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THIS IS A
TOUGH
STORY, BUT
YOU WILL
LIKE IT —
IT HAS
EVERYTHING



POWERFUL, LONG,
COMPLETE
STORY BY
KENNEDY
SCOTLAND

JUST ANOTHER MURDER!

JUST ANOTHER MURDER!



—GOT THE DOUGH, BUDDY?

This is a tough story of men who shoot first and ask questions afterwards. The question was, who would survive long enough to inherit the family fortune.

..... THEY DIED TOO FAST TO SUIT THE POLICE

Chapter 1.

THEY SHOOT—AND MESS!

I'M a dick—private investigator, or detective, to you, but I like the other better. What I mean, it's downright, got no frills, an' I guess that explains me, too. Sides, I got as much privacy as a hole in a back-seat—the gentleman of the Press use to TRUST. They claim I've paid to bring my man in an the best every once in a while, not on a dick. You might think I'm just a wild man from way-back, with a head that thunders at the eye-brows, while the modern crook has brains,

an' you gotta fight brains with brains, which leaves me unarmed.

We-I, maybe I'm played out, but it's my hunch the modern crook's be different from the old-time, an' a guy with brains wouldn't want to be a crook. At that I'm willing to take a chance of bein' wrong, an' I'll search my six-guns with their brains. An' hearse tell you, I ain't seen the heads yet that done much good after I put a slug in 'em.

I don't understand the physical-what-you-call-it analysis stuff, an' if I did I still wouldn't go for it. You know what

I mean—where a kid has his intentions or someone removed an' he gets straight over after.

I having a prelude in case for a revokin' murder, an' his lawyer stands up in court with the gall to say how this poor feller wasn't in blame, on account his parents was that ignorant they stopped his paltry wings off'n him. If they'd had any sense, they'd let him get all the kiddy cuts his system on the floor! As for me, I'm that stupid I don't see no connection between that an' the monkey sprays' a couple bank clerks with a

MEET CEDRIC HIND—
the detective who is different—
in a
POWERFUL, ALL-THRILL, LONG
COMPLETE STORY
BY **KENNEDY
SCOTLAND**

somebody an' walkin' off with a stack of dough. But then, maybe it's me that's crap—

Anyway, the way I'm tellin' about escaped the hot seat. Later he came up for parole, lots of repentance in his eyes. Well, it would be neat, quinn the Parole Board, to keep a guy inside, an' his promise to be a good boy in future. Besides, they got customers waitin' for his call. So out he goes, an' two months later he bumps off a copper, an' we gotta start all over again. That's because I decided wherever I got laid a chance, I wouldn't trouble no judge an' jury. Right from the start the news-bosses liked me, so-called maybe the "Chronicle." They thought up names for me you wouldn't call your best friend, an' asked did I think I was Public Excitation No. 1? I never took no time off to worry.

One day the homicide captain, my boss, sent for me. He looked worried, all worried up.

"Hind," see he, quiet-like, "you'n' me ain't had a heart-to-heart talk for some time."

"You know I'm no conversationalist," I warned him, "but I listen good."

He muttered something about some folks bein' that accommodatin', then, fixin' his unshinin' blue eyes on me, said in a hurry voice:

"I often heard you accused of havin' a good hard neck—I'm wonderin' how much it was standin'?"

I looked at him, puzzled. Was he kiddin' me, or was he just plain nuts? I ran a hand round my collar:

"Well," I said doubtfully, "there's them that say it ain't carry much, but I guess it's all right. Why?"

"You seen the guy in the circus that takes the whole gang on his neck—kinda human pyramid? Right now you're that guy, see?"

"Why, thanks for the joke, Cap. It sure does a feller a heap of good to know his work's appreciated. Seems kinda mean at that to take credit for doin' everything in the department."

"That's just your modesty," he assured me.

Then his whole manner changed. He pounded the desk.

"You shouldn't swell-headed!" he barked. "Quit your chinin'. This here's serious, an' you know damn well what I mean. The whole frame is on the Commissioner's neck, he's on the Chief's, the Chief's on mine, an' he the heavy one, I'm on yours!"

I winced.

"That takes a lotta neck,"

He glared at me, grabbed a paper an' thrust it under my eye.

"Read that!" he bawled, indicatin' a blue-printed column. It was headed:

"SCANDAL IN THE POLICE
DEPARTMENT."

I read it slowly. Boy, it was hot—wonder the paper wasn't scorched. Listen to this:

"Once more it is our painful duty to draw our readers' attention to a glaring scandal in the P. D. It isn't the first time we have thrown the limelight on the numerous activities and incredible brutality of that so-called nation of the law, Cedric Hind, Detective, Plain-clothes, Noctuid Branch. The fair name of our great city is besmirched as long as this ruffian is at liberty to commit murder after murder under the cloak of the law. His latest victim was one of our most prominent citizens, a public benefactor known to you all, viz. Mr. Tod A. Mack. He was wanted for questioning on some technical triviale, and Hind was to escort him to Headquarters . . . the swaggering brat so terrified this harmless, elderly professor that his palmed hands shook as he surrendered his gun—a toy weapon his hands indicated him to carry since he feared kidnapping—and as the weapon exploded harmlessly . . . and with an incident contempt for truth and justice, Hind's report states Mack was killed resisting arrest."

There was a lot more; I read it through while the Chief signed with a cold sign.

"Well?" he demanded when I'd finished.

"What do you say to that?"

I put my finger on a word, showed it to him, emphasized:

"They ain't a 'k' in Cedric."

I thought he'd bust; his eyes popped, an' he fanned an' panted, utterin' a few incoherent words that sounded obscure. I held up a hand, said soothingly:

"I know, I know. Maybe I'm all you think—an you can't believe all you read in the papers. Plenty of 'Tut-tut' Mack, what was carry the 'typewriter' for the Kinney mob, called a harmless old gent! Why, that machine-gun of his has out done a score of guys, YOU know that. You watched him grow from a rat-tat to a rat. His gun exploded accidentally-like? That's a laugh! It exploded three times—I gotta rule of bandage round my ribs to prove it—an' his howlin' carries all the time. Of course, maybe you could describe him havin' his parlor refined—with a load of lead—a triviale. Maybe."

Quite suddenly the captain cooled down. He was a good enough lad; wouldn't liked me to run the department his way. But what the heck, he'd a wife and kids to think about, so he hadn't take orders. He smiled, gave a watery smile, spoke apologetically:

"I won't keep up this stuff, Hind. I'm sorry, but one next time it's your badge—or mine."

Justly I explained my badge, laid it before his surprised eyes. "Tyrin' the light-bulb on it, I told him."

"I guess this is it, then. I not only broke the tape, I'm half-way round the course again. Yess, Mack's bodyguard's his make-up cracks about a yellow gum heikin' the gals to take his boss when HE was around. Well, he had it out with me an hour ago. He's decoratin' the next slab to Tut-tut."

I couldn't laugh THAT off, so I kissed the force good-bye. Talkin' about laughter, when I'm at the height of nervous tension, I laugh. Nervous tension, the dogs claim. I only know it pops outa my mouth without my say-so on my part. I got it figured out it's my way of shavin' I'm scared silly an' about to break. You know, like other folks might scream, or faint, or something? It ain't a pretty laugh, either. If any other guy done it I'd say it sounded like a dent, see? When I tell you it scares even me—

at times, you can imagine what it does to the others. At that I wouldn't want to lose it. Not any. It ain't the first time it's come to my help when help was all I needed, an' plenty of it. I remember once—but maybe I'd better begin at the beginning—

Well, one day I'm stamin' the old broom outside my street door, when BINKY, a round hole with cracks radiatin' from it jumped into the glass panel right at my nose. I don't take no children—so I tell me a bullet done THAT. Likewise, since I heard no shot, I knew the friendly greeting came from a silenced red.

Now, no matter what you read nowhere else, there ain't such a thing as a REAL silencer now on a single-shot weapon, so I was in no danger from a second shot none. That hole' carried, instead of dodgin' inside, I did the opposite. I turned and made a dash down the step like I had the gunman spotted. I figured if he wasn't already on his way, he might try a get-away now. Sure enough, across the street a black sedan let out a roar an' started to swing out from the hole like somebody was late for an appointment.

Course, I could say been wrong, but playin' my hunch, I sprinted over, nearly

THE LANE GAME.

leaves my pants on the fender of a three, before the blink car could find an opening in the traffic. There were two men in the party, one thin, a near-skeleton's meat with misty eyes. He gaped at the car in my lap, as if a lance-like pointed tongue had to maintain his thin lips.

"High an' to the right," I said conversationally as soon as I got my breath, and piled into the back seat beside him.

"High?" he wheezed in a hoarse voice, looking for two pointed.

I shook my head approvingly, as if it seemed to anger him.

"Say," he burst out, "you got a believe card, feller?"

"Sure, sure," I interrupted soothingly. "I got the right to be alive. You got the right to count that after all your trouble."

"Still, I told you where you shag went, and maybe you didn't allow for wind or something?"

"He was either stubborn or stupid, kept up his act.

"Maybe you're talkin' sense an' I'm crazy. I wouldn't know. I'm just a stranger here. Still, I'm a right guy, so suppose we say you made a mistake, an' I drop you somewhere?"

I scribbled my beliefs, scribbled at him thoughtfully, like I was doubtful. Far down the sidewalk I got a welcome glimpse of Officer Maloney.

"You think you could drop me right?" I asked, adding slyly: "This time?"

He acted like the crack meant nothing to him.

"Anywhere you say, mister."

"Drive in here," I ordered, as he found over and parked his pad, now up till now had never looked his pad. Who he turned a heavy, brutish face over his thick shoulder. With animal-like stability he let his eyes wander over me, gauging by my gun as if it was a cipher. As strong as a gnat, was my snap judgment, but not so smart.

The rain beside me suddenly carried the brain for both of them. He flinched a thumb at the left, as if the eye at the wheel suddenly turned in as if stopped. He acted like it was none of his business if there was a strange guy in the car holding a gun; or maybe he was just smart. His pad split his face in a smile, said affably:

"Mind of the line, brother."

Maloney was still a few yards off, came slowly.

"That's what you think," I said grimly, and without warning I tossed my gun into the man's belly and landed hard. That hurt, an' he yelped like a kicked cat.

"Who the hell are you?" I rasped. "An' how come you tried to motivate me?"

"Gee, mister," he gasped, "you got me all wrong. Ain't it so, Tan? You're the one, whose long, empty face once more hung over the back of the seat like a core potato over a hedge."

"Eyes front, handsome," I ordered firmly, making a throaty noise with my pad. He blinked rapidly, opened his mouth as if to protest, apparently thought of a better idea, closed up an' turned away.

"Now," I said, "talk, you!"

"Talk? With a gun buried in my stomach up to the waist?"

I closed off a bit, an' he felt himself leaving.

"If this is a stick-up, okay. But you sure picked a lousy. A confeder couldn't get a nickel with my pocket, see?"

I could see though this man was soft-headed, he wasn't scared none. I looked him over carefully. For all his elephantine self, with stars an' stripes, he was a hood, a gunman. But you can search me,

I never saw him or his stooge before. An' I don't like guys who haven't been introduced through introductions. Ain't hardly polite.

"Sure I picked a lousy," I sneered. "If you want to be smart you'll tell me your racket, before I turn you over to the strong-arm squad. Sarry?"

He made a nasty sound.

"Hell," he said confidently, "you ain't no copper, you can't run no in."

I smiled.

"So you DO know me?"

There was an interruption. The rear door jerked open; Maloney put one heavy foot on the step.

"Trouble, Mr. Hind?" he inquired hopefully. Maloney and I were still inside. We had pounded a beat together before I stepped out for support.

"Yep," I replied. "This guy took a pop at me with a silvered rod." I jabbed him again. This time he didn't flinch. He stiffened; his string dropped from him like a clank. He burst out:

"Well, officer, this man's crazy—nuts—lame from the funny house."

"Center's tough, huh?" I snapped. "Know these guys, Maloney?"

"That I do not. They don't run with any of the mob in this city."

"I tell you," the other almost yelled, "we ain't in no racket."

"Well, what do you carry a red AN' silverer bar?" I asked, an' added slyly, "or side in a stolen auto?" That shot told. The big fellow in front twisted round.

"This ain't no hot bus, fella," he rasped unconvincingly.

I turned to Maloney and said:

"Frick them, while I watch they don't bite."

The trick produced one flat, 28 from the driver, rolling from the other. I shoved my hand down the back of the seat; it touched something hard. I pulled out a rod with a long silverer anounced on the barrel. Maloney grinned in my act; he carefully. He winked slyly.

"No," he said pointedly, "a single-shot Belgian. An' really slow, they tell me. For built in possession or was a' them ten years ago a five-year ago."

"Not so fast, fella," the little man said in a hard voice. "It ain't been found in his possession, an' I know better about it. It means him in this auto when we lifted it—oh, sure, I'm certain this bus ain't ours, but you can't hang anything else on us."

"Smart guy," I nodded approvingly.

"But what about the slug that nearly drilled my skull?"

"An' go to hell," was the elegant reply: "What different would YOU be with your skull drilled, anyway?"

"So, so! A wisecracker, huh? Well, make when the boys get to work on you, you'll dig up some smart talk for them. They'd appreciate THAT." I turned on the one called Tan, and indicating Maloney, said with a flourish:

"Would you be so kind as to drive this guy to the precinct station on 44th Street? And check the traffic lights."

Maloney laughed, took my place in the car, and rolled back, gun in hand. I stepped to the sidewalk.

"I'll be with you," I told him. "Tell Crowley I'll be along later to hear what these hooda did."

Maloney waved a blue arm.

"O.K.," he called, as the auto glided off.

I found a phone, rang up Detective-Lieutenant Crowley, spoke a few words.

I WAS tired; had been on a case for a couple nights, an' lastly brought it off okay, ignored my chance had earned some rest—an' fuel. As I made my way back to my apartment, I wondered who these men could be, but didn't give myself no headache in tryin' to figure it out. After all, if two strange guys wanted to bump me, they had to take their turn in the queue. There was money on the line waiting for that job. Lettin' hot rods had thought they were good enough to collect it, too, but—well, I'm here, an' they're gone places. Besides, I had an idea that the strong-arm squad would get a song from them any before my mouth-piece pulled his harness straps out.

Mrs. Bloch who looks after my apartment, met me at the elevator.

"There's someone been waitin' for you a half-hour," she said, like she was accusing me of something. "Wouldn't give no more."

"Who is it?" I said. "Someone I know?"

"I shouldn't think so," she replied, with a kinda funny emphasis. "She's a swell dame—a lady."

I guessed that crack, an' went on up. For once Mrs. Bloch was right. My visitor was a swell dame; she had this and that an' all it takes. When I entered, she was sitting low-like in my cooker. I shut the door, pegged my hat, swung a chair over in front of her, an' occupied it.

She was fair—natural, I judged—an' her eyes were so blue you noticed them at once, yet they managed to look intelligent, too. It didn't take no stretch to see she had a grand figure; her all-black legs were crossed, an' their shapeliness was worth a long look. Maybe I gave them just that, for she increased them hurriedly, an' a slight flush stained her cheek. But she smiled in a friendly way so she said:

"Mr. Hind?"

"Frick," I looked. "Your voice matches." "What on earth—" she began, then her flush deepened. With easy grace she rose. "I came here on business, Mr. Hind—serious business. The affair—"

"I'm sorry, ma'am," I interrupted, getting to my feet an' leavin' real foolish. "I didn't mean no wisecrack. It was just a thought that came into my head an' jumped right out of my mouth."

She smiled at once, smiled a little slyly.

"Let's forget it," she said, an' sat down again. I eased myself into my chair again, pulled out a cigar, hesitated to light it.

"Please smoke," she said.

"Thanks, Miss—" I got out.

"Lana," in the name, she answered.

"Lorraine Lane. I'm a daughter of Mariner Lane."

"The hell you are—I beg pardon," I murmured. "D'you mean the railroad millionaire?"

She nodded. I leaned back and stared at her reflectively. Her blue eyes gave me back stare for stare—the mine was using me up, an' doin' it better than I was her, I felt.

"I'm hoping," she said slowly, "you are not too busy to undertake a job for me."

"Ma'am," I told her, "I couldn't be THAT busy."

That made her smile again, as she said quietly:

"Thank you, Mr. Hind. You give me—confidence, somehow."

I felt as though she had given me a million bucks. Sure? I hadn't map out of it, I put on a grin, hard-boiled role.

"Well, now I'm elected for your job, let's get down to cases. I'm fixed-in, if you'll go on the air."

Franklin in a little thing of a purse, she began.

"Well, it's a long story—but maybe you're already familiar with most of the details," she added bitterly. "They've been handled often enough."

Her handiwork finished, she handed over a bill.

"A retainer," she said so indifferently. "That's customary, I believe."

I handed the bill. It was for \$50 dollars! Franklin's concern with an effort, I agreed.

"Oh, sure, retainers is usual, lady, but five hundred bucks would retain the average dick like me for life." I went through the motions of handing her the bill. She said nothing, just held up her hand as I put the bill in my pocket, looked like a thief.

"I must take you back five months to my father's death," she said firmly, but her lips quivered ever so little. "He was killed on a hunting trip, so you may have heard."

Now that she mentioned it, I remembered the headlines about it—for the passing of Lane was worth a week's publicity.

"He was found separated from his party, his discharged gun beside him. They—they said it was an accident." She paused a moment, looked at me minutely, then asked slowly: "I don't believe that—no, no."

"Why not now?" I asked gently.

"I'll tell you why—too many things have happened since then that just don't fit in with that accident theory."

I felt sorry for her; there had been some good men on that job, and they had all expressed the same opinion—accidental death. Just one of those things. But I didn't interrupt, and she ran on. As her story proceeded, I began to get real interested; it got to look like she might have it right at that. It was like this:

When Mortimer J. checked out he had three kids, just like you or me, only his was worth better than fifteen millions. "Course, he left a small crowd of relatives, too—a crowd that expected a golden mine." They were two brothers, one a widower with a son and daughter, the other a bachelor; a spinster sister, an adopted son, and, of course, Louise, his million-dollar daughter, and her kid sister, Claire. That's all. There was also a hook with, the man's name was kinda queer after it went as it did.

Louise, the favorite evidently, had a cool three million put in her lap, the rest were to share an share alike. So far there ain't no kickback or error in it, is there? But that don't finish the bill—no, sir. Mort has had that dough up, so that his heirs get only the income of their portions, an' can't touch the capital for eight years. Since anything might happen in that time, he has thoughtfully arranged that in the event that any happens die, their shares go to the others in proportion; an' should they all die before the eight years is up, the whole fortune has to be used for the purpose of building, equipping and endowing a free hospital for the treatment of the poor of this city. "The supervision of this scheme has been explicitly invested in my old and valued friend, Franklin Goodman, Doctor of Medicine."

Well, all the legacies were healthy, an' lived the make's the eight years easy—happy accidents. But that's just what started to happen. Big brother Ben, who ran a small ranch, was clearing a piece of ground about a month after Mort's death. He put a load of explosive under

a stump, in the face, an' beat it prompt. Nothin' happened, so after a minute or two, inquisitive Ben walked over to investigate, an' just that stump center outta the ground at a hundred miles an' hour. When he came down they planted him in the hole the stump had left.

Not so long after, Brother Hank's boy, Joe, reckoned hard have a look-see at the underside of his old man that ain't been done no good time but ten years. He shot himself in his garage, started the engine, an' crawled underneath. Next morning they pulled him out by the feet. Well, he ain't the first guy that got fust-poled in a garage.

Hank himself, four-five weeks later, was fishin' a creek on vacation. They've caught a big one, he figured he could himself a drink, so he untipped his flask, got the top off, an' got busy. He'd no more than set his mouth, when he came to the surface, spat, emphatically, an' remarked

she got it (take, in the heart an' in the head. Of course, the giggle was held, but what the hell, his kind don't take charms to speak to have their bumped! So it passed off, another innocent bystander killed, an' all that guff.

That was Louise's story. When she had finished she said to me:

"That's just four of 'em. Who's to have the next accident?"

"We, Miss Louise, you ain't get that way. I tried to console her, "I'm looking into this thing right away."

"That's what the oldest said!" she burst out.

"What?" I rapped out. "You been to other dicks?"

"Sure," she told me, "two others."

"Who were they?"

"A man called Ross," she replied. I made a note. "And the Quasi Agency."

I rapped back in my chair, and quietly: "Tell me what they said."



Hind was facing his would-be murderers before they had time to realize what was happening. "You missed," he said. "I don't."

daughter-like: "Hell, that stuff's poison—I'm gonna change my hoodlums." He was right on both counts. There was lead in his flask, an' when it got through with Hank, they were throwin' dirt in his face. Three down.

And right here was where Louise began to think things ain't quite hunky. She eyed her suspiciously in the family pillbox, this some Dr. Goodson who'd to run the hospital—if there ever is one, but, of course, she has nothin' definite to go on. He listened carefully, admitted it was funny then three days the way they did, an' promised to investigate to please her. Of course, he didn't dig up nothin', not even a bad smell. So Louise decided to let things ride.

Nothin' else happened till one week before she called on me, an' then—the kid Hank's daughter, Marilyn, maybe began; to feel her case now that pop an' brother are gone, was visitin' in a speak of the not-so-good kind in N'York. She was worse than mine—had a gunda with her. Anyhow, a racket developed; the lights went out; there was some shootin', an' when the cops came, they found there was only one casualty. You're right, it was Marilyn. S'Times, no one else hit, but

"Well," she said slowly, a slight frown on her cheeks, no though recallin' something unpleasant. "Ross, a horrid man, but clever, I think, undertook to help me. He seemed to think there was something behind it all at first. But after a couple of days he was different—said his investigations were complete, and he was satisfied it was all coincidence. Then I got the note before the Quasi Agency. The next day they returned the remainder with a note to say they were too busy to assist me."

"Too busy?" I inquired. "Why, a case to these guys is a novelty! So then you came to me. Say, why did you pick me out next?"

She hesitated.

"Well, I had read in the papers about one of your jobs, and—"

I said in a hard voice:

"You thought this case would suit me, since I deal in death?"

"Please don't," she cried out suddenly.

"I didn't mean it that way. It was just that if there is anyone at the back of all this, it must be someone as hard as steel, and I want to meet him with someone equal—there, I'm making it worse."

She grabbed for a square inch of

ambulo, while I sat dumb. At last, I said, as gently as my lips allowed:

"Remind, Miss Louise, You're right at that. I am an hard guy, an' you're kind an' to come between you an'—well, friends."

"I don't like to hear it put that way. It lets me see that I may be asking you to risk—just you may be frank."

"You askin', lady, maybe you is risk that." I tried a smile on her. "Doubt, you oughta have more confidence in me than an' that." Her eyes were as big an' stary, they were dazn' things to me. "I've taken your money an' I'm your man till you fire me."

She smiled at last, an' I went on briskly: "Now, I don't want to be no much, but right now I don't mind admittin' there is a queer odor about them—accidents."

She leant forward eagerly. "I feel it," she said warily. "Tell me truly what you make of it all."

"Not so fast, not so fast," I told her. "I'll ask you one. Don't it strike you as queer that two agencies turn down a fat case like this?"

She wrinkled her nose in a thunders' out cry.

"I can't see that it has any bearing on the case at all," she admitted.

"Maybe not," I agreed. "But it looks like them other dicks has been got at, see?"

"My afraid I don't," she said, posed. "By the Prophet's toe-marks, I believe that explains somethin' else again. Tell me," I went on rapidly, "did anyone know you were comin' to see me?"

She answered readily. "Oh, yes, I made no secret of my intention. In fact, I meant to come yesterday, and quite a number of people knew that."

I laughed. "Then I've been in this case all day and didn't know it!"

She looked so downright bewildered, I had to laugh again. I explained:

"You think I'm crazy? Maybe I am—like a fox. Figure it out this way. Some smart guy is doin' a line in wholesale murder. One of his prospective victims gets wise, contacts detective agencies. What does the smart guy do? He don't want no dicks in the party, so he has them warned off—or bought off. The victim talks of comin' a dick everybody knows can't be frightened or bought. What's the answer?"

Louise shook her head, worse puzzled than before, so I tell her:

"Smart guy tries to have honest dick—that's me—bumped off!"

"You mean," she asked horrified, "they'll try to have you killed?"

"You're funny in wrong," I told her. "Have tried."

I let her in on the shooter's that had happened earlier, assured her the case was as good as settled, on around the strong-arm squad would make them robots spill the beans.

"I'll ring up the station right now," I told her, "an' see if they're talked yet."

I dialed the phone, called a number, got through to Crosby. I asked a couple questions, then said slowly:

"I'll be right over, Crosby."

Deliberately I looked up, turned to Louise. She stretched my shoulder, her face tense with emotion.

"What's wrong?" she cried. "Why do you look like that? Is it—is it bad news?"

My voice sounded queer to me as I replied:

"The very worst. Mulvaney hasn't reported in yet."

"What does that mean?" she whispered, white to the lips.

I did not answer. There was no need.

QUITS FOR MULVANEY.

I SAW her in her car, told her she'd be leaving from me, then grabbed a taxi and was rushed to the police station. I didn't need to ask Crosby if he had any news. He was taking it hard—like everyone else, he was fond of Mulvaney. As briefly as I could I told him what had happened. There was a long pause. Then he spoke:

"I could ask you why the hell you didn't come in with Mulvaney personal."

"Sure you could," I agreed. "I been askin' myself that. We both know the answer: it didn't seem necessary, not with Mulvaney."

He tried again.

"Neither of you had lamped these books before?"

I shook my head.

A bell whirred. Crosby picked a switch before him. A voice came through like an old-time gramophone:

"Private citizen phoned in a message. Black sedan abandoned at vacant lot on Eighty-Sixth Street. Body inside, policeman."

We were scrambling into Crosby's police car before the voice had drained to a finish. Down town we cut over, our siren clearing a path for us. Out into the quieter blocks, amongst taverns' warehouses an' dingy stores. Talkin' the sidewalk, we swung into Eighty-Sixth, almost on top of a sinister group of peering people, who were here kept back from the scene by a couple motor-cycle cops. They scowled right an' left as we approached to a stop. The street's walking strip was still on the air as I peered into the street now.

One look sufficed me. Mulvaney lay face down on the floor, an' only dead men be so he did. The great big Irishman had been shot like a dog. I turned away as Crosby's men got busy on that car. It was a cinch they would find nothing, but they weren't making any bets. Amongst the bystanders, no one had seen nothing, no one knew nothing.

I felt a hand on my shoulder, turned an' faced Crosby. He asked quietly:

"Where are you off to, kid?"

I shook his hand off, not too roughly, an' answered:

"I'm gona to get the a meat."

"An' then?" he persisted.

I spoke softly.

"Mulvaney was a buddy of mine. What do YOU think?"

He eyed me closely for a minute.

"I ain't thinkin', kid. I'm tellin' you somethin'. I ain't see that the cops what does this is took care of, all legal an' proper, see? If you got any leads, it's up to you to come clean. I won't stand for no private shooter's matches."

"I've told you all I know, Crosby, an' I ain't askin' you to tell me anything you find out. That gives you a start, don't it? If you want to fry these guys, get to them before I do."

I walked off, an' felt that Crosby's eyes were boring into my back.

For the rest of that day, an' most of the next, I did notin' but joint crawlin'. I made myself conspicuous everywhere crooks played. Did it all careless-like, but not too careless; you gotta have craft, see? Long towards four in the afternoon next day, I left a dive on 86th Street I'd been givin' the once-over. My play didn't seem to be gona' over so good, an' I was

gotta' kinda down an' sore. I ankied slowly up the street, tryin' to make up my mind where to go next, when I gotta' laugh.

Somebody was gittin' my smoke, an' cheer' it back. He did everything but carry a periscope, he was that obvious, dodgin' in an' out of doorways like a kid playin' tag. Well, I'd join the party, like, so's he couldn't miss me, I turned up French, cut down a narrow tunnel at a lane, into a quiet backway. I looked all round. As described on a lead here, I slipped into the shadow of a little out-house. Forewarned, slow then hurried, my effort up the street. They showed, stopped, Pause. Then a huge head was peered cautiously round the corner. It gazed so long this way an' that way without spottin' me, that I got tired waitin', an' called out (with a like):

"Here I am!"

The head was peered back like I struck it. In a couple secs round it came again, spotted me, then a bulky figure stopped into the light, an' lumbered towards me like a comic book. It was the lantern that had drive the death out! Things was happenin' to break my way. He had covered half the distance when a thought seemed to strike him, for he stopped like he ran into something.

"Hey, you!" he rambled emphatically. "whadda ya mean—HERE?"

"Well, I'm here, an' you're lookin' for me, ain't ya?" I asked, innocent. He was plainly taken aback an' commenced with himself for a minute. Then he continued his advance, an' finally had a couple feet away. He was coverin' me with a gun like a cushion. We eyed one another without a word. His heavy face was without a gleam of intelligence; here was one lacy that could kill at the drop of a hat, an' lose no sleep over it. Suddenly his mouth gaped, an' he laughed—a brainish, satisfied sound.

"I thought it was youse, wise guy," he rapped, an' spat phlegmatically. "Hell, I ain't so dumb. I'll show Outta' somethin'."

I let him think he had me overed.

"What have you against me? I ain't done you no dirt."

He laughed like he was enjoyin' himself. He was one of them guys what likes to play with his victims before he bumps 'em.

"You ain't hurt?" he asked. "That's too bad, 'em I'm givin' ya the best answer, see?" His finger lightened on the trigger.

"Just a minute!" I called urgently.

"Maybe I can tell you something." He hesitated, his curiosity got over.

"Out with it, quick! I ain't got no time to lose."

"It's just this," I said with conviction.

"Your friend, Outta', has taken a run-up powder on you, an' left you to stand the rap for that killin'."

"You dirty bar," he spat. "I should give it to ya for that crack alone."

But I wasn't I had him sold, if I played carefully.

"Why should I say that if it ain't so? It won't do me no good to lie when you can easily check up."

The logic of that seemed to slow. His face cleared.

"You're right," he admitted grudgingly.

"I can call him up after I've checked you off."

That didn't sound so good to me.

"An' where will that take you?" I said.

"If Outta's gone I ain't no use to you dead. I could be—alive."

Once more his heavy brain wrestled with

a thought. After an anxious minute, the oracle spoke.

"O.K., I'll do that little thing. I seen a call-in at the corner, I'll put a call through from there. An' if you try any monkey business, mister, you're a dead one."

I knothed snaly again; not that I had been in the slightest danger, but I did not want to feel this on till I'd got my into' from him.

Stagnorly, so as not to make him nervous, I led the way to the call-box. It was deserted. He kept his gut lined on me while he called a number. I heard him say "Yeah" once or twice after he identified himself, then "I've a little job to do, then I'll be right over."

He slammed up the receiver turned an Indian face on me.

"Yo, yo, rat, you had! Well, diggit this."

His arm tensed, but his stag went wild, because you can't do good shootin' with a couple Indian riggin' thro' your head, an' that's just where I put them. He crashed down like a tree and commenced to snore, then suddenly stopped, an' died peaceful.

It was a neighborhood where it ain't healthy to investigate shots, so I wasn't too surprised when nobody came passin'. I lifted the receiver, called Craney's number an' got it first time. He sounded downright mad; I guessed the news-brood had been after him.

"Man," he snarled, "I ain't notified them killers yet, but I'll say I'm close after them."

"Yeah?" I replied. "Tell that to the reporters! I don't believe in Sissy Glass no more. I'll give you a hot one. Have a look round this call office if you can trace it; an' bring down with you."

I hang up on a belief of protecting profanity, an' went my way.

Now I had his telephone number, it didn't take me long to have Cutter's help-out. It was listed as an apartment house, "place at No. 220, Nineteenth Street. I found it to be a cheap neighborhood, but not far enough down to be in the dirt. No. 220 was an undistinguished five-story job, neither lookin' nor welcome. I tried the door casually. It opened, an' I stepped into a not-too-clean hall. Doors all round, stairs to the right, an' no elevator. I fished out a cigar an' made a job of lightin' it, while I brought the old bean into action. Not so good. I just couldn't figure out no smart way of findin' which door was Cutter's. Looked like I'd hafta ask somebody.

I turned, and almost collided with a chassy-lookin' dame dressed for the street. She gave me an easy stare, an' I lobbed my finger to my hat an' said, real smooth:

"Excuse me, sister, I'm lookin' for a couple friends; they've just moved in. A big stout guy, an' a little one, an' Indian-looking guy, dresses snappy."

The friendly look on this fraidy face done a quick face-out; she became hard-lookin'.

"I ain't no sister o' yours, feller," she said, brightly, "an' if you mean them pups, they're in the end room on the next floor, if they ain't out on their ears yet."

She swept past.

"Thanks, sister," I called after her, but she only made an unshakable noise. I was locked to see like she'd got Tan's and Cutter's number, all right; they would make a pass at her—but why go into that? I took my body up to the next floor, meetin' nothin' but a kinda stale smell, an' eased along to the last door.

Without any hesitation, I knocked confidently. A voice came at once.

"Who's out?"

I was playing in luck—it was Cutter's. "Me," I answered, as like Tan's great as possible. In a second I heard a bolt snovey, then Cutter's rat-like eyes were lookin' down my gun-barrel!

I didn't have to say nothin'; here was one baby who knew exactly what to do when he was at the wrong end of a gun. His hands went up just the right height.

"Hell!" he spat out. "You again?"

"Sure," I agreed. "In person." I flipped back his coat, pulled a gun out of a neat shoulder holster. Then I stepped inside and boined the door shut, fumbled the lock back with my left hand. A snit look peered told me we were alone. I patined my man all over, an' found nothin'. While I was doin' that, I said:

"Of course, I don't hafta tell you I'd admire to have you make a break!"

"Oh, sure, sure. I know you dinks from A to Z." He spat nothin'—on my shoe. I didn't like that, so I wipped it on his pants, hard. He went to the floor like a pole-axed bullock. I hoisted him like you lift a cat, by the back of the neck, slammed him roughly into a chair.

"Whose payroll are you on?" I strapped at him.

"Am I on some guy's payroll?" He lifted his eyebrows into his hair. I leant forward, knooked them back with the sights of my gun. I watched the gash on his head. For a second it didn't bleed—then the red man. He pulled out a hanky, mopped at it silently. Tough! I'll say he was. I knew I'd get nowhere with that kind of stuff—but, well, he'd killed Mulvaney. I WANTED him to start somethin'—knew he would. Yeah, call it rat an' sneeze if you like.

I didn't speak for a little, then I said slow:

"In a minute I'm goin' to knock you



In the car was Mulvaney, and it was obvious why he had not reported to headquarters.

off the way I did Tan; the way you did Mulvaney.

That jolted him. He hadn't figured Tan had got his. He laughed, but kinda off-color.

"Who? Oh, that cap? Say, that would be another. You're a dink, you oughta know that."

"You're tellin' me," I said. "Maybe what you did to Mulvaney wasn't murder; maybe he up an' died of a heart attack?"

"Hell, that was different. Self-defense, what I mean." He was becomin' quite animated.

"Self-defense my foot! Knock in the back, an' you call it self-defense."

He leant forward confidentially, wagged a finger at me, an' argued:

"Weren't he takin' me places at the end of a gun? I hafta let him have it. Cripes, I don't hang gaze for the fun of it."

I sneered.

"The hell you don't! You'd kill your own mother for a five-spot."

"Man." He sat back, raised his left foot to a comfortable position, with the ankle resting on his right knee, and started toying with his shoe-lace. "I couldn't do that; my o' man beat me to it."

I raised my knee, looked impressed.

"Yeah?" I asked. I was watchin' him closely, an' tryin' to appear not to. I felt that, somethin' was goin' to break soon. He went on complacently, but his words meant nothin' to either of us.

"Yeah. He knooked her off one night he found ground glass in his beer. Tough, he was—what I mean; he wouldn't stand for no monkeyin' with his beer; no, sir."

There was admiration in his voice. He seemed relaxed, but I saw the blood start from his ear again.

"So he knooked her off, huh?"

"Sure did; the' man wasn't also didn't know nothin' about the glass." He lecturedly he added: "She was a star at that—she knew I done it."

There was a ring of pride in his voice as he said it—he actually looked to me for approbation. But I wasn't deceived—not any.

Black as he looked, I knew he was a wild animal, croonin' for a spring.

I shifted my eyes to the other corner, an' said softly:

"A right smart family of

killers, huh?"

His eyes beared into the door behind me—looked like he was trying to will me to look round; but I didn't give to commit suicide that way.

"Now tell me," I demanded suddenly, "why did you try to give me the head?"

He tried to look sheepish.

"Aw, hell," he said, "that was just a job to me, mainin' removal, y'understand? It just happened to be you, an' it just happened to be me. We're on different sides, see?"

He fumbled with his lace as tho' nervous; but his baby had no nerves, an' I watched his hands close. A little cord on the back of his right hand stood out, an' I went into action.

Oh, he was fast, I admit. But what good did it do him? He just wasn't that tough. I didn't care if he had the gun stuck some down his trouser leg to that ready

hand. Then he took my strap smack below the breast bone. As that he managed to squeeze the trigger before he slumped back, I held my red ready, but he wasn't dangerous no more, he was plain' out laid.

"Och," he wheezed, "ya masia bin wise all the time. I gotta hand it to ya."

"Och—he had me pulled. Here was a guy I coulda hand—but he killed Malwancy. I said, automatically:

"Anything to spill before you pass out?" With an effort he kept his head up, the light flicked in black. His voice had fallen to a whisper's croak.

"About that cop—I HADDA give it to him—him or me. Just like you give it to me. Say, there's five hundred smokers in my red—they ain't rightly mine—I a shaver guy twisted his face for a second—on account I didn't get you, see? Let his woman have 'em, if he— He had full sideways, then forward. He died like that.

I took his red. Sure, I knew that ain't ethical. But Miss Malwancy has two kids, an' that makes it some. I also took his trick gun. It was a raw one on me. Slung in the waist of his trousers, it was arranged to slip down to near his ankle when he holsted his hands. Simple, an' with possibilities of being' real useful sometimes. I went through his pockets and found nothin' interestin' or illuminatin'. I combed that apartment like I was a harem; drew a blank again. Well, I'd hafta be satisfied with squaring the Malwancy account. I was no further forward with the Lane case. Come to think of it, I might be all set there—but I didn't think so.

I took a final look round, then went to the door. I stooped with my hand on the bolt, listened. There was a subdued murmuring outside it. I caught that all right, but I got something more—the approaching scream of police sires. So! Some nosy individual had heard the shots an' reported 'em. Too late to go now, so I softly slid back the bolt, creased over to the bed an' sprangled comfortably at it.

The whispering outside the door rose to a yammering, then stopped suddenly. Someone pounded on the door. In a raised voice I answered:

"Come in."

The door bounced open an' Croaksey himself, gun in hand, stepped in, a couple bolts at his back.

"Hell!" he said in a fierce whisper when he leaped me. "Some guy phoned in a call that someone's been killed here. Was it you?"

"Ma?" said I. "You can see I ain't been killed."

"Retained the whoocracks!" he barked, angry at someone behind him suggested.

"Was it you phoned?" As he spoke he got a load of Cutter's body in the chair.

"That that door an' stay on the outside of it?" he ordered one of the bulls.

The door shut out the starin' eyes an' chokin' lungs. Croaksey turned to me, patting up his gun.

"So," he said, softly for him "another dead one, huh? Who is this guy?"

"The red that got Malwancy" I gave him back casually, "he now we're all quiet."

"Have your fan, Hind," he snapped, "but this is one time you'll have to do some smart explainin'." I rose leisurely, snugged away my belt an' clapped my hat down.

"O.K. by me, Croaksey," I said softly. "I guess it's only right the papers should know them killers was dead when you caught up on them at that."

"You mean—?"

"Nothin' else but," I replied. "I don't want no trouble—see that I don't get it, an' you can tell any story you like." He mused that one over, an' I saw I had him sold. After all, it won't do HIM no good to drag me in; on the other hand, a little credit at headquarters is sometimes' nice again. Anyhow, there two guys is dead, an' it don't march matter to them whether they died in a gun battle with the police, or a kick from a mule.

When Croaksey spoke again his voice was still gruff, but he had losted his colours down. He asked:

"You positive these are the right men?" I laughed that one off.

"I'm plumb sure they are," I told him. "I shanno who they are, but I do know what they done."

The bull who was in the room with us suddenly came to life. He had been noddy'n the late lamented like an artist does a model, but one side, then another.

"Say, I know this egg. I nearly jumped down his throat. I laughed that one off.

"Let's have it then," I snapped out. "Who is he?"

"Well, if he ain't Snake the Cutter Barbell, I'm a too-dancer."

"Och," I told him, "you're right! His pal called him Cutter."

The news was a knock-out. I'd heard of Barbell all right. Who hadn't? One of Chi's highest-priced gunmen; a red that could be bought only by the very biggest shots. I looked at Croaksey; he was starin' thoughtfully at me. We were both wonderin' the same thing. Who in this man's town could send for a man in Barbell's class? And why? Well, the why didn't take me long. He had been brought in to bump me off; a kinda compliment, if you care for that kind. Someone wanted me on the spot, but I had a rep with a gun; an' he didn't care to trust the job to a local lad in case it went screwy an' he got implicated. That was as far as I got, when Croaksey, who wasn't foolish all the time, said:

"Letch he come on his own, either Ryan or Porpeli sent for him. They's the only ones here could buy HIS gun."

"I guess that's so," I agreed. "All right, if you can spare me, I'm on my way."

Croaksey snapped out of it. He said briskly:

"Sure, you can go now. If we want you, we'll know where to find you."

Well, I didn't like that last crack; sounded like he might put a tail on me; but I let it pass. I had other things to worry about. I had decided that it was time to look up Louise Lane. Maybe I'd neglected her too long already.

THE GUY IN THE WOOD.

IT was a long drive to her home, so I grabbed some food an' cruck a few things in my grip before I left. I couldn't tell how long I might be there, but I had to get on the spot an' see the other actors in the drama.

My location had no difficulty finding the Lane place. It was a real millionaire's out-of-town home. Wooded grounds; marble French windows an' all. Well, I paid off my mind, an' pounded the devil's head clapper that adorned the centre of the great, studded door.

It opened in a minute, an' a guy like a movie buffer looked down a red nose at me an' my grip. I grinned friendly-like, but he didn't give it back. No, sir. He said, haughty:

"This ain't the residence for you, MIA." I threw my grip at his feet, an' said:

"Fall in your neck, an' go tell Miss

Louise that Cedric F. Hind is here. P for private, got it?"

"The name means meanin' somethin' to that guy—I ain't unknown—for his master changed complete."

"You, sir. At once, sir. Please be seated, sir."

He took my hat, an' rung a little gong. An understudy of himself appeared, an' stood solemnly before him. He indicated my grip.

"Take Mr. Hind's bag to his room, an' unpack it," he ordered, an' turning indignantly to me, added:

"Would you be so good as to let me have your key, sir?"

"Retained that," I told him. "I'll do my own unpacking. Just so long as you let Miss Louise know I'm here."

The other image took my grip sadly away, an' the butler said:

"Miss Louise is expecting you, sir. I'll go to her at once." He bowed gravely an' faded off.

He was back in a minute, more obsequious than ever. He waved an arm grandly.

"This way, Mr. Hind, sir, please."

He put me into a room with a carpet knee-deep, arranged me in a chair that made even my back seem small, an' announced:

"Miss Louise will be down in one minute, sir. Can I get you anything?"

Even as he spoke, Louise entered. Ouch, she was swell! Swell! her in her own home, in a slinky frock, kinda took your breath away. She dismissed the man with a look, an' turned a warm smile on me. I rose an' took her hand.

"I'm so glad you've come," she said. "I've been worried. You see, I rather expected you yesterday." There was just enough gentle reproach in her voice to make the feet kinda shiverish, but good.

"Believe me, MIA," I told her, "it was very urgent business kept me."

I wondered what she'd say if she knew I'd croaked a couple since I seen her! She drew me over to a divan, pushed me into it, an' sat beside me. Then she turned her eager face to mine, laid a hand on my arm, and asked:

"I have made a little progress," I said slowly, wonderin' just how much to tell her.

As though she read my thoughts, she said:

"You can tell me everything. I read the papers, and I know that poor policeman was killed." She shuddered a little.

I said:

"We can't bring Malwancy back, but his killers has been took care of." I thought she struck a little; her eyes were wide an' questionin'. But she didn't ask just what I meant, so I didn't hafta lie to her. I went on quickly:

"Have you done what I asked you?" She nodded. I'd asked her to have all the luggage here so's I could give them the once over.

"Good!" I said. "Suppose we have them all in here now? I feel like makin' a speech."

As they were introduced, I took stock of them. Aunt Mary came first, surprisingly young to be Louise's aunt; dark an' capable-looking; not easily scared, an' capable chiefly scared on life in general like a lotta old maids.

Little sister Claire, a tricky little thing of maybe eighteen, with flirtatious eyes an' dangerous lips, besides a promise of seductive curves that her gown couldn't hide. I liked her; I imagine most men would.

Half-brother Orange, about thirty, tall an' athletic, an' real good-looking. But I noticed his eyes weren't so clear, or his

compulsion to goad as they would have been. Late night.

Maybe the most interesting was Dr. Greenbaum. Tall and spare, with carefully brushed white hair, he had the air of an ambassador. There was cleverness and shrewdness looking you right in the face out of his closely-shut eyes. But gradually I looked him up. He was the real thing in doctors, with more than a local reputation.

It seemed ridiculous to suspect any of them; but I been in this racket for twenty years, and I can't tell a swindler from a parson yet—not on looks. I got them sorted in front of me, and looked like a showman began.

"Well, Golan, this maybe ain't too pleasant for you all, a dick like me planted in the house with you." There were some polite murmurs of dissent—not too loud, I noticed—under Orange's career. "If you all co-operate with me, the sooner you get rid of me," I passed; that was quite a good crack. Then I gave it to them. "If there has bin any monkey-business gosh on, which I believe, the party responsible is right in this room."

Orange jumped up, said something; "Come, come, don't be melodramatic! Everyone here is above suspicion. I can vouch for that."

"Thank!" I gave him back. "An' who can vouch for you?" Orange looked hot at that, while Claire tilted her. Louise broke in scoldingly:

"Mr. Hind has no intention of offending anyone. He is only doing what I brought him here to do."

The doctor looked her up at once. "That's so, Orange, my boy; we wasn't be thin-skinned in a never like this."

For a minute it looked as though Orange wouldn't be mollified; then he sank sulkily into his chair.

I went on. "Well, as I was goin' to say, if you reason it out, the only possible suspects are in this room, on account no outsider benefits either by the deaths that have taken place, or," I added slowly, "those that may take place."

That took the smile off Claire's face. Aunt Mary coughed primly, said in a soft voice:

"May I inquire, Mr. Hind, what steps you propose to take?"

"You got me there, lady," I admitted. "I ain't no Napoleon; I got no campaign mapped out. But there's just one thing I want to say. With me, you all start over."

Here Claire closed a post, while Orange muttered "Very gratifying." I smiled to Gaster; ignored Orange.

"I don't favour or suggest any one of you. I'm goin' to ask you one thing."

"Let me explain. I happen to know that the gait party does have an underworld connection, an' that's the line I'm working on. I've harrin' you all checked up, at a point on it, any contact I've speaking about, will be reported to me. That's one thing people in your position can't keep hid. Well, if you are innocent, but do happen to have mixed in a little dirt, it won't tell me, an' my agents—that wounded god—had it out, that would make me think you hid it 's'pose, an' make me the natural suspect, see?"

It was a bluff, of course. Not a very clever one either; but, then, I ain't clever. I just knew that one of these huckles know either Ryan or Fergal, an' if he really thought I might find it out, he'd like as not

tell me some bed-time story to account for it. In the meantime, there seemed to be little I could do but wait.

I didn't hafta wait that long, either. I hadn't been in my room fifteen minutes, when there was a tap at the door.

"Come in!" I cried; an' who should appear but Dr. Greenbaum himself. What I thought! Maybe.

"Sit down, doc," I invited, an' he perched himself comfortably on the bed.

"What's on your mind?" I asked lazily.

"Come to business?"

He laughed easily. "Hardly that, Hind," he said; "but it suddenly occurred to me that I, of all people, have what you might call an underworld contact." I sat up at that. Now, was this guy gonna be clever, or simple?

"How come, doc?" I asked him quietly. His long, white-linckin' fingers moved rhythmically, an' he eyed them with a some pleased attention as he replied:

"How come, doc?" I asked him quietly. His long, white-linckin' fingers moved rhythmically, an' he eyed them with a some pleased attention as he replied:



The man lay motionless on the bathroom floor. Had the unknown killer succeeded again?

"Oh, just as a physician," he smiled. "Even gangsters need the services of a doctor at times, you know. Periodically, I treat Gustav Ryan; and, of course, everyone who reads the newspapers knows what he is."

"I'm glad you told me," I said. "I mighta got off on the wrong foot if I'd found that out myself." Did he look relieved at that crack? "Now, let me tell you something. Watch your step with this guy—he's about the biggest nut in this city, an' the toughest. By the way, I wanna ask you something, but don't get tipped about it."

"Anything you like, my dear Hind," he said graciously.

"It's this," I told him. "In the event that the Lane family get insured complete, how do you stand, personal?"

He met my eyes steadily. "If I understood your question, you want to know if I gain anything; if any of that vast fortune will find its way into my

pockets?" I nodded. His voice rose. "Not a cent! Under no circumstances whatsoever can any of the money be appropriated to my private purse. The will, you understand, provides for a super-hospital. I shall be chief of certain wards, at a remuneration to be fixed by a board. I may say, further, that the salary would be considerably less than my practice brings in, in all likelihood." He spoke with such sincerity that he couldn't be doubted. I was impressed.

"Then you gain nothing?" I asked. "I treated something" that time. He bounced up like a ball, his lean face wrinkling, his arms raised.

"I—!" he cried. "Whereas I to be considered! The gain is to humanity—to the suffering thousands who are too poor to buy medical attention—the children who hold out their puffy arms in mute appeal for relief—for LIFE! Think of it, man—THINK! The services of a hundred more distinguished men than I, in research and practice, at the disposal of the poorest, the weakest! I tell you, Mortimer Lane had vision, nobility!" He stopped suddenly, sat down as he'd exhausted, pulled out a handkerchief, an' mopped his forehead. He looked at me kinda shame-faced, an' his voice was quiet when he said:

"Pardon me, Mr. Hind. I allowed myself to be carried away by my hobby-horse. You see, that is the dream of a life-time."

He smiled sadly, apologetically. "That's all right, doc. You got me goin' my own self, an' I've recovered hard-ened. I don't take much interest in hospitals, sure to send 'em a customer now and then, see?"

He smiled faintly. "Course," I conceded largely. "It looks a grand idea to me. And, say, I gotta hand it to you doc—you're sure great guy!"

But I was very thoughtful after he left. I switched off my light, killed in a chair by the window, and stared out into the darkness. Take old Greenbaum, now. He had nothing comin' to him, even if the whole bunch was eliminated. You'd figure that oughta let him out. Yet, in some way, he was a crazy guy, if ever I saw one, in spite he had as many degrees as a thermometer; and you can't tell about a crazy one. Ryan was a patient of his, too. Greenbaum would, applied the brains, an' Ryan 'bout everything else for them jobs. What I mean, they was done subtle; no ordinary crook think them up, not any.

Right-ho, what a mess! There was that smart-alec Orange. Why should he be all turned up on account I was on the job? Minkler a big play for Louise, too, the young second one? Maybe I should have a talk with him. Well, no time like right now, even if I had to waken him.

I found his door an' rapped twice. No answer. I could see the light was on, so, bender down, I got an eye to the keyhole.

"Peeky-!" says a meekin' voice behind me. I came straight with a jerk. Orange had wanked up on me, an' stood with a peep on his face; but made me want to knock his own back.

I stared hard at him. "Eyes always lock your door when you go for a hair?" He wore a dressing-gown, an' had a towel round his neck.

"I saw he didn't like that, but he drawed out-like."

"Only when there's strange guys about, see?"

Here was one lad sure ahhin' for it! He swung his door wide, hesitated.

"You want to see me?" he asked. I let me eyes wander over him casually for a second.

"Not now," I told him: "I think I see Jerry."

His mouth opened as if to speak, but he had realized a quick "Oright!" and shut the door behind him. I could see I had him worried. Which was only good, on account he had no gunner's ion. Cause that led, in spite of his croak an' damp hair, had been heavier 'n both. You don't wear street shoes in your bath.

I had a notion to have a look in that bath-room. I pushed up the window, stuck my head out. Sure enough, a drainage led down to the roof of a kinda outhouse. It would be no trick at all to get out that way. That Grange had been out of the house. I was certain; but why should he want to sneak out at midnight? I ain't sayin', so it seemed to me I better go on down an' see if I could find out.

I landed soft, then stood a minute to get my bearings. They was no stars, an' the moon was playin' hide-an'-seek among the clouds. I crept the house, tried every window an' door, but like a regular cop. Nothin' there. A sudden flurry of wings in a covey started me. On a branch, I felt my way into it. Clammy branches drew chilling frivers over my face. Suddenly a dark figure loomed in front. I stifled, hard on gas.

"'Zat!" came a hoarse whisper. "'Zat you?"

Clearly I began to inch forward, one hand outstretched.

"Saw!" I blurted back.

Then came:

"You got the dough?"

This time the voice was natural. It was

vaguely familiar; I'd heard it before, but couldn't place it. I reached out farther, was about to grab, when, BING! something that weighed a ton dropped smack on my head. I didn't feel myself fall, but I was lyin' on my back, watchin' a shower of tiny lights dancin' an' bobbin' in front of my eyes.

The lights slowly vanished, and I was aware of two dark figures bendin' over me. I wasn't no comber—I got an unaccounted change—but I couldn't move a finger for a million.

A light flashed on my face, an' I found someone give a gasp.

"For crissake sake—it's that gun-shoe Head! Oh, boy, you sure started scupper!" when you picked him down to get! I guess, this lets me out, 'cause I'm gonna be a thousand miles away when he wakes up!"

There was a commotion sound from the other; then I tried to move, an' all them lovely lights went into their dance again.

As soon as I could move I hurried back to the house. No windows for me this time. The flunkies who answered my ring opened his eyes wide.

"Have you been out, Mr. Head?" he asked stupidly.

"Out kump!" I told him grimly, kickin' the lamp on my head. But I hadn't enjoy the job by myself. A thought struck me. "All you male servants sleep in one room, I believe?" I'd been told that when I went over the house earlier.

The man looked surprised at the question, but answered readily:

"In the meantime, you, sir. The servants quarters are being altered—"

"We mind that," I interrupt brusquely: "what I want to know is, have any of you been out in the last half-hour?"

He answered without hesitation. "NoBODY, sir. I'll be bound to notice." He stared at my head, a sorta concerned look in his eyes.

"Well?" I asked tently. "You seem me before—why the pop-pop?"

"It's your head—there's blood on it!"

I seemed a chance to give him a sleepin' night wonderin' what it was all about, so I told him, casual:

"Sure, I know. Some gent out there parted my hair with a black-jack." I turned away, but something in the man's manner struck me. "Brother," I said soft, "if you know anything, you better spill it—quick!"

He looked uneasy; shuffled his feet.

"It—it may be nothing, sir; but in the grounds to-night I saw a man—a rough-looking man—skulkin'. An' now that you have been attacked—" His voice trailed off.

"You born a long time tellin' me this," I growled suspiciously. He dropped his eyes, looked very unhappy.

"I—I thought, maybe, Mr. Grange—"

He stopped like he'd said too much.

"What about Mr. Grange?"

"I saw him speak to him, an' thought he'd tell you." The words came with a rush, like he was glad to get them off his chest.

Maybe you noticed what this tough stranger looked like!

To My Readers

THE TRAP.. By Berkeley Gray

DULL PEOPLE

are mostly those who do the conventional things expected of them. The moment one meets someone who has that gift of thinking for themselves—someone who does the unexpected—you sit up and take notice. Such people are highly envied and attract unto themselves a host of friends and companions.

It is this gift of doing amazing and unexpected things that accounts for the rapidly growing popularity of BERKELEY GRAY'S stories of NORMAN CONQUEST. He DOES keep the reader on his toes. You never know what he will get up to next.

This is one of the secrets of good writing: the art of keeping the reader on the edge of expectancy, coupled with that most important factor, the giving to the reader of all you have led him to expect, and more if possible. No one knows better than an editor that one cannot bluff the public for long, if at all, and nothing is more irritating and disappointing than a story that

starts off with a tremendous ballyhoo and fizzles out like a damp squib.

One thing everybody likes about NORMAN CONQUEST is that he never lets you down. He is so exciting as to be almost explosive, and if you don't get a kick out of next week's brilliant, long, complete story, "THE TRAP," by Berkeley Gray, I'll swap jobs with you!



In this grand yarn, Conquest is busy smashing the latest racket of Rurik Yeogler, alias Carlos Castello. He is so close on the heels of the big crook that Yeogler fades out and leaves his big country mansion wide open for Conquest to walk in and take possession. Naturally, Norman Conquest expected a trap. And he was right! The house blew up with Conquest inside it. And what happens after that you must read for yourselves, next week. There isn't a dull moment in this story.

Now, here's a very important announcement. In next week's issue you will also have the opening chapters of an enthralling story, "THE BRAIN," by Walter Tyrer, the popular author of that great yarn, "Old Sid & Young Jed." Mr. Tyrer is one of the finest yarn-spinners of modern times. No one can tell a story quite as he does, and it gives me great satisfaction to be able to set his latest work before you next week. You will find further particulars on Page 372.

The Editor

Letters to the Editor should be addressed to: "The Thriller" Office, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.A.

He nudged his books for a minute.

"Well, he was big and heavy. I didn't see him close, but he seemed to have a sorta horkmark on his cheek, and his ears were like—what'd you call 'em—you know, like some leavers got."

"Check!" I cried gleefully, thumping him on the back. "You told me plenty. You can hit the hay; you done a good night's work."

FIVE DOWN!

MY head was buzzing, and I was glad to get between the sheets myself. I lay for a while turnin' things over in my mind. I knew the tale the Turkey described; to wonder the voice in the garden was familiar. "Five-spot" Hogan, and no one else. A lad that was thrown of the Force for takin' bribes, an' was now a small-time racketeer, bootlegger, strong-arm guy, or what-have-you?

So Grange musta been the boss what blugged me. That added up all right. Looked like he had'n't bin out when he caught me top-hatin, but was on his way out when he spotted me an' came back. Then he walked an' followed me. Well, he sure was anxious to keep me from knowin' about Hogan. An' what was that about "Have you got the dough?" What would Grange be givin' that guy money for? That young man would do with some wickin'.

I was only half-dressed next morning, when there was a considerable ruckus on my door. I opened it, an' looked out. Young Grange stood there, a queer look on his face.

"Hind," he said slow, "looks like you laid down on the job."

That jolted me same, but I said, casual: "How come?"

"Five down," he answered cryptically, "another of the Lane heirs has—well, died suddenly. It's Aunt Mary."

I threw my coat on an' grabbed his arm. "Take me to her!" I ordered grumpy.

Without a word, he led me along the passage and down a couple of steps, then halted at a closed door. I brushed him aside, turned the knob, an' entered. He came in at my heels, carefully closing the door behind him. Dr. Greenleaf was just turning the sheet over the still figure on the bed. I looked at him inquiringly. He nodded unemotionally.

"Dead seven or eight hours," he said quietly. "A terrible business, but not altogether unexpected."

"Huh?" I grunted, lookin' hard at him.

"I mean," he said quickly, "her heart was in a bad way. I'd been treating it for some time."

I turned to the bed; pulled the sheet back quick. She looked as calm an' peaceful as tho' she slept, her features composed, her eyes closed. Something brittle crunched under my foot. I stooped an' picked up a small, thin piece of curved glass. The other two crumbled up to me, interested. "There was none crunched," an' we found some more tiny pieces of glass, I turned to Greenleaf.

"Are you quite satisfied this was a natural death?" I demanded.

Without hesitation he answered.

"I can only say she has all the appearance of one who died of apoplexy—that is, heart-failure; and, further, that her heart was in such a condition that apoplexy was imminent."

There was an outlier from Grange, who had been admit't to talk for some time.

"With all due respect to your judgment, doctor, I submit that this is no natural death."

The doc looked puzzled; he frowned, but his voice was smooth as he asked:



"The doctor's suit!" yelled the man at the window. And Hind knew that he had been caught napping for once.

"On what grounds do you, a layman, challenge my opinion?"

"That glass!" cried Grange angrily. "Don't you see? It's part of a glass knob!" He turned to me triumphantly, an' finger outstretched, indicated the bed. "Lough—there's more of it!"

I said nothing; went on examin' the glass. Greenleaf shook his head.

"Fragrant!" he murmured.

Almost angrily, Grange protested.

"What do YOU say, Shortcock?"

"I'll see you both downstairs in ten minutes," I said, dismissing them; and to Grange: "Also, the person who found—"

"Orange!" I nodded to the still figure on the bed.

However, it was better'n half an hour before I made my way down. I found they had collected Louise an' Claire, also a sooty-looking maid in a smart cap an' apron. Louise was pale, but composed; Claire showed traces of tears. I turned to the maid. I saw I'd hafta be abrupt, so this time would throw hysterics. I said:

"What's your name?"

She jumped.

"Kath," she replied.

"Well, Kath," I continued, "just tell us what you know about—that." I jerked my head significantly. She began with a rush.

"Well, I took Miss Lane's morning coffee up at eight, like I always do. She didn't answer my knock, but I thought nothing of that, as she often didn't." She paused for breath. "So I went right in—"

"Then the door wasn't locked?"

"Miss Lane never locked her door on account she was afraid. I put the tray beside the bed, then drew the curtain. I spoke twice, but when I got no answer I put my hand out to touch the poor lady. She—she didn't move. Oh, she was that

still an'—an' COLD! Well I ever ferge!"

"You noticed nothin' unusual in the room?"

"The book Miss Lane was readin' was open on the bed, like she fell asleep readin'. I never know her to do that before."

"And last night—were you the last to see her?"

"I was," she almost sobbed.

"Was Miss Lane in bed when you left the room?"

"She was."

"What about the lights—did you switch them off?"

"All but the reading-lamp by the bed."

That was all I wanted from this dame. I thanked her, much to her open disgust. She flourished past me, givin' me one of them looks as the west.

"One moment!" Grange stopped her. "Can you tell us if the window was open when you entered my aunt's room, Kath?"

"It was open, sir. Miss Lane wouldn't sleep in a room with a closed window."

The pallid Grange thanked her, held the door wide, an' strut it softly behind her.

"You see?" he demanded triumphantly.

"I seen all I want," I came back meekly. "An' I'm quite satisfied things is beginnin' to break right."

"Maybe," answered Grange; "but the way I see it, you're gettin' nowhere fast. At this rate none of us will be alive to see things break, as you put it."

Louise had sat silent all this time. Nowin' closely, one arm round her sister, sort of protesting. Now she addressed me in a fal' voice, as if I had cut an' drained of all emotion.

"Surely, Mr. Hind, we can't just leave things as they are? There must be something that we—that you can do!"

A murmur of assent came from the others.

"Please don't ask me to say more than this, I know I can break this case, see? I know it looks bad the way things have turned out, but the rat that killed that old lady—I looked surely first at Grange, then at Greenleaf, then finished slowly—" She tipped his hand.

Did Grange flinch? The old she was easier to read. He looked downright mad; then he drew his spare figure up.

"So," he be, in them academic tones of his, "you will first try professional—er—diagnosis! Indeed, I see you are all convinced murder has been done. In that case, I must ask you to call in another doctor."

Louise melted to him at once. She gave him a quick smile.

"You mustn't be angry—please. You see, it isn't just—just words. It's all these other mysterious accidents."

"As for another doctor," I chipped in. "I already sent for one. You gotta have the corner on a job like this. Likewise the police."

"That's a hot one, if you like!" sneered Grange. "We call in a detective, an' HE hunts for the cop!"

"Listen," I cried; "when I came here I asked for a little co-operation. An' what do I get? Opposition at every step. For

cried out loud, when you let me do this thing my way?"

"Well, why don't you DO something?" George demanded bitingly.

"As 'Yinastane' I asked him, with a frosty glare.

"AREN'T you going to try to find out who threw that bomb?" he said in like an accusation. "What kind of a detective ARE you, anyway? An open window—broken glass, any foot can see what happened!"

"Yeah?" I said. "But, then, maybe I ain't no fool. If you want one to run this case, why don't YOU take it on?"

"Very well, Mr. Hind, I shall, of course, make a point of seeing the police first, and getting them all in line."

"Go to it, young fella," I advised. "But maybe they'll know that much already. Still, I guess they'd be real interested to know how a glass bomb was thrown thro' a window two stories high, an' open a couple inches, round a corner of a room on to a bed later?"

He was stuck for a minute, then a little softer, he admitted:

"Well, maybe it was thro' the door—it wasn't locked."

"Sure, that would bein' easier. But nobody in the house would do a thing like THAT. You reached for them your ownself. Well, folks," I said, "if this was the first sudden death in this family, an' if they wasn't a few million dollars involved, maybe I'd a taken the doc's word that the lady took syncope. But then the doc's word. When Miss Louise came to me, it had never occurred to her that any of YOU had a hand in the pie. She thought—"

"—as I guess most of you did, too—that some crazy guy with a grudge against Mortimer Lane was all set to wipe out the Lane family. You all know I don't figure it that way at all. Still, your guess may be as good as mine. I'd say, if a guy had a grudge against Mortimer, an' he killed him, then that would be the end of it. Now, take your own's case. The way I see it, she was ready'n in bed last night—the bomb's still in't there—by the light of her bed-lamp. Well, this lamp's got a foot over her head—see? An' the bulb exploded—pop! Maybe her heart was bad, like the doc says, an' she was nervous, anyway, an' the sudden pop, an' plumes'n' of the room into darkness, frightened her so much that she ate an' died. I chance—not."

Dr. Overkump, jumping up in some excitement, said rapidly:

"I believe you've hit it, Hind. It would just have required something like that to cause heart-failure."

The door whistened open an' a little guy stamped in. He'd a jacket that hung to his knees, an' I could hit an average, a cowboy hat you could take a bath in—only this blunder looked like bath was for neckers like you an' me. All you could see of his face was a pair of peached-egg eyes an' a long, telecastained, weep-willow moustache.

"I'm the sheriff," he announced truce-lessly—"name of Tring." He slid a bolted six-gun along his belt till it hung straight down in front, an' glared thro'ly round the room. We were outside the city limits, an' I knew the "police" meant the "sheriff," but I hadn't hardly bargained for a comic like this.

"Where's the body?" see he, before anyone could speak. "An' who done it?"

Clairé winced, an' Louise bit her lip. I stood up, looked down on the little man.

"If you'll come with me," I said, "I'll give you the whole story."

My fingers dug into him; he was glad to come. I took him upstairs, George (traffic) after, an' explained things to him. Then

he listened to Orange's story. When he had finished, he combed his whiskers thoughtfully. It was clear he thought somebody was crazy. He planted himself in a chair outside the death-room.

"Guess I'll set right here till the crooner gets over. If he ain't a killer, I'll take a hand then." Which was more sensible than you'd a hoped for from this three-brain.

"Who is the crooner in this neck-in-the-wood?"

"Dr. Fausch."

"What a break! I know Fausch well; guess he'd do a little job for me."

"I've gotta go up to town," I said.

"Maybe you'd give him a note from me?"

"You'll be able to do that your ownself," he promised, "on account you ain't givin' up to no town, see? Leastwise, not till I give the sap-on."

Before I'd time to set this limbo job who did he think he was, a soft voice spoke over my shoulder. Unthought, Louise had joined us.

"Finks, you mustn't leave a job." She laid a hand on my arm an' looked at me pleadingly.

"Listen, miss," I explained, earnest. "I ain't remain' out on you. Not any. I got things to do if this rotten mess is to be waked up, see? Things I can't do here. I—I just gotta go."

Of' whiskers, in the chair, made a noisy noise, then growled:

"That's what YOU think."

"You keep out of this, gran'ma," I told him grumpy, my jaw out a mile. "Keep on polishin' the seat of your pants, an' don't try to start nothin'!"

The ol' scoldy bristled. Funny how important them lick sheriffs got to thinkin' themselves. He opened his mouth to bluster, but he worth came, for suddenly a wild, agonized scream rang thro' the house. It was an unexpected an' blood-curdin' that for seconds after it died away nobody so much as moved. Louise, her face paper-white, murmured:

"That's from my room!" She took a few stumbling steps, then stopped, leaned weakly on the wall.

I was past her in a flash, gun in hand. Her room was empty! Pussed, I stared round me. A faint moanin' caught my ear; it seeped thro' a door opposite the bed. I swung it open, and found myself in a bath-room. On the floor, in front of the bath, was a crumpled figure in male's uniform. The port Hatt! I had her on the bed, bathin' her head, when the others arrived.

Conversation naturally took change, cool an' untroubled. I could only all there stappin' one limp hand. Suddenly I stared at the fingers. The forefinger an' thumb, right at the tips, showed tiny, fresh burns.

I slipped quietly back to the bath-room. The bath was half-full of hot water. For both had drawn a bath for Miss Louise. It took only a couple minutes to find what I was lookin' for. Everything looked in order. I touched a corner of my hanky to each electric switch near the bath. He came away from the spray-switch cozy. A close look showed frayed flex, some of the strands wires exposed, actually working the switch.

A slow anger started to burn within me. Some devil had arranged this neat little trap for Louise. I remembered to think what would have happened had she touched that switch for a spray after her bath. Her hands wet, standin' in water—why, the poor kid woulda taken a job that'd fried an elephant. Even Bath, standin' on a mat, fingers dry, was unconscious—maybe dyin'.

Here was a challenge, if you like. Right under my nose the crooner's best played his fifty game. Crooner—or George? It had to be one or other. Was Orange clever enough to put these killer's over? Why had he leared no, anyway? An what for was that spe, Hugin, Tally? HIS money? I had no doubts about Dr. Overkump bein' one smart body. Cross, too, he'd I missed my bot.

Hath was still out. I looked an' eye-brow at the doc. He shrugged.

"May be out for hours," he whispered. "I've given her a hope to overcome the shock."

I shook my head. I'd give a lot to know what was in that type. Would he dare—

I looked hard at him. Was it imagination, or did I see a devil proper thro' the—



"Lo, Crocker," said Hind, sprawlin' on the bed. "This is the guy th' got Mulvaney." Crocker scowled the sight. "It'll take you a lot explainin' to get away with this! he roared.

These cold, intellectual eyes? I got the idea, in his relaxed way, he was tauntin' me, givin' me the horse laugh. Well, we'd see.

I found Orange in his room. He looked startled, like I'd caught him at something.

"I want a word with you, Orange. I ain't usin' any threats, but if you don't answer me prompt an' truthful—well, it's gonna be just too bad."

"So you ain't usin' any threats?" he mimicked.

"Not I ain't," I said very quiet, "that's just talk'n' you."

"I-I was comin' to look for you," he said in an altered voice. "I found this in my room just now."

He held out a sheet of newspaper. I glanced at it curiously.

Printed in rough capitals were the words:

"YOUR TURN NEXT."

I studied it for a minute, drew my finger across the words. Then I flipped his coat back, jerked out his fountain-pen. While he stared apprehensively, I slowly unrolled the top. Like I thought, the ink was wet. Without passion I let him have the back of my hand on his face.

"You got one helluva crust to try that on me," I spat at him contemptuously. "You wrote this yourself. What are you trying to do, you young fool? I couldn't beat your brains out with a feather. Are you too dumb to know this is no time for play-acting? Lemme tell you something, in 15 year turn next, unless I can prevent it. All here you are, gettin' under my feet at every move."

I saw that get under his skin, so I didn't give him time to get his composure back, but talked fast.

He looked down, hesitated.

"To tell you the truth, I'm not clear. In any case, I might never have produced it if you hadn't come burstin' in like that. I thought maybe you suspected me, and if I showed you a note like that, it would divert suspicion from me. Sounds foolish enough now, but—well, there you are."

"You wanna read a book some time," I grunted dispassionately, then, more brashly, demanded: "You laid me cold in the garden, Wigg?"

"So you knew it was me all the time?" he muttered, eyes wide uncertainly. I nodded sharply, waited.

"Well," he began slowly, "I was afraid you might jump to conclusions—"

He stopped.

"You were afraid I'd meet up with a guy called Hagan, an' maybe check some trash out of him. That's it?"

I thought his eyes would fall out.

"You know about—HIMI?"

"Oh, I get around. What I want to know is your business with a thing like that. P'r'ntance, why were you givin' him money? You better talk fast an' talk straight, kid, on account them gents on a street, see? It could all add up to something mighty undesirable, if you catch on."

He nodded thoughtfully.

"I can quite see that. Yet it's all so simple. Hagan was—in my book—began."



"The way you've talked an' behaved, I'd be justified in believin' you are the murderer. At that, maybe you are, only I can't see you with either the nerve or the brain. You're a small-timer, in any man's language. That's how I have you figured, son, whether you like it or not."

"All right, all right," he agreed humbly. "I'm an atomus as you is see this cleared up."

"You oughta be," I said dryly. "Now, are you ready to talk?"

He nodded.

"That's better. You realize I only wanna be sure that Greenham is my man?"

"Greenham?" he echoed incredulously.

"Who else? Even you couldn't figure that out. Before I go any further," I asked carefully, "tell me why you wrote that note to yourself?"

That's how I met him. Well, when it began to look like someone was set to wipe us out, I got to thinkin' how it would be a good idea to have the house outside watched—sort of bodyguard, y'know. Oh, not for myself, because no matter what you think, I don't care that easy. But there were the girls to think of, an', well, Hagan, seemed as good a bet as anyone, so I hired him."

Pretty feeble story? Well, maybe. But I Hagan I know when a guy's tellin' the truth, an' I believed it, an' he heaved a mighty sigh of relief.

"But, boy," I couldn't help addin', "you took an awful chance when you laid that blank-book on my door."

So it was Greenham, like I'd thought. Well, he was one baby I couldn't outguess. "Way out of my class. I was three matches'

with him, anyway. I'd never get enough on him to have him arrested, no'mind convicted. It was his brain against my gun, an', boy, there's a lot to be said for a good gun."

I was goin' to play for a show-down. I'd get Ryan an' the doc face to face, then if I couldn't handle one or other into jail—well, I must be on the side. I didn't even give a thought to what would happen if I was wrong about Ryan bein' Greenham's man in this. Big shot as Ryan was, he could be bought. Besides, who knew what he was hatchin' in that crafty head of his? If Greenham got to handle all them millions, I guessed he'd had Mr. Ryan kinda nearer in on him.

WAS IT BUNDS?

THE doctor looked surprised when I asked him if he could accompany me up to town. I could see he didn't take too kindly to the idea. You could almost see him set himself what his stupid idea was up to. He looked, sayin' with every sign of reassurance:

"So you really ARE leaving—er, Mr. Him?"

"Well, doctor, it's this way. I got a job that's right up your alley, an' it has to be done at once. Sure, as you see so anxious to help—I thought he blinged quick at that—I'm tellin' you to come with me now!"

He saw it would seem strange if he held out, so he agreed with a show of warmth.

"Of course, you can rely on me. Only it does seem a pity this job of yours can't be done here."

"It can't," I said shortly, "not unless you got a whole laboratory in your grip."

Loose joined in, with the news that the coroner had phoned he'd be delayed further on another case. That was annoyin', an' I'd hoped to see him any minute. However, seem' as the bank sheriff couldn't be trusted to give him my note, I entrusted it to Louise. Told her it was important. I could see she was sure at me for proposin' to desert her, but I could hardly explain everything, so I just explained nothing.

The sheriff left his post by the death-room when he smelted the coffee. He joined us unasked, takin' his coffee an' a mountain of sandwiches over to a corner like a dog does a bone. For a minute he was content to eat an' talk, then, seem' a long, crooked finger at me, he talked in.

"Young feller, it ain't everybody Sheriff Tring warns honest. You don't leave here without my permission."

"That's fine," I said. "Course, I have that, ol' timer!"

I played silently with my gun-belt, suddenly it was in my hand, just as quick it vanished.

The old timer damn didn't realize I was kickin' him. His eyes popped like he didn't believe them.

"I'd think it over," he stammered hastily, an' in short embarrassment, buried his face in his coffee.

On the way to town I gave Greenham the glass splinters from the death-room.

"You those for poison an'?" I told him. I spoke casual, like I was sayin' "how you bin," but I watched him close in the rear mirror.

"Poison gas?" he repeated thoughtfully, his brow like a wash-board. "Did you say poison gas?"

"Neither else but."

But you ridiculed the idea of a gas bomb? He looked at me in a concerned but professional way, as if I might be a candidate for the monkey-house. "Re-

"Here, this glass came from a light bulb." He seemed so genuinely out of his depth that it was comic. They could this baby get—or was I all well? I pushed my chair aside.

"Sure it came from a lamp, doc. But that lamp had been turned into a bomb by the introduction of some liquid. That can be done under a vacuum by a smart chemist, without destroying the glass. Then when the lamp has been lit some time the heat vaporized the stuff inside, blew the glass air—poof, the wick's done."

"So?" he murmured, as to himself, then again. "So?"

"That was all, but there was more of deadly threat in that softly spoken word than if he held a gun at my head.

There was a long silence after that, as from time to time I peered at my companion in the glass. He hardly ever moved, just sat hunched in his corner, with his head pulled in like a tortoise, eyes closed. He'd agree a lot to know what was going on behind that dead-pane of his.

"Funny thing about young Grayson," I mused, half to myself. He kept his eyes closed, but I saw his ears were coated. "He was a bit too smart with his master theory. Then there's that poor Hopson, as crooked as they come, contacts him at night an' gets his money from him."

The other's eyes opened slowly. "Grange?" he muttered, like the name was new to him. There: "You don't seem to have been waitin' your time." He pondered a second. "Maybe you know he's an amateur chemist, too?"

I laughed shortly, like I'd learned someone that played me. "Which I hate—the doc was milder."

"You don't see?" I cried. "Now that adds up! He's in debt all round—means his sometime mighty important made him derry up to Hopson. Anyway, I don't like the doc."

I changed the subject. "How long will it take you to find out if there was anything in that lamp?"

"It may take a few minutes or a few hours. You see, there's hundreds of bottles, lots I could do, so I've a million of working thro' them till I get brown reactions on some poison gas, if indeed, one is present at all."

"Of course, there would be enough left on these apparatus to give the reactions?" he asked.

"The most minute quantity is sufficient," he assured me. "You may take it if I find no indications of liquid gas, none was ever present."

That was what I wanted to hear. He continued speaking.

"Of course, the larger the quantity I have to make my tests with the easier and easier the work. I suppose you gave me all the glass you found?"

"His voice was casual, but somehow I got the impression he hung on my reply.

"You can gamble on that," I lied smiling, as though he gave a little sign of relief.

As that I was feeling rather myself, I felt I could get this bird to pay a surprise visit with me to Mr. Barkowicz—Chief Constable Ryan, as they call it. I couldn't get there two to give the show away one way or another—well, I'd go with my old job on the Force back.

I dropped him at his office.

"You'll have that report for me tomorrow, sure?"

He nodded briefly, as I drove off.

But not far. It wasn't my idea to give that lad any chance for more monkey business. If he had tipped Ryan to have

me estimated before, as I was morally certain he had, he might still think it a good idea, now? So I was sticking as close to him as a dog's flesh. I parked round the corner an' went to an eating house I'd spotted opposite his office. Taking a seat that overlooked the street, I ordered a thick steak. About midnight Grayson's lights went. I hung about a little to make sure he'd gone to bed and was out of mischief.

Late as it was when I reached my rooms, I gave the landlady residence a tickle, asked for Miss Louise. I got quite a kick at the welcome in her soft tones. Briefly she told me the customer had come and gone. He'd left word for me to ring him around midnight. That was all right—could only explain what I knew already, that she got an electric shock.

I rang off—I was eager to hear what Dr. Fawcett had to tell me. He told me plenty.

"Oh, by the way, I had a look at these bits of glass you left. Showed traces of hydrocyanic acid. What's that? No, I won't spell it—you gotta dictionary. Is it poison? Well, you saw what it did to Annie May, an' no trouble at all. Sure I'm sure. The autopsy'll bear me out."

"Thanks a million, doc, you bin a real pal. See ya in the morgue," as I pressed the receiver before he could reply.

I got a cigar going an' threw myself into a chair. I could see some sleep all right but I had to make up my mind what my next move was to be, an' the next again. For ten minutes I think I kept dilly, but what the heck, it was no use. I said before, whenever an' planner ain't my strongest suit, no more's a bull cight's'n. I gotta have action. I got up an' poured myself a stiff one. Why wait till tomorrow? I wouldn't sleep none to-night, anyway, so why not keep two other eggs awake as well? Gave a lad like Grayson another twelve hours, an' he'll think up more devices than a carpenter has toes. Besides, maybe I only thought he went to bed. Houses have back doors. In a sudden mood I grabbed my hat an' high-tailed for my car.

The doctor's place was in darkness. Somehow I looked forbidding, menacing. I pounded the door, rang the bell. A cop looked on the other side of the deserted street, stood awfully like a stick as he prepared to enjoy himself. I hammered louder. Suddenly a light appeared in the window over the door. In a second a head on the end of a screwy neck stuck out.

"Hey, you!" an angry voice squeaked. "What are you tryin' to do—beat the door down?"

"I want to see Dr. Greenleaf," I called up.

"What? At this hour?"

"I don't know best week, brother," I shouted impudently.

"You don't sound like one of our patients, mister. Anyway, doctor's out—left an hour ago."

"Did he say where he could be found, or when he'd be back?"

"No. If you're sick there's a doctor in the next block."

The head vanished like someone pulled it back on a string. So that was that! I waited a half-minute (couldn't open) for a nickel-plated dumb-bell. Looked like I'd played my hand badly an' sighed over the old doc. "Word of just plainin' a trace word of suspicion in his mind. I climbed slowly into my hot, squinted at the clock. Five after one. I didn't hafta count the stars to know that everything depended on my next move. If Greenleaf

was on his way to the Lane place—was that was my hunch—the odds'd get there till after I am. It was a crack he hadn't suddenly remembered a date. Hooray. He was getting panicky, if hardly desperate, an' he had urgent business to attend to. The question was, what? The possibilities brought a trickle of sweat over my skin.

I'd have to call on Ryan at once, an' without Greenleaf's consent. How I'd pleased the two whole science had depended on getting them two face to face. After I'd pushed Ryan around a bit, I figured he'd talk, then I'd take after my medical friend like a hot red hell. You might say why not him—give Ryan a miss—make the other talk? Or, why bother to have him talk at all? Sure, sure, I know it would be easier to call him an' give him the works. But they's ethics, even in killing, see? I was morally certain he was a multiple murderer; but I had to have proof before I turned the heat on him.

All this wasn't talkin' no numbers, so I let in the clutch an' returned to my rooms. I'd a thing or two to do there before beauty's Mister Ryan. First off I saw that my armoire was right. No, I wasn't nervous, just cautious, on account you bin longer that way. Only a guy harkin' trouble walked uninvited into G. K.'s private office at this hour. He ran the toughest open-house in town, an' for me specially they was no welcome on the mat. There, just to name it, I put down on paper what I knew about all these killings. No need for all my work before myself even if I did walk into a lead store.

I'd only finished when the door buzzer started, an' kept on going like somebody was hammerin' on the bellows. I hung open the door. Riley, the cop on the beat, stood there with a low face.

"Sorry to trouble you, Mr. Head, but is that your floor out in front?"

I nodded curtly.

"Well, it's slowly's someone in the back of it," he told me slowly, a funny look in his eye.

"What third? I befond, "you seen a man in a car over?"

"Not like this one, I ain't!"

I coded down a bit. This was beginnin' to smell to me.

"No?" I asked matter, "what's different about this one?"

"He's dead, that's what!" Added innocently, "Suicide."

That was plenty. I was down the stairs like a hundred devils was after me. It was dark inside the car. I flashed my torch. It played on a dead hand holdin' a gun, up to a gleamly white face.

The torch nearly dropped from my fingers, an' for a minute I could only gape stupidly. I jumped a yard when at my elbow Riley said:

"Know him, Mr. Head? There was a touch of suspicion in the tone. I pushed my hot back in puzzled comprehension.

"I can tell you who he is," I told him, "but I sure didn't know him, not any." An' meant it. I'd only thought I knew him. Why, I'd a said Greenleaf was no more the lad to put a gun to his head than I was. Still, as I already said, you can't tell about the crazy ones. But this case had sure blown up in my face. I'd been running in circles so long I was dizzy. Maybe I could take this hot job as a deliberate kind's compromise. His admission, an' acknowledgment I'd a got him any time now. But I still didn't like it. I felt like a guy that about busts a blood-vessel to catch a train, then finds it don't start for an hour.

Well, there were still some loose threads,

so I might as well look in on Ryan as anything. Apart from anything I might expect with him, he had to be told not to let any more bad boys on me. Yes, I certainly owed that fellow not a visit.

I turned to Riley:
"You're playin' in luck," I told him. "Fisher's this body an' all!"
He looked interested, muttered "Yeah?"
"Yeah. You know Lieutenant Crowley, of course? That'll mean a lot to him—a whole lot, see? Now, if you want to be smart, you'll get into this fiver an' go straight to him."

The cop scratched his head, looked doubtful.

"You wouldn't kid me?" he asked.
I shrugged indifferently.
"Of course, if you ain't the ambitious kind. I guess at that maybe I better go myself. Boy, if I was sold in unknown—what a chance!"

Four Riley fell. It was a kinda dirty trick, maybe, but, oh, what would I give to see Crowley's face when this slaps with him up with a stiff on his man? Course, I'd hafta make it right for Riley afterwards.

He climbed in behind the wheel.
"I shouldn't oughta leave my beat," he grumbled, "but I'll take a chance!"

I leaned over the side, shouted above the whirring starter:

"This is important. Tell Crowley he'll find me at Ryan's place. You won't forget Ryan's place?"

He nodded, though he looked surprised, like he wasn't sure if he heard right.

On second thoughts I climbed in beside him.

"You can drop me a block from Ryan's; it ain't much off your way."

When he dropped me I reminded him again of my message to the lieutenant. You see, I don't like to take chances if I don't have 'em. I knew I could get in to Ryan's, alone; but the only way I'd come out alone would be fool fast. So I had to have help. I figured you couldn't hold Crowley back when he got my message, he'd be that happen' fast. I'd take him an hour at least to come, an' I hoped to be ready to leave then.

THE CLEAN UP.

LIKE all these joints, Ryan's place made a great show of being that careful who they let in. That was an account the customers get a big thrill outa thinkin' how they were kept real sure-deevit, breakin' the law an' all that. Even so, while maybe almost anybody with dough could be allowed to part with it in the front rooms, they was places at the back that was strictly tight. From the outside the place looked deserted, just a dingy, brown-stone house in a lousy neighborhood that had been a swell home in the Civil war. The entrance was in the basement. A mean-looking gent played peek-a-boo a hole in the door. I fumbled my passport, a handful of greenbacks. The door opened an' I walked into a dingy, threshold hall. The housekeeper eyed me with disfavor—even he could see I was no pretty boy out for a lark.

"What do you want?" he demanded in a throaty, suspicious voice.
"I got a date with the boss," I said stably.

Without takin' his eyes off me, he spit out of the corner of his mouth:

"Jacko!" he bawled.
A huge black bouncer unfolded himself

from a chair in the corner an' shuffled forward, yeoman:

"This guy says he's to see the boss," he was told.

I didn't like that, but said nothin' an' followed the tired black. He led me to a door thro' which music was seeping, an' went right in without once lookin' to see if I was followin'. I was in a large, beautifully-fitted room. All round the walls were tiny tables with men an' women sittin' at them. Many were in evening-dress. There was a little band in sight, but judgin' from the bottles an' glasses every' was only a side-line. About half a dozen couples strolled round a dance



Louis Berger was the only man who stood between Hind and Ryan, the big stool, but he didn't stand there long.

floor the size of a postage stamp, the men wrapped round barstools that seemed to have been interrupted in the middle of dressin'. My guide made for a horse-shoe bar at the far end. He spoke to the broker, an' an eye in a white coat that didn't bristle his broken nose an' outside, nasty eyes. The major nodded away, the barman went on polishin' glasses while he looked me over disapprovingly. At last he spoke:

"Do you want to see the boss, huh?"
"Something like that."

He considered this for a minute, then nodded:

"You'll hafta get Louis' okay fast."

Louis Berger was a sorta third hand to Ryan. Some jobs was asked enough to say he packed about all the brains they had between them. I'd always neglected this disbarred lawyer would be a bigger stool than Ryan but for one thing—his head'n' never made over the first payment on guns. At that he was as dangerous as they come. It was a ditch if he seen me first, I'd never get near his boss, on account he had good reason to know me.

I'd have to play careful, so actin' disguised, I headed:

"For cryin' out loud, what is this? Some delectable presentation? The chief sends for me an' I'm passed from one guy to another like a bad dollar."

A couple plug-uglies disguised as waiters followed up an' stood behind me. I watched warily in the bar mirror. The barman polished heavily for a minute, then, without a word, lifted a flap in the bar at the same time, indicatin' a customer door behind him. I passed thro' jaunty, clearin' the door carefully after me. Only then did I draw a breath of relief.

I was in a biggish room that could pass for a meeting place, with hangin', soft seats, lounge chairs. A huge safe looked out of place in one corner. There was a door at the far end, an' I made for it. Before I reached it, it opened an' a man entered. Hardly glancin' at me, he strode towards the safe. My luck was out—I was Berger!

Suddenly he stopped like he hit a wall. He'd all at once realized who the big guy standin' there was. He turned slowly, looked me full in the eye, then he looked back to his safe. His lips twitched, he waited for me to speak but I reckoned I'd got it up to him, an' stared silently.

"Berger?" he said, this punk was so scared he didn't dare breathe in case I mistake the movement. He'd had any doubts about Ryan havin' put me on the spot, this had'a write my words, heashed them. He saw thought I'd called for the rent!

"Lo, Hind," he managed at last, with a pained attempt at indifference. "Long time no see you. Lookin' for someone?"

"Yeah," I answered, wonderin' how to get rid of him. "Is your boss in there?"

"Maybe," he admitted, a crafty look comin' into his eye, "but he's busy. Ain't nothin' to-night. In fact, if I was you, I'd go anywhere else but in there."

He took all the threat out of the words with a watery smile, like he meant friendly advice.

"An' if I was you," I told him grimly, "I wouldn't try to stop nobody, savvy?"

He blinked rapidly.

"Well, there's no need to be that way," he consoled. "I was only tellin' you."

He had been makin' over to a little table on which lay some glasses an' a cigarette. Carelessly he picked up the box.

"Smoke?" he invited, an' when I shook my head, he shrugged an' made to lay the box down.

It was nearly too late when I realized that the smart had almost to get it square on an alarm button. Hearty, but not quite. He was maybe a half-inch off that bell-push when my knuckles took him under the ribs. He folded over slowly, placed the back of his skull just right for my gun barrel. I caught him as he fell, an' he was that limp in my arms. I thought I'd killed him. But, no, I could feel his heart beatin' steady. Well, he'd be out for a long time, for that was no love job, so I pushed him onto a table under a chair. I like to keep things tidy.

On the other side of the door Louis had entered was a short passage. I cut-down along to another door. There was a notice on it:

"PRIVATE.
KEEP OUT."

That was Ryan all right—he believed in tellin' 'em.

I listened for a minute. Did I hear a murmur of voices? I decided I didn't, so, after softly twistin' the knob, I gave the door a mighty push. I meant to be inside that quick I'd leave my shadow

gassin'—but no dice! I hadn't reckoned on a curtain on the other side of the door. Still, if it bothered me, it also prevented Ryan from recognizing me till it was too late.

He was behind a bar desk the size of a billiard-table. He made an instinctive movement, but froze in the middle of it; like Homer, he knew my hand wasn't in my pocket for warmth.

I staved him down. He was a kinda sprog-lookin' egg, possibly yet powerful, an' the way his tailor had his screwy snagged was his was nobody's business. If only some colour-blind guy hadn't chose the cloth. The room was furnished respectably, it could be a breakin' where a mitz business was done on the side. Or again, you could call it an office, with trimmin's thrown in for a boss who liked relaxation—a lot of it.

If I said Mister Gustav Ryan looked surprised, that wouldn't be the half of it. He'd practiced a lifetime to earn the title "Fokky-daw" Gus, but this was one time his sandy nose widened, and his hairless eyebrows chased waves of wrinkles into the roots of his thin hair. But I wasn't kiddin' myself. This rat was on his home ground—I didn't scare him. He was as tricky an' dangerous as a rattler.

"Hoody?" I greeted him. "Hase I didn't break up nobody?"

I gave the room another look over, thinkin' again of the veins I'd imagined. He was skate all right. Besides, the only door was the one I'd used, so nobody had slipped out while I was hang in the curtain.

"This room is marked private." He was complete master again, an' his voice sounded harsh an' insolent. "You mean knockin' with a feather?"

I had a grin at that one, but of course, only Louie an' me could see the joke.

"I knocked," I assured him. "Maybe I got the wrong door."

He made an impatient sound.

"Skip it," he said nastily. "Geein' you're here for a very short time, state your business as short as you can."

"Fast off, then." I came back, "crawled out from behind that coffee an' oil where I can see you good."

He dragged but copped without a word. To tell the truth I didn't like the way he was actin'—he was altogether too sure of himself. I expect a little more in a tone I hold a gun on. I parked on the end of the desk, one leg danglin'.

"Now you can relax. Maybe you'd be more comfortable if you was to chomp your hands over your tummy. That's better. Be sure you don't move them, 'cause I'd hate to have to pin 'em there with a slug."

"That red puts about a foot on your height, don't it?" he sneered. "I don't know how you got in here, but I DO know how you'll go out. Maybe you never thought of that?"

"That's my personal headache," I told him confidently, hopin' head that Crooksey didn't fall on. I shook my head respectably. "You ain't very polite is a guy you want for."

"MIS—sent for YOU? You're crazy!"

"Have you sent for me. Any gun that imports a couple cheap slates to trim me is simply hoggin' me to look him up, see?"

"Hell!" he spat out in disgust. "You ain't dumb enough to think it was me hired Bartlett's gun—!" He stopped suddenly as I give him the laugh. I could see in his sandy eyes he knew he'd tipped his hand.

You see, the talkin' off of Tim an' his partner had been credited to the police. Not even the smart men-foolards knew any

different, so the only one that could know outside of Crooksey an' me was the man who handled their play—except of course, Greenlow, who wasn't talkin' any more.

Well, that was about the best knee-end landed in. I was sure relieved to prove my guess there had hit the bull on account I seemed to have been off the target on too many other things in this case.

All that was left to do now was to move faster on this side before me that I'd be aird off-ended if any more of his gunmen threw lead in my direction. "Course, I'd admire to give him the facts he deserved, but where would that take me? I couldn't killed him, an' maybe got a vote of thanks from the city, but if I lost him, an' like as not he'd have the law on me, so, with his pull, he could make a little thing like an smash change stick. That's a laugh if you like!"

Best he'd betrayed himself, Ryan didn't shift any more. He wasn't head man of a tough bunch of mameys for nothin', an' besides, he was smart enough to know I could prove not a thing. He showed his bridge-work in a vicious grin.

"Well, punk," he jerked, "I don't aim to admit of derry nothin' to you. Hell, you ain't even the law, you're just another dim-wit with a gun, thassat."

"No," I agreed thoughtfully, "you don't hafta admit nothin', but by the same token I don't hafta prove nothin', see? An' I'mma tell you somethin'. If any of them Lane girls had his heart, right now you'd be on a slab—maybe the one next to Greenlow's."

He looked puzzled.

"Greenlow? Who's Greenlow?"

"Surely you ain't forgot old Doc Greenlow already? An' him, only dead an hour. That's what I call gratitude!"

The fat body opposite heaved with laughter. I stared at him hard. If this guy wasn't genuinely amazed, he acted swell.

"You mean that of ranny-goo—er, ee, medical advice? An' so you give HIM the heart?" He copped again with laughter. "Mind," he gasped, "you—you ain't just good, you're grand!"

"Have a good laugh," I told him grand. "Maybe you'll like it even better when I tell you be send me the job of bumpin' him off. By the way, how much did he pay you for all them Lane killin's?"

He went into a fresh bout of laughter. I couldn't stand it no longer, so I let my swingin' foot sink into his soft shlo-dum. He stopped heavin' mabber, but set an explosive gasp like a burst balloon. His face darkened angrily. Not that he was hurt much. It was a long time since anyone had booted him, an' he'd grew to such a big size it was his dignity was hurt most. He'd never imagine it. Then he began an horseback get that way.

When he could speak, he said quietly:

"I'm rememberin' that, you a cheap killer."

I let him have it again, remarked pleasantly:

"That ought make it twice as easy to remember." I don't like to be called names.

"So you got it all figured out, huh? Greenlow is the master-mind that buys murders like you'd buy a hamburger? An' you're the head-egg parson, hee—that bounds him down as there's no escape, an' he up an' sublets? Boy, you big smart. What I mean you sure got some-

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I tried to keep my face straight. Eley's downward features reproached me over his chair's shoulder, but the other burrows built in the background were grinning like kids. Croakley was popular with them all right, but he sure was funny when he went lay-wire. At that he was one good egg—see how he came running when he learned I was at Eley's? He knew darned well I'd be in a jam in that dump.

I took him aside.
"It ain't so bad as that, Croakley," I told him. "Did the police doctor see that poor gent in my car?"

He snorted.
"Of course not—that can wait. I got some consideration for people. I don't hand 'em outa bed for nothing."

"Well, when he does examine him, he'll tell you that was no suicide, see? Dr. Greenham was knocked off, see? he's a big noise in this town, got important friends. What I mean, questions is gonna be asked. You know. What's the police doctor? Has anyone seen our homicide squad? Am I right?"

Croakley squirmed. As head of the squad he was fair game for the news-bounds. He looked interested.

"Here's the answer," I waved at the bodies on the floor. "That young man there was the worst one-man crime wave that ever hit this town. Compared to him, our other friends' Gals was a piker."

"The lieutenant didn't seem convinced. 'You don't say?' he sneered. 'Why, man, you're nuts. I know that boy. He belongs to one of the best families in the state. If your single eye is him, you'd better start running' right now."

"That's what YOU think," I cracked. With a dramatic flourish I produced something I'd fished from Orange just at the cage scene. It was a diary. I'd only had time to peek at it, but I'd seen enough to know it was dynamic. There was plenty on the one page I skinned to have hang Orange a dozen times.

Maybe it didn't seem rational for a guy to write stuff like that in a diary, but I seem to spy things before. Maybe it's plain sanity makes 'em do it; or it could be a sane investigation urge to get them things off their minds. But why go into diary? I ain't no peech-what-you-call-it, an' their motives ain't no never-again of mine, see?

Croakley thumbed a page or two. In a minute he began to be indifferent. His eyes popped like a bird with galore. Several times he give a quick glance at Orange, as if to make sure he wasn't drowsin'. After a bit he put the book carefully in his pocket, turned to me.

"You're sure you lucky guessin', Hind. This kinda lets you out." He gave me a winky smile, went on: "When this is read in court, you musta listen careful. They'll bite you wouldn't want to miss, see? About a dick he labels 'C.H.' That wouldn't be you, by any chance? Well, he's fair enough—admits he nearly let down on account he overheard this dick, thinkin' he was only HALL-witted." He chuckled.

I looked at Croakley, then at the still figure on the floor.

"We'll," I shrugged, "what if he was smart? What did it get him?"

"An' that's what I always say—you gotta be awful quick to beat a dog."

THE END.

(Why not let the Editor have your opinion of this story? Address your letters to The Editor, The THRILLER Library, The Fiction House, Patterington Street, London, E.C.4. Miscellaneous letters to Fiction will be dealt with at next month's grand long complete story and Walter Tappin's new serial.)

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RULES: The First Prize awarded to the correct word will be £50.00. The 2nd Prize will be £25.00. There will be 12 other prizes of £10.00 each. All prizes will be sent by air mail. The contest will be open to all persons who are over 16 years of age and who are British subjects or who are domiciled in Great Britain. The contest will be open to all persons who are over 16 years of age and who are British subjects or who are domiciled in Great Britain. The contest will be open to all persons who are over 16 years of age and who are British subjects or who are domiciled in Great Britain.

"Ins and Outs" No. 1

1. ALL THE WORLD KNOWS A . . .	OVER	6	L	L	L	L	L
2. MADE BY HAND	HANDLED	7					
3. SMOOTH	SPRIT	5					
4. IT'S NOT EARLY BUT QUICK	TRUTH	6					
5. SOMEWHERE FOUND IN THE LABORER	ICE	3					
6. HARDLY FOUND	CREACK	6					
7. WHAT EXPLOSIVE T. NOT ORIGINALLY	LIGHT	5					
8. TO OPEN	BREACH	6					
9. PRESIDENT OF THE SPADY DOCK	LAN	3					
10. GENTLE PLEASER CAN BE OCCASIONALLY	REPLENT	7					
11. VERY IMPORTANT OF THEM	PANS	4					
12. ATTRACTIVE NAME OF WEDNESDAY	PEARKS	6					

In entering this contest, I agree to accept the printed conditions and awards as they stand and signify binding.

Name:

Address:

..... T

ATTACH 6d. in stamps for each attempt made, or a 6d. P.O. or stamp for FIVE attempts.

Post Your Entry Promptly! Closing: April 20th.

The World's Cleverest Crime-fighter is on the Trail of 'Davy Jones'

RIVER of DEATH



THE GIRL IN THE CAR.

"DAVY JONES" was a name to inspire terror on the Thames. It was the only name by which the man who controlled the biggest gang of river pirates was known. Under the command of his lieutenant, named PIKE, he sent a party to raid the ss *Equator*, but a small-time crook, SAILOR MARCO, was already there. The two gangs slashed. Pike's men killed all of Marco's men except two—Marco and one other. They escaped, and Marco had recognized Pike. But the police arrested one, and he turned King's Evidence, telling them that Marco could be found on the *Woodchuck Ferry* that night. Another to end the reign of terror on the river, the police, under INSPECTOR JOE CARTON, hastened to the ferry to capture Marco, and although no one knew it, another crime-fighter was also there—LAMONT CRANSTON, otherwise known as THE SHADOW.

LAMONT CRANSTON stood, hat in hand, enjoying the breeze that blew across the choppy waters of the Thames.

A parental man, it pleased him that he had reached the ferry in time. He was driving into town from a friend's house in Essex to a business acquaintance in Kent, to attend to some routine investment matters. His sleek *Bentley* was parked on the ferry's vehicle deck. Cranston had hurried up front to enjoy the cool breeze.

Few people noticed Cranston. A millionaire, a world-famous traveler, a big-game hunter, he chose to live quietly and without publicity. His name appeared occasionally in the social and financial pages of the newspapers.

But to-day, as he stood idly near the starting bow of the ferry, Cranston's mind was concerned with crime. Like most of the other ferry passengers, he had been shocked by the newspaper headlines that announced the strange

START NOW THIS
ENTHRALLING
STORY OF THE
SHADOW

By
MAXWELL
GRANT

piracy aboard the *Equator*, and the murder and mutilating scene.

A burning glint appeared in the depths of his deepest eyes. For an instant another—brow—man was revealed behind the placid exterior of Lamont Cranston. Then that grin, briefly exposed personality vanished.

Cranston preferred it to be that way. It would hardly do for the ferry passengers to realize that The Shadow was standing at their very elbows.

Lamont Cranston was The Shadow! Crime-fighter extraordinary! Years before, he had not only suffered at the hands of crooks, but his only son had been lured into the underworld by them. He he fought a ceaseless war on crime, hoping all the time to gain news of his lost son.

It was a secret that no one suspected—not even Police Commissioner Weston. Inspector Joe Carton had his suspicions, perhaps, but he never proved them. Both Weston and Carton were personal friends of Cranston.

Lamont Cranston continued to think about the unknown criminal who chose to call himself Davy Jones. Suddenly, however, his attention was diverted swiftly to something closer at hand.

Out of the corner of his eye he had seen a ferry passenger whose face interested him. The man was Sailor Marco. Cranston didn't know that, but he divined that the fellow was a crook. Furtive terror seemed to flick in his body, unpleasant eyes.

The Shadow's gaze turned towards an amazingly pretty girl. She was watching the crook that Cranston had noticed a moment earlier. Cranston was unable to tell whether a secret signal passed between them. Presently the man melted among the crowd of passengers. The girl walked slowly to the rear of the ferry.

Cranston wondered if the pair were planning to meet unobserved at the deserted stern of the boat. He waited

while. Then he began to move slowly amongst the cars on the lower deck.

He had barely taken three steps when a shrill cry roused him to action. It was the terrified scream of a woman. It came from the rear deck where the pretty girl had headed.

She was standing alone when Cranston saw her. He hung back, allowed other passengers to run to her aid. Her body was quivering with fright. There was a loud thump on her bare forehead, where someone had dashed brutally at her. There was no sign of the thing with the beady eyes.

The girl offered a hysterical explanation for her screams. A man had leaped her. When she had reacted it, he had struck her. He had fled through the woman's cabin. She described her assailant. He was not the man Cranston had noticed up front. Either that, or the girl was lying.

A search of the woman's cabin failed to find the man. The cabin itself was deserted.

Cranston, continuing quietly about the charming ferry-boat, made a most interesting discovery. The man was not the only person missing on the boat. The beady-eyed crook, whom Cranston had momentarily lost sight of, was also no longer to be found!

However, Cranston had no time to pursue the investigation further. The ferry had already slackened speed to edge alongside its pier. It struck with a bang and was made fast. Passengers began to leave.

But they were halted by a strange sight. A squad of plain-clothes detectives were leaping aboard the moored ferry. Cranston recognized in the very forefront of the detectives the darkly grim visage of Inspector Joe Carton.

Joe knew Cranston, but he merely nodded. Under his orders, the startled ferry passengers were herded together. Stared police eyes scanned every male face. The man they were searching for was not among them.

Carton muttered a low-toned oath of disappointment. He permitted the passengers to leave the boat.

Cranston, however, did not depart. He had drifted towards the spot where his car was parked farther back. He smiled and advanced, as he saw Carton beckoning to him.

"Hello, Mr. Cranston! Sorry to annoy you with that quick passenger search, but we're here to pick up a guy who was supposed to be on this trip of the ferry. Did you happen to see a passenger who looked like this?"

He showed Cranston a photo. It was a picture of the thing with the beady eyes. Cranston's reply didn't reveal the station in his mind. He sounded politely puzzled.

"Of course! I remember him! Sailor Marco, eh? And you say he's a criminal? He was on the ferry, up-ferried with the rest of us. He disappeared when we began to approach the pier. A rather queer incident happened, as a matter of fact."

OLD SI AND YOUNG JED



THE NEW SHERIFF.

IT was the gray light of morning when they got back to Sawback, and the whole town was out, while the stars and the moon were shining with light. Someone had gone on ahead with the news that Patch Riley was taken, and the town that had gone in fear of him was rejoicing. They'd soon break up his gang now they'd got rid of the leader.

This was Eph Mackay's hour. The sheriff rode in front with his chest thrust out and his sheriff's star gleaming. His round red face beamed with pride. He left the posse to come along with what he believed to be Patch Riley. They'd picked up a wagon on the outskirts of the town, and they'd laid the body on it, and now it was drawn into the town and up to the sheriff's office with the posse riding on either side of it. Eph Mackay got front.

The crowd parted, cheering, as the procession rode up Main Street.

"Good old Eph!"

"You feed him all right, sheriff!"

The cheers ceased, and they rode right up to the porch outside the sheriff's place. The sheriff dismounted there, and stood up on the wagon so that he could acknowledge the cheers comfortably.

"You can sleep easy in your beds to-night, folks of Sawback," he said. "I went after that darn cowardly rascal and I got him, same as I promised! I had some good boys with me, but I guess they weren't needed, for—"

He broke off. Someone was prying forward, had disturbed the blanket that had been laid over the dead man. Someone with a bald head and three-looking chin-whiskers. Eph Mackay gave a gasp, and bent forward to have a good look.

"Sufficing out-fish!" he gasped. "If it ain't Silas Varley! Boy, old 'un, they reckoned you was dead, killed by Patch Riley!"

"Sure I'm dead," asserted Old Si. "But I took a notion to see the guy that killed me. I want to look at Patch Riley's corpse, because judging by them bet, there's something darn queer about this here body!"

Very as a youngster, he jumped up on the berry and dived back the blanket. He stared down suspiciously, and suddenly

twisted away the black patch that covered one eye.

"Same as I thought!" Silas Varley snarled. "You ain't got Patch Riley at all! You've plugged my smooth-tongued, double-crossing nephew, and you've done me out of a killing I craved for!"

The crowd was stirred and silent. Someone else clambered up on the wagon, peered at the corpse.

"Durned if the old 'un ain't right! It's Mortimer Stone!"

The sheriff's face was puffed and bewildered. There was an ominous silence, and then someone blazed. Something came from the back of the crowd, something red. A ripe tomato flattened itself on Eph Mackay's chest. There was a yell of laughter, and some more vegetables came. Eph ducked, and an egg exploded on the wall behind him.

"Where's the tough guy sheriff who shot it out with Patch Riley?"

"Take his badge off him!" someone yelled.

It was a big, raw-boned cowboy who twitched the badge of Eph Mackay's shirt and held it high.

"Any offers for the job of sheriff?" he demanded.

It was Old Si who stepped forward, his thin white hair fluttering in the breeze.

"Give me that badge!" he croaked. "I got a notion that if anyone's gonna get Patch Riley it had better be me!"

Someone pinned the badge on him. There was a yelling, laughing crowd around the old man, pumping at his hand, slapping him on the back. He looked down, saw that young Jed had been hauled up close beside him. He dropped his hand on his grandson's shoulder.

"Here's my new deputy!" he roared.

"Listen, kid, while I'm tending to Patch Riley, you got to get that Boy Bandit, or else—"

THE TEST.

THE sight of old Si, who was believed to be dead, seemed to have stunned the crowd, and those who were near to the

HERE IS THE CLIMAX OF THE STIRRING STORY OF THE MEANEST MAN IN THE WEST AND HIS HUSKY PAL

wagon on which he was standing gazed at him with wide eyes and open mouths, while those at the back, who couldn't see clearly, jolted forward and demanded to know who it was. There was a burst of talk, a surging mass of people around the wagon. Then Boy Miller, the big cowboy who had torn the badge off the sheriff, stepped forward and lifted up his hand and belittled:

"Hold it, folks!"

There was a hush. Boy's voice was terrifying when he raised it like that. Two or three of the cowboys from the same bunch started to shout up to him:

"What's happened, Boy?"

"What's all the trouble?"

Boy waited for a breath, standing there with his hands on his hips.

"The trouble is, folks, that Mr. Eph Mackay, your highly respected sheriff, has pulled a lower, and the corpse he told us belonged to Patch Riley don't belong to Mr. Riley at all. He's been fooled by a black eye-patch and a dirty look. What we've got here is our respected citizen, Mr. Mortimer Stone, and he's permanently and unconsciously dead; but that's something that concerns his relatives more than us. The citizens of Sawback was demanding the corpse of Mr. Patch Riley, and accordingly Patch Riley's in very good health."

There was a snarl of anger from the crowd. It seemed years now that Patch Riley had dominated the town of Sawback and the countryside around and defied the law, and it had sent a wave of hope through the people of Sawback to hear that Patch Riley was dead. They had begun to think the outlaw was above the law. Now it seemed that, after all, he had cheated them again; he'd raid their cattle and keep them from sleeping easy in their beds, just when they'd been cheering because they believed him dead.

"That's Patch Riley's corpse!" someone shouted.

Boy Miller looked grim.

"Sorry to disappoint you, gent," he said. "But it seems we ain't got the pleasure of burying Patch Riley as yet. Take a look at this."

Death seems quickly and frequent in the West, and the consequence is that there is little reverence for the dead. Boy Miller stopped now, took all that was mental of Mortimer Stone by the neck, and jerked him into a sitting position. The crowd could see his white face and closed eyes, the way his head sagged limply on his neck. They could see he was dead; but, what was more important, they could see it wasn't Patch Riley.

"Durn it, that ain't Patch! That's only Mort Stone!"

"Exactly!" agreed Boy. "And our fearless sheriff told an 'ard shot Patch

Riley. It looks as though he's pulled a fat one on us, and that means he ain't fit to maintain law and order in these here parts, and therefore he needs a new sheriff. A sheriff who will go out and get Patch Riley, and bring him back so we can fix him a swell funeral.

Gran'pop had been standing behind him beaming, and now he nodded happily.

"A guy like me," he echoed.

"Excellent!" said Hony. "Like Mr. Silas Varley here, who has kindly volunteered for the job of sheriff of Sawback, with pay and emoluments. What do you say boys? Does he take the sheriff's star, or don't he?"

There was a buzz of discussion among the crowd, and then there was an inter-ruption. Eph Mackay had got his cow-boys back. They'd been standing at the back of the wagon teaming, and now he pushed his way forward, his slung red face glowing with indignation. His rasping voice rang out above the crowd. Eph had the vote of a sportsman, that was what had singled him out for the job of sheriff in the first place. The boys had concluded that anyone who talked as swell as that was bound to make a good sheriff.

"Listen, boys!" the sheriff bellowed. "You can't do this to me! I've been elected sheriff all legal and proper for a period of seven years, and I've only done three years. I been a good sheriff to you, and I've kept all the bars and poker games open, and if one or two cutouts have been wandering around you can't hold that against me, because I ain't never concealed the fact as hold-ups and shootings is illegal, apart from family disputes."

"What about Patch Riley?" someone shouted.

The sheriff looked uneasy.

"Patch Riley?" he said. "Yeah, I've been intending to deal with that guy. I been aware for some time that it's been getting serious about Patch Riley. One or two shootings and killings—well, a guy might do them playful, scarcely meaning what he was about; but Mr. Riley, he's gone too far. I reckon there's as many as a score of nutches on his gun. I've been making arrangements to do something about Patch Riley."

Hony Miller stepped forward, his face scornful.

"Yeah," he growled. "You intended to deal with Patch Riley. You went out last night with a posse to deal with Patch Riley. And what happened? You come back with the corpse of some other guy!"

"I can explain that," spluttered the sheriff.

"Yeah!" drawled Hony. "Well, you'd better explain it to Marcellus Boney. If he says he's satisfied with your explaining I'm willing to listen. But, meanwhile, if you've no objection, I'm in favour of Sawback having a new sheriff. What do you say, boys? Does Sawback want a new sheriff?"

"A new sheriff!" shouted the crowd fervently.

Eph Mackay started, turned pale, and then pulled himself together and stopped forward.

"Sure!" she cried. "A new sheriff! And that's what I feel like, a new man! With you boys backing me—"

Hony Miller regarded him with indignation, and then reached out a long arm and swept him back.

"I guess you're all with me, boys," he said. "What Sawback needs is a new sheriff, and not the same one with his hat turned round. Mr. Mackay here has been a good sheriff in certain directions, although I ain't sure which directions

there might be, but what Sawback needs is a young, lanky guy with a shooting iron and the nerve to use it, the sort of guy who can go out in three three fields and bring back Patch Riley single-handed. A guy like Gran'pop, old Silas Varley!"

Old Silas beamed and stopped forward.

"Folks," he raged, "you certainly have picked yourselves a swell sheriff—"

Eph Mackay stood in front of him, faintly beaming up and down with rage.

"They ain't picked you yet!" he stormed. "I've still got a part of my term to run. After that we got to have an election!"

Hony Miller scouted.

"With you holding the ballot boxes? I guess not. No, boys, I reckon we've got to find another way to pick a sheriff. I vote we turn 'em both out in the hills and pick the one who brings back Patch Riley."

"Oh O.K. with me," grinned Gran'pop. Eph Mackay looked yellow about the gills, but he didn't say anything. He realized that the Sawback boys were at the end of their patience. They'd put up with Patch Riley's apprehensions long enough, and now they wanted the outlaw behind bars, or better still, under the ground. There was a shout of joy from the back of the crowd, a shout that swelled and grew nearer.

"Give the star to the guy that brings in Patch Riley!"

Gran'pop turned and grinned at the unhappy-looking Eph.

"What do you say, Mr. Mackay? We both go out back and hunt for Patch Riley, and the one that brings him back, dead or alive, is elected sheriff!"

Eph Mackay shivered.

"I say it's madness," he whispered. "It's suicide!"

Hony Miller held the sheriff's star high and waited until the surging crowd was still.

"It's all settled, folks," he cried. "Just about now Sawback's got two sheriffs, and they are both going out hunting for Patch Riley. The one that brings him back, dead or alive, gets the sheriffing job permanent."

The shout of delight that went up from the crowd drowned the speech that Eph Mackay had been meaning to make. Sawback didn't want any sheriff who couldn't fix Patch Riley for them.

OLD M'S BARGAIN.

JED VARLEY had some difficulty in finding his Gran'pop. The crowd got excited and surged forward, and a lot of wild cowboys jumped up on the wagon, with the result that Jed seemed to be swallowed up among them. When he got the chance to look round, his Gran'pop had gone.

Jed fought his way through the crowd, looking everywhere for his Gran'pop, but he seemed to have completely disappeared. Jed was almost in despair; he tried to backtrack his way through the crowd in Main Street, when all at once he bumped his bullet head against a fat stomach. There was something familiar about the gasp he heard, with the result that Jed looked up and saw the pain-sweating face of Hickory Dodd.

"Gee, Heck!" he gasped. "It's swell to see you!"

Hickory unhappy rubbed his stomach.

"Swell or not," he grunted. "It ain't so good to feel you. What are you playing at, young Jed?"

"I'm looking for Gran'pop," Jed said breathlessly. "He's going out hunting for Patch Riley, and I want to ride in his posse."

"I just seen your Gran'pop," reported Hickory. "And he was heading for Tom Garner's lunge. And if you ask me, young Jed, you—"

But it seemed Jed hadn't asked him, for he strolled away without hearing what Hickory Dodd had to say. Jed went like a snake for the blacksmith's forge, only to find it deserted. But then he came on Gran'pop, who was lurching among the pile of old bedsteads and rusty bicycles behind the blacksmith's lamp. Gran'pop had just lashed out a very battered-looking bicycle and he was inspecting this with a jaundiced eye.

"Gran'pop!" gasped Jed. "Can I join your posse to hunt for Patch Riley?"

Gran'pop regarded him coolly.

"I ain't taking no posse," he said. "Patch Riley's only one guy, ain't he? And there's one of me, isn't there? Well, I'm fixing to bring in Patch Riley with this!"

He held forward the ancient and rusty bicycle and Jed regarded it reverently.

"Gran'pop," he said slowly, "you can't bring in an outlaw with a bicycle with two fat tyres!"

"Why not?" demanded Gran'pop. "If I takes a horse I've got to load it and water it and rub it down and see it's properly bedded down at night, heverry! If I takes a bicycle I've only got to find it, and when I want to I want to load for myself, and when I want to sleep I just lay it down on the ground. Unless it's stolen, which ain't likely, it will be there waiting for me in the morning. Better than all the horses, the trouble with the West is the horses; the cowboys ain't bicycle conscious. I'm going to show 'em as the horse is an obsolete animal. I'm going after Patch Riley on this here bike!"

Jed regarded him with awe, wondering whether his Gran'pop was a genius or just plain brainy.

"What about your posse, Gran'pop?"

"I don't hold with no posse," his Gran'pop told him.

He didn't stay to argue. He mounted the bicycle and rode off. Jed watched him wobble from side to side, and then steady himself and head down Main Street. Jed had a feeling of unreality. It couldn't really be true that his Gran'pop was going after Patch Riley on a bicycle. Because if it was true, it amounted to suicide!

Jed put his hands to his mouth and shrieked.

"Hoy, Gran'pop!"

Either Gran'pop didn't hear or didn't choose to. He wobbled off down the road, almost out of sight by now. Jed felt his heart contract with fear. His Gran'pop was certainly was a swell old guy, but he sure was a darn fool. If he wouldn't leave a posse to look for Patch Riley, there would have to be a posse to look after Gran'pop!

Gran'pop wasn't worrying. He hadn't been on a bicycle for thirty years, but he wasn't settled down to it. Riding on fat tyres was a bit rough, but maybe it was all for the best, judging by the sort of road surface that lay ahead. Old Silas wouldn't a bit at first, but soon he was steady enough. But he wasn't heading for the hills straight away. He made for the No Hope claim.

The No Hope was deserted. No one had been near the old claim for more than twenty years, not until Gran'pop made use of it as a hide-out. It had been decided long ago that there was no gold at the No Hope; no one at Sawback would have risked a dollar on it. They'd had mining surveys, diggers, creeks, reports, all inspecting the No Hope claim.

behind, and he was almost on top of him before the old man heard him. Grandpop whirled round in a flash and covered Jed with his gun. Then he granted and lowered the gun-muzzle sheepishly.

"So it's you, Jed?"

"Yeah," said Jed. "Me, and about three hundred more!"

"Way," grunted Grandpop, "you ain't brought a posse from Starbuck?"

"I ain't a posse, Grandpop," said Jed. "But it's every man or boy who can tote a gun. They're all coming for you, Grandpop, and all coming up behind determined to clean up the hills from Patch Riley!"

Grandpop snarled with anger.

"I ain't scared for it and I don't want it!" he roared. "This affair between me and Patch Riley, it's kind of personal, and I means to settle it private. On night back, Jed, and tell that damn out-of-side in poses they got to wait just twenty-four hours, and then maybe I'll allow their Sunday school outing. But not before. Tell 'em they've got to give me twenty-four hours or they can find another sheriff!"

Jed looked at his face and realized he meant what he said. He backed away respectfully.

"O.K., Grandpop," he assented. "I'll tell 'em to give you twenty-four hours."

Jed slipped away, and he delivered his Grandpop's message.

Grandpop was alone in the hills, watching the road from the valley. Night fell, and his attention quickened. To-morrow the valley would be ringed about with armed men, but to-night only one man watched the trail, and there was darkness to offer Patch Riley cover. He wouldn't trouble about his gang; he'd out-fox-ross them as readily as they would double-cross him.

Grandpop's eyes and ears were alert. It seemed long he had been watching; he'd seen the daylight slowly fade from the sky, the stars come out. Then suddenly a light sound made him stiffen, and he saw a dark shape moving slowly up the trail. Grandpop levelled his gun, his finger snapped swiftly on the trigger. His hand.

The dark shape halted. Grandpop heard a whining of pain and realized instantly what had happened. Riley had taken no chances himself; he had driven a steel shaft to draw Grandpop's fire, and the spit of yellow flame from Grandpop's gun must have given away his whereabouts. Grandpop didn't wait for the volley of shots he knew would follow. He threw himself sideways, rolling over and over in the darkness and at the same moment Patch Riley's gun spoke.

Four shots, Grandpop counted, and each one smacked against the rock behind which Grandpop had been hiding. But by now Grandpop was a dozen paces away. He started above the tops of these come from Patch Riley's gun, levelled his own gun again. Patch was too confident; he wasn't even taking cover. Grandpop snapped his trigger once. Tell it back under his hand, saw the dark figure pitch forward on his face.

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DETECTIVE WEEKLY

"I reckon accounts is best about square, Patch," he grunted.

Patch was quite dead when he found his a mule-back nearly drilled through his heart. Grandpop was impaled to let him lie, but then he remembered that Egg Mackay had been standing with his entrance. So Grandpop slung the dead outlaw over his shoulder and headed back to Starbuck.

There wasn't much glory for the Starbuck posse now that Grandpop had accounted for Patch Riley. The white posse headed for the valley the next day, but the outlaws were not without a leader, giving it without a fight.

They roped the outlaws together and led them back to Starbuck. And it was there that Jed Warley saw the Boy Bandit again, with his wrists roped together, as he was herded into a cattle truck to head for the county goal. The Boy's face looked in a snarl when he saw Jed.

"Hey," he snarled, "if they hadn't been careful to rope me up, I'd have knocked your head right off your shoulders!"

Jed glared quickly round him. No one was watching him for a moment. He jumped on the truck and climbed inside with the Boy Bandit. He had his jack-knife out, and with a snick he cut through the Boy's bonds. Then he put his knife away, stepped back.

"O.K., Boy," he invited. "Let's see you do it."

The Boy snarled and came on. Jed backed from his whirling fist, left his shoulders against the side of the truck. He took off from there and jumped in, ignored the railing blows of the Boy as they rained about his head. Jed went in, driving hard, a left to the stomach and then a right to the jaw. The Boy grunted, changed colour, his whirling arms slowed. Jed passed, looked at him thoughtfully.

"Flaming dreamer," he said.

And then, with a straight right between the eyes, he smacked the Boy down, saw him drop like a log, and knew that for a while he could sleep in peace. There he stepped over him, out of the truck, down to the platform. The Boy, he knew, would give no more trouble until he was safely behind bars.

Whiter Mason, the lucky rigger, greeted Jed cordially.

"Oh, boy, oh, boy, oh, boy! You'd sure better hurry! Down at the school-room poor Grandpop's giving the biggest chicken supper ever, to celebrate him being elected sheriff of Starbuck!"

Jed grinned.

"If I know my Grandpop," he said, "he ain't paid for them chickens."

THE END.

Write to The Editor, The THRILLER Rigger, The Storyway House, Farringham Street, London, E.C.4., and let him have your opinion of this piece.

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