt. He'd be a walking bomb, and if he was thin to begin with we'd never notice him in the crowd."

"You really think he intends to end his own life too?"

"From what you told our man last night, Father, I'd say he sounds like it."

"What can we do? We can't search everyone coming to Mass. We can't tell people to stay away from church Sunday." Father Noone pursed his lips. "Isn't there some sort of machine you could use—an X-ray or metal detector?"

"There'd be no metal, except for the detonator."

Father Noone sighed and said a silent prayer for his congregation. "Then what is to be done?"

"We'd like to start by putting a tap on your telephone."

"That presents certain problems. On occasion we get calls of a confidential nature."

The detective nodded. "I understand that, Father. If you'd prefer, we can hook up a tape recorder so all you have to do is flick a switch when he calls."

"*If* he calls."

"He'll call. These birds all follow a pattern. Besides, he'll want your reaction to last night's little bomb. I'm going to check with the phone company about having a man standing by to trace the circuit, but I don't think there's much hope. Not unless you keep him talking for five minutes or more."

"Well, leave the tape recorder. I'll turn it on if he calls."

The detective nodded, starting to move away. "I'll be back with it, Father. And . . . try not to worry."

"Thank you, but I'm afraid a little bit of worry is called for at this point."

After Detective Stephens had departed, David Noone walked across the street and stood for a time looking up at the steeple of the church, his church. Outlined against the hint of summer clouds, it seemed suddenly very big. He thought about what it meant to the thousand people who called St. Monica's their parish, thought about the babies baptized within its walls, the children in white for their first communion, the Sunday sermons and the Lenten missions. To all these people, St. Monica's was more than a weekly gathering place; it was a sort of symbol. He supposed in some way it was a symbol even to the man who would destroy it, and he wondered what kind of man that was. He wondered if they would meet at last on Sunday morning.

That night, earlier than usual, the phone call came. Father Noone flipped the switch of the tape recorder as the voice said, "Find my little gift last night? Find it, huh? There'll be lots more Sunday morning, Father Noone. When your Monsignor gets back there'll be nothing left but a great big hole in the ground."

"Listen! Don't hang up for once. Let me talk to you."

"So you can have the call traced? Oh, no."

"Do you want to die, too, on Sunday?"

"Yes, I will die, too. I am not afraid, like you stinking priests! I will die gladly."

"Listen," Father Noone pleaded, a sudden thought striking him. "Listen, if it's just priests you hate, kill me. *Kill me!* I'll come and meet you anywhere you want. But don't kill hundreds of innocent people just because you hate priests."

"It's not just priests," the voice said. "It's all of you who killed my wife!"

"Tell me about your wife," Father Noone said quietly, keeping his voice calm against the throbbing of his heart.

"I'll tell you—*in hell*!" And then, his voice breaking for the first time, he sobbed out, "Stop me, stop me! Oh, God, stop me!" Then the phone was dead.

For a long time Father Noone only sat there, staring at the telephone in his hand, listening to the buzzing of the dial tone. The man wanted to be stopped, wanted to be saved, but could they find him—reach him—in time?

Presently he went in to the other room where Father Malloy was setting up the chess board for the nightly game. "What's the trouble?" Jimmy Malloy asked. "Another call?"

Father Malloy rubbed a warm hand over his eyes. "Yes."

"I think we should call the Monsignor, Dave."

"No, no, that wouldn't do any good. We have the police working on it already."

"You think they'll find him by Sunday morning?"

David Noone picked up one of the black chessmen, a bishop. "In some ways life is like a chess game, Jimmy. If we could see into his mind, anticipate his next move, we might be able to stop him."

"How can we see into his mind? He's only a voice on the telephone."

"That's the trouble. Only a voice on the telephone."

"Dave, maybe we should give the story to the papers, tell people to pick another church Sunday. You'd never forgive yourself if that bomb went off during Mass."

"It's my church, Jimmy, as much as it's theirs. The church and the people and the priest are all one in my mind. I can't separate them, or even think of saving one without the other. I've got to stop him, Jimmy, to save the people *and* the church. We send the people away this Sunday, and he'll just wait for the next Sunday, or the Sunday after that. The best way to protect the people and the church is to find him, and I'd like to do it before the Monsignor returns. You know this business would be too much for his heart."

"I guess maybe you're right, Dave. Do what you think is best. I'm with you."

Father Noone smiled. "Thanks."

"How about some chess?"

But Father Noone shook his head. "I think not tonight, Jimmy. I want time to do some thinking. And I must call Detective Stephens to pick up this tape recording. There'll be plenty of time for chess next week."

"Let's hope so," Father Malloy breathed. . . .

On Friday morning, after Mass, David Noone saw Sister Xavier crossing the street. He tipped his hat and took her arm to help her over the steep curb. "Good morning, Sister. How are you today?"

"Fine, David . . . Father! Just fine. You've been working hard, though. I can see the lines under your eyes."

"Some nights a priest must keep long hours."

"I know. And with Monsignor away it must be twice as hard on you. Tell me, Father, some of us noticed a police car outside of the rectory on Wednesday night. Was there any trouble?"

"None, Sister. You might almost say it was a social call. Don't be concerned."

"You're in our prayers, Father," she said, walking on towards the school-yard.

"Thank you. I can ask for no

more." He watched her go, thinking that he'd known very few women as good as Sister Xavier, even within the confines of convent life. He went then up to his room, hearing Father Malloy puttering around downstairs, hearing the daily sounds of Bertha's cleaning chores. After a silent prayer he drew a pad of paper to him and started writing down a few words and thoughts as they came to him. He knew somewhere in the city another man would be getting ready, too, perhaps even at that moment fitting the moulded plastic explosive to his body.

Just before noon, Detective Stephens arrived, looking glum. "How are you today, Father?"

"I suppose I feel about how you look. Any news?"

"Not much. We played that tape of the phone conversation about twenty times this morning. The police psychiatrist listened to it."

"What does he think?"

"That the man means it. He says you should cancel the Sunday service."

"That's all you can tell me?"

Stephens shrugged. "Our speech expert says the man comes from New England, probably Massachusetts."

"He doesn't sound like it."

"Might have been years ago. Anyway, that's all we've got. The phone company can't help us, by the way."

Father Noone frowned. "I've been doing some thinking, trying to out-think him, if that's possible. I've made a list of the things we know about him."

"Oh?"

"He's a man, unbalanced, probably in his forties."

"Forties?"

David Noone nodded. "The voice sounds it, and also there's the fact that these plastic bombs were used in the closing days of the Second World War. If that's where he learned to use them, it's more than fifteen years ago."

"He could have picked it up somewhere else. Construction company, maybe."

"Maybe." But Father Noone was not to be discouraged. "If we only knew who he was . . ."

"That's easy to say."

"I've been thinking. He says we killed his wife. Well, somewhere his wife must have died. She must have died in circumstances that have unhinged him to the point where he seeks revenge against churches and priests, perhaps simply against Catholics in general. Now where did this happen?"

The detective shrugged. "Here in town?"

"Perhaps, but try to put yourself in his place as I did. His hatred of priests and churches is not generalized. It is aimed at one specific church, this one. He plans to die in Sunday's blast, not live to blow up other

churches. The ruin of this one church will satisfy his twisted thirst for revenge."

"It's something that happened years ago in this parish!"

"I thought of that but discarded the idea. The Monsignor has been here for twenty years, yet our bomber didn't ask for him or anyone else by name when he called the first time. He only asked for the head priest. So he didn't know any of us. Also, if the Monsignor were somehow involved, why would he continue with his plan for this week-end when I've told him the Monsignor is away?"

"Then why did he pick this church?"

"That's what I'm asking myself. Why poor old St. Monica's? What's the connection with his dead wife?"

"Could you find out tonight when he calls, Father?" They were both certain another call would come.

"I'd better try, I suppose. Sunday is only two days away."

"I'll be back, right after supper. I want to be here when he calls."

Detective Stephens went away, and Father Noone spent a good part of the afternoon in his room, reading his office, meditating on what might have been. It was not often that he found the time or the inclination to ponder the great unknowns of his life, but just then he was in a mood for reminiscing. He thought back to the days of his youth, all the bright young days of playing and romping, the pretty high school girl he'd thought he loved. And back further, to Sister Xavier cautioning him as he raced across the street, and the other boys playing tag or baseball or just tossing stones into the park pond. He remembered these things as he remembered the day of his first kiss, his first Mass, the first time a person died in his arms. It was a life, better perhaps than most.

And in the evening, while Father Malloy coached the basketball team in the school hall, he sat with Detective Stephens waiting for the phone call.

"Late tonight," he told the detective.

Stephens nodded. He was unhappy. "The newspapers know about the bomb the other night. They want to run the story."

"You persuaded them not to?"

"I think so, but it was a struggle. Actually our head shrinker thinks the guy might want publicity. If that's the case, running the story in the papers would be the worst thing we could do. The reporters have agreed to lay off till after Sunday morning."

The telephone rang and they both jumped a bit. Father Noone answered, but it was only a parishioner with some minor request. After that they sat in silence for a time. "Do you play

chess?" Father Noone asked.

"No, never could get interested in it, Father."

The phone rang again, and this time it was the familiar deep voice. Stephens clicked on the tape recorder and slipped on a pair of earphones.

"Hello again," the voice was saying. "Are you prepared to die on Sunday?"

"Please," Father Noone said, "please meet me and let me talk with you about this thing."

"No need to talk. Sunday morning my bomb will do the talking."

"I've told the police. They'll stop you."

"If they can find me."

"You want to be stopped, don't you? You said so last night. That's why you keep calling. You *want* us to stop you."

"I want you to *die*—die, die, die!" The voice was rising to a familiar frenzy.

"What do you have against St. Monica's? Perhaps you have the wrong church."

"No, St. Monica's, St. Monica's —that's the name! I'll destroy it, blow it up. I blew up things in the war, you know."

"I know."

The voice was cagey. "How do you know?"

"I know a lot about you. Meet me, and I'll tell you."

"No!"

"Listen, I'll be in the church for the next hour, alone. Come to me there, talk to me, and I promise nothing will happen to you."

"No!" The receiver was slammed down on the other end.

Father Noone sighed and looked up at the detective. "I'm afraid I scared him off."

"You did the best you could. We don't seem to know any more than we did, except for a confirmation of that war part."

But David Noone was thinking again. "We just *might* know something else."

"What?"

"St. Monica's. Suppose it was a *different* St. Monica's."

"But this is the only one in the city, isn't it?"

"Not in this city. In some other city, a long time ago."

"But where? What city?"

Father Noone shrugged. "A city in Massachusetts, perhaps."

Stephens blinked his brown eyes. "Maybe, Father. Just maybe. We could check, get a list and start calling them all. But what would we ask them?"

"Talk to the pastor or an older priest. Ask them if there was any trouble during the past fifteen or sixteen years with a man whose wife died. I'm afraid you might run into several—a certain type of individual loves to blame priests for difficulties—but maybe we can find the right one."

"By Sunday, Father?"

"It has to be by Sunday." He rose to leave.

"Where are you going?"

David Noone smiled weakly. "Over to the church. There's always a possibility he'll come. I want to be there if he does."

He entered the darkened church by the side door and knelt at the altar railing in prayer, his face lit only by the flickering of vigil lights and the overhead sanctuary lamp. He remained there for an hour and fifteen minutes, alone, but no one came to him. . . .

On Saturday afternoon there were confessions to be heard, and for a time the thoughts of Father Noone were far away from the nameless voice on the telephone. He was aware, though, that it was the last day of the week, the day before Sunday. He wondered vaguely what Sunday would bring. That night, when he returned from evening confessions a little after nine, Bertha told him the man had called twice. David Noone accepted the information with a nod, and went in to speak with Father Malloy. He had not heard from Detective Stephens all day.

"Big crowd," Jimmy Malloy said, "at least for this time of year. Maybe the people are getting religion."

"Maybe."

"Your man call yet?"

"Bertha says he called twice. He'll call again."

"Tomorrow's the day."

David Noone nodded. "Tomorrow."

"There's the telephone."

"That'll be him again," Father Noone said, and almost at once Bertha appeared in the doorway, signalling him.

The voice was the same tonight, but perhaps beneath the surface tones there was a touch of finality to the terrible words. "Tomorrow, Father. Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow. Tomorrow the grave."

"When can I look for you? Which Mass?"

"The one you least expect. Look for me, try to stop me, try . . ."

"Tell me your name."

"Death. That is my name."

"Tell me about your wife. How she died."

"My wife!" He shouted an obscenity into the phone. "How dare you even think of her, you who killed her, you who destroyed her! Tomorrow I will blow you into hell. You and as many others as I can."

"Don't you realize you're sick? You need help."

"I need help." The voice seemed to be trailing off. "I need help. Help me . . . help me . . . help . . ."

"Wait! Don't hang up!" But it was too late. Again. It had been his last chance and now it was gone.

Father Malloy hurried in. "The detective is here. He's learned something."

"I hope so," David Noone breathed. "I certainly hope so." He followed Jimmy out and saw Stephens standing just inside the door, looking pleased. "You have something?"

"After all day on the telephone. You'd never believe there were so many St. Monica's churches in the state of Massachusetts. I wasted two hours this morning tracking down a false alarm. Turned out the man was dead. But I think I've got it now."

"Tell me."

"After I ran through the Massachusetts ones, I checked some of the neighbouring states. The first one I called in Rhode Island landed me an old priest who seemed to know something. He was reluctant to discuss it until I told him the situation. It seems just ten years ago there was a man named Thomas Zellow, non-Catholic, who married a girl from St. Monica's church. She was a very religious girl, and maybe a year after the wedding she died in childbirth. Zellow blamed the priests for making her have children. He came to the rectory one night and started breaking windows, threatening to kill the priests. Anyway, shortly after that he was committed to an asylum. It seems that during the war he'd received a head wound in an explosion . . . "

"Explosion?" Father Noone's mind grasped at the word.

"He was an explosives expert, apparently. Only one of his demolition charges went off too soon. Apparently the death of his wife was just enough to aggravate this old brain injury."

"It sounds like the man. Where is he now?"

"The priest heard not long ago that he was out of the asylum, but that's all he knows."

"And what does this Thomas Zellow look like?"

Detective Stephens spread his hands in despair. "I don't know. Damn it, the priest couldn't really remember. Just average, he kept saying. He was nearly thirty then. Dark hair, average build. Wore glasses."

"That could fit anyone. But at least we know he's just under forty. The hair could be greying, the glasses might be contact lenses now. I suppose you checked locally on the name."

Stephens nodded. "No Thomas Zellow in town, at least not under that name. We know one other thing, though. We know he's not Catholic."

Father Noone nodded. "But I knew that already. I realized it tonight when he called twice while I was hearing confessions. Our Mr. Zellow knows very little about church operation. Any Catholic would know confes-

sions are heard on Saturday night."

"Well," Stephens cleared his throat. "Well, I'll have a dozen men down here in the morning. Don't worry about a thing."

"I'll sleep soundly," Father Noone assured him. "At least now the terror has a name. . . ."

By the time the eight o'clock Mass had ended without incident the next morning, Father Noone was certain he knew. After he removed his vestments he hurried outside into the warm summer air, searching out Stephens or one of the others. He spotted the detective smoking a cigarette in his car and joined him in the front seat.

"I think I know when he'll come."

Stephens looked suddenly interested. "Oh? We thought we had him at this last Mass. Grabbed a guy carrying a canvas bag. Had his bathing suit inside."

David Noone took a deep breath. "Look. There are four more Masses. Put yourself in his position. Which one would you pick?"

"I don't know. If I was crazy enough to pick one at all it would probably have been the first one. Just proves how wrong I'd have been."

"Your men were here, on the alert, for the seven o'clock service. And the eight. But two things will happen as the morning drags on. Your men will become less alert *and* the church will become more crowded."

"You think he'll try the noon Mass."

But, surprisingly, Father Noone shook his head. "It's most difficult to look into the mind of a mentally sick individual, but doing the best I can, I reason thusly: he wants the church crowded, and he wants the police off guard, *but* he doesn't want to wait until the very last Mass, when the police would naturally tend to be on guard again. Don't you see? At eleven o'clock there'll still be two possible Masses. But at twelve there'd only be one possibility left. I think he'll try the eleven."

"Why couldn't he leave the bomb to go off later?"

Father Noone shook his head. "He'd know we'd be searching the pews between Masses. Besides, he wants to kill people, even including himself."

"Well," Stephens said, glancing at his watch, "we'll see if you're right."

The nine o'clock service came and went without incident, and so too did ten o'clock. The usual crowds of worshippers filed into their pews, while Father Noone kept a careful lookout for strangers. Then, as the last of the ten o'clock people were departing, leaving only a handful of late ones kneeling in final

worship, David Noone hurried about his mission.

"Jimmy, I'm locking the side door and putting an *out of order* sign on it. No one ever uses the side towards the rectory, so everyone will have to enter through the main doors at the back of the church. I'll be there, watching every person who comes in."

Stephens joined them, looking bored. "He's not coming."

"Remember what I said? That's just what he wants you to think. Just keep your men there, outside of church. I'll point him out to you as he comes in."

"You'll what?"

Father Noone nodded. "Actually, we know at least seven things about the mysterious would-be bomber. First, we know he's in his late thirties. Second, we have reason to believe he might have dark hair and glasses. Third, he's of average build, so the plastic bomb around his middle will beef him out a bit."

"That description is ten years old," Stephens reminded him.

"All right. But at least he won't be thin, not with up to sixty pounds of explosives under his clothes. He knows we're watching, so he'd never use a suitcase or bag. Fourth, he's not Catholic and has little actual knowledge of church operations. So when he walks through that door he might not even remove his hat."

"If he's wearing one on a warm day like this."

"Even if he's not, I'd be willing to bet on one other item—he won't bless himself with holy water as nearly all Catholics do upon entering a church." He paused for breath. "And fifth, of course, we know his name. That will be enough to put him off guard and confirm our suspicions."

"You said seven things."

"So I did. Sixth, he'll be alone. Agreed? And seventh, he'll be a stranger to the parish, someone I don't recognize. If he'd been coming here, even for a few weeks, he'd have known our names, and would have asked for us by name the first time he called. So we have a medium-sized to husky man of nearly forty, a stranger and alone, who probably won't take holy water as he enters. Shouldn't be too hard to spot in a crowd of two hundred."

Detective Stephens smiled. "You have great faith in your own deductions."

"I'm a chess player. You should take it up."

Father Noone stationed himself near the front door, watching and waiting. And the people came, the familiar faces he'd seen every week for so many years. He knew them all; nodded greetings as they filed in, hoping

he was right and that they'd be saved from this madman he knew only as a voice. He could see Sister Xavier and the other nuns crossing the street to attend their second Mass of the morning, could see them mounting the steps of the church.

And then, suddenly, he noticed a nondescript man passing unseen by the spot where Detective Stephens casually stood. The man might have been anyone, a new parishioner, a casual visitor, but there was something about him. . . . He was holding his right hand pressed against his side as if fearing he might somehow burst. He wore no hat, and as he entered he made no effort to dip his fingers in the holy water. Father Noone moved forward to intercept him, but in that instant Sister Xavier and the other nuns had suddenly placed themselves between the two men.

For David Noone, time ceased to have a meaning. He was frozen to the spot, seeing over the heads of the nuns the hard, vague eyes of the enemy. Their eyes locked, and they knew each other, as surely as if they always had. The man's right arm went tense against his side, and his left hand dipped beneath his coat.

And Father Noone knew now the single unforeseen circumstance, the move on the chess board he hadn't anticipated. This man was not to be taken alive. This man would set off the detonator and blast them both into oblivion, here and now.

"Good morning, Father," Sister Xavier was saying.

David Noone stretched out his hand. "Zellow! Wait!" There was no time now for carefully thought-out reasoning or chessboard moves, no time for this mental game of skill, no time for anything but the appeal of one human being to another.

The man seemed startled by the sound of his name, and for a second he hesitated. That was long enough for Stephens, just outside, to react to the sound of the shouted name. While Father Noone pushed the last of the nuns through the door into the church, Stephens drew his gun. "Hold it right there, Zellow."

The man turned, in slow motion. "Shoot me and we all go up. Your bullet will set off the explosives."

"Not C–2, it won't. You know that as well as I do."

Zellow's hand hovered, an inch away from the concealed detonator. The three of them might have been alone in the world. All alone. Inside, the single chime of a bell announced the beginning of Mass. And Father Noone stepped between the drawn gun and Thomas Zellow. "No one's going to shoot you, Thomas. No one's going to hurt you."

"Father . . . ," Stephens gasped. "Get out of the way!" He took a step forward. "The man's a walking bomb."

No more skill, no more time, no more. Just three of them, adrift in a wild world. Father Noone reached out his hand, reached out as if to a drowning man. And slowly, very slowly, Thomas Zellow's hand left the detonator and came to meet it, to grasp it. . . .

the freech case

by Stephen Dentinger

"LEOPOLD, you know Harry Argus, don't you?"

Captain Leopold of Homicide looked up from the usual Monday morning pile of paperwork. He was a bit surprised to see that the speaker was Compton, an assistant District Attorney who rarely visited the gloomy confines of Headquarters. "Argus? I knew him years ago. Why?"

Compton perched on the edge of his desk. "He's back in town. Running a flat joint out at the Starbright Amusement Park."

"Crooked?"

"They don't come any crookeder. We don't want trouble with those people out there, Leopold. Why don't you just drop by and give him the word?"

"Why me? I'm Homicide."

"You're a friend of his. He might listen to you."

Leopold grunted. "I doubt that. But I'll take a run out there tonight if I get a chance. Always happy to help the D.A.'s office.

"I'll bet." Compton gave a sort of snort and walked away.

For Leopold the rest of the day was filled with memories of a man whose very existence he'd almost forgotten. Shadowy mem-

There is essentially no difference between the police procedure followed in the larger cities—and in the smaller university towns such as the one in which Captain Leopold of Homicide works. In every instance, as in this latest Leopold story, the investigative officer has to rely, more than is realized, on his knowledge of the people involved. And on his memories.

ories, because Harry Argus was a shadowy sort of person. Leopold had known him during those odd post-college years when no one knew quite what to do, what job to accept or decline. They were years of war, and Leopold had gone off to Washington and later to North Africa as a member of army intelligence—an unglamorous job that had him at one stage interrogating Italian prisoners on an almost round-the-clock basis. He'd lost track of Harry Argus during the war years, hearing finally that he'd been dishonourably discharged for running crooked dice games in the barracks at Fort Dix. There was more to it, but he never heard the rest. He came back from the wars and entered the local police department, and when he met Harry Argus again the younger man was up to his neck in bookmaking and numbers. He'd left town one jump ahead of the police, but men like Compton had long memories.

So that night Leopold drove down to Starbright, a sprawling prairie of a place near the shore of the Sound. It was no real place for an amusement park, but some unwritten law stated that they must always be near a body of water, and so it was. Starbright. He remembered it as a boy, when it had seemed like heaven. Now, with the passing of so many years, it was only a garish showcase of neoned thrill rides and crooked sucker games. Here the lowest, least intelligent, of the criminal classes plied their trade, and thus it was an unusual place to go in search of Harry Argus after all these years.

Leopold passed one or two men he knew, men with criminal records. He passed a couple of sailors from somewhere making a play for two tight-jeaned girls from nowhere. And finally he saw the man he sought. Harry Argus, older now and perhaps a bit heavier, but still a man who walked on the balls of his feet, like a prize-fighter always entering some unseen ring. He was still in his mid-thirties, a few years younger than Leopold, and he might have passed for any age between twenty-five and forty.

"Hello, Harry.

Argus squinted in momentary puzzlement, as if reaching back in his memory. Then, with a sense of wonder, "Leopold! Damned if it isn't old Leopold!"

They shook hands and Leopold asked, "How've you been, Harry?"

"Good, good. Making a living."

"It's been a lot of years."

"Oh, hell, I was bumming around. Pretty good bumming at times, too. I had six months as a black-jack dealer in Havana before Castro came along."

Leopold waved a hand at the

line of carnival games behind them, each in its own booth with an operator diligently attempting to attract the suckers with patter that was familiar a century ago. "This sort of thing is quite a comedown for you, isn't it?"

Harry Argus laughed, a bit half-heartedly. "You might say I'm between engagements." His blue eyes still had the old fire, though, and Leopold knew he was far from out. "But who told you I was back in town?"

"The word gets around."

"You still with the police?"

"I'm Captain of Homicide."

"Yeah? Hell, a real success, huh? What are you—forty? Big job for a fellow your age. Glad you're not in the vice squad." This last came with a sort of stale laugh. "Come on over and I'll show you my layout."

Leopold followed him to the booth at the end of the line, where a handsome girl with feathery brown hair was giving the pitch to a half-dozen potential customers. "Come in closer, folks—you've never seen anything like the mouse game! Guess the hole the mouse goes into and win a valuable watch or radio."

Most of the booth's interior was taken up by a large horizontal wheel with sixty numbered holes at its outer rim. At the centre of the wheel was a tin can covering the mouse. When the girl had about fifteen bets down she spun the wheel and waited till it came to a stop. Then she lifted the can and they watched the dizzy little mouse make its way toward the wheel's edge, heading for a random hole. After a moment's hesitation it went down the hole numbered 34.

"Sorry, no winners this time, but get down some more bets, folks. Cover several numbers—it's only a dime a throw." The girl worked fast and hard, clearing the board of its collection of lost dimes while she talked up the next game.

"Pretty good, huh?" Harry Argus asked. "That's Kate O'Bern, the greatest little gal in the business. Come here a minute, Kate. I want you to meet my good friend Captain Leopold, of the police."

She shot him an uncertain look, seemed to decide it must be all right, and flashed Leopold her brightest smile. "Glad to meet you. Friend of Harry's?"

Leopold nodded. "From the old days."

"He said he knew a lot of people up here. I'm from West Virginia myself."

"Nice country down there."

"Hills. Nothing but. Well, back to the grind. Nice to meet you, Captain."

Leopold motioned to Harry Argus. "Let me buy you a cup of coffee, Harry. I want to talk."

"Huh? Sure, I never refuse a free drink. Even coffee."

They found a little lunch counter next to the fun house and sat down at a grease-stained table. Leopold waited till the coffee arrived before he started in on his speech. "Harry, I'll get to the point. The D.A.'s office doesn't want you in town. You beat it out ahead of that last rap, but they don't want you back. They think you're running a crooked game here, and they sent me to talk to you as a friend."

"Crooked! You mean the mouse game?"

"Harry, Harry! Don't give me that old innocent act. Remember, I was with you one night when you won a hundred bucks with crooked dice. Every one of those games can be gaffed, including the mouse game. I imagine you've got a foot pedal by which that cute gal can close off any half of the holes. If she sees the mouse heading toward a hole with money on it, she closes it and he goes in the next one. Of course you have to pay off sometimes, but not as often as you might."

Harry's face was red with anger. "I thought you were my friend, Leopold."

"I'm everybody's friend. Close up the mouse game and get out of town."

"Or?"

"Or they'll run you in, Harry. You can't make any money behind bars."

Argus stood up, leaving his coffee unfinished. "Shows how much you know, smart guy. I once made half a grand playing the match game with three guys after a raid. I could make money at the bottom of the river!"

"Don't end up there, Harry. I don't want you for a customer."

He watched Argus walk out, across the asphalt midway, back to the girl and the mouse game. He felt almost sad, as if he had lost a friend he never really had. . . .

"Get rid of the suckers," Harry told Kate back at the booth. "We're closing up."

"So early?"

"I'm supposed to blow town. I got the word."

"From your cop friend?"

"That's right."

"Since when did you start listening to cops?"

He pulled down the overhead steel shutter that closed the front of the booth. "Who says I'm listening? We're just goin' on to bigger and better things, baby. You're done working a foot pedal for a lousy handful of dimes."

"Harry, Harry—you and your big ideas." She came up to him in the dimness of the closed booth, stroking his bristled chin. "Still trying to figure a way to gimmick that thing at the race track?"

"Laugh if you want to. All I'd need would be one good engineer on my side and I'd take that track for a bundle."

"If it's not the track then what is it? We need money to live."

"Cards. Or maybe Izzy Freech's crap game."

"They're tough boys, Harry. If you were caught cheating they'd kill you."

"Maybe. Maybe not. Look, doll, I want you to go back to the hotel and wait for me. I have to see a guy."

"If you're going off somewhere, why can't I keep the booth open?"

Harry Argus sighed and frizzled her hair. "Because the cop told us to close it, Kate. For right now, we gotta obey the cops."

"Harry?"

"What?"

"Was that Leopold really an old friend of yours?"

"A long time ago. He's a pretty good guy, really. But times change. People change."

"Don't you ever change, Harry."

He bent down to kiss her. "I'll be back."

Harry drove downtown and parked in the lot next to the Silver Dollar Grill. The place was a holdover from a generation now grown and scattered, a generation Harry still liked to claim as his own. In the years immediately following the war, the Silver Dollar had prospered, its bar lined nightly with returned veterans uncertain of anything except the price of the next drink. But as they moved or married or matured, their places at the bar were not somehow filled by a younger generation. The younger ones in this town had some place else to go, and Harry often wished he could find where it was. How often he wished that!

The bartender looked up as he entered. A customer on a weeknight was a rare thing these days, especially with the good weather holding on into September. "Hello, Harry."

Harry nodded to the man, whose name he didn't know. There were new faces at the Silver Dollar since the last time he'd made it his headquarters. This bartender he'd known only a few weeks, since his return. "Find anybody for me yet?" he asked, signalling as he spoke for his usual beer.

"The electronics engineer? Yeah, I might have somebody for you, Harry. Fellow was in here just last night. I heard him talking and told him about you."

Harry smiled. "Not too much, I hope. Where do I find him?"

"Thought you might be in tonight. Told him to drop back."

"Thanks." Harry tossed him a half-dollar from the change. He took the beer and went over to sit alone at a corner table where

he could think without interruption. He could think best like this, in the midst of other people going about their own business. He sat for a time only watching the ever-changing colours of the plastic-fronted juke box, then shifted his attention to a slightly drunk girl at the bar. She was swaying slightly on the foam-rubber bar stool, her tight skirt working up over her knees. She had nice knees.

"Harry . . ."

"Huh?"

"Harry, this is the fellow I mentioned. Bill Yates. Bill, meet Harry."

He shook hands with a tall, thin young man with glasses and a scattering of pimples on his face. Somehow Bill Yates didn't seem like the kind of electronics engineer Harry had in mind. "Glad to meet you, Bill. Buy you a beer?"

"Thanks."

"Work around here?"

"Over at Con-Am El. The bartender said you had a deal cooking."

Harry felt a bit of uncertainty, but he plunged on heedlessly. "A sorta deal. You know a lot about computers, things like that?"

"Enough. It's my job, more or less."

"Know how to wire them?"

"Computers have a lot of wire. It's not done by hand. We have machines to do the wiring and other machines to check it out."

The beers arrived and Harry Argus sipped his, feeling the foamy head against his thirsty lips. "But you could do it? Better yet, you could gimmick the wires to get the wrong answers?"

The man was puzzled. "Why would anybody want to fix a computer to give wrong answers?"

"Could you do it?"

"Well, I suppose so. Just interchange the terminals on any one of ten thousand wires and you'll get wrong answers some of the time."

"Ever been to a race track, Bill?"

"Sure. Why?"

"You know how a totalisator works?"

"Well, it started out as a refinement of a telephone dial system. Now the newer tracks use regular computers."

"The odds are figured, after the track and the state get their cuts, and at the end of the race the totalisator divides the amount bet on the losing horses by the number of winning bets to determine the payoff."

"So?" The thin young man seemed unable to grasp just what Harry had in mind.

"So the odds have to be figured just right. If somebody gimmicked one of these machines so it figured the wrong odds, you could bet the right amount on each horse in the race

and win—no matter what the results were."

"Well," the man named Yates cleared his throat and searched for a cigarette. "Well, I suppose so. But the track officials would get wise soon enough."

"All you'd need would be one or two races. Betting big."

"And how would you manage to gimmick the machines?"

Harry shrugged. "A repairman. It could be arranged."

They sat in silence over their beers for some minutes longer, before Yates finally spoke. "This the deal you wanted to see me about?"

Harry spread his hands flat on the table. "Fifty per cent of the take, and I furnish all the needed betting cash. How's that sound?"

"Not so good. It's dishonest."

"Ha!" Harry snorted with good humour. "Since when is cheating a race track dishonest?"

Yates finished his beer and stood up. "I guess you've got the wrong boy. I'm not interested. For your information, I don't think it could be done, anyway. Good night—and thanks for the drink."

Harry watched him walk away. "Sure," he said, mostly to himself. All right, another idea down the drain. He took his time finishing his own drink, then followed Yates out of the place.

"O.K.?" the bartender asked as he passed.

"Yeah, sure."

He hit a couple of other familiar bars, trying to find some action. But it was a dull September's night. After an hour's search he found a poker game and sat in for a time, losing five dollars. As he was cashing in his chips, a familiar voice greeted him and he saw that it was a sometimes pool hustler and gambler named John Swan. "Harry! I heard you were back in town."

"How you been, John?" In a world where nicknames were commonplace, he'd always been simply *John* to everyone. He looked like someone named *John*—not Jack or Johnnie but John.

"Good, good. Made a killing last week."

"At the track?"

"At Izzy Freech's game. That's a big money operation these days, boy."

"I've heard about that," Harry said, suddenly interested. "But how do you get in? Nobody even knows where it is."

"Izzy has to be careful. He gets big people up from New York. Businessmen, actors, playboys. Sometimes there's a hundred grand riding on a single throw, all on the table—in cash. Can't take a chance on the cops or a stickup."

"When you going over again, John? Maybe I could roll a few."

"Tomorrow night, boy. If you want to come, I'll fix it up."

Harry felt a rush of excitement. "Where is it?"

"Even I don't know that, boy. Look, meet me here at eight-thirty. And bring your money."

Harry bought him a drink and they parted friends, as if they'd seen each other at work every day for years. The high spirits of the encounter, with the promise of big action on the following night, buoyed him for the trip back to the hotel room where Kate O'Bern waited. He told her what had happened, and drank with her, and loved her that night with a fury he hadn't known since their first time together. . . .

At police headquarters the next afternoon, Captain Leopold once more found Compton waiting at his desk. He knew at once that it was about Harry Argus, and he wondered what more would be expected of him now. There was a stabbing and a gas station shooting on his desk, which had effectively forced Harry Argus out of his thoughts till that moment.

"You talked to him?" Compton wondered.

Leopold nodded. "I think he'll be gone before long."

"Funny thing. We had a man come in this morning with an odd sort of story. It was referred to me because I was holding the old file on Harry Argus."

"What kind of story?" Leopold continued working while he talked, flipping through stapled pages of typewritten testimony and reports.

"An electronics engineer named Yates. He works for Con-Am El. Claims somebody approached him in a bar last night with a scheme for rigging the race track totalisator to pay off the wrong odds. The guy's name was Harry, and Yates identified a photo of Argus."

"He does have the schemes, doesn't he? What are you going to do about it?"

"We're alerting the area tracks, and checking the files for any electronics people with criminal records that he might try to contact. That's about all we can do now. Can't arrest him for a bar-room conversation."

"I don't think you have to worry too much. Argus isn't yet a hardened criminal type. He's an opportunist, a cheat, a con man—but he looks for the easy money. If this man turned him down, chances are he's already on to something else. Maybe he'll leave town. Maybe he'll even turn honest. That's a pretty cute gal he's travelling with."

Compton wasn't satisfied. "I'm going to find out if he's still operating that mouse game. If he is, we'll run him in on some charge. Don't like his kind around town. They only mean big trouble."

Leopold mumbled something

in agreement and went back to his reports. Harry Argus was not yet one of his worries. . . .

John Swan drove Harry some miles through the early night, mostly in silence, and as the ride seemed to reach its destination Harry had a crazy feeling of growing tension and excitement he hadn't felt since his first army days. They parked at last in an overgrown vacant lot at the outskirts of town—one of the few such lots that had not yet been cleared and dug for another new suburban split-level.

Harry saw that the lot had once been a parking area for a now-defunct undertaking business, and there was something about the empty old colonial house sitting there in the moonlight that chilled him. Perhaps it was a good sign, though. On the right nights, anything could be a good sign.

"This the place?" he asked John as they got out of the car. "Good idea, old funeral parlour."

"Hell, no. This is just one of the pick-up points. We're ten minutes early. The truck'll be here at nine."

"Truck?"

"You'll see. Izzy runs a careful operation."

Promptly at nine, the blinding headlights of a small pick-up truck came into view. The truck was red, but bore no markings. The driver stayed in, only motioning them to the rear. Here, behind the double doors, Harry saw that the inside had been converted into a sort of bus, not a great deal unlike a police patrol wagon. Two other men were already sitting inside, smoking cigarettes in silence. Harry didn't know them.

As soon as they were inside, the truck started up once more. There were no windows, and it was obvious now that John had spoken the truth about the secret location of Izzy's crap game. Not even the players would know where they were being taken. Presently the truck paused, and Harry thought he heard the sounds of a great corrugated iron door being raised. That would make it a warehouse somewhere—probably right back downtown.

When the doors finally opened and they climbed out, Harry saw that they were in a low-ceilinged sort of garage. The driver motioned them through a door into a tiny reception room. Another red truck was already parked next to theirs, and Harry guessed that one might have brought a group up from New York. The reception room held a battered desk and a couple of chairs, and two rough-looking gunmen with proper bulges under their tight jackets.

"Raise your hands," one of them said. "Everybody gets frisked."

Harry saw a small automatic and a spring knife on the table, apparently confiscated from the earlier group. He raised his arms and one of the guards went over his body with careful hands, missing nothing.

After this ceremony they were allowed to pass down a short hallway, past a room marked *Men*, and finally through a steel door. There, in a sound-proofed, windowless room ablaze with light and already thick with cigarette smoke, was Izzy Freech's secret game. A single crap table of green baize, with brass legs and padded backboard, was the centre of attraction—and the only article of furniture in the room, except for a few chairs and a small bar against one wall. Harry saw that the game was already in progress, with six men grouped around the brightly lit table. Four of them were middle-aged, well-dressed strangers. The fifth was Ronny Doblow, a movie actor currently in rehearsal for a Broadway play. The sixth man was Izzy Freech himself.

Freech was a slight, bald man who'd spent the half-century of his life in unswerving pursuit of a single goal—money. The stories Harry had heard were stories everyone in the rackets knew; of how Izzy Freech had run a crap game in a blanket against the side wall of the Y.M.C.A. at the age of fourteen; of how he'd graduated to a stickman at a plush Nevada casino, then came back east to establish his own illegal operation. He had the eye of a gambler, an eye that could spot welshers a mile off and deal with them accordingly.

The sounds of the game filled the room; the shouted bets, the throw of the dice, the losers' mumbles and the winners' brags. It was a big game, with banded stacks of big bills changing hands at every throw. The bills were mostly hundreds, and Harry felt out of place in such company. He only watched for the first twenty minutes, all but ignored by the others. But when it came his turn to throw, he did not pass the dice. Instead, he smoothed out two crumpled ten dollar bills and tossed them on to the baize. "Shoot twenty."

The actor gave the bills a disdainful look. "Big money man!"

Harry blew on the cubes and sent them spinning against the patterned padding of the backboard. "Eleven! A natural!"

He let the forty ride and threw again. His point was six, and he made it in three more rolls. The actor was still sneering, so he let the eighty dollars ride. The dice came up three, a loser.

"Tough luck," John Swan said, accepting the dice for his turn.

"Yeah." Harry watched the action in silence for a time, then wandered out to the men's room. He could see the two toughs in

the outer room, having a game of gin rummy.

He wandered back to the dice table and watched the piles of money hitting the green baize. He figured there was at least fifty thousand dollars visible just then. Looking at all that cash, watching it change hands, did something to him. There were a number of ways to get it into his hands, all involving the very tricky use of crooked dice. But seeing Izzy's sharp eyes always on the throw discouraged that line of thought. Any try at crooked dice and he'd end up being worked over by the two gunmen in the other room. No, if he was going to take Izzy Freech's game, he'd have to use a weapon he'd never resorted to before.

He'd have to use a gun. . . .

It was after midnight when he returned to the hotel room, but Kate was waiting up for him, sipping a beer while she glanced at the cartoons in the *New Yorker*. "How'd it go?" she asked.

"I lost twenty bucks. But I've got a scheme that'll bring in a quarter of a million."

"What now?"

He sat down on the couch next to her, his mind alive with the excitement of his plans. "I'm going to knock off Izzy's game, Kate. Tomorrow night."

"You mean hold it up? You're crazy!"

"Maybe. Maybe not. It can be done, and I know how. But you've got to help me."

"You've never done anything like this before, Harry."

He sighed and got up for a cigarette. "I never saw a quarter of a million bucks in cash before, either. These guys bet fifty or a hundred thousand on every roll of the dice! And Izzy couldn't even report the robbery to the cops!"

"He'd send his hoods after you."

"We'd be flyin' off to Paris by the time they started moving."

"Paris, Harry? You mean it?"

"I mean it, Kate." He had her interested then. She'd do it, whatever he asked. He started outlining his plan, describing the set-up of the place to her.

"It sounds impossible, Harry. Like robbing Fort Knox."

"It would be impossible for a gang. But I think one man might just pull it off. I'd need you to follow the truck, though—and wait outside the place with my getaway car."

"You said they search you. How could you get a gun in?"

"I can't. I'll use one of theirs."

"What?"

He reached into his suitcase and brought out a pair of gloves. "Remember these, baby? Ordinary deerskin gloves—but with six ounces of powdered lead

across the knuckles. They sell 'em to police departments. Let 'em search me—they'll never notice these. Not till I hit 'em."

"Gloves in September?"

"This is a classy crowd. Some of them were wearing gloves tonight. I noticed."

"I still don't like it, Harry."

"You'll like it well enough when you see the colour of that money. You'll like it when our plane lands in Paris."

"All right," she said finally. "What else do you want me to do?"

"I'll need more bullets. For the gun I take."

"Harry . . ."

"Don't worry, I won't shoot anybody. But if they follow us—hell, those guys might only carry one or two cartridges in their guns."

"What kind should I get?"

"I didn't see the guns. But get a box of .32 bullets and one of .38 bullets. I don't think they'd be carrying anything bigger."

"God, Harry—what if you killed somebody?"

"Kate, I'm goin' to tap him on the skull with this glove—that's all! Stop worrying."

"I worry, Harry. I worry all the time. I worry when we're taking suckers at the boardwalk con games. I worry every time I breathe, I guess."

"Kate, baby, tomorrow night at this time the only worry you'll have is how to spend a quarter of a million bucks." He folded the gloves with their weighted lining carefully into his coat pocket. Then he poured them both a drink and stood with his glass for a time at the window, looking out at the lights of the city. Somehow the sight of the city, of the low buildings and the distant streets and homes, made him sad. Sad and empty. . . .

The next night Harry Argus met Swan at the bar once more, and they travelled out to the deserted parking lot next to the empty funeral home. They were a few minutes late and the panel truck was already waiting. As they climbed into the back, Harry glanced casually over his shoulder, catching the expected glimpse of dimmed head-lights a block further down the road. Kate was on the job.

Before long they had rolled through the familiar steel door and were being ushered into the small reception room. The taller of the two men remembered Harry, and he nodded as he ran those same careful fingers over his body. They never even glanced at Harry's gloved hands, held loosely above his head. "O.K., you're clean."

This night there were only five of them around the green crap layout. Izzy of course was there, and Harry and Swan. The actor, Ronny Doblow was back too, but the fifth man was a stranger

to Harry. John Swan seemed to know him, though, and nodded an uneasy greeting across the table. Harry joined in the game, waiting while the dice made two complete circuits of the table, aware all the while that this fifth man's eyes seemed to be upon him. His luck was surprisingly good on small bets, as was the stranger's and Izzy's. Doblow and Swan were losing.

Finally Harry left for the men's room, feeling first the gloves in his pocket. He was more than a hundred dollars ahead, but Ronny Doblow had just tossed his usual packet of bills into the centre of the table. Izzy would match it and there'd be maybe fifty thousand in play. The stakes were too big for Harry, just now.

He nodded to the two guards engrossed in their gin game and went through the door to the toilet. The gloves came out of his pocket and slipped easily over his fingers. He was ready.

He opened the door and called to the two men. "Say, you got a little flood in here."

"What?" One of them—the little one—put down his cards and came to investigate. As he passed beyond the doorway Harry hit him a blow across the temple. He fell without a sound.

Harry walked out and approached the man still at the table. This would be the tough part. The man looked up from studying the cards in his hand and said, "Hell, mister, you always wear gloves when you're . . . ?" He saw the blow coming, but too late to avoid it. The lining of powdered lead slammed into the side of his head. Before he hit the floor Harry had his gun out of the shoulder holster. It was an S & W .38.

He went back to the men's room and picked an Italian automatic out of the other man's pocket. Then he snapped out the clip and dropped the whole thing into one of the toilet bowls. The .38 would be his weapon.

Back, through the door, along the hall, making certain the tumbled body could not be seen from the crap table. He had perhaps two or three minutes before one of the guards might start to regain his senses and give the alarm. Not long, not long at all.

Izzy Freech had just crapped out and the dice passed to Ronny Doblow. He selected a banded batch of hundred dollar bills from the table in front of him and tossed it into the middle. "Ten thousand," he said, enjoying himself. Izzy matched the bet, and Swan and the fifth man bet a hundred each. Doblow rolled the dice and Harry's gloved hand tightened on the .38 held out of sight behind his back. "Seven! I win!"

"No, I do," Harry said, swing-

ing the gun into view. In the same motion he gave the actor a shove with his left hand, toppling him away from the table. "Nobody move!"

Izzy Freech glanced towards the outer room, then frowned as if realizing what must have happened. His hand dipped below the side of the crap table and came up holding a tiny automatic. Harry cursed and fired once, catching Izzy in the chest.

"*God, Harry!*" This came from John Swan. Harry didn't look at him, keeping him only in the corner of his eye as he watched Izzy slip to the carpeted floor.

"O.K., everyone else put their hands on the edge of the table. No more tricks."

"You killed him," the actor said, his voice high with terror.

Harry's left hand was busy scooping up the piles of bills. He tried not to think about Izzy Freech dead or dying on the floor. He stuffed more bills in his pocket and then backed away. Certainly Doblow and the others had more money on them, but he couldn't risk a search now. The guards might surprise him from behind at any moment. "Just keep holding it there," he said. "Hands on the table."

He kept talking as he backed away, not really knowing what he was saying. His mind was now fully on Izzy and what he had done. He hadn't meant to shoot anybody, hadn't meant to, hadn't!

There were sounds behind him. One of the guards was back on his feet, but still too dazed to act. Harry turned and broke into a run, remembering as he did so that Izzy's tiny gun was still back there on the floor for any of them to use. He plunged through the first door he came to, feeling cool air that told him he was almost out. Then through another door, and he was outside in the night. Back in the city, as he'd suspected. Kate's car was parked halfway down the block. She flicked her headlights and he ran for it. Ran!

"Harry . . ."

"Get going, quick!"

"Harry, what happened?"

"I got the money, that's what happened."

"I thought I heard something. A shot."

"You got good ears. Izzy Freech pulled a gun on me. I had to shoot him."

"*Harry!*" Her hands jerked on the steering wheel, veering the car dangerously to the left.

"Hang on, he'll be all right. I've got the money and that's the important thing."

"But you promised—you said you wouldn't use the gun!"

His head was throbbing with pain, but he tried to ignore it as he counted through the stacks of money from his pocket. "Shut up

a minute, will you? I'm counting."

"*Count!*" she screamed out, all at once. "Count your blood money!"

His vision blurred for an instant, then cleared again as he finished the job of counting. "Forty-seven thousand dollars! How's that for a few minutes' work? It's not a quarter of a million, but there weren't as many players as the night before."

"Harry." Her voice next to him was close to a sob. "Harry, what have we done . . . ?"

Captain Leopold needed only one look at the sprawled body of Izzy Freech. Then he stood up and motioned Fletcher to cover it again. "Who called it in?" he asked.

Fletcher shook his head. "He didn't give his name. But he asked for you: '*Tell Captain Leopold there's been a murder. Harry Argus just killed Izzy Freech.*' Then he gave me this address and hung up."

"You didn't recognize the voice?"

Fletcher shook his head. "He was trying to disguise it, and he did a pretty good job."

Leopold shook his head sadly. "I warned Harry, just a couple of nights ago."

"You think he did it?"

Leopold shrugged. "Somebody did. Somebody got into Izzy's crap game and held it up, I would guess." He glanced around the big, well-lit room, now so deserted except for the police and the thing under the sheet. "None of the other customers stayed around to tell us for sure."

"You'd think they would have dumped the body somewhere and kept the game's location a secret. This is a damn nice crap layout."

"With Izzy dead there wasn't any more game," Leopold said. "Get going and round up the people who worked for him. I want a list of everyone that was here tonight. And put out an alarm for Harry Argus—wanted for questioning."

"If it was robbery, the guy was a crazy fool. If he hadn't shot Izzy, they'd never even have called the police."

"Probably not." Leopold was carefully lifting a tiny .22 automatic from beneath the table. "Looks like Izzy put up some resistance, though."

"It's a hell of a life."

Leopold picked up a pair of dice and flung them across the green cloth. "It sure is. I rolled a seven and there's nobody left to pay off."

Nobody left. . . .

Kate O'Bern returned with the morning papers as Harry was finishing shaving in their motel room. The careful plans they'd made to drive straight to New

York had somehow evaporated in the shock of the night before. They'd gone instead to a motel on the Boston Post Road where they hoped temporarily to be out of reach of the police and Izzy's friends. Kate had gone in search of newspapers, and when she returned, Harry had only to look at her face to know what they said.

"He's dead, Harry. You said he wasn't, but he is!"

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean to kill him."

"The police want you for questioning."

"We've got to move. Keep moving."

"Run all our lives?"

"We can do a lot of running with forty-seven grand. With a little luck at the tracks I could run it into half a million."

"Sure, with a little luck! The kind of luck you had last night!"

He was silent for a time, watching out the window. Despite the coolish September temperatures, the motel's pool was still open for business, and a girl in a bright red bathing suit was practising her dives. Finally he turned back to Kate. "Did you get the bullets?"

She opened one of the suitcases and tossed two small boxes on the rumpled bed. "Here—go shoot somebody else!"

He picked up the box marked 100 *bullets*—.38 *cal.*, and opened it. "Damn! You got the wrong things! These are bullets—*slugs*—for guys who load their own cartridges. I can't use these!"

"I asked for bullets and that's what they gave me. It says bullets on the box."

"O.K., O.K., I meant cartridges. I thought you knew *something*." He picked up the box and hurled it against the wall, sending the hundred leaden slugs bouncing and rolling across the floor. He went to the dresser drawer and took out the .38. There were five cartridges still left in the chambers. "This'll have to do," he said.

"I'm sure it will. It's enough for you to kill me and blow your own brains out!"

He ran a hand over his forehead, feeling the old ache again. Then, regaining control of himself, he went to her. "Kate, Kate—what's happening to us? We used to be a team. Why are we fighting like this?"

But she didn't answer him. She, too, was looking out the window, perhaps for a moment seeing herself as the carefree young girl on the diving-board. If she could see that far through the tears. . . .

"Funny thing," Fletcher was saying to Leopold at about that time. "Did you see the medical examiner's report on Izzy Freech?"

Leopold had taken up smoking again, and his morning's ash

tray was already overflowing. He found space for another butt and ground it out. "No. What about it?"

"Well, it appears the immediate cause of death was suffocation, after he was shot. Looks like Argus wanted to make sure and held something over his mouth and nose."

Leopold's eyes shot up, full of interest. "Argus or someone else. He'd hardly take the time to do it if he was robbing the place. Damn it, we have to find out who else was there."

"We've got a lead on that, too. There was one clear set of finger-prints on the crap table beside Izzy's. They belong to John Swan, one of the local gambling crowd. Figuring that Izzy probably had the table's wooden ledge polished or at least wiped off every day, I think it's a safe bet that Swan was there last night."

"Pick him up," Leopold said.

"I'm one jump ahead of you. I've already got the boys looking for him."

Just before noon, as Leopold was putting on his top-coat to leave for lunch at the cafeteria in City Hall, they brought in John Swan. Leopold had never met the man, but he had about him the look of the professional gambler and hustler. Perhaps a bit better dressed than Harry Argus, but in the same basic mould. Leopold looked him over while he hung his coat back up. Lunch would have to wait.

"Hello, Jack. How are you?"

"The name's John. John Swan."

"All right, John. Want to tell us about last night?"

"What's to tell? I don't even know why I got picked up."

Leopold fumbled for a cigarette. "You got picked up, John boy, because your finger-prints are all over Izzy Freech's crap table. Freech is dead and we want to know who killed him."

John Swan seemed to debate for a few seconds before answering. Then he said, "All right, I got nothing to hide. Fellow named Harry Argus held up the game. Izzy pulled a gun and Argus shot him. The rest of us scattered quick."

"All right," Leopold told him. "I want the names of everyone who was there."

Swan gave a shrug. "Izzy, his two gunmen, Harry Argus, and a few others I didn't know."

Fletcher came up behind him. "Come now, John. You know everybody."

"There was an actor fellow, up from New York. He moaned the most about losing his money."

"Name?"

"He's in this movie up at the *Royal*. Doblow."

Fletcher nodded. "Ronny Doblow. I've heard he's quite a gambler."

"Who else?" Leopold asked.

"There were just five of us

last night. Plus the two guards. Harry knocked them out and used one of their guns."

"Five. You mentioned four: Izzy, you, Argus and Doblow. Who was the fifth?"

John Swan smiled a bit, as if he'd been waiting for this part. "One of your boys."

"One of what?"

"Compton. He's an assistant D.A., isn't he . . . ?"

Harry Argus was almost asleep, drifting in that half-world of daytime slumber, where every sound and movement of the daytime world entered in upon the misted mind. He'd slept very little the night before, and now at noon he sprawled across the rumpled bed like a fallen warrior. The sleep came and went restlessly, in and out as the tide, and occasionally the faint sounds of a radio could be heard from the next room, intruding on the curtain of his brain. Somewhere a dog barked, and somewhere else a car rumbled into life. And his dreams were troubled, murderer's dreams—the dreams of Raskolnikov and a thousand more.

Something woke him, perhaps the closing of a door, and he sat up in the rumpled bed, blinking at the half-seen sunlight. He was alone in the noon-day world, wondering almost at once what had happened to Kate. He shook his head to brush away the aching cobwebs of dream, then saw the note propped against the mirror.

Harry—I have taken the gun and gone to the police. It's the only way out of this mess, darling. Please, please don't hate me too much.

He read it twice before crumpling it into a tired ball. Then he sat on the edge of the bed and tried to remember where he was at, where he was going. . . .

Captain Leopold, who rarely found the need or the inclination to show his temper, was demonstrating to Assistant District Attorney Compton that he indeed had one. "You felt like *gambling*, and you went to Izzy Freech's game, *knowing* full well that the word would get around, *knowing* the bad name you'd be giving to every cop and detective and prosecutor in this town! *Then*, as if that wasn't *bad* enough, you witness a stick-up and shooting and do *nothing* about it, actually *leave* the scene—and finally call in the information from a pay phone, disguising your voice! Damn it, Compton, it's guys like you I hate with all my heart, and if I can pin anything on you for this you can be damn well sure I will."

"Just calm down, Captain. Just calm down. This doesn't have to go any further than this room." Compton tried to light a

cigarette, but his hand was shaking badly.

"Listen, you scum—the bullet Argus fired only started the dying. Someone—one of you other players—finished the job with a pillow or a towel. You're just one of the suspects, Compton, and if you're guilty I'll escort you to the electric chair personally."

The cigarette was finally glowing, but the sweat was standing out now on Compton's forehead. "God, Leopold! You know I didn't kill anybody!"

"I know nothing of the kind."

"The two guards took off right away in the truck. Then Doblow, Swan and I left. I told them I was calling the police."

"You told Fletcher on the phone that Izzy was dead. How did you know that if you didn't kill him yourself?"

"God, Leopold! I saw Harry Argus shoot him in the chest! He was bleeding all over the carpet and he wasn't moving. What was I supposed to think? That guy Swan looked at him and said he was dead."

Leopold picked up the report from Fletcher. "Someone took the time to pry open a drawer in the office. I think he was after some I.O.U.'s, and apparently he found them. Did you owe Izzy any gambling debts?"

"I swear to you, that was only the second time in my life I was ever inside the place. And I was winning when Argus pulled his gun!"

"Don't you find it a little bit ironic that you should be on the scene when Harry Argus of all people pulled off a robbery and murder? After all your efforts to 'get' him?"

"That's the story you can release," Compton said, eagerly grabbing at the idea. "Tell the papers I was there checking up on Argus."

"I'll tell the papers the truth, and I'll tell your boss, too. I've got a call in for him now."

"What did I ever do to you, Leopold?"

"Nothing. You just never knew me well enough, Compton. You just never knew I was a cop, till now." He flicked a switch on the desk intercom. "Fletcher! How you coming with that actor?"

"His story's the same as the others, Captain. Want me to bring him in?"

"Yeah," Leopold said. "And get Swan, too. I'm going to get to the bottom of this thing, right now."

He flicked off the switch and sat for a moment in silent thought, watching Compton sweat it out across the desk. . . .

To Harry Argus, the world was a dirty trick, a fixed wheel, a marked deck. Life had played out the chips for him, and all he held was a handful of jokers. He'd killed Izzy Freech, for

some money that now seemed next to useless, and Kate had left him—gone to betray him to those enemies he didn't hate. They'd never made it to Paris, and they never would, now.

Perhaps all of life was a secret game, played out on some cosmic chess-board which you only glimpsed just once and then not nearly long enough. If that was it, then Harry at least would have the last move for himself. He wouldn't sit there on the bed waiting for them to come for him, with their flashing lights and shrill sirens.

He went into the bathroom and fumbled at his safety razor, removing the blade still soapy with use. . . .

Leopold paced the crowded office with an air of impatience to be on with the thing. His office was not made for questioning sessions, and it was only the importance of two of his "guests"—Compton and Ronny Doblow—that caused him to gather them together here rather than in the big, coldly barren room upstairs. The actor, Doblow, was already full of protest, and there was always the possibility that Compton might recover a little of his lost courage.

"I'll make this as short as possible," Leopold told them, signalling the stenographer to begin transcribing what was said. "The three of you have been brought here and questioned in connection with the murder of Izzy Freech and the hold-up of his crap game. I think it's pretty well established by both Mr. Compton and Mr. Swan here that the man who staged the hold-up and shot Izzy was one Harry Argus."

Ronny Doblow was busy lighting one of the thin black cigars that were his occasional trademark. "Then why in hell aren't you out after him, instead of bothering honest citizens?"

"Because, Mr. Doblow, the bullet wasn't what killed Izzy. Oh, I'm sure it would have, in time. But it was speeded along by someone who had to make sure he died, someone who smothered him and then stole some I.O.U.'s out of his locked desk. Now Izzy Freech's game had a reputation of being quite private. There were only six of you in the building besides Izzy. One of the six must have smothered him."

Compton moved uneasily in his chair. This was a new experience for him, and he wasn't enjoying it. Next to him, John Swan seemed almost asleep. Leopold eyed each of them in turn before continuing. "It's quite out of the question to believe that Harry Argus would return to the scene of the crime to finish Izzy off, so that leaves just five of you. The two guards are out on a couple of counts.

They wouldn't be likely to have gambling debts with their boss, and also if they returned I'm sure they'd have been much more interested in disposing of the body and protecting the location of the game and the equipment. They never would have killed Izzy and then left him there—where he was sure to be found sooner or later."

"So you think one of us did it?" Doblow asked, puffing on the cigar.

Leopold looked unpleasant. "Would you please stop smoking that thing in here? Yes, I think one of you did it. You're the only three left. You all departed together and split up outside, I understand, but it would have been a simple matter for one of you to return to the place."

"Which one?" Swan asked. "Our fine assistant D.A.?"

"Mr. Compton is a likely suspect—and is certainly a very foolish man—but a few things manage to clear him. First off, he was winning in the game last night, while you two were losing."

"What difference does that make? Argus took all the money."

"True enough," Leopold admitted. "But there's also the matter of Mr. Compton's position. He had been an assistant District Attorney for a number of years now—since Harry Argus lived here before—and he would certainly be familiar with police procedure in murder cases. He would certainly know that the medical examiner would perform an autopsy despite the seemingly obvious cause of death—and would discover the true crime. Under those circumstances, would he be likely to call the police himself, knowing he'd be linked to the investigation? If he'd smothered Izzy, he'd be much more likely—certain, in fact—*not* to call the police, to either move the body himself or hope that Izzy's men would return to move it."

John Swan moved in his chair. "That leaves the pretty boy and me."

Leopold nodded. "You both were losing last night, and possibly had lost before. But would Ronny here, with his money, find it necessary to write I.O.U.'s to a gambler? Add to this the fact that it was you, Swan, who examined Izzy and announced he was dead. You and you alone had the opportunity to realize he was still alive. That fact doesn't convict you, but it certainly clears Compton and Doblow. They had no reason, after your statement, for returning to kill Izzy, because they both believed him to be dead already. Add to this one other little point—you knew Compton was an assistant D.A., and could be reasonably sure he'd report the crime. You could be afraid help would arrive before Izzy really

died. But Ronny, on the other hand, didn't know Compton. Even if he believed Izzy to be alive—which we've shown he didn't—he would have no reason returning immediately to kill him. He'd have been much safer waiting for Izzy to bleed to death, then returning for the I.O.U.'s the next day."

John Swan still looked sleepy. "You'll have a tough time proving any of that in a court of law."

"We'll have a tough time convicting you anyway, since Izzy was bleeding to death at the time you finished him off. But I think, Swan, that we'll just give it a try. Maybe Izzy's men knew about those I.O.U.'s, or maybe some of the recent players remember you dropping a bundle and going in the hole. Yes, I think we'll try it, Swan."

"Try, then, damn you!"

"Fletcher, take him down and book him on suspicion of murder. I'll be with the D.A., about our friend Mr. Compton, here."

They were starting out when Leopold's phone buzzed at his elbow. "Yes?"

"Captain, there's a woman down at the desk wants to see somebody in charge of the Freech killing. Should I send her up? Says her name is Kate O'Bern. . . ."

Harry Argus watched the sink fill slowly with the mixture of warm water and blood, coming faster now than the drain could carry it off. He seemed finally now to have found himself, bent listlessly over the bathroom fixture, thinking not really of Izzy or Kate or any of them, yet seeing them all with eyes too clear even now. But he knew that vision would cloud before long, knew his senses were growing weaker even as he possessed the thought.

In his final beautiful dream all was right with the world at last, and there were no more faces or memories to challenge him, no more suckers to be taken or bucks to be made.

Dreaming, he never heard the rising wail of the distant siren.

Dreaming, he passed peacefully into death. . . .

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murder most subtle

by A. N. Glennon

WHEN A POPULAR young member of a tight-knit group dies of natural causes, the rest of the group are naturally introspective, and for a time busy themselves with ardent preparations for their own demises. So it was that the death of Lieutenant Bob Russell created a sensation within the Navy community in Key West.

Upon hearing the news, the base Legal Officer immediately had his secretary run off another thousand forms labeled "Last Will and Testament of ———", with other suitable blanks to be filled in. And the local insurance agents, never noted for reticence, avidly brought their lists of prospects up to date in anticipation of giving whatever assist they could to the inevitable upswing in new policies.

Lieutenant Commander Tom Flynn, along with a select group of other Navy men who n
to know, experienced a di
sort of sensation. The Navy, concerned as it might be over the death of a promising young officer, was doubly concerned by the fact this officer was also an undercover agent for the Office of Naval Intelligence. Because

A. N. Glennon, author of MURDER ON PATIO BEACH (SMM, Febr. 1964) and other stories about him, writes with authority of Lt. Comdr. Flynn, Permanent Shore Patrol Officer for the Key West Naval Base, who finds himself, to his dismay, "typed" as a man who has had investigative experience and who therefore can solve any problem—even murder—

his death had left his current assignment uncompleted, ONI had sent Mr. Arthur Draper to Key West, hoping Russell may have left something tangible that would help to conclude his investigation. Captain Forrest, the Naval Base Chief of Staff, had called on Tom to give whatever aid he could, and Tom had reacted as expected.

"But Captain," Tom had said, and was cut off by the Captain's headshake.

"I know, Flynn, you keep reminding me. You're the Shore Patrol Officer, and this isn't Shore Patrol business." Forrest gave Tom his most winning smile. "But you're the only officer I have who has any investigative experience, and you know the people in the city and on the Base better than anyone else around here. You're the obvious one for the job."

In midafternoon, Tom turned the Shore Patrol office over to his assistant, Chief Evans, and picked up Draper. They went first to the Small Reactor Research Facility, at the Naval Station Annex, where Russell had been assigned. The Director being busy when they arrived, they waited in the office of the administrative assistant, Mr. Charles Schroeder.

"Charlie," Tom said, after introducing Draper, "we've come to look through Bob Russell's office for some material he may have left there."

Schroeder, a small, dark man whose widow's peak and pointed chin made his face heart-shaped, looked from one to the other almost fearfully. "Material he may have left? What sort of material?"

"Notes, maybe. Something not directly related to his work."

"Here? Don't be silly. He'd have nothing here that wasn't related to his work. We don't have time in this sweatshop for anything but our work."

"We think there might be something, Charlie. We'd like to look for ourselves."

"Prying, nosing around again. All the time, someone spying on you in this filthy system, right from the first application blank you fill out. All right, then, go ahead, see if you can find anything in his office. I'll take you there." He stood, his entire body quivering with anger, and opened a narrow key locker on the wall. He selected a key, then turned to them, a slight mockery in his eyes. "You'll be wasting your time, though. I've already cleared his files and his desk, and I found none of his spy notes there."

"What are you talking about?"

"Why, his notes for the ONI, of course."

Draper frowned and jabbed a finger toward him. "What notes for the ONI?"

Schroeder paled and sat back

down at his desk. "Well, uh, I thought, that is, Dr. Collins told me yesterday that Russell had been working for the ONI. That's why I was especially alert in clearing out his office."

"And you found nothing other than his normal work, you say? I'd still like to see the things you removed. There may have been something there you wouldn't have recognized."

"Well, I'm sorry, but you can't. Most of it has already been returned to the facility files. I put the rough notes in my classified wastebasket and they were burned yesterday afternoon."

Draper buried his face in his hands. "No telling what might have been there," he said, "and this talented amateur burns it."

There was nothing further to say, so they sat there in silence, listening unintentionally to the voices from the other side of the partition separating Schroeder's office from the Director's. A deeply resonant voice, thick with tones of the deep south, was suddenly raised in anger.

"Look at the inventory, Cosgrove; look what you've put here! Sixty gallons doesn't evaporate from a closed system. It has to be around here somewhere, and I want you to either account for its use, or to locate it. Five, even ten gallons evaporation I might accept, but not sixty."

Tom, embarrassed by the shouting, looked for some way to be less obviously listening. He saw a back copy of *Scientific American* lying on Schroeder's desk, and reached for it. Schroeder snatched it away before Tom quite touched it. "You don't want that, Flynn, it's a back number. Besides, I have to return it to the library. That's what I was about to do before you came in." He dropped it into an open drawer in his desk, and slammed the drawer shut. Tom's temper flared momentarily, but he caught himself and forced a smile, shrugging off Schroeder's boorishness.

The bass drone in the next office continued. "Look at the records for past quarters, for heaven's sake. Hardly a drop unaccounted for. This stuff's expensive; so expensive we can't go losing it by the carboy. Now, you go on down there, son, and do yourself some looking. You've got just four days to locate it. Otherwise, I'll report this to Washington for whatever action they see fit to take. I'm leaving tomorrow for a meeting in Denver. I'll expect your explanation when I return."

A door opened down the hall, and a slight, blond young Lieutenant walked past Schroeder's open door. His chastened look was mingled only slightly with an air of defiance, but he was sweating profusely in spite of the air conditioning. Schroeder

stood behind his desk. "I think the Director can see you now," he said.

Dr. Collins met them at his office door. His appearance fitted his voice—long, greying hair cut to flow over the top of his head and curl up over his collar, a florid complexion, even a string bow tie. It was obvious that a tall, heavyset man such as this should have gone into politics, not physics.

"Come in, gentlemen, come in," he said. "Sorry I had to keep you waiting, but it seems we have one trouble after another. First we lose a very talented young officer, now we have other problems: a breakdown here, sloppy accounting there, meetings to attend—why do these societies have to be always meeting somewhere? I think there's a conspiracy to keep me busy, busy, busy." His resonant voice, Tom suddenly realized, contained an alien undertone at short range. It was almost as if the southern accent fought for dominance against some other quality.

Collins commented on the heat and walked over to a water cooler. He passed each a glass of ice water. "I imagine you want to talk to me about Lieutenant Russell." He shook his head solemnly. "A tragedy. So young, so vigorous. Always so concerned about his health, so particular about his diet. And yet to be struck down so suddenly. I can hardly believe it, he was so dynamic. Has a cause of death been determined?"

"Yes," Draper said, "it was a rather rare form of anemia, but a fast-acting one. As you know, he suddenly grew very weak, went into a coma, and died shortly after."

"But he was such a vital young man. Why it was due to one of his enthusiasms I got this water cooler. Excellent spring water, isn't it, gentlemen? Russell himself literally wouldn't drink anything else, even though the closest supply house that carries it is in Miami. He spoke so highly of it that I tried it, and found I shared his enthusiasm."

Draper looked at his glass critically. "To tell you the truth, Dr. Collins, I hadn't noticed any particularly different taste about it."

"Of course not. This is pure spring water, and of course it's tasteless because of its very purity."

Neither Tom nor Draper could think of any suitable reply to that. Rather than pursue the subject, Tom returned to their mission.

"Of course, of course," Collins said. "You want to know if Russell left any notes pertaining to his little task for ONI, don't you?"

Draper bristled at this. "Look, Doctor, Russell was supposed to

be a covert agent. When we sent him here, only the Admiral and Captain Forrest were told of his ONI connection, and they wouldn't have been told if it weren't necessary that someone in authority know, in case he needed help. Now, would you mind telling us just how you knew he was working for ONI?"

"Certainly not, Mr. Draper. Captain Forrest in his wisdom felt that I, of all people in this area should know that Russell was an ONI agent. After all, it was I who originally asked for help in tracking down the security leak in the facility."

"And did you inform Russell of your knowledge?"

"No, indeed. I felt that he would be unable to operate to the limits of his discretion if I revealed I knew his true status. After all, he could hardly have felt comfortable in observing me, for example, knowing that I knew." Dr. Collins gave a deprecating wave of his hand and smiled. "Assuming, of course, that he might have felt it necessary at some time to put me under observation."

"Well," Draper said, "did Russell ever come to you with any information of his own accord?"

Dr. Collins sighed. "No, he never seemed disposed to inform me either of his clandestine work or of his suspicions. As you know, information has continued to leak out in spite of his presence. Surely his reports to ONI were adequate?"

"Unfortunately, no. Russell's operating procedure ran contrary to our preferred practice. He would never commit suspicions to paper. He preferred to wrap up a case, submitting a final report that was thorough and completely factual. His progress reports simply told what he had done. We can only hope he kept some sort of notes either in his office or his room, something to give us a lead. Mr. Schroeder just told us there was nothing in his office. That leaves his room."

"Charles said there was nothing? How did he know what you are looking for?"

"He said you told him yesterday of the ONI connection."

"You must have misunderstood him. At any rate, you'll still want to go through his quarters. I'll send for Lieutenant Cosgrove, who shared a house with Russell."

"Fine. While we're waiting for him, would you mind giving us an idea of your security setup so we can get the feel of things?"

Quickly, Dr. Collins explained that each officer or key civilian had a key to his own desk and office, and that all locks were grouped so that a single master key could open any desk, another any office, and a third would open certain storage spaces. The security areas had

locks that required specific keys, and no master would open them. No individual had a key which would open any desk or office but his own. The master keys were kept in Schroeder's office, with one more set for Dr. Collins, and another for the security guards.

When Lieutenant Cosgrove arrived, he was obviously still suffering from his last visit to the Director's office. He acknowledged the introduction to Tom and Draper without ever looking directly at Collins. He led them from Collins' office, his step growing lighter as the distance increased.

On the way to the house Russell had shared with Cosgrove, they realized how late it was getting, so stopped at a restaurant for dinner. Over their coffee, Tom asked if anyone had been through Russell's things yet.

"Not yet. This being a combination military and civilian command, some things aren't handled the way they would be in a strictly military group. We planned to inventory and pack his things later this week. Anyhow, nothing's been touched so far." He paused, thinking for a moment, then added, "If I knew just what you're looking for, I might be able to help you better."

"Might as well tell you," Draper said, "you're the first person we've met so far who doesn't know. We learned several months ago that some highly classified reactor information was leaking out from here to an iron curtain country. Russell was sent down to locate the source, but died before he could find out."

"Golly, I didn't realize our work here was so important."

"It is, be sure of that. The trouble is, the information, which all comes from the same source, covers the whole spectrum of reactor research, and not just what you do here."

"If that's so, how could you trace it to Key West?"

Draper's stare turned slightly frosty. "A good intelligence man never reveals his sources, Cosgrove, but I can tell you part of it. A reactor physicist defected to us some time back. Everything he knew about our research came from classified reports that had been published before he came over, except for a small part, which concerned the work you do here. That part hasn't yet been published, and is not generally known, even among those who are cleared for this sort of information. The source of that information, at that time, had to be right here."

There was little conversation in the car as they continued their short trip. When Tom stepped on the brake and started to turn into a driveway, Draper

looked at the house within the fence, and his eyes bulged. The gate was just wide enough to admit the sedan, but the white house was large enough to handle twenty or more men, rather than just two. Tom laughed at Draper's reaction. When the car stopped at the end of the driveway, they were behind the large house, parked on what had been a tennis court. Directly in front of the car was a small cottage. Draper shook his head. "Had me worried for a minute, there. I thought we'd have to search all three floors of the big place."

Cosgrove shook his head. "No, just two rooms in this place, and they aren't even connected. It's a little bit awkward if it's raining, but otherwise it's pretty comfortable."

The cottage was L-shaped. The living room and kitchen were in one leg of the L, raised a few feet above ground level, and the bedroom-study took up the other leg, at ground level. A large closet and a bathroom adjoined this room.

The living room offered little but an insight into the past history of Key West. The tiled floor testified to the old Key West custom of enticing ships onto the reefs to get their cargoes. Regardless of its source, the tile, along with the jalousied windows and doors, and the wrought iron and rattan furniture were ideally suited to catch any stray coolness that might be in the neighborhood. A quick glance around assured them Cosgrove was right when he said they'd find little of interest in that part of the house.

The sight of the bottled water in the kitchen made them all realize they were hot and thirsty. Cosgrove took an ice tray from the refrigerator, and said something under his breath when he found it almost empty.

"Never do remember to refill these things," he said. Then he brightened. "Well, Bob's ice ought to do the trick."

"Bob's ice?"

"Yeah. Bob Russell wouldn't drink ordinary tap water." He pointed to the bottled water in its metal stand. "Always had to have that special water. Just to make sure he didn't contaminate himself, he even cooked with it, and made his own ice cubes from it." He reached into the freezing compartment, pulled out a plastic bag of ice cubes, and put a couple in each glass. The glasses, he filled at the sink, ignoring the bottled water. "I don't see what he saw in that stuff. Tried a swig or two every now and then, but it didn't do anything for me. Well, let's take this into the bedroom and see what's there."

The bedroom door opened nearly in the middle of one wall. To the right, under the high

windows, were twin beds with a nightstand between. Opposite the door was a desk, while to their left were doors to the closet and bathroom.

"Room seems underfurnished, somehow," Draper said.

"You're right," Cosgrove said, "there's no dressers. But look here." He opened the closet door. The closet was nearly ten feet deep, with a center aisle leading to hanging clothes at the far end. Nearer the door, shelves were neatly arranged with shirts, socks, underwear, and accessories, with more space and less confusion than dressers would have provided. On the floor on each side, under the shelves, was an assortment of books, portfolios, and papers that make up the personal files people tend to accumulate.

"Bob's stuff is to the right," Cosgrove said. "Whatever you're looking for is probably there, if it's anywhere in the house."

Tom and Draper sighed and started a page by page search for something significant. They split a stack of portfolios and leafed through them hurriedly, each with an eye on the steel strongbox that lay at the bottom of one sack. At last, they had assured themselves that nothing of importance was in the open files, and they turned to the box.

"How do we get into that?" Draper asked.

"Won't be hard. That's the kind they issue at Annapolis—it's for privacy, not security. We can open it with a beer can popper."

Tom was right, and they had it open after a few seconds of work. On top were carbon copies of Russell's periodic reports to ONI. Draper gave them a quick glance and said, "Nothing new here. What else is there?"

Tom pulled a book from the bottom of the box. "Looks like a diary," he said.

Draper snatched the book from Tom's hand and went with it to the desk in the bedroom. He waved Tom's questions aside. "Let me be alone for a while, Flynn, and we'll see what's in it."

Tom and Cosgrove returned to the living room to wait for Draper. Still thirsty, Tom asked for more water, and followed Cosgrove to the kitchen. Tom studied a shelf full of strangely labeled food boxes.

"Where did he get all this stuff?" he asked, pointing.

"Well, a lot of it you can get at most supermarkets," Cosgrove said. "I can't stand it, myself. I'll take a good steak anytime over that wheat germ and blackstrap. But Bob really ate the stuff up." He paused, startled at his own accidental joke. "The only hard part was the water; he had to get that from Miami."

"Yes, that's what we were told.

Does the distributor deliver it all the way down here?"

"He sure does. You'd be surprised how many people go in for this sort of thing. It isn't exactly selling like hotcakes, but there's enough business down the Keys to pay for about one trip a month. It comes in five gallon jugs, and Bob used to get about five jugs each delivery."

"Twenty five gallons a month?"

"Yeah. Remember, he used it for cooking and drinking both, and he drank quite a bit of it. If he ran out, I'd pick some up for him over the weekend."

"In Miami?"

"Yeah, I don't care too much for Miami itself, but I go with an airline stewardess based there. We get together whenever we can, almost every weekend."

"What did he do with the regular deliveries, have them delivered here?"

"No. His and Dr. Collins' orders were delivered to the lab, so the driver could collect for each delivery."

"I suppose Collins gets quite a bit, too?"

"Well, he isn't bugged on it, like Bob was. He doesn't use five gallons a month, hardly."

"Did Russell drink it at the office, too?"

"Sure, he carried a little vacuum bottle with him every day. Like I said, he wouldn't drink anything else."

Tired of Russell's eccentricity, Tom changed the subject. "What's your job at the facility?"

"I'm the reactor officer. I don't do much research, as such. Mostly keep the reactors running, make sure they're looked after properly, keep the electronics checked, and so on. Routine stuff."

"Routine?" Tom looked at him searchingly. "How many people in the whole country are qualified for this routine job?"

Cosgrove smiled. "Well, the field's not exactly overcrowded, but there's probably more than you think. Even so, it isn't really exciting after you've been doing it for a while. It'd be different on a ship, I suppose, with all sorts of things going on, but here, we usually run at a constant level, and it's pretty much a matter of keeping track of the meter readings."

"You have help?"

"Three officer assistants, and enough men for a twenty four hour reactor watch when they're critical. I take some of the watches myself; it gives the other guys a chance for a day or two off, and I need the practice to keep my qualification."

Draper came into the room just then. "Let's go, Flynn," he said. "I'm tired, and we can get going again tomorrow morning." He had Russell's diary under one arm, and motioned toward the door with the other.

In the car, Draper asked,

"What was your impression of Cosgrove?"

"He seemed like a pretty open type. Nothing evasive about him, if that's what you mean. Why?"

"Tell you later. First off, though, how many people at the facility do you suppose can see the incoming classified reports, plus data on current work down here?"

"That's hard to say. Collins and Schroeder, for sure, and Cosgrove. Probably another half dozen civilians and most of the Navy officers, depending on the particular work they're assigned. In these technical fields, you've pretty near got to read everything you can get your hands on. You have to keep up on what others are doing if only so you don't duplicate some pretty expensive tests that have already been done competently."

"I was afraid that's what you'd say. That's why Russell had made so little progress. He had twelve or fifteen suspects, and no way to narrow them down. And here we are, starting where he started, without even the chance to do it undercover."

"Did you get anything from the diary?"

"Darn little. The only individual he mentioned was one who spends a lot of time out of town, but he identified him only as C."

"That's fine! I wonder how many C's there are at the facility. Or do you suppose he had people labeled A, B, C, and so on?"

Draper shuddered. "That's why I said we're starting right where Russell started. We met three C's this afternoon, Collins, Cosgrove, and Schroeder."

"Schroeder?"

"Charlie."

Tom pulled the Navy sedan into his parking space in front of the BOQ, and the two went inside. Although he couldn't explain it, Tom felt keyed up. He tried to relax by reading for a few minutes before turning out his light. It didn't help. Something kept nagging in his mind, something tied in with what he had seen and heard during the day. Something he almost remembered, but not quite. He tossed in his bed, tangling the covers hopelessly about him, and finally sat up, soaked in his own perspiration, disgusted at his inability to sleep. He got up and went over to his easy chair for a cigarette, hoping this would settle him enough so he could sleep. It was two in the morning by then, and he was beginning to get desperate.

The cigarette had almost burned down when Tom's memory finally made the connection. Quickly, he went to the bookcase, where his back copies of *Naval Institute Proceedings*, *Scientific American*, and a few other treasured magazines were piled.

Hurriedly, he leafed through the back numbers of *Scientific American*, until he came to the article he was looking for. When he had finished reading, his mind was clear, but he was not happy.

Russell's death had not been natural—he had been murdered. The method was subtle and almost undetectable, but Tom now knew the secret, and how to prove it was murder. All that remained was to find out who had done it. Even this wasn't going to be too hard, now. With his new knowledge, the field was narrowed to a very few people at the facility who could have had the opportunity. Tom looked again at the cover of the magazine. It was the issue that had been on Schroeder's desk that afternoon.

Tom and Draper met in the BOQ wardroom at breakfast, and Tom described his find of the previous night.

"Sounds plausible, Commander. We don't usually trust these so-called natural deaths any more than we do an accidental death when an agent's on a case. Even though we sent the vital organs up to the medical laboratory at Bethesda, though, this one left us no other choice. I'll put in a call, and have tests made to confirm it."

Tom nodded, his eyes red and half-shut from his trying night. "I'll get someone from the Shore Patrol office to pick up the samples we'll need from the cottage, while you're doing that. It's sort of ironic, isn't it, Russell setting up his own death?"

"Sure, but don't kid yourself; if he hadn't made it so convenient, whoever did it would have found another way. What bothers me is this Forrest guy. I don't know what he was doing, breaking Russell's cover for him. If he told Collins, he might have told others. No telling how far some of these guys will go, sharing their exciting little secrets."

"Don't be too rough on him, Draper. It would have seemed logical to me to let Collins in on it, let him know the Navy's not just forgetting about his problems."

"Sure, Flynn, he's your boss, and you've got to stick up for him. But, when we say to hold something in strictest confidence, we don't mean broadcast it to anyone you think might like to know it. We mean it's for you, period. Now, where do we stand?"

"Well, there's Cosgrove. He's in charge of the whole reactor operation, and has the access he needs. Plus which, he spends a lot of time out of town. He's got a girl friend in Miami."

"Doesn't he have a passel of assistants?"

"Sure, but he's in charge. With him signed for the stuff, they'd have to go to him or Dr. Collins for the keys."

"Okay, then, we'd better check with Dr. Collins as soon as I've called Washington."

Collins was still raging over the short inventory of the previous day when they arrived at the facility. Cosgrove could be heard through the door, trying in vain to explain his shortage, and losing ground every minute. While they waited, Tom approached Schroeder. "Charlie, who'd been reading that *Scientific American* you had on your desk yesterday?"

Schroeder snorted. "How should I know. I'm just the librarian here, on top of all my other jobs. But nobody ever bothers to check stuff out with me. Just take what they want, when they want, and when they're through, toss it on good ol' Charlie's desk. I don't even know when that magazine was taken out, let alone who took it. At least, I keep the classified stuff locked up. You don't get me on any security violation."

Before Tom or Draper could comment on this loss of a possible lead, Cosgrove left Collins' office, shaking his head and mumbling to himself. Dr. Collins appeared in the doorway behind him, his expression changing from frowning dismissal to half-warm welcome when he saw Tom and Draper.

"Still fighting the same problems as yesterday, aren't we gentlemen? I take it you've made no more progress than I, in our respective searches?"

"Not exactly," Tom said, taking a visitor's chair in the office. "However, we now have reason to believe Russell was murdered."

Dr. Collins raised his eyebrows. "Murdered? But, surely the doctors have confirmed that Russell died a natural death?"

"Well, they're reviewing their opinions now, Dr. Collins. Doesn't it seem odd that a young man such as he should suddenly take sick and die soon after taking on a covert assignment? Particularly one who was such a fanatic about his own health and diet?"

"Mr. Draper, such coincidences occur all the time."

"I said it to Flynn, and I'll say it to you—when one of our agents dies on an assignment, the ONI doesn't usually believe in coincidences. We were almost taken in this time, but this was murder, and we're going to find out who did it. When we have our murderer, we'll also have your security leak for you."

"Well, of course, I want that problem solved, whether I can agree with you on Russell's death or not. Er, yes, Jackson, what is it?"

A young civilian at the door, looking slightly embarrassed at interrupting, said, "Thought you might like to know, Doctor, we put a twenty four hour tightness

test on the reactor system, and haven't lost a drop."

"Well, then. Have you tested the transfer piping?"

"That's the next step, sir."

"Let me know how it turns out."

Tom and Draper had followed this exchange with great interest. It was Tom who broached the subject.

"Yesterday and today both, Dr. Collins, you've seemed to be upset by some sort of unexplained loss. Are you by any chance missing some heavy water?"

"I suppose it's obvious from what you've heard."

"That, too. Doctor, we'd like to look around the facility, if we may. Could you provide us some badges that will let us wander without getting into trouble?"

"Of course."

Wearing their unrestricted badges, Tom and Draper went down to the reactor room. Naval officers and enlisted men, mixed with civilians, clustered around the control boards and studied the instruments which literally lined aisle after aisle of electronic equipment. At one side, a group of technicians were attaching hoses and pressure gages to a piping system. Cosgrove was supervising these men, but turned aside at the approach of the two investigators.

"Hi. How's it going . . . any progress?"

"A little, but no real break yet. What's going on here?"

"We're setting up to put a pressure on the heavy water transfer system. Been losing quite a bit of it, and can't find where it's going."

"Where is it stored?"

"In there." Cosgrove pointed to a heavy door near a wider door leading outside.

"Mind if we take a look?"

"Not at all. I'll unlock it for you."

The storeroom was spacious and well-lit. At one side were racked several large glass carboys, while on the other side was a metal tank raised a couple of feet from the floor by steel legs. The tank was fitted with gages to show the pressure inside, and the water level. Valves in the tank permitted easy filling or drainage. The floor of the room was cement, dipping gently to a large drain in the center.

"Isn't it a little dangerous to be around all this heavy water?" Draper asked.

Cosgrove laughed and shook his head. "No. Actually, this is probably the safest place in the building. Heavy water isn't radioactive. We use it as a neutron shield. We keep this tank nearly full, with a slight pressure on it, to make sure the system outside stays full. These carboys are our spare supply."

Tom pointed to a smaller carboy near the door. "That one

looks a little different from the rest. It has a printed label."

"Oh, that's one of the mineral water jugs. It belongs to Dr. Collins, or maybe it's one of Bill Russell's. Remember, I told you they were delivered here. We keep them in this room for convenience, until they're needed. Makes it convenient for pickup and delivery, and I don't mind unlocking the door now and then for them. Actually, since Dr. Collins has his own key, I never had to open up for him.

Draper's eyes had narrowed during this explanation. "It made things just a little too convenient, if you ask me. Let's go, Flynn, I have some things to do."

Tom and Draper left the laboratory and went to the Fort Taylor Officer's Club for lunch. "I like to eat comfortably when I can," Draper explained, "and besides, the drive to the other end of the island will give me time to think things over."

"Look," Draper said after they'd ordered their lunch, "this thing is beginning to come a little clear. You figured out he was murdered, and how. We knew from the start why, even before we knew it was murder. As to who, there's only one man with regular access to that room."

"Correction, Draper, only one who carries the key in his pocket. Anyone who really wants in can get in. There are too many master keys for comfort."

"But Cosgrove knows what specific research is going on there, and what progress is being made. As Russell's roommate, he shouldn't have had much trouble figuring out that Bob was sending reports to ONI. He probably saw one or two accidentally, and it wouldn't have been completely unnatural for Russell to have confided in him."

"All right, but by the same reasoning, wouldn't Russell have noticed Cosgrove's habits, whether he got or sent any especially private mail, or made regular contacts with certain people?"

"Certainly. Cosgrove told you himself he goes to Miami almost every weekend."

"You think his girl friend may be his contact?"

"Not necessarily. Use your head, Flynn. It could be anyone. He doesn't have to go directly to meet his girl. He might stop for gas, for a hamburger, or just to sit a few minutes on a park bench. It's not hard to set up a meeting in a city where you're only known to one or two people."

"But he's being very conscientious and worried about the heavy water shortage."

"Wouldn't you, in his place?" Draper threw his napkin on the table and stood, leaving a tip for the waiter. "Let's go to your

office. I want to make a couple of phone calls."

At Shore Patrol Headquarters, Tom had a chance to catch up on his routine work, while Draper began placing his calls. Draper's couple of phone calls took up most of the afternoon, but were productive. About five in the afternoon, he finally put the phone down and said, "Well, you were right about the cause of death. It was verified late this afternoon. We also had the FBI records reviewed again. I couldn't go over them in detail before I came down, because there were too many, and I didn't know which to look at hardest. Schroeder seems to be a perpetual sorehead, but harmless—no derogatory information in his record."

Draper paused to light a cigarette, then continued. "Cosgrove and Collins are a different story. Cosgrove had some unsavory connections in college—Commie front clubs he got mixed up in. He claimed in his personal history forms he didn't know what they were, and hasn't done anything we know about that indicates different. As for Collins, it turns out he was born in Poland, and sent over here to live with an aunt and uncle when he was about eight years old. His parents stayed over there, and both died during the war. No derogatory information there, either, so it's a tossup. I guess Collins learned this Deep South act as a sort of self-defense mechanism. His aunt and uncle lived in Savannah, Georgia, and I guess he wanted to fit in. We'd better talk to Collins and Cosgrove both."

Tom picked up his telephone and called the reactor facility. He hung up after a short conversation, frowning. "I knew it was a little late to be calling, since they quit at four thirty, but I figured it might be worth the call. Schroeder was there, cleaning up on his office work. He said Collins left about four."

"Okay, we'll go to his home. Did you find out where he lives?"

"It isn't that easy; he's headed out of town, for that meeting in Denver."

"So let's talk to Cosgrove, instead."

In the Shore Patrol sedan, they raced over to the cottage. After knocking, they waited, then went in. Cosgrove was gone, and the disordered bedroom indicated a hasty packing and exit. By the time they'd realized this, it was nearly six o'clock.

Tom glanced at his watch, looked again, and turned pale. "Draper, quick, we've got to call National Airlines. Their afternoon flight is just about to leave. Both of them are probably on board."

Draper snatched up the phone, while Tom dialed the number

from memory. When the last digit was dialed, Draper pulled the receiver from his ear and stared at it in disgust. "Busy," he said, and replaced the handset. He counted slowly to ten and picked it up again. This time, the connection was made. "Flight 372?" he asked. He listened with a pained expression, and shook his head at Tom. "Were there any last-minute passengers?" When he hung up this time, he looked defeated.

"The flight just took off for Miami," he told Tom, "and there was one passenger who came charging in at the last minute. The description fit Cosgrove. But that doesn't do us much good, since we missed the plane. I'll have to call the Miami FBI."

"Give me the phone." Tom snatched it out of Draper's hands and dialed rapidly. "Hello, give me Commander La Pierre," he said. "Doug? Listen hard . . ." Tom rapidly explained the situation, and ended with, "How fast can you get us to Miami? . . . Okay, we'll be there as fast as we can."

He grabbed Draper and they rushed to the car. Tom started the siren and flashing light as they hit the street, and they headed for the Overseas Highway, toward Boca Chica Naval Air Station.

"What's going on? Where are we going?"

"We've got a fair chance to intercept them," Tom said. "Friend of mine's the Exec of a jet squadron, and I knew he often works late. They've got a couple of F9F-8T's on the line, fueled and ready to go. He and another aviator friend are suited up and ready to go. They'll pre-flight the planes while we're on the way, and take off as soon as we're aboard."

"Swell, but I still think we'd better give the Miami FBI a call."

"Their Operations Office is doing that now." Tom had to slow going around the wide curve by the Naval Hospital, but was passing 75 miles an hour when they hit the Stock Island Bridge. The straightaway across Stock Island toward Boca Chica gave him a chance to open up even more.

"Hey, Flynn, I thought jet fighters are single seaters?"

Tom kept his eyes straight ahead, watching the road for possible danger. "Not the 8T," he said. "It's a trainer."

Draper beat a clenched fist against his knee. "How much time have we?"

"It'll be close. The National flight's scheduled for forty five minutes. Ours will take twenty two. We had twenty three minutes leeway from the time of your call—with luck it'll be a tie."

"Twenty three minutes difference, and you're hoping for a

tie? What about takeoff and landing, and all the taxiing?"

"Twenty two minutes is for chock to chock."

Tom braked sharply and swung hard right through the Boca Chica gate, leaving the bewildered guard saluting a cloud of dust, which dwindled with distance toward the jet hangar. Tom skidded the car to a stop just short of collision with one of the two planes, and the two jumped out. The ground crew swarmed over them, throwing parachute harnesses on, pulling straps tight, and bodily lifting them into the planes to be belted into their seats.

The pilots finished their preflight checks and climbed in just as the ground crew stepped back. The two planes were taxiing for takeoff before Tom and Draper would have thought possible. They screamed down the runway and pulled up sharply, throttles wide open, headed for Miami. As they leveled off, Draper's pilot switched on the intercom. "Doug La Pierre here," he said. "Sorry we didn't have time for an intro on the ground."

Draper fumbled for the right switch to reply, but by the time he had it, La Pierre was on the air.

"Miami tower, this is Navy jet 142440, leaving Boca Chica. ETA Miami four zero past the hour. Request straight-in priority landing, flight of two . . . government emergency."

"Navy jet 440 from Miami tower. Understand you desire straight-in priority landing, four zero."

"Affirm."

"Roger, checking my expected traffic. Standby."

La Pierre switched back to intercom. "Priority landing gives us a clear runway three minutes each side of ETA," he said.

The Bay of Florida gave way to the Everglades, and Miami itself was looming up over the horizon before Miami tower called back.

"Navy jet 142440, Miami tower. Priority landing granted at four zero. Use runway zero nine right . . . one at a time." After following up with additional flight and field information, the tower added, "Understand you are intercepting National Flight 372. It will land just before your priority period. Airport police are standing by to assist, and FBI agents are enroute to the terminal."

"Roger, thank you."

In their final approach, they saw the National plane landing ahead of them. It was off the runway, taxiing toward the terminal as they landed. While they taxied off toward the terminal, the other jet touched down behind them.

Following the taxi instructions, the two Navy planes

headed for pier B of the terminal, and Tom let go a sigh of relief when they passed the National plane, which had been shunted aside so they could get to the terminal first. The ground crew signalled them into position, and they had the canopies open and were climbing out almost before the wheel chocks were in place. The airliner swung into position and cut the engines. There was a delay in getting the steps up to the door. Tom saw this was deliberate; terminal police, followed by several men in plain clothes went with the stairs as they were pushed toward the plane. Tom and Draper joined them, exchanging nods as they met. "Erikson, Special Agent in charge," one of the civilians said. "You can identify the men you want?"

The door opened. Tom answered the agent, and they started up the ladder. Before they reached the open door, the crack of a pistol shot burst out of it. There was a moment of complete silence, then a turmoil of screams and shouts from within. Tom entered the cabin to see Cosgrove rising from his knees on the floor, holding a bloody pistol in his hand. He was stark white, and his eyes were glazed, staring in horror at what remained of Dr. Collins.

The bullet had hit low in the side of the head, demolishing it from the jaw up. The interior of the plane was spattered with bloody fragments and by now, most of the passengers had become sick. Tom choked back his own reaction as best he could, and took Cosgrove's arm to lead him from the plane. Draper grabbed the gun from Cosgrove's hand as they came up to him.

Leaving the airline with the problem of handling the rest of the hysterical passengers, Tom, Draper, and the Miami reinforcements took over a vacant jet waiting room at the end of the pier. After some discussion, they decided that Tom and Cosgrove would return to Key West in the Navy jets, while Draper remained behind. After straightening out the details in Miami, Draper could return to Key West on the morning National flight. Cosgrove, still somewhat in shock, would be taken under guard to the Naval Hospital in Key West.

The next morning, Tom and Draper met in Captain Forrest's office to report the end of the investigation to him.

"There should be no further security problem at the Reactor Facility, Captain," Tom said.

"No, but it leaves the Navy quite a problem in replacing Dr. Collins. We've suffered a great loss, there."

"Not exactly, Captain. You

see, it was Collins who was passing the information abroad."

"What? Surely you must be mistaken. Why, I've had him in my own home for cocktails and supper. I'd stake my life that he was an honorable man."

"We staked quite a bit more than that, Captain," Draper interjected, "but the man was a traitor to our country. Bluntly, he was a spy, and had learned the other nasty attributes of a spy for self protection. He got so used to lying, that he lied for no reason at all when he denied telling Schroeder about Russell's ONI connection, and he lied in another sense when he reprimanded Cosgrove over the shortage of heavy water."

"What did the heavy water have to do with all this, anyhow?"

Tom put his old *Scientific American* on the Captain's desk. "There's an article in here which describes some animal experiments in which all the water in their diet was replaced with heavy water. All the animals died, and their symptoms were much like Russell's. Of course, no human experiments had been done, but Dr. Collins probably extrapolated from the article and realized he had a nearly undetectable murder weapon at hand."

Captain Forrest paled. "And I gave him his victim, didn't I? I don't know how I can face myself from now on."

Draper started to agree with Forrest, but Tom spoke up. "Look, Captain, Collins was pretty sharp. He was expecting someone, and it wouldn't have taken him long to spot Russell without your help."

"Thank you, Tom, but it won't do. Given a little more time, Russell might have smoked Collins out. I denied him that time. What I don't understand is how Collins got Russell to drink nothing but heavy water."

"Well, Captain, Russell himself made that pretty easy, by insisting on drinking his bottled water. Dr. Collins simply started drinking it himself, and suggested they have it delivered to the facility. Picking up his own water gave him a perfect excuse to go into the heavy water storage area. By picking the right time, he could dump the spring water from Russell's jugs, and fill them with heavy water from the tank. In spite of his enthusiasm for the spring water, Russell couldn't really tell the difference. Both are tasteless."

"I wonder," Captain Forrest said, "just what gets into a man like that, a solid citizen in a highly responsible position, to make him become a spy and a murderer."

"Well, it's something that happens fairly often," Draper said.

"Collins claimed his parents had died in Poland during the war. He may have believed it for a while, but we found a letter in his desk telling him they had actually escaped and were living safely in another country. It hinted that, although they could not join him here, he could insure their comfort by performing certain services. These services led him into the web, and ended in murder."

"I still find it hard to believe. After all, Collins reported the shortage of heavy water to me himself, a couple of days before you arrived to take over the investigation."

"I imagine he had to. After all, it wasn't the sort of thing he could cover up. Besides, he had Cosgrove as scapegoat."

"And I suppose Cosgrove shot him because of the hounding he had taken over the shortage."

"No, sir," Tom said. "Cosgrove didn't shoot him. Collins saw us waiting for him and realized it was all over. He must have felt we were beginning to breathe down his neck before he left Key West—he may even have been using the Denver trip to cover his escape. Whatever he had in mind, he pulled the gun out and shot himself, rather than come out and face us. Cosgrove was so shaken that he picked up the gun as a sort of reflex, and was holding it when we came in."

"Cosgrove, then, was not involved?"

"Not at all, except at the end. He coupled our investigation with his heavy water shortage, and came up with the right answer. He didn't know how to reach us, so decided to follow Collins himself, hoping he'd get a chance to call in help along the route."

"And that was a pretty nice display of initiative," Draper said. "I think I'd better have a talk with him before I go."

A BURGLAR WHO LIKES CLOCKS

Wenzell Brown, whose novel about Cuba, MARKED FOR MURDER, appears in this magazine next month, contributes the story of the burglar who was baffling the authorities in Duluth, Minn., this winter.

Fifteen lakeside cabins were entered within one week.

In each instance the only thing the burglar has been interested in were the clocks—electric, battery and windup types. This was the only thing missing from each cabin.

What did he *do* with all these clocks?

the long, long journey

by Philip Ketchum

CARL BAKEWELL realized some people thought he was an odd-ball, and some thought he was a genius, but frankly it made no difference to him what anyone thought. He was well contented with his lot. His parents were now gone and he was alone—excepting for his dog, his car, his house and his laboratory. What more could he want? His dog, Cedric, a boxer, provided him with companionship. His car could take him down to the village for the necessary supplies he needed. His house was a shelter, a haven. His laboratory was his life.

He was thirty-two, tall, thin, gaunt, a rather sombre-looking man. He had grown up here on Grandy Mountain, the son of the county surveyor, had gone away to the university, had taken some graduate work in science, then had returned home and in an old barn near the house had set up his laboratory. What he was working on there he never explained. When he was asked he usually said he was experimenting, testing, working out some new theories on insecticides and fertilizations. That these were hardly comparable

Veteran novelist Philip Ketchum returns with this story of a man who had looked into the scowling face of economic necessity—and decided that he had better marry this small, fragile woman, who seemed so quiet, and so manageable. And who had money. Unfortunately he did not know her . . .

fields seemed to surprise no one. Probably, Carl could have said anything about his work.

His parents were killed when he was twenty-nine, and right after that a good many people thought he would get married. He would need a wife, someone to look after the house, to cook for him and to handle the washing. But at least he put it off a long time. He had been left a little inheritance—and this he used. In fact, he did not consider marriage until the inheritance money was gone. Then, reluctantly, he looked into the scowling face of economic necessity—and saw there the person of Orena Waltham. She lived in the village, a small, fragile person, thin, and possibly pretty. She seemed like a rather quiet person, rather timid. And from a financial standpoint, she was wealthy, which was important.

Carl was not interested in marriage, *per se*. He did not want to complicate his life with a wife, but possibly Orena would leave him very much alone. If he shouted at her she would jump. He was sure of it. There seemed to be a good chance of turning her into a shadow-wife, a silent, frightened person who would live in the background of his life.

His courtship of Orena Waltham was hurried and there was little finesse to his approach. He went to see her one night, bluntly said what he wanted. "I am lonely—not in the daytime for then I work. But I'm lonely at night. I think you are, too."

"Yes, I get lonely," Orena said. "I couldn't marry a stranger but we've known each other all our lives."

"We have seen each other about," Orena corrected. "We don't know each other. For instance, I want to travel. I want to go all around the world. I can afford it, too, but to go alone——"

"That's just the point," Carl said. "To be alone isn't good."

Orena looked up. She had intense, black eyes and they seemed excited. "Would you like to go with me—around the world?"

"Yes, I would," Carl said. "But first I have to finish the experiments I'm working on."

"How long will that take?"

"Three months," Carl said, and he was thinking to himself that surely, in three months, he could have Orena well in hand.

"Will you promise it?" she was saying. "Will you promise to go around the world with me?"

"Of course I will."

"Then you may kiss me," Orena said. "Tomorrow we will get married."

From the very beginning, Carl's marriage was disappointing, disastrous, and a source of constant irritation. In a rather quiet and gentle way, Orena in-

vaded every area of his life. The perfume of her person seemed to seep into the house. She drove Cedric outside, not by attitude or by order, but the boxer did not seem to like her. She borrowed Carl's car, drove it madly to town and back. She even invaded the laboratory to ask Carl unnecessary questions.

A week of Orena was almost too much to take. Three weeks of it almost smothered him, but by this time her estate had been set up in a way so her money was available to him. This was what he had been waiting for. After three days he had given up the hope that Orena could be frightened into being a shadow-wife. She looked quiet—but she wasn't. She seemed gentle, but she was hard as steel. And she would not stay in the background. In fact she was all over the place, never silent. And she gabbed, gabbed, gabbed, about the trip around the world. Definitely, Carl had no time to go around the world. All that was important to him was the laboratory.

Of course he knew what he had to do. Now that he had Orena's money, there was no need for her. It would be wonderful to be free again, and to have only Cedric, his car, his house and his laboratory work. And to have no Orena.

This was Friday. On Fridays, now, they had fish cakes, and on Saturday they had the fish cakes they did not finish on Friday. Carl had discovered this happened every Friday and Saturday. Fish cakes. He hated fish cakes. But quite suddenly he didn't. Tonight he would eat the fish cakes—and praise them. Then tonight he would add something to the fish cakes which were left. Arsenic, would do. He had a sufficient supply. He would load them up with poison—and tomorrow he would act sick, refuse to eat. But Orena would be hungry—and she could have them—as many as she could handle. One would be enough.

The fish cakes were horrible, but Carl praised them. He even ate an extra one, although it almost choked him. Then, late that evening, he went to the refrigerator and carefully doctored the inside of the cakes with powdered arsenic. The dosage was strong enough to finish a person after a single bite. And upstairs, he slept with complete relaxation. One more day, and he would be free.

But things didn't work out that way. The next morning, for some reason or other, Orena gave the fish cakes to Cedric. One gulp—and that was the end of the boxer.

Carl was shattered at what happened. He had been very fond of Cedric. It was hard to believe he was dead. He stared

at Orena who looked more curious than shocked.

"Could it have been the fish?" she asked, and she was frowning.

"Of course it was," Carl growled.

"Then I'm glad I threw it away. What if I had saved it for us? I usually do, but you said you liked the fish cakes so well I didn't want to serve them, warmed up. I was going to make new fish cakes, for tonight."

"I don't think I'll ever want fish cakes," Carl said. "And what will I do about Cedric?"

"I'll buy you a new boxer," Orena said. "One of the best."

She did. Orena drove off that day in Carl's car. She returned that afternoon with a pedigreed boxer, one who was young, fierce-looking and who growled at Carl and seemed to want to tear him to pieces. His name was Buff and he liked Orena.

"He will get used to you," Orena said. "Just give him time."

She smiled and patted Buff on the head. He seemed to enjoy it —and he growled again at Carl.

A week passed—a horrible week. Orena talked forever about their trip around the world. A dozen times a day she invaded his laboratory, her eyes probing every corner of it. Buff usually accompanied her. He still growled at Carl. And they had fish cakes almost every night. Carl gagged over them.

Eventually, he had to do something, and in the planning of it he made a great sacrifice. He decided to place his car on the altar of necessity, and after working on its brakes, making sure they wouldn't work, he sought Orena. "I had planned to go to the village for a package which should be there—but I wonder if you could go instead. It would help me a great deal."

"Of course I will go," Orena said. "I love to drive your car. You know that."

He managed a smile, then a new thought came to him, and he said, "Why not take Buff with you? He might like a ride."

"I think he would," Orena agreed.

He backed the car from the garage and was very careful about this, for the brakes were completely destroyed. He aimed the car at the road. There were two bad turns, one very near. Over its edge the drop was five hundred feet. Carl watched Orena and Buff get in the car, and he was thinking, "In one more minute—"

But again something went wrong. Instead of roaring down the road Orena hesitated, slowed the motor, and climbed out. She called, "I've forgotten something, dear. I want to get—"

The car was on a slope. It was out of gear, the brakes would not hold, and it started rolling. It moved very slowly along the

road, then it rolled faster and faster. Buff gave a jump, left the car, but the car kept moving. It was not going very fast when it came to the first curve, however there was no one at the wheel to turn it, and the car tumbled over the edge rather disgracefully. It smashed to pieces on the rocks, five hundred feet below.

"Your car!" Orena moaned. "Oh, I'm so sorry. I'll buy you a new one."

Carl took a shaky breath. He seemed unable to say anything. But for some evil chance, Orena and Buff would have been deep in the canyon, in what was left of his car. It would have been a lovely accident—but it had not happened.

Orena did buy him a car, not a new car. In fact she bought a rather dilapidated wreck. It was old and ugly and it wheezed up the canyon road, but it worked. And as Orena pointed out, if they took a trip around the world they didn't need a first-class car. This one would do.

There was little Carl could say to that. Carl still had his house, his laboratory, and he had no financial worries. But he also had Orena, an antagonistic dog, and a car he hated. He also had the sneaky notion he was losing ground in the battle to get what he wanted. Orena was either very clever, or very lucky. He was not sure which.

They had fish cakes that night. They were thick and spongy and topped with a marinated sauce which tasted like a mixture of quinine and sour vinegar. Orena said it was delightful. She ate three. Carl choked over one. Then after the dishes were over, Orena brought out the latest travel folders she had received. She chatted two hours over the pleasures of the Orient. They would love it there, she was sure. They might even decide to stay in the exotic East.

The next morning Carl moped around his laboratory. He had a hard time concentrating. After a time the wind came up. It shook the barn. He had reinforced the walls and the centre-beam but one of the struts leaned precariously. He had meant to straighten it, but had put it off. Now, looking at it carefully, he noticed just where it would fall, if it gave way, and he thought how nice it would be if Orena was in the way. He could set up a desk for her, putting her right in the way. He could entice her to help him—and then wait for the strut to fall. But that was too slow, or it was possible that Orena would see the strut falling, and would jump out of the way. No. This would not do. He needed a positive programme, something which could not fail, a fool-proof scheme, a fatal accident such as he had just tried. It was only by

chance that Orena had escaped a dive into the canyon. The next time, if he set up his plan perfectly, she would fit into it.

It was with great reluctance that Carl decided to sacrifice his home. It was a big building, and well constructed, but honestly, it was larger than he needed. A cabin was all he needed for himself. A cabin, and the laboratory. Of course there were some fine pieces of furniture in the house, but what of it? If he were honest, when it came to values, one problem stood paramount to everything else. Orena. She had to go, and she had to go quickly. That was the only thing to consider.

Looking back, Carl realized Orena should have tried one of the poisoned fish cakes. But she hadn't. She should have been in the car when it went over the cliff. But she had escaped. These two facts were a warning to him to be very careful next time. In considering the plan he had in his mind, now, it would be well to consider every possible eventuality. There was no point in just burning the house, but if Orena was inside and if she stayed inside, then the loss of his house was of no importance. But that was what he had to be certain about—keeping Orena inside.

Gradually he set up his programme. Benzine, a strong wind and a match would take care of the fire, and if the doors and windows were open and the fire had a good chance of starting, the house would go up like bonfire. What he needed beyond that was some assurance that Orena would be sound asleep when the fire started—and a good dose of nembutal should handle that. Orena took vitamins, four capsules a day, one after each meal, one at bedtime. But if the capsule she took at night was nembutal, she would fall asleep quickly. The vitamin capsules were rather large. Carl was sure he could put ten grains of nembutal in one capsule—a nice, heavy dosage of sleep. Of eternal sleep.

It was ten days before a good strong wind came up at dusk. It howled on into the evening. Carl listened to it banging at a loose shutter. It made a delightful sound. He glanced at Orena who was deep in a pile of travel folders, and he said, "Quite a wind."

"In Antigua it is often windy," Orena said. "But we won't stay there long. In Majorca they have soft, warm breezes. We might buy a villa on the sea. Wouldn't you like that?"

Carl smiled. He could afford to say anything tonight. "Yes, I would love it there. Isn't it time to get to bed?"

"Almost," Orena said. "I've run across a new fish cake recipe. It's made of snails, octopi and

squid, in equal parts. Where could we buy snails?"

"I'll find some," Carl said.

Orena's deep, black eyes seemed to measure him thoughtfully, but then she said, "Carl, you are a good husband. Yes, I think it's time to go to bed."

He was quite attentive to her. He even brought her some warm milk to take with her vitamin capsule—and he was the one who got the capsule. He got it from his pocket and it held a double dosage of nembutal. In twenty minutes she ought to be asleep.

"I'll check the house, and the lab," he told her. "This wind is bad. I want to make everything secure."

"But you'll hurry to bed?" Orena said.

"Of course I will."

He left quickly. He wanted nothing to disturb her until she was asleep. Buff, the boxer, growled at him as he left the room, but this time he didn't resent it. Buff, in all probability, would go up in the fire. A deserved end.

The next twenty minutes were difficult. Carl paced the floor downstairs. He listed what he had to do—make sure Orena was asleep, open the doors and windows, everywhere, to provide for a good draft of wind, splash the benzine along the hall, along the stairs, and in most of the downstairs rooms, strike a match and then get outside himself. If the fire built up as he thought it would, the downstairs would be a mass of flames in only a few minutes. No one from the second floor could ever get out.

He waited twenty minutes, then ten more minutes, and went upstairs to the bedroom. The light was still on, but Orena was in bed and seemed asleep. He called her, "Orena! Orena!"

She did not move, did not make a sound, but Buff did. Buff said, "G-r-r-r-r-r-r-r——"

"To hell with you, Buff," Carl said. And he closed the door.

For the next few minutes he was busy. He got the benzine from a closet where he had stored it. He splashed it along the halls and in each room. He opened the doors and the windows. Then he struck a match and threw it into one of the splashed areas. That was all he needed. One match. And he had to run to get outside. In a matter of seconds the entire first floor seemed on fire. It was almost like an explosion, and with the windows and doors open, nothing could have stopped it. Before five minutes had passed the flames were licking up around the bedroom. The crackling of the fire smothered any other sounds. It was a beautiful, beautiful fire. A funeral pyre for Orena—and for Buff.

He stood on the side of the

hill, watching, and glowing, and feeling free for the first time in weeks. The crackling of the fire was music to his ears. He wanted to——

"G-r-r-r-r-r-r——"

The sound came from behind him and it sounded, terribly, like the growl of a dog. He looked around, quickly—and caught his breath. Only a few yards away was Buff. In some way or other he had escaped from the house, but what was worse was the shadowy figure beyond—Orena! Yes, Orena. She was walking towards him, her black eyes fastened on the fire, thin and small, and bundled in the robe she sometimes wore. But what was she doing here? How had she possibly escaped?

He gasped her name. "Orena! Orena!"

She motioned vaguely. "I know. You were worried I was caught inside. But I wasn't, dear. I'm all right, so there's nothing to worry about."

"But the fire——"

"I know. It's too bad about your house, but then, it was an old house, anyhow. When we get back from our world cruise we'll buy a new one."

He stared at her numbly. How she had escaped he would never understand—but there she was, very much alive, very real.

"You were so nice to me, I waited for you to come back to bed," Orena said. "But Buff growled at you, so I got up to put Buff outside. How could I let a dog separate us."

"But—but you took your pill," Carl said. "You usually go to sleep right afterwards."

Her laugh had a strange sound. "You were so nice to me I forgot all about my pill. I must have laid it down somewhere. I know I didn't take it."

He stared at the fire, and suddenly shivered. She had been in bed only minutes before he started splashing benzine along the halls. She must have seen what he did, yet she had made no accusations. She hadn't even asked any embarrassing questions. Was it possible she had failed to guess he had tried to kill her? He felt shaky inside—and frightened—and terribly unsure.

"I know what we'll do," Orena said. "We can't stay here any longer—no place to sleep. Why not start off on our world cruise—right now?"

"Right now?" Carl gasped.

"Yes, right now," Orena said. "We could leave in the morning."

"But my experiments——"

"Oh."

"They are very important," Carl said, and he was being quietly assertive. "Very, very important. And although the house has burned, the lab hasn't been hurt."

"But—but where would we live? I mean——"

"I only use part of the barn as a lab. We could put in cots——"

"And a refrigerator and a stove."

Carl nodded. "I know it would be difficult. But if I could have another week in the lab—and if you help——"

"I'd love to help," Orena said.

Carl took a deep, steadying breath. He was thinking of the weak strut in the barn, of how it could be weakened, and of how it would fall. He could rearrange the laboratory to move his work table out of the way to put a desk in the way of the weak strut—Orena's desk. He would face her the other way so she wouldn't see it as it crashed towards her.

The next few days were difficult. Neighbours came by, the curious came by, and the sheriff came by to stare at the charred wood which once had been his home. Of course no one was suspicious. The house had not been insured, no one had been hurt. The fire must have been an accident.

Orena was her normal self. As she made half of the barn into a living quarters she chatted of sunny Italy, romantic Spain and the glories of Greece. And just to prove how normal she was, the first meal she cooked in the barn was fish cakes served with a sauce Romanoff to which she had added lemon rind and peppermint. It tasted as usual—horrible. Even Buff looked sadly at her after he had tasted the concoction.

Four days slid by. Carl showed her how to keep a record of his experiments. He studied the way she sat at the desk. Then, while she was away, he examined the weak strut, weakened it, then tied it in place with a guy-rope. He had loosened the top, and the break at the bottom. All he needed now was to cut the guy-rope and the strut would crash down on top of her. It probably would hit her so quickly she wouldn't feel it. Then boom—and he would be free. It occurred to him, ruefully, that getting away from her was more difficult than it had been to acquire her. Next time, if there was ever a next time, he would be suspicious of quiet, gentle, timid-looking women who were made of steel inside.

The next morning, almost at once, Orena noticed the guy-rope supporting the weak strut, and she pointed to it, and nodded, and said, "Carl, I'm glad you braced that strut. I've worried about it."

He felt a sudden, horrible suspicion she had guessed what was in his mind. Actually, from the very beginning, she should have guessed. The poisoned fish cakes, the automobile accident,

the fire, each should have seemed false. And now—seated where she might be crushed, surely she must be nervous. But she did not seem at all worried. Seated at the desk she smiled at him brightly.

"Time to catch up on those records," he said gruffly.

"I will," Orena said. "But I wonder what it'll be like in Tahiti."

"We'll never get there if we don't get busy."

She looked down, got busy and as Carl stepped away she didn't seem to notice that he was moving back to the guy-rope. In fact he was almost there when she called, "This is it, Carl. This is what you wanted."

"What?" he answered almost angrily.

She would turn around in another moment. He was sure of that. She would see the strut falling towards her, and would jump out of the way. This was not the right time to cut the guy-rope. In another moment, when she was busy again——

He moved towards her, stood behind her, and heard a warning growl from Buff.

"Be quiet Buff," Orena said, and she looked up at him. "Isn't this what you wanted in the formula?"

She was pointing at her notes, notes she had copied from him, but he was far from the formula he wanted. He was sure of that.

"Take a good look at these figures," Orena said. "Here, sit down at the desk—take a real look." She slid out of her chair, moved away.

Carl was interested, in spite of himself. After all, this was his life, his experimentation, his devotion to science. Maybe he was closer to what he wanted than he realized. He sat down at the desk, studied the formulation of his latest work. Above him he sensed a movement but there wasn't time to look up. Instead, a stunning blow hurled his head to the desk and briefly he lost consciousness.

When he awoke he was lying on the desk, stretched out on it, and he was all alone—or at least he thought he was alone. His head hurt, terribly, he was sick at the stomach, and he wasn't sure what had happened. Definitely, the strut had not fallen, but something had smashed over his head. When that had happened, Orena had been right at his shoulder. She would have seen what had happened. In fact, she could have been responsible for the blow—and she was. He realized, numbly, what must have happened. Orena had induced him to sit at the desk. She had hit him over the head with something. Then she had stretched him out on the desk, right in the way of the strut. If that was correct, at this very moment she was at the guy-rope,

sawing it in half so that the strut would fall across him, and crush him.

He turned his head, looked past the strut to the guy-rope. And there was Orena, quiet, sweet, gentle Orena, sawing the rope in half.

"No!" he shouted. "No—no——"

She looked back, smiled, but shook her head. "I'm awfully sorry, Carl, but I'd better do this. Next time you might succeed in killing me, and I wouldn't like that a bit."

Her knife finished its job, the strut tilted towards him. He tried desperately to get out of the way, but he couldn't make it. There was a smashing pain—and for a time he remembered no more.

There was a hospital, there were doctors, there were people around him occasionally and among them Orena. He heard her tell of the tragic accident and she seemed shaky, tearful, on the edge of hysteria. A dozen times he started to tell the truth—but what was the truth? How could he make people see that he was the victim of a mistake? What could he say?

There was a consultation. His body was paralysed. Nothing could be done for him. But Orena would look after him, care for him, love him. She had bought a small house near the edge of the village and had given up her world cruise. She was a wonderful woman.

"No," Carl whispered. "No—no—please——"

But the doctor just shrugged.

So he was taken home—to Orena—and this was like a nightmare. He shivered in his bed. He was afraid to look up.

She spoke from the doorway. "We'll have an early supper. I've run across a new book of fish cake recipes. Tonight, we'll have fish cake souffle. You will love it."

Carl shuddered, closed his eyes. He was afraid that from now on his life would be a ceaseless procession of fish cakes.

"Then tonight," Orena said, "we will talk about our world cruise."

"World cruise!" Carl said. "In a wheel-chair?"

"Of course not," Orena said. "That would be too clumsy. I've brought this——"

She was holding a small urn in her hands—a funeral urn. It was dark green and was decorated. She was holding it almost lovingly in her hands.

She spoke again, under her breath. "I will take you everywhere, all over the world. Isn't that a nice thought, Carl. I will never feel alone again."

(Continued from Other Side)

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