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KNOCK-OUT!

A POWERFUL LONG COMPLETE
MYSTERY STORY

BY GEORGE DILNOT

KNOCK-OUT!



She was only a girl... BUT WHAT A GIRL! Her own private brand of Knock-out laid out a couple of crooks and smashed a dirty racket in the big fight game.

Chapter 5. MONEY FOR NOTHING.

THE little lady in the big leather office chair rapped a pencil between her teeth while she considered things—which included the young man at the opposite side of her desk. He had slick hair and a touch of sideburns. A bit of a liard, she decided.

"Well, could you've got here, Miss Emery," he observed, and served a hand round the chastely severe office. "When I came to look you up I didn't know that the head of the U. S. Investigation Service was a dame—especially a dame that looks like punch and cream."

Val Emery inverted and levelled the butt of her pencil at him.

"Now that you've got over the shock, I'd cut out any more references to my personal appearance. I'm sensitive. Also I'm a business woman, not a wax model. What do you want, Mr. Stretch Sherry?"

"No offense," he continued. "How'd you know they called me Stretch?"

"She got down her pencil.

"I know a lot about the bunch of heels that are hanging round Fighting Frankie. I'm still wondering what brings you here. Tompos fugio, Mr. Sherry. It's been hanging over a while since you came in."

"I got you," he said. "Mentioning your time's valuable. So's mine. That's why I'm taking no notice of that crack about being a heel. Here it is. You're interested in this match between Fighting Frankie and Bob Zippo. I just dropped in here to say don't."

"Ah!" She brought the pencil into action between her teeth again, and her delicate eyebrows came a little closer together. "I'm being told don't. So somebody's worried about something. Why?"

He leaned forward, and one hand holding a package dropped as if unconsciously on the corner of the desk.

"Nobody's worried, sister. Nobody's

worried about nothing. All I'm here for is to pass a hint in a friendly sort of way. This betting racket is bad for little dames. Leads to heart failure. I know a guy once in your line of business that got to poking his nose into what he didn't ought to. Then, one day somebody left a pineapple at his office. Eloquent offer it was. Something like this. All the Brown found of him was a metal button."

Val looked back and laughed as she laughed.

"So I'm to lay off or have my office blown up by a bomb. We may as well be plain about it. That's what you're telling me. It sounds extreme. Somebody must be badly worried."

Stretch Sherry's eyes were half closed. He shook his head.

"No threats, Miss Emery. What put that in your head? I'm just telling you about a guy I know. I thought you'd be interested."

SPORT AND MYSTERY IN A GRIPPING, LONG COMPLETE STORY

By GEORGE DILNOT

"I am," she agreed. "Tell me something else. The betting on Zagge was ten-to-seven yesterday. It's dropped to three-to-two against him this morning. Has this friendly limit of yours got anything to do with that?"

He smiled with a touch of contentment.

"You're not so dumb, even if you do look like—never mind. How would I know about the betting? Except that it's wise money. Now a clever dame like you might get in 'em the right side." He took his hand away and a neat package of notes remained on the desk. "There's five hundred smackers there—a hundred quid as you reckon. It's a heater. There'll be another five hundred when Frankie wins—as he will, money for nothing."

The girl reached over and rifled the notes with her thumb as if they were a pack of cards. Then she threw them carelessly back on the desk.

"This is overwhelming, Mr. Sherry. What am I expected to do for this?"

"Why, nothing, I just said so." His gaze met hers fully for the first time during the interview. "Just sit back and collect. I'll send you a couple of crispnote notes."

"How nice of you. Two free snags, and I'm to be paid by both sides. I suppose it didn't enter your mind, by any chance, that this agency is already retained? The Zagge people had an idea that there might be some dirty work at the crossroads and are paying me to prevent it. And you want me to double-cross them. For a large snafu of hundred pounds."

She fingered the notes again.

He grinned. He thought he understood.

"That's O.K., baby. You won't hold us up any more. I'm offering you this because so don't want any bother. But we won't stand for blackmail by any fancy dick, even if she's as pretty as you are. I don't mean that nastily, but I've met private detectives before. I like you, Miss Sinsky. We could have a good time sometime together. But you've got to understand I'm talking straight."

"I appreciate it," she smiled. "Well, I'll think it over."

"Better make that thinking quick," he urged. "You've had fair warning. I'll be phoning you this afternoon. I guess you'll be sensible." He switched his feet in his hand as he rose. "Say, maybe when you've made up your mind we and you might have a bite together."

"I'll think about that, too," she smiled. Only when he had gone did she realize that he had left the notes behind him. She weighed them in her hand thoughtfully and then looked them in a snafu.

Going into an outer room she raised her eyebrows questioningly at her secretary, who was just discarding a pair of spectacles.

"How'd it go?" she demanded.

"Perfect, Miss Kneary," he answered. "The crowd ought to be interesting. That fellow's a book. He ought to have thought of a microphone."

"All it does is to make clear that they don't intend Zagge to win that fight. The fact that we've got two men at his training quarters must have leaked out. But I don't know that, we can take any action merely because I've been offered a bribe. I'm going along to Scotland Yard now. If I don't come back I'll let you know where I am."

Chief Constable Michael Mackie, the executive head of the Criminal Investigation Department—more intimately known to Val as Uncle Mike—received her with an affected fit of trembling. She thought the demonstration ill-timed and eyed him coldly.

"What is it?" she demanded. "You look like an elephant with St. Venz's darts. Is it catching?"

"It comes and goes," he said darkly. "Whenever I see you I start to quiver. I want to run away. What is it, hellion?"

"It's a prize fight."

"Tosh. That's the worst of you private detectives. You should be accurate. There are no such things as prize fights these days. Prize fights are illegal. You mean a boxing contest. In other words, the battle between Fighting Frankie Doran and Bob Zagge."

"You have access of intelligence," she admitted. "Will you consider this? The winner of that fight is to have the right of naming the champion of the world. That means big money if he can win that, too. The heavyweight champion of the world can clean up hundreds of thousands of pounds."

"I read the papers," said Uncle Mike dryly.

"That you know that this is a prize-fight affair. If either of the men fails to turn up in the ring the other is automatically the winner. Both those men are clean fighters as far as I know. Fighting Frankie is a little past his best, but he thinks he can beat the champion if he gets the chance. But he can't beat Bob Zagge, and the men behind him know it. Zagge is a comparative newcomer to the ring, but he's what boxing men call a natural. But if Zagge, for instance, breaks an arm or a leg, or get with some other accident, or disappeared—"

"A lot of it," he snapped. "I'll give you another, if anything happened, what's it to do with me—as you?"

"There you go again." She swung her big eyes upwards at him and he smiled. "You ought to feel it a compliment that I ought to confide in you. As a matter of fact, the if is only about what is going to happen—for something is certain. Bob Zagge's manager knows it, and I know it. The V. I. Investigation Service has been specially retained, and I have had a couple of moments down at Zagge's training quarters for the past week. Just before I came here a hanger-on from the opposition called on me. He offered me two hundred pounds to shut my eyes, and as good as told me that if I didn't my office would be wrecked by a bomb."

Uncle Mike dropped his head anti-barrister manner as he stiffened in his chair. He reached for a telephone, but she stopped him.

"If you're thinking of having my office 'bombed' under observation, you can call it off," she said. "I can look after myself. I have my professional pride."

"Then why do you come badgering me?" he exploded. "What kind of a stooge am I? It's a hundred-to-one this book's hitting—hoping to scare you off—but it's a line of talk I can settle in half a minute. We could knock him off for making threats like that."

"Remarkable," she said, as one musing aloud. "Strong man of action showing his hid place. Thank you, Uncle Mike—but no. Arrest him, perhaps get him fined five pounds and bound over to keep the peace. That would be helpful—I don't think."

He made an arraigned posture.

"I'm almost tempted to hope that they give you to smithereens. What do you want?"

She stroked the knee of her skirt.

"Well, darling, my own staff is limited. When the fight takes place I want you to have a dozen G.I.D. men there—twenty would be better."

Uncle Mike pulled a tobacco pouch from his pocket and slammering it viciously on the desk began slowly to fill a pipe.

"Not up my street, helion. The promoters can hire uniformed police if they need 'em to keep order. I wouldn't argue with you when you say something else funny may be pulled about this fight. Things like that do happen. But unless and until it happens, or shall I say until we've something more definite to lead us to believe that a crime may be committed we're not in the picture. If we jumped in on all these kind of things you private detectives would be looking for work. Now hop it."

She made a face at him and stopped, swinging the door behind her with an emphatic slam. But she had barely left three steps along the corridor when he called her back.

"There's someone on the phone for you," he said. "Your office must have said you were here."

Val swung by him and put the receiver to her ear. It was one of the men she had detailed to keep guard at Bob Zagge's training quarters.

"I think you had better come down here as soon as you can, Miss Emery," he said. "There's something wrong with Bob. Mr. Fright has got the idea that he's being poisoned."

AT THE TRAINING CAMP.

IN a remote stretch of country in a Surrey valley, Bob Zagge's training quarters had been established. It was an old country house with a number of

outbuildings, one of which had been fitted up as a gymnasium, sufficiently out of the way to afford seclusion, but not too far from London. Val reached it by car in under an hour.

One of her own men was on guard at the outer gate, and she stopped to have a word with him. Slim Fright, the boxer's manager, stroked up. His nickname may have fitted him once, but now he was a stout, ugly little man with a likable smile and a big reputation in boxing circles. However, there was no smile on his face as he greeted her.

"I'm glad you're here, Miss Emery. There's something awfully and it's getting me down. This fight is due to take place tomorrow evening, and we've as good as lost unless a miracle happens." He opened the door of her car. "Let's walk up. I'll send someone to take your box to the garage."

"What's this about Zegge being poisoned?" she demanded. "Have you had a doctor?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Yeah—two. They know just as much or just as little as I do. It might be or it might not be. Well and so on. Similar, yes, that's what one of them says to me. 'Was and see.' And the fight's tomorrow evening!"

He was clearly tremendously agitated, but he calmed down as they went into the house and he entered her into a little room that had been fitted up as an office. With his hat tilted on the back of his head he walked up and down, talking while she listened, and now and again interjected a question. There was not a great deal to tell. He had noticed that Bob was lethargic and irritable when he woke up that morning.

"I thought there was something on his mind and asked him right out. What do you think he wanted?"

She admitted that she could not guess.

"Nothing else but a hundred grand in one-pound notes. Insisted that I should take a car there and then and go and change a cheque. Wouldn't tell me why, and wouldn't let me send. No, I must go myself. I thought it best to trouble him, and, after all, there's quite a lot coming to him on this fight—even if he loses. Well, I got it. He was worse when I got back, and all the thanks I got was a grant. Now why would he want a hundred grand like that? I ask you? He can't spend it here." He lifted his hat further back. "Perhaps I wouldn't think two loads about it in the ordinary way. It's no business of mine what he does with his money so long as he keeps in condition."

She rubbed her cheek thoughtfully. "He's not putting a fast one over by any chance? I notice that the betting's changed."

Slim Fright brought a heavy hat down on the table.

"That boy's square. I've handled him too long not to know that. I know men and I know boxes."

"I'll take your word. What do you think of that?"

She told him of the visit she had received from Swiss Sherry.

"I'm not surprised," he commented. "Those two birds you sent here are smart, but there's no secret about what they are. If the other side are cooking up something dirty they might feel better about it if they had you and your men food. Swiss is one of Bobbie Corson's boys, and a corker's in the straight line between two points for Corson."

"Fighting Frankie's manager?" she interjected.

"That's him. You know I brought you into this because I felt that he might be trying to turn some trick. There's a big gambling ring behind him, and they've been pulling the betting up. Look at this. Never mind how I got it. It's a copy of a cablegram Corson sent to a big shot in New York."

Val studied the slip of paper. "Cover all Zegge bets," it read. "Frankie is in."

"That helps to explain the switch in the odds," she said. "Now how bad is Zegge really?"

"You shall see for yourself. We've been missing off training, but I'm going to give him a little bit of a work-out in a few minutes. Come with me."

In a lofty, box-like building, filled with the usual synthetic paraphernalia and a replica of a boxing ring roped off in the centre, Bob Zegge was sitting with a towel over his shoulders. Somebody moved to take it off, and she snatched like an outraged tiger.

"Get the hell out of it, will you? Leave me alone."

"A fighter in training is always a touchy animal," remarked Slim in an undertone. "It's a tough strain, physical and mental, and the fiercer he gets the worse it is. But that doesn't account for everything. There's something else." He went over to the boxer. "Bob, here's Miss Emery come to wish you luck."

The young giant set grudgingly to his feet. He was obviously in perfect physical condition, and the muscles rippled under his smooth skin as he put out a hand. But the eyes, instead of having the alert, eager expression which had struck her when she first met him, were dull and listless like those of an old man.

"Training quarters ain't no place for a girl," he grumbled. "Slim ought to know better than to worry me."

She appeared not to notice the rudeness, but was utterly unlike the rather shy country girl with which he had received her on previous occasions. Fright set short an embarrassing moment with the suggestion that Bob should get into the ring.

A number of men who all seemed infixed with the same gloom were clustered around the ropes. A sparring partner was already in the ring with gloves on, limbering himself up. Bob climbed in his corner and leaned back listlessly while his gloves were being adjusted.

"Three two-minute rounds," said Slim. "Let yourself go, Bob. Show us what you're got. Ready? Seconds out."

Val, watching keenly, saw at once how heavily Bob came out of his corner. He seemed to move in a kind of daze as though he were some kind of badly-eyed automaton rather than the swift, vital, fighting machine that good judges held him to be.

Beating Rolfe, his opponent, was an older man, who at one time had been in championship class himself. He knew all the tricks of the trade, but now at thirty-five was regarded as a back number and only to be used as an animated chopping block. Obeying instructions that had been whispered to him he concentrated mainly on defence. Cursing round nearly he covered up, raking only now and again a few experimental leads.

Zegge went through the motions. Months of training had not been without effect. He would have fought in his sleep, and indeed that was what it seemed

like. His supple body was perfectly balanced, but it seemed plain that his brain was not consciously directing it. There was a series of clinches in which he was pushed about.

"That other guy," whispered Slim to the girl, "is an old man, and as slow as a tortoise. Normally Bob would tear him to pieces. Yet look at him. He can't get an opening. He's dead on his feet."

At the call of time he went over to Bob's corner. Val could hear him quietly taunting the boxer.

"What do you think you're doing? Those punches of yours wouldn't break a fly off a pig of butter. You laying down on us? Fighting Frankie will make you look like a monkey. You hear me? Stop into him—stop."

"I'm all right," snarled Bob. "Don't shoot at me. You leave me alone."

But he seemed to be stung, as the manager had intended, and in the next round he seemed to be trying to court himself. The other man was boxing coolly and refused to be drawn. Towards the end of the round Zegge let loose a terrific right swing. Rolfe saw it coming and without apparent trouble calmly sidestepped and caused it to pass by inches.

Fright swore beneath his breath. In this interval he did not go near Zegge, but gave a low-voiced instruction to another man. He was a wiry and busy man. As a rule, especially on near a fight, such care is taken to avoid the chance of injury to a boxer in training. Slim Fright had become reckless.

"Make a light of it, Bob," he urged. "Mix it. Let's see if we can sting him into some life. If he's that bad I want to know it."

The other grunted doubtfully, but he was glad to obey orders. For the third round he jumped in fighting, smacking in a series of lefts, and catching Zegge with a right back to the head. Half-way through the round Rolfe followed the younger man into him and appeared him with left and right. The blows did little harm, but Slim's face brightened as he saw that they had the effect of rousing Zegge into retaliation. He got here a savage left on Rolfe's face, and followed with two lefts to the body which the other rode, dancing away as they landed. But Zegge followed up and there was another clinch. As they broke Bob once more got a left to the sparring partner's face, and then his right came through with devastating force, beating Rolfe collapsed on the ropes.

"That'll do," cried Slim. "That's more like the old Bob. We'll call it a day."

He was laughing now but the smile was slightly wiped from his face when Bob had been handed over to his attendants for a shower and rub down, and he accompanied Val back to his little office.

"That bout showed that something may come back," he said, "but he got going too late and I don't know whether he could have kept it up. I'm still guessing that someone's slipped him the poker."

His fists clenched. "That means there's some double-crossing in it Corson's job in this camp. If ever I find out who it is—"

Val lit a cigarette and frowned thoughtfully.

"I thought all that kind of thing was in the bad old days, but he certainly looked as if he were drugged."

"I'm damned sure of it. I've never seen it before, but I've been twenty-odd years in the game and I've heard of it. It can happen. They used to use East Indian hemp—hashish. But there it is. I thought

they might try something, but dope never entered my mind."

She looked at her watch. "We've still got more than thirty hours before he goes into the ring. If the opposition are doing him why didn't they wait till later on?"

"I don't know," he admitted. "One of two things," she said. "Either the person who did it wasn't sure of a second chance arising, or he wanted to see the effect of the dope and is planning another dose before the fight. We've got to watch everything that Bob eats or drinks."

"That's been in my mind ever since he first showed symptoms. But I don't see that there's been any chance there. There are usually from six to a dozen of us having our meals with him. No one could tell whether any man would eat from a particular dish or not. But no one else has been sick."

"Hum—ah! I'd like to check up on all the people you have here and what you know about them."

"I've already had a list made out for the men you have on guard so that they shall know who has a right to be about the place. Here's a copy." He pulled open a drawer and handed her a typewritten sheet. "Practically every one of 'em I've known for years—sparring partners, trainers, managers. Even our cook is an old lady I've always used."

"Who's?" she queried. "Naturally we get a few, but we're strict about strangers. In any case, they couldn't get at his food or drink."

"And in spite of all that you still think he's been drugged?" He nodded grimly, and she went on. "Well, if nothing else happens you've got thirty hours to get him back to shape. I want to talk with my men and the doctors you called in. Then, maybe, I'll see some of the training staff and have a chat with Bob himself."

"All right by me," he said. "Except that if you do see Bob I want you to go easy. I don't want him upset any more than he is. Nobody's said anything to him about being doped."

"I'll be careful," she agreed. "Can I use your phone? I expect to be here most of the day—and possibly all night. I want to leave a message."

Slim Fright's face took on the semblance of his accustomed grin as he lowered.

"If Mr. Swish Sherry should ring me up, say that I've been detained on business—that I'm in conference at Southside Yard—and that you don't know when I'll be back." She replaced the receiver. "That may give him something to think about. No harm in trying to throw a scare into him, although I'm not so sure that it will do any good."

A TALK WITH UNCLE MIKE.

FOR several hours Val was busy. The doctors helped her as little as they had helped Fright. Both were men in general practice living in the district, and neither made any pretension to special knowledge.

Her own men had nothing to go on. They had seen nothing to arouse suspicion. Whenever Zags had gone outside the grounds one of them had always made a point of being near him.

"Has he ever spoken to anyone when he's been out on a training run?" she asked.

"Only once," said one of the men. "Yesterday afternoon there was a girl in a car who stopped him. He seemed surprised to see her, and I heard him call her Daisy. I wasn't near enough to hear anything they said beyond that, but it

looked to me as if they were old friends—or something else. He kissed her when they said good-bye."

Val screwed up one eye, which was a bad habit of hers when she struck a train of thought.

"You didn't take the number of the car?"

"As a matter of fact, I did. This is a funny job, and I make a habit of jotting down anything." He consulted a notebook and gave a number.

"Good," she said. "Ring up my office and ask 'em to trace the owner and to find out what they can about Daisy. I'm going to see Mr. Fright."

A few minutes later she confronted Slim Fright with an abrupt inquiry:

"What do you know about a girl named Daisy?"

He looked at her steadily and scratched behind one ear.



"I'll shoot that sandy out of your hand if you make another move, Miss Spinach," said Val, in a level voice. "Don't touch it, Bob. It's poisoned."

"Daisy? Not a thing. Wait a minute, though. Seems to me that I remember some of Bob's letters were in a woman's writing, and I've got a vague idea that I've heard the name mentioned." He went out and returned shortly shaking his head. "You've been hearing about that dame he saw in the car. McGraw, one of his sparring partners, was there who happens to know her. She's a girl called Daisy Spinach—a waitress or something—that Bob used to know before he came down here. But Bob's level-headed. He's much too interested in his career to go off the deep end, even if he had the chance. That his don't mean a thing."

Val was not quite so sure, but pursued her inquiries steadily, interviewing practically every person in the camp with the exception of Bob Zags himself. He was asleep in his room and she decided not to disturb him. When she had finished she put through a telephone call.

"Uncle Mike," she said, "this is Val. I want you to do me a favour—a different kind of favour. You know as much more

about these things than I do. Can you tell me anything about Indian hemp?"

"So that's it?" he grunted. "They feed natives on hemp seed. And it's a kind of dope. Hold on."

She knew he must have guessed something of the reason underlying her inquiry, and presently his voice came again over the wire.

"Carnabis indica is what you mean. The intoxicating and narcotic properties of Indian hemp have been known in the East from a very early period, and are referred to both by Herodotus and Galen. It may be smoked, eaten, or drunk. It can be mixed with tobacco in cigarettes, or mixed with opium and made into a paste for introduction into such things as sweetmeats. The spice is to disguise a characteristic smell."

"That's awfully interesting. Uncle Mike," she said, as if she were hanging

on the line.

"I'll be careful," she agreed. "Can I use your phone? I expect to be here most of the day—and possibly all night. I want to leave a message."

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"I've already had a list made out for the men you have on guard so that they shall know who has a right to be about the place. Here's a copy." He pulled open a drawer and handed her a typewritten sheet. "Practically every one of 'em I've known for years—sparring partners, trainers, managers. Even our cook is an old lady I've always used."

"Who's?" she queried. "Naturally we get a few, but we're strict about strangers. In any case, they couldn't get at his food or drink."

"And in spite of all that you still think he's been drugged?" He nodded grimly, and she went on. "Well, if nothing else happens you've got thirty hours to get him back to shape. I want to talk with my men and the doctors you called in. Then, maybe, I'll see some of the training staff and have a chat with Bob himself."

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whigs when she seemed reluctant to let go her hold.

"Didn't you hear the lady, Day? She's had enough."

As the two dazed girls got to their feet he tied Val's hands behind her with his handkerchief.

"You're one of those clever dames who must hurt us," he said. "You've put us all in a jam, including yourself and Bob. If you hadn't interfered he'd just have let the light and it would have ended there, even if people did think there was something awfully. Now you've forced us to make sure he doesn't fight at all. And we're lumbered up with you because we don't leave you behind."

"Hard luck," she murmured indignantly. "I see your difficulty. You're going to make me sure of a shot in the air by kidnapping us both."

Swish did not answer at once. He was busy over the unconscious woman. He took a silk handkerchief from Bob's breast pocket and pressed his hands behind him as he had those of Val. Then with much effort, for Bob was of course a big man, he lugged him into the back of the car and propped him up on the back seat. Then he went back to Val, who was being watched by the sly Daisy.

"Your turn, sweetheart. In you get. You try hard, I'll say that. I got that message about you being in conference at Scotland Yard, but you see I'm here all the same. Come on."

With a hand on her elbow he urged her to the car and she went meekly enough. She sank into the back seat by the side of Bob, and Swish drove Daisy a little away from the car out of hearing. After a few words they also took their places, the girl at the wheel, Swish by her side. He related himself so as to talk to Val when the car started.

"I reckon this is going to be a mighty unpleasant experience for you," he said conversationally. "I'm sorry about it. But it's not too late yet."

She smiled at him. Behind her back her hands were restlessly at work. When he had tied her wrists she had held them in such a manner that there remained a little play in the fastening when she related them. She was struggling now to increase it.

"Not too late?" she echoed. "What do you mean?"

"You're not so dumb as that. We don't want all this bother. Suppose you take double what I offered you before and go back to bed and forget everything. We'll dump Bob somewhere near the camp. Either he'll come to his senses and find his way home, or somebody'll pick him up in the morning."

Her hands were free now, and she hoisted her legs together to keep them behind her. She gathered her brow thoughtfully.

"If you're willing to do that, why—"

"I know what you're going to say," he interrupted.

"The only thing we're interested in is keeping our noses clean and seeing that Fighting Frankie wins. Now you can take it from me that Bob won't talk about this when he wakes up. We'll have to take a story, but it won't be the right

one, and he won't mention any names. I'll give you something that you can slip into whatever he eats or drinks during the day."

They passed a hump in the roadway and Bob's body lurched on to him. As if to prevent it happening again she pushed her shoulder into his side. One hand began to steal cautiously towards his jacket pocket. If she could regain possession of the pistol that he had taken from her she would soon put a different complexion on matters.

"Why shouldn't he talk?" she asked. "Perhaps he didn't see you, but he knows all about Daisy. It would be something to do with that hundred pounds, of course."

"Don't sidestep," he urged. "I'm not answering questions. I'm asking 'em."

"I'm afraid there's nothing doing, then, Swish," she said. "You see, I've still got my money on Bob for this fight."

With an impatient snigger he turned his back on her as if giving up further argument. Her hand was in Bob's jacket pocket by this time. All that her fingers closed on was a box of matches. The gun was in a pocket on the other side, and gratefully as they were it was impossible for her to get at it. She bit her lip, and was glad that Swish had given up his attempt at conversation. She wanted to think—and quickly. At the end of five minutes she had come to a decision.

Her left hand gripped the handle of the car door, and she waited until they had slowed down to take a corner. Then, leaning forward, she suddenly did something the same thing to Daisy as Swish had done to her. She seized her hair and jerked her head fiercely backwards. The car swung dizzily to one side and back again. Val threw open the door and jumped. She was round the other side of the bend and running as if for her life on the front wheels of the car skidded into a shallow ditch and came to a halt.

So quickly and unexpectedly did it all happen that Swish had no chance to stop her. She heard the crash of the door as he leapt out, and his voice was raised in a menacing shout for her to stop. It was doubtful if he could see her in the darkness and crouching low, she increased her pace if anything.

There was a quick report behind her and then a second and a third. She chuckled as she ran. Swish, she decided, had lost his head. He did not like to go too far from the car and was firing to frighten her.

For a few more minutes she continued to risk on the grass verge of the roadway. Then her pace slackened and she at last came to a stop, listening intently. There was no sound of pursuit, but she heard the jerky spasms of the car engine as an attempt was made to extricate it from the ditch. More audaciously she pursued her way.

BROOKS FOR CARBON

A GLANCE at the illuminated dial of her watch showed Val that it was a little after midnight. The night was dark and she had not the faintest idea where she was except that it was in some small country road. She wondered where they were taking Bob. The sound of the motor engine changed as the gear was shifted into top. Swish had relinquished all idea of chasing her and had resumed his way.

She faced about and began to move in the same direction as the car. Not until she had been walking for twenty minutes did she discover a main thoroughfare and a signpost. Then she knew she was on the Portsmouth Road, somewhere near Colchester. She hoisted a sign of relief when a little later she came across an A.A. telephone-box. In another minute Uncle Mike was roused from a deep sleep by the snoring snuggles of the instrument at his bedside.

"Uncle Mike," she opened. "I'm in a jam. I'm marooned on the Portsmouth Road, and I want you to send a car to fetch me."

"What am I," he queried, "a cab rank? I thought you were being paid to protect Zogge."

"That's what I'm doing. I wouldn't be cutting dirt to my dear old reliable if it was just a question of myself. Listen, darling, I don't want anything to look out about Bob being missing yet. But you can start pulling a few wires while you're waiting." She explained what they were and slyly took his number for granted. "I'll be seeing you at the Yard."

"I suppose I'll have to be up all night," he grumbled. "Where exactly are you?"

She gave him no clear directions as she was able, and he agreed to order a car from the nearest police station to pick her up and bring her to town. As she put down the receiver she considered ring-



It was Val's gun against his ribs that woke Fighting Frankie. "Don't try anything," she said warningly. "You're coming with me."

ing to Slim Fright to break the news, but there was nothing Slim could do, and she did not see what could be gained by giving him a restless night. She did, however, get her secretary out of bed with orders to collect a change of clothes and certain other articles necessary to repair her ravaged toilet and meet her at their office.

By the time she had finished a patrol car was waiting outside the box, and at her urging a susceptible driver made breakneck speed over the deserted roads to London.

Val wasted no more time than was necessary at her office, and it was a neat, quick and spry little lady who shortly presented herself to the impatient Chief Constable in his room.

"Hallo, Uncle Mike. Know anything?" There's no trace of that car as yet," he said. "I've had a wireless sent out to all patrolling cars, and an all-station message. But it's odds he hasn't been brought back to London. Of course, I haven't mentioned Sagar's name. They're merely keeping an eye upon her car. If it's found anywhere in it will be held until I am notified. We're having Swath Sherry's rooms watched, and an eye is being kept on Eddie Corson's hotel. I can tell you a good deal about Swath. I had him checked up as soon as you told me of his threat to berate your office."

"How thoughtful of you," she drawled. "I rather thought you might. But I know all about Swath. He's a tough egg from the United States. Kind of heel to big gamblers. Does their dirty work, but no one has been able to pin anything on him, although he's had some close calls. There's no record that he's acting for Eddie Corson, Fighting Frank's manager, but there's no law against thinking what we like. The person he's more interested in at the moment is Daisy Squinch. I know something herself. For instance, she's a waitress in a Richmond teahouse. Lately she's been spending more money than any good waitress ought to have. The car she was driving is registered in the name of Eddie Corson."

He lifted a file of papers. "He lifted a file of papers. I can go a little farther than that. Daisy is married to a bloke who, a year ago, was sent to five years penal servitude for a smash and grab raid. He's Squinch is Bob Sagar's cousin. He is in the penitentiary cells for an attempt to escape from Maidstone a week ago. And Daisy was in that smash herself but we weren't able to prove anything."

Val clapped her hands softly. "That helps," she exclaimed. "It fits distinctly."

"I don't see how," he grumbled. "We've got her cold for this watching as your evidence shows. And don't think I am suggesting anything against Bob. His record is perfectly clean. Sagar Bill was punched he's helped this girl cover a bad passage now and then, but that's to his credit." He tossed the papers aside. "I'll do all I can to help you find these people, of course. But what are you going to do if you don't get Bob Sagar in time? He'll have automatically lost the match."

"I don't know," she confessed. "I'm counting on getting him."

He leaned over the desk and dropped his voice, although there was no one likely to overhear.

"This isn't official advice, but as a man to his niece I can point out that whether of these turns up for this fight nobody wins and nobody loses."

Her eyes widened as she gazed down on him.

"You unscrupulous old pirate. Are you

suggesting that I should kidnap Fighting Frankie?"

"Nah, heh-heh! What put such an idea in your head? It would be a criminal offence." He grinned at her.

She nodded her head vigorously as she dropped to the floor.

"It's worth thinking about. If all else fails, you'll be hearing from me, darling."

"Where are you going?" he demanded.

"There's something else I want to know, Ray—"

But she had slipped out of the door. Uncle Mike rubbed his chin. He doubted if he had been wise.

Although Val had said she was going to see Corson there were one or two things to be dealt with first. If all went as she hoped, it would not be necessary to see him. She returned to her office for a while. There, during her talk with Uncle Mike, her official secretary had been busy carrying out instructions. Now the two of them put through and received a series of telephone calls.

Finally she rang up Corson himself, stretching a handkerchief over the mouthpiece so as to distort her voice. Unlike Slim Fright, Corson had broken up his training camp that day. With only the day to go he had brought the boxer and his retinue to Town, and was himself staying at the Royal Hotel. He was sleeping the sleep of a man well satisfied with himself when Val's call came. Sitting up in bed he switched on the light and reached for the receiver.

"Mr. Corson," said Val. "I've got a message for you. Swath Sherry is trying to get over a fast one. He's sold out."

She could hear him gasp.

"Who is he? Is that speaking?" he demanded.

"That don't matter," said the girl. "Call me a friend and I'm giving you the office. There's a dame named Emery—some kind of a private dick—who got mixed up in a scheme-to-night. You heard of it?"

"No," he denied, but she knew he was lying. "Who is this Emery woman? What's she got to do with me? You'd better come round and have a talk if you've got anything to tell me. I'll make it worth your while."

"I'm not out for money," she declared. "I'm putting you wise because I've got my own reasons for putting a spoke in Swath Sherry's wheel. Here's the set up. You think that they've got never-mind-who safely tucked up. Well, this dame's cut-bid you with Swath. They're spring him. You don't have to believe me. Just ring up and find out if they're still there. I'll lay twenty-to-one you don't get any copy."

A full-blooded oath came over the wire, but she jammed the receiver back without giving a chance for more questions. The corners of her mouth twitched. Her trap was set.

"I think he's bitten," she said to her secretary. "We'll know her save pretty soon. The car ready?"

"Waiting," said the other. "And there's this. You asked me to get another one. It's loaded."

Val put a half-smoked cigarette back in her mouth, and picked up the small pistol which her assistant had procured to take the place of the one she had lost. She examined it carefully and put it in her handbag.

Less than half a mile away Corson was feverishly ringing up another number. It was with great relief but with considerable bewilderment, and still only partly allayed suspicion, that he found his brother-in-law at the end of the wire and had a talk both with him and Daisy Squinch.

If he could have seen and heard what was taking place at the private telephone exchange of the hotel at that moment he would have been much less puzzled. A thoughtful man was seated by the operator hastily transcribing a page of shorthand notes.

In a very little while Val knew not only the number to which he had phoned, but exactly what he had said to Swath Sherry. Nor did it take very long to check up on the number he had given and get an address. With this information in her possession Val had decided that the time had come to break the news to Slim Fright. His reaction when he heard her first words on the 'phone was a quiet-voiced string of epithets, many of which she had never heard before, spoken with great intensity.

"I never thought they would go so far as to stretch me," he concluded. "I'm going to talk to the police."

"Don't go off at half-cock," she begged. "The already here in Scotland Yard—officially. Better leave those out for the moment. I know where Bob is. We'll have him back before daylight if we're lucky. And if we don't the light will be called off. Listen."

She spoke quietly and earnestly, and he gave a long, low whistle that ended in a chuckle as she finished.

It was eight o'clock in the morning when Eddie Corson, refreshed by an early cup of tea, put on his dressing-gown and strolled into Fighting Frankie's room, which was next to his own.

"Stops well, son?" he demanded. "I—What the hell?"

His jaw dropped as he beheld a tumbled and empty bed. Pinned to the pillow was a note addressed to "E. Corson, Esq.," and marked "Personal and Private." Peering on it he saw it barely open.

"Dear Mr. Corson," he read. "Did you ever hear of mine for the pander? We need a message and have taken the liberty of using your man. He will appear safe and sound in the ring tonight if well, there are several hits. Can you take it? Of course, you can call in the police, but if you do you had better think up a good story. We don't believe you will. Think it over. Love from the lack."

"ONE OF THE GUYS."

THE HOSTAGE.

FIGHTING FRANKIE had awakened by someone pushing a gun into his face. He opened his eyes to find that the muzzle had been transferred within an inch of his face. A girl's soft voice was murmuring a threat.

"Sorry to disturb you like this, but if you make a sound, or anyone interferes with us, you won't fight another fight for a long time—if ever. Get up and dress. You can put your clothes on over your pyjamas."

It was a second or two before his dazed senses appreciated the situation. In the dim light he could make out the outline of Val's face, and his own features relaxed in a grin as he realised that he understood.

"Don't overdo the joke, sweetheart. Tally that gun farther away. Some of the boys put you up to this. It ain't so funny."

He put out his hand to grip the weapon, but withdrew it with a quick exclamation as she rapped him sharply over the knuckles with the barrel.

"It's no joke, Frankie. I don't want to hurt you, but if you're not sensible I'll

have to put a bullet through your shoulder. So move."

There was an inclusive quality in her voice that convinced him she was in earnest. His jaw dropped. She backed away a little as he set up, but the muzzle of the pistol never wavered.

"You mean that you're holding me up?" he said incredulously. "What's the big idea?"

Val shrugged her shoulders. She was not inclined to reply.

"If you're stalling in the hope of finishing me—don't do it," she advised. "I might get hurt and hit something more vital than your shoulder in this fight. There'll be plenty of time to explain. You're coming with me."

She cut short another attempt at argument peremptorily. Fighting Frankie was not wanting in courage, but he was not inclined—especially on the verge of a fight—to risk some injury from a girl whom he was beginning to consider an armed madwoman. The best thing he could do, he reflected, was to humour her for the instant and wait for a chance. Slowly he began to put on his clothes over his pyjamas. Finally he donned a hat and coat and she gave him some more orders.

"You'll stroll out and down the stairs now. Sit on the floor. I shall be two paces behind you. If we meet any of the night staff and they say anything tell them you can't sleep and are going out for some fresh air. Outside there is a car waiting. You will stop straight in. Is that clear?"

He gave a grunt and she held the door open for him. In silence they walked downstairs to the reception hall. There a solitary night porter was talking to a man in chauffeur's uniform who appeared instantly to stiffen as they appeared and dashed out through the swing doors. Whatever he had been saying seemed to have smothered out and curiously the hotel man might have felt for the latter held the door open for them.

The chauffeur had left the door of the car open and was already at the wheel. Frankie, still conscious of that gun, although it was out of sight, took his seat in the back, and the girl settled herself beside him and slammed the door. The car immediately moved off.

"This is the roughest piece of work I've ever struck," he said between his teeth. "Where do you think you're taking me? Who are you anyway?"

"Call me Miss Emery," she said. "If you ever go to the police they'll know me. And if only you know it I'm your friend. I've looked up your record, Frankie. It's pretty clean. Whatever made you throw in with a crook like Conson?"

"Maybe Conson's a crook and maybe he isn't. I take people as I find 'em, and he hasn't swung anything crooked on me. What's he got to do with this mess?"

"Everything. Conson doesn't believe that you can stop Bob in a straight fight. So he first tried to dope Bob, and when that didn't come off he went the whole hog. A few hours ago Bob was kidnapped. You know that there's a forfeiture clause in the agreement. If he doesn't turn up in the ring and you do, you win by default. That's why I've snipped in and taken a leaf from his book."

Fighting Frankie gave a gulp. Out of the corner of her eyes she was watching him narrowly. There was no doubt that he was surprised.

"I can lick Bob Sarge," he said with conviction. "I can lick him without any chance. Having accidents, I'm the better man. I give you my paroled word if

honour that so far as I am concerned this fight is on the square. Of course, I know there's heavy sugar on the match, but I'm not in on that—much. It means a lot to me in other ways. Still, say all what you says takes a lot of swallowing. Where do you come in? You wouldn't know that you're cutting my throat?"

"I'll show you," she said, and took the pistol away from immediate contact with him, although she still kept it handy for emergencies.

She summarized the details of the offer to bribe her, Sarah Emery's threats, the story of the doped events, and finally the snatching of Bob Sarge. The man listened grudgingly.

"The dirty crook!" he broke out when she had finished. "Honest, Miss Emery,

"I've been dancing on red-hot needles ever since you woke me up," he declared. "I'm sure to death that you might not put it over this crooked bunch. And now here's Fighting Frankie himself, in person, as large as life and twice as natural. How are you, son? Don't look like you're going to get that championship title so easy now, does it?"

Val intervened hastily.

"Don't rub it in, Frankie and I have been going over things and he's all right. All he's out for is a clean fight. Shake hands."

Slim hesitated a moment and then stretched out a hand.

"I'd be a rat not to back Miss Emery's judgment now. I take it all back, kid. Maybe you've been given a new deal, too." "That's O.K.," said Frankie. "Only



Conson snatched the letter from the pillow. He had thought his racket was going over big, but now he knew he was up against trouble.

you got to believe me; this has all been over my head. But even if Conson is a dirty dog I got to have this fight. It means as much to me as to Bob Sarge. I'll be my last stab at having a chance for the championship."

"If I can get Bob—and he's fit to fight—you'll have your chance," she said. "I'm taking you down to his training camp now. I've arranged with Slim Fright to look after you."

Frankie grinned ruefully. "I half-guessed that. There'll be a howl when Conson finds I'm gone."

Val gave a little chuckle.

"On the contrary I don't believe there'll be a whisper."

"Got it all thought out, ain't you?" he murmured.

It was still dark when they reached the camp. The headlights picked out a little group awaiting them round the gates which swung open to let them through, and were immediately locked behind them. In a minute of 180 they were inside the house and Val was shaking hands with a delighted and grinning Slim.

don't go thinking too hard that I'm a soft mark all the time."

"Leave it at that," Val advised curtly. "We all want a straight deal. I'm in a hurry. Just a minute, Slim."

She drew him outside the room and they held a few minutes' quiet conversation. Whatever their opinion about Frankie might be neither of them was inclined to take too much for granted.

"Until we've got Bob back I'm going to have this bed right under my thumb so that he can't wink an eyelid without me knowing," declared Slim. "Every guy in the camp is going to be on guard, including your fellows. You've got Bob located, you say. How many men will you want? I'd like to chip in myself—"

Val shook her head.

"I'll play this out myself." There was a little more discussion and he presently saw her to her car.

VAL HELD IN

VAL was in high spirits as she gave the word to her chauffeur—he was the man who had listened in to Conson's con-

versation over the telephone, and was really one of her most trusted assistants—and they set out on another run through the dark.

Her destination was a place—the telephone crowd-dragging had revealed—Dunstable, not more than half an hour's run from the training camp. It was a week-end cottage perhaps a mile and a half from the spot, where she had made her escape from Britain's one—a place set back at the end of a narrow lane which was a side-way, and surrounded by a high wall.

She left her companion in the car parked with its lights out in a lane some quarter of a mile away and proceeded on a quiet tour of exploration. A brief examination showed her that the big wooden gates were locked and she began a circuit of the wall. There were places where it was overgrown with ivy, and when she reached the back of the house she used this to help her clamber to the top. Thence she dropped into a neglected garden, and flashed a tiny torch to enable her to pick her way gingerly towards the house. She had taken a dozen paces when suddenly her heart leapt to her throat.

There was a soft, quick thudding as the shadowy figure of some big animal leapt silently across the lawn towards her, and as she switched the light towards it she beheld an enormous Great Dane. Dogs had not entered into her calculations. Her pistol was in her other hand, and her finger began to close on the trigger. A

second now would spoil everything, and yet she feared she must take the risk.

But as he leaped her the dog dropped to a crouch and began to wag his way forward on his belly, with his tail wagging after the manner of dogs anxious to be friendly. She gave a little laugh of relief as she dropped her loaded arms and peered him calmly on the head.

"Feeling lanky, old top? That's all right."

He snarled up to her and followed close on her heels as she examined the house. The second window she came to suited her purpose. She carried a stiff-bladed portfolio for just such an emergency, and edging it between the sashes with a little effort pressed back the catch. The window cracked as she threw it up, and the dog whined a little at the prospect of losing her companionship. The girl climbed in and listened. Apparently no one had been disturbed.

It was quite a small place and she wanted no time with the couple of reception rooms or the kitchen on the ground floor. Sledge, she reasoned, was not likely to be there. At the top of the stairs she halted dubitantly. There were three doors, and to open the wrong one might be fatal. Her attention was riveted when she noticed that only one had a key on the outside. She twisted it cautiously and let her lip as it squeaked in the rusty lock. For an instant she froze, but nothing else happened and she pushed the door open.

A JOHN G. BRANDON STORY NEXT WEEK!

To My Readers

THE man who never makes a mistake never makes anything! That was one of Detective-Inspector McCarthy's mottoes in life. So much so that he headed the Commissioner of New Scotland Yard in his den to hurl it at his head.

And why? Simply because a man was due for trouble—probably the sack—for falling down on a case. Doge was rearing its ugly head in the West End of London. Barkin had been told to find out all about it, and all he had done was to arrest two miserable dope peddlers who hardly counted at all.

But McCarthy said—"The man did his best. He just was out of luck, that's all." And he made himself safe a distance over so that the Commissioner ordered him to take over the assignment and clean up the dope ring.

"If you succeed," he promised, "I'll forget about Barkin."

So McCarthy sallied forth into Soho to assault the dope business, for the sake of saving a fellow officer from the order of the boot.

Was it sheer blind luck that he succeeded? Maybe not, for McCarthy knew all his colors where Soho was concerned. It was his native country, so to speak. And he would have succeeded quicker if that battling aristocrat, the Honorable R. S. Y. Purvale had not turned up with complications.

All the same, McCarthy brought home the bacon; and it double-quick time, too! But it was tough going, and the telling of it will thrill you in next week's long complete story, "SOHO NIGHTS" by John G. Brandon.

Yes—it's a BRANDON story next week. Don't miss it, and see that your friends do not miss it either. Spread the news that John G. Brandon will be back

in the THRILLER Library next week, with a gripping story of McCarthy and R. S. Y. Purvale.

In the same issue you will have another grand installment of Walter Tyne's unusual and brilliant story, "THE BRAIN," also the final chapters of that powerful yarn, "RIVER OF DEATH."

The Editor

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



Her first sensation as she fit in the beam of the torch raised was one of disappointment. The room was completely empty—emptied, he did not look as if it had been used for a long time. There was not so much as a bed or a chair in it, and the boards of the floor were bare of any covering. She was about to withdraw when the beam of her torch, sweeping the opposite wall, illuminated something that caused her to pause. It was a small knob.

She stepped lightly across the room, and discovered that that side was of wood panelled over to match the other three solid walls. She pulled at the knob and a door swung open. That side of the room was nothing but a vast cupboard partly filled with rubbish. With his arms handcuffed to a bar set across a small frosted window, and with a strip of adhesive tape over his mouth, Bob Doge was crouched on a sledge chair near the outer wall.

Instantly she had freed him from the gag, but her finger on her lips warned him to remain quiet. She closed the cupboard door again to help deaden any sound before she ventured on a question.

"Anyone here besides Swish and Daisy?" she whispered.

His eyes glowered heavily.

"Only one guy as far as I know," he said. "A one-eyed doggy they call Mike. They'd keep straddling him up with those handcuffs when I came round, or I might have hurt some of 'em. That was a million years ago. Swish, what a man I was. What happened to you? Haven't you got here now? Where is this dump?"

She answered his questions perfunctorily. There was no time for long explanations. The great thing, she pointed out, was to get away as quickly and quietly as possible.

He grinned readily.

"That's so. But how? Easy enough to separate these bracelets if we had a bit."

"Sure," she agreed. "The only objection to that is that we haven't got a bit."

Tentatively she jabbed at the mortar near one end of the bar with the blade of her penknife. A tiny strip came away, and with new hope she started feverishly to work. Her hands became sore and blistered after a very few minutes but she was encouraged by perceptible progress. The mortar, although it was hard, had become brittle and was easier than she had expected.

Then she secured beneath her teeth as the blade snapped in her fingers. Luckily there was a second blade. She used this more carefully and presently Bob, by rocking the bar to and fro, was able to discharge one end and slip his hands off. He was free—free at any rate to move—although his hands were still fettered together. He worked his arms and overcame the handcuffs.

"Good!" he murmured in relief. "That's better. Let's get cracking. The sooner I get somewhere where I can get these things off the happier I'll be."

She nodded, and they stole noiselessly across the room. Her hand was on the door, and she had opened it an inch or two when from down below there came the ring of a telephone startlingly loud in the silence.

She pushed the door back quickly, and still gripping the handle remained in a hovering attitude, her ears glued to the passage. There was a stir down below, and nearer at hand in the adjoining room there was a thud as someone jumped out of bed. She heard hurried footsteps rushing down the stairs to the telephone in the tiny hall.

"This," she remarked coolly, "has just about torn it wide open. This hang-up

has kept on a shade too long. I ought to have thought of disconnecting that telephone. That will be Corson. He will have read my note and be wanting to know—"

"What note?" demanded Bob, to whom she had so far said nothing of the capture of his antagonist.

"Never mind now," she said. "I'll be up here to investigate in a minute. Stand by this side of the door. Do you think you can knock a man out with those things on when it comes?"

He grinned joyfully as he shifted his position. This was something he could understand.

"You bet you. A little awkward, but the guy I hit won't have any complaints." Downstairs Swiss Sherry had scratched the telephone from a heavy-jawed man whose naturally scowling face was made still more sinister by a patch over one eye.

"I'll have that, Mike. This is Swiss talking, Eddie. What—what's that? They've picked Fighting Frankie! Now what do you know about that? The dirty dog." He spoke with a fervent disgust at the depravity of human nature.

"I'm going to see about it, don't you worry," said Corson grimly. "What I rang up for was to see if you were still there. I got some hints about you, as I told you earlier on. It wouldn't be exactly healthy for anyone to run out on me. You stay put and keep that kind where he is. Leave everything else to me. I'll have Frankie in the ring to-night."

"Thank—your better," said Swiss. "That's O.K. with me. Only don't let's have any more cracks about double-crossing. What are you going to do?"

"I can't tell you on the wire. You'll be hearing from me."

Swiss laughed back the receiver. One-eyed Mike had been joined by Daisy who had put on an outdoor coat over her nightgown.

"What's wrong?" she demanded. "Never mind," he started. "Get busy and see if you can scrouge up some hot coffee and something to eat out of this dump. You run up and have a look at Bob, Mike."

The other man started up the stairs. Bob Zaggo heard his heavy footsteps approach the door and peered himself lightly on the balls of his feet. As the door opened there was a fraction of a second during which Mike beheld the boxer waiting for him. He had no chance to do anything. Before he could open his mouth the blow—as a sensationalist calculated as any Bob had ever delivered with the true use of his hands—took him on the jaw and he dropped with a thud half in and half out of the room.

A scream came from Daisy who was on her way upstairs to finish dressing. Val pushed the door to see Bob dragging his victim inside.

"A sweet L.A. boy, though it will never go on your record," she murmured. "That leaves only the pair of 'em. We ought to be able to fix 'em now. Here comes Swiss."

He came up the stairs with a rush and with a gun in his hand. But as he reached the top caution slowed his steps.

"Come on, Bob, that won't get you anywhere. I've got a rod here, and I'll blast the top of your head off if there's any more monkey business. If you want it rough you can have it rough."

He had no suspicion that there was anyone with the boxer. He assumed that the other had somehow managed to get free from the bar to which he had been tethered, but he had a shrewd notion that



Val opened the window easily. It worried her. This job should have been difficult. Something was wrong!

the handcuffs had not been so easy. What he was not prepared for was to be answered by a woman.

"Good-morning, Mr. Sherry," said Val. "It's nice to hear your voice again. And talking about blasting I've got myself a new gun since we last met. Come along in and have a look at it."

AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS.

SWISS made no immediate reply. With an effort he bottled up his feelings. This called for heavy thinking.

"Should I go and ring up Corson?" demanded the agitated Daisy.

"Yeah," he said, and immediately altered his mind. "No. What good can he do? You go and do what I told you and make some coffee. I'm parking out here." He half-rose, half-reclined on the stairs, with his revolver in front of him and his eyes fixed on the door.

Val repeated her invitation.

"Come along up, Swiss."

"Not so you'd notice it," he retorted. "I'm quite comfortable here, sister. I reckon you'll stay where you are for a while, too."

"I wouldn't be too sure of that," she said. "Bob and I have got a date at a fight to-night. We've got to keep that in mind. But there's plenty of time."

"An optimistic dame. What makes you so sure there'll be any fight?"

"Hain't Corson told you?" she asked in mock surprise. "About Fighting Frankie? We've got him. And there's Bob here with me. All we've got to do is to get them together in the ring. Some of my own friends are coming along. People from Scotland Yard. They'll be glad to meet you. I'm just the advance agent."

He showed this over for a couple of seconds.

"My own opinion is that you're lying, sister," he pronounced at last. "If Scotland Yard was in this they wouldn't stand for you announcing Frankie like we announced Bob. You wouldn't want to be in the dock along of us."

"What a rag!" she said contemptuously. "Fighting Frankie came along of his own free will. I put him up to one

or two points about this mob that they're making him the fall guy, and I helped him to cut loose."

Swiss's face became even more thoughtful, but he forced a squawk.

"I see. You expect me to believe that? Know any more hot-line stories?"

"Lots," she asserted. "You've been chipping in personally a heap more than you can afford on this fight. You've got more than you can

ever pay if you lose. What's on a man's the fellows you're but with will think you've chiselled 'em—and chisellers have been picked up dead out of the gutter before now. So if you want to sit up pretty as you thought you were you've got to make sure that Fighting Frankie gets the decision."

"Go on," he said between his teeth.

"I've been having Daisy looked up. You or some other hood in your gang, found that she was a kind of dastard

relative of Bob Zaggo. So she was picked up at Scotland, and she turned out to be willing enough to work in with your dirty plans. She was supplied with a car and sent down to find a chance of doping Bob. Too bad that someone was silly enough to let her have a car that is registered in Corson's name. That wasn't at all clever, Swiss. I haven't checked with Bob, yet, but I can rough out her story. Her husband, Bob's cousin, was supposed to have escaped from Maidstone Gaol. As a matter of fact he had tried to, but it didn't come off. Bob wasn't to know that. He swallowed her yarn that Bill Spink had succeeded in his getaway, and was lying low. Blood being thicker than water, she appealed to Bob to lend him a hundred quid so that he could get out of the country."

"That's absolutely right," broke in Bob, "though how you—"

"Never mind how I got on to it," she stopped him. "It was a cute idea, and I think I can see Mr. Eddie Corson's line British hand in it. Daisy slipped Bob a piece of candy doped with hashish when she met him, and that yarn made sure Bob'd be on hand—secretly—to get another dose at the right time and to pass across the hundred quid. It nearly came off, and we might still have been guessing what was wrong with him—if I hadn't chanced to bump in. I suppose that hundred pounds was to have been just a bit of her rake-off? She'd expect more than that, and if you ask me it would have been cheap at almost any price."

Daisy, who had brought a cup of coffee and some bread-and-butter to Swiss, put the refreshment down on the stairs with a quivering hand and obtained in starchy.

"Listen to the lying cat!"

"Let her talk," said Swiss. "I like to hear her."

"I thought you'd be interested," said Val, speaking with a kind of dispassionate detachment.

"Cunning little devil—you. Why are you telling me that?"

"I have my feelings," admitted Val. "I like to show off. And you annoy me hanging around. I thought if I gave you the right angle on this you might like to beat it while the going's good."

Her frankness was calculated and deliberate. She knew the disadvantage of her own position while Swish still covered the stairs. Whether he would really shoot or not she was not sure, but if he did the odds were in his favor, because he could get in at least one shot, and perhaps two, before she could get clear of the angle of the door and get a view of him. She hoped that her statement of how much she knew would frighten Swish enough to make him take to flight and leave the way clear for Bob and herself to make an exit without further immediate trouble.

It did, indeed, add considerably to Swish's worries. He felt like some animal being driven into a corner, but he became all the more dangerous for that. Up to now murder had been his part of his plans. It had not seemed necessary, and in England he knew well enough it was highly dangerous. Yet he topped with the idea.

If he could get rid of her—and her evidence was the main part of the case she had outlined against him—there was a chance. To get rid of her—and Bob—in one group might still leave the case in his hands.

Daisy was shivering. She made no attempt to conceal her concern. He needed a target all her to bend down so that she would talk with less chance of being overheard.

"This dame's dangerous," he muttered. "But I got an idea of fixing her. Pull yourself together, Day. I want—" He stopped. Low as his voice was he was afraid that it would carry. "Get me a pencil and a piece of paper," he ordered. She stole down, and when she came back he wrote this message:

"Go out to the car. There is a spare can of petrol on the running-board. Bring it here and leave it by my side. Find me a long piece of string at the same time. Then go back to the car. Start it up and take it out to the gate. Keep the engine running and give two boots when you are ready."

Daisy shook her head.

"What are you going to do?" she repeated in a hoarse whisper. "I won't leave any hand in it. It's murder."

"Do you want to do five years in jail or perhaps—" He made a gesture with the revolver. "It'll be all right, take my word. Who's to know? It's going to be O.K. You hear me? Move."

Suppressed and yet fearful, she did as he told her. Val and Bob, listening from behind the door, were mystified. They could not make out what was happening.

"Well, Swish? Going to wait there till the Flying Squad come to your party?"

"Yeah. I'm still here," he said gruffly, and wormed his way slowly to the top of the stairs.

On the landing he placed the petrol can and, unscrewing the top, fast the string round the handle. He threaded the line and through one of the hammers and carried it down to the bottom of the stairs. Near the lowest step he crumpled an old newspaper, and with the string in one hand and the box of matches in another he stood listening.

He did not have to wait long. From somewhere outside there came the sound of a couple of hoofs. Deliberately he set a match to the paper and waited till it was well alight. Then he gave a jerk to the string. The petrol tin was pulled down on its side and a cascade of spirit flowed down the stairs.

Swish Sherry was out of the house

before it reached the burning paper. As he raced to the car a burst of flames told him that his proposed scheme had failed. He pushed Daisy roughly from the driving seat.

"It's take this best. We got to be well out of this before anyone sees us."

CORSON'S COME-BACK.

WHEN Eddie Corson's first transport of blind rage at the disappearance of Fighting Frankie was over he settled down to cold thought. He remembered one of his most trusted aides—a gentleman known in some circles as Sharkeye Brook. These two went into conference and he told as much as he thought was necessary.

"I ain't so set on it, boss," Sharkeye urged. "We're deep enough as it is. Why not let things slide? Call everything off, tell Swish to spring Bob and take a chance on a straight fight. We can only lose."

"Sure, we can only lose," sneered Corson. "That's easy. But losing means one thing for me—no-a-a-a—cash. There's too much at stake. It's what I don't intend to do. So you find those two gars just like I say. They're on a hundred quid apiece if it comes off. And the sooner it's done the better. Let me know when they're ready."

Some time about an hour later a powerful, long, black, official-looking car pulled up outside the gate of Slim Fright's training camp. A man in the uniform of a police inspector descended, shook the gate vigorously, and finding it was locked rang the bell. The driver, who was dressed as a constable, got down and stood close behind him.

"You Mr. Fright?" demanded the first authoritatively to the man who answered. "You're not? All right. Open the gate and take us to him. You see who we are."

Slim, who from a window in the house had seen the encounter, scolded out to meet them. The sight of their uniforms gave him a vague fear that something had gone wrong with Val.

"Looking for me?" he queried. "My name's Fright."

"You're the man we want to talk to," said the inspector gruffly. "You're the boxing manager? We've got information that you are concerned in the kidnapping of a man named Deane, Fighting Frankie, the boxer, and we have a warrant to search this place." From his breast pocket he flashed a folded blue paper which he immediately copied.

If Slim had been better acquainted with police procedure he might have feared this approach a little odd. But the uniforms lulled suspicion. He accepted them at face value. He unlocked his underlip. He was staggered at Corson's audacity, and approved for time to think.

"That so?" he asked. "Well, I've been considering swearing out a warrant myself against another gip. Only Corson's beat me to the punch. Come along in, gentlemen, while I 'phone up Scotland Yard. I can put this right in two ticks."

The constable shifted his feet uneasily but the other man shook his head and laid a hand on Slim's arm.

"You'll talk to us. We are Scotland Yard. Where is Frankie? He'll be wise for you to save trouble. Mr. Fright."

Struggling his stomach Slim led them into the house. A little group, which included Frankie, was gathered by the front door eager to know what was happening. There were murmurs as Fright explained the object of the police visit.

"Easy, boys. This'll all sort itself out. We don't want to get in on the wrong side of this. Miss Emery will be back soon."

"We're looking for her, too," the inspector said grimly. "We've got a warrant for her arrest."

"I reckon I got some sort of say in this, ain't I?" demanded Frankie, pushing himself forward. "I'm supposed to be the man that's kidnapped. I'm telling you that's all boloney. I'm here of my own free will. I can stay here if I like."

The inspector seemed as taken aback as most of the circle of boxers. Slim's grin grew broader as he shot a sideways glance at the boxer and he mentally registered a mark in his favor. This proved that Frankie was straight. The man in uniform recovered himself almost instantly.

"That's different," he admitted. "Maybe I'm here on a foot's errand, but I got to go through with it, all the same. You'll have to come back with us and make a statement, Mr. Deane. If there's been no kidnapping we may have to charge someone with doing a public mischief by wasting police time."



A hand, grasping a stubbed gun, appeared. Val r

Slim jingled some silver in his pocket and smiled more happily than ever. Then, he reflected, would let Val see and give Corson something to think about.

"Suits me," he agreed. "What Frankie says ought to satisfy you. No need to go to a lot of trouble about any statement. He'll sign a paper here if you like. It oughtn't to take two minutes."

The official shook his head. "Nothing doing. He's coming back with us. I've only your word for it that he is Fighting Frankie."

Slim did not pursue the argument. Official ways were official ways and he thought he could understand the inspector's point of view. He scolded down the boxer who was irritated at what he deemed a refusal to take his word, and persuaded him that the best thing for him to do was to accompany the officers and get the matter cleared up.

"It's like this," he explained. "None

of us want to get our noses dirtier than we can beat, and quarrelling with the police would look bad. I was hoping to keep you here till Bob turned up, but it can't be helped. You keep silent."

"I got a hunch about this," persisted Frankie. "You come with me."

"I ought to be here," protested Slim. "I'm wondering about Miss Emery. She ought to be back by now. But it can't make much difference. We'll probably be back within the hour."

It struck him as a little queer that the police should object to his using his own car and insisted on Frankie and on riding with them. But it could not matter very

"Floury cops, eh?" exclaimed Fright. "I get it."

Someone pulled the door open. He recognized some of the grinning faces as taught from the opposition camp. Corson, a stern smile on his face, gave a jerky nod.

"Hello, Frankie. Hello, Slim. We're taking Frankie home if you don't mind."

Slim got stiffly out of the car and felt in his right hand waistcoat pocket for a cigar, which he jammed between his teeth before replying.

"Wag, if it isn't Eddie. Got a match? So you saving a couple of stage cops on me. Well, it was your turn."

He stumped quite calm, and Corson enjoyed his triumph as he snugged a lighter into flame and held it out. Slim leaned forward a little. He had been a boxer himself before he became a manager. His left hand travelled swiftly upwards with the fall force of his body behind it and the other man topped backwards into the roadway.

"I've been praying for a chance to do that for a long time," said Slim placidly. "I feel better now that it's out of my system."

Backing a step towards the car he tilted the still unlighted cigar defiantly at the six or eight angry men who surged round him, and waited for the instant attack that he expected. But Fighting Frankie was now out of the car and, spreading out his arms, cleared a space.

"Don't forget I'm in on this. Any other of you boys who are looking for a rough

house may only get to ask for it."

His intervention seemed to surprise most of them. Sharkyve elbowed his way to the front.

"What's this, Frankie? After all the trouble we've had to find you an' all, Don't tell us you've been an' sold out on us."

"Sold out nothing," retorted Frankie.

"Slim's a right guy and nobody's going to touch him while I'm around. Listen, you talk. I've been blind to all sorts of rottenness but my eyes are opened. That crook there only got what was coming to him."

Corson was sliding up with one of his assistants busy over him with a handkerchief. He got uncertainly to his feet, for he was still a little dazed.

"That's it, it is!" said Corson quietly.

"I reckon Slim must have been picking the tale but and strong to get you this way. I'm a crook, am I? No, why's that you up to the biggest thing of your career.

Me, who's worked to dig you out?" For a chance of the championship that you'd never have had without me. Slim must have worked on you hard and had to get you to believe him. You fall for something that snake tells you the very first minute like a come-on from a farm. To hear you approved think that I'd get no reputation in the fighting game."

"What have you done with Bob Sagger?" demanded Frankie doggedly.

Corson raised his eyebrows.

"Me done with Bob Sagger? Hear him, boys? No thank you they've been filling you up with. Be your apt, Frankie. They had to tell you something. But I didn't think you were dope enough to swallow a thing like that. That was to keep you quiet, I guess. They've taken care to keep Bob out of your sight, but you can bet he will show up in the ring to-night. You—yes, you may—were to be kept out. That was the big idea. Eh, Slim?"

The other manager coughed in his cigar.

"That's quick, Eddie. The way you can string lies together sounds very heavily plausible. Frankie's got a right to believe you if he chooses."

"You're wasting your time, Eddie," put in the boxer. "I'm on to you, Scream. Take the whole carcase along. I'll stick around with Slim until I get inside those ropes."

Corson frowned. When he had framed his plan he had not reckoned on any trouble of this kind with the boxer whom he had assumed to be held by force just as he was holding Bob. Frankie had always been tractable enough and his willingness to follow instructions, stand to fighting, and leave all other affairs to his manager had given the latter the impression that he would always be simple enough to handle.

"That's strange talk, son," he said.

"Aren't you forgetting me or two little things? Suppose this fight comes off and you lose to-night? What do you think the newspapers will have to say when they learn that you spent to-day in the opposition camp? Will they think it a set-up? Ask yourself. I guess you'd have some trouble in persuading them otherwise. Then there's something else you've overlooked. You and me have got to be completely under my control and discipline up to and including the day of the fight. Oh, boy, what a sweet action for damages I'll have against you. Not only will you be washed up as a boxer, but I'll ask you for your last penny."

Slim removed his cigar and blew out a cloud of smoke. He was quite sure that with that gang around him Frankie would never be permitted to return with him. He got out a hand to restrain the angry boxer.

"There's something in what this tough says, boy," he advised. "You don't want any more. Maybe if we told our side of it we could make the picture look different, but some of the mad might stick even then. You go along and keep your eye shut whatever happens. If you took my man out on the ref gave you the decision I won't have any complaints against you. It's the wisest way."

"If you say so," said Frankie unflinchingly, and turned haughty on his own manager.

"And you'd better stay away from me if there are any more tricks up your sleeve. Get that? I won't answer for myself, and what Slim gave you just now won't be nothing."

"That's inside me told," said Corson.

"All I'll ask you to do is to carry out your contract. In you get. On your way,



ent. The weapon thudded on Bob's head and he collapsed, if not the first round.

much so long as they gave them a lift back. They started off hastily enough, the inspector volubly apologetic about rules and regulations now that he had got his way.

They drove for about ten minutes, and since neither Frankie nor Fright knew where the nearest police station was they took little account of direction. But presently the manager became aware that there was a car ahead and a car behind keeping pace with them. He frowned thoughtfully, and for the first time a doubt struck on his mind. Before he had time to express it the driver of the foremost car put out a hand and they stopped with a jerk. Men from the other cars were tumbling out and running towards them.

"Here," said the police inspector, leaning over from the back seat and tapping Slim on the shoulder. "Is where you got out. You'd get a nice little bit of exercise walking back to your car."

Slim. "One of these days I'll be remembering that punch and, believe me, you'll know all about it."

Slim turned on his heel without reply and started on his journey home.

UNCLE MIKE'S DRAFT.

WITHIN a few seconds of the hurried exit of Doctor Sherry from the cottage the window of the stairs had caught, and the glare began to show beneath the door. Val caught her breath as she realized its significance. She had not imagined that Swiss would go to this extreme. But she was quick to understand.

"They've set the joint alight," he said quickly. "Better open that door, Miss Emery. There's no other way out. If we're quick we may be able to take it on the sly."

"Miss Swiss is waiting at the bottom," she said doubtfully, and pulled the door ajar.

The staircase was now almost hidden by the smoke and flame, and she struggled for a moment as she considered the chances. But Bob was not inclined to wait. Before she could stop him he had swung her up in his manacled arms as if she were a baby. He plumped on to the landing and down the stairs in three giant strides. The smoke choked her and the flames lashed at her dress, but in half a minute they were outside the house. The man set her down, crushed a smouldering spark on her skirt between his hands, coughed a little and grinned.

"Well, here we are. What do we do next?"

"If you can think and act so quickly as that when you're fighting I could pick the next heavyweight champion of the world," she said. "There's no dope about you now. I was more scared of running into a bullet than of the fire." She still had her pistol in her hand and was peering around her. "Swiss seems to have taken it on the lam. Having made up his mind to murder he would have been wise to stop and make sure."

"You got guts," said Bob. "I can't take murder so easy. I'm looking forward to meeting that rascal again."

But Swiss was away. The girl led her companion towards where she had parked the car, but the driver, gun-faced, and with a big automobile in his hot net-thorn halfway. He gave an ejaculation of relief.

"You all right, Miss Emery? I was coming to find out what was wrong. That fire—" He made a gesture towards the house. Smoke was pouring from the windows.

"A close thing," remarked Val. "We might have married you badly, Jim. Seen anything of a man and a girl?"

"A car came out a little while back, but it turned in the other direction and didn't pass me. It was going hell for leather."

"You bet you it was," said Bob. "They wouldn't be anxious to hang around. What about these things?" He held up his wrists to display the handcuffs.

"I'll attend to those," declared Val. "There'll be a fire in the tool-room. You drive, Jim. We'll be getting back to camp. We can't do anything about the fire and I'm anxious to know if Corson has made any more."

She sat in the back with Bob and worked anxiously on the link that held his wrists together. Her hands were sore long before she had made sufficient impression for him with a sudden jerk to snap the link. The cinkets about his wrists would have to wait for removal to a more convenient time. She brushed her hands together.

"That's that. I don't know that the way you've spent the last eight or nine hours would be recommended by the best judges as preparation for a fight," she commented. "How do you feel now?"

He stretched his arms out as far as the limits of the car would allow and worked them like pistons.

"Hungry," he declared. "That side'll be fit to light a dozen men, though a shower and a few hours sleep won't hurt me. Hey, what was that? Sleep—sleep!"

He prodded the driver in the back to emphasize his words and the car skidded to a standstill a hundred yards away from the entrance to the training camp. Bob banged open the door and ran to meet a figure they had passed who was just emerging from a footpath. A stout little man was swaggering along the front of a cap tilted at a jaunty angle clenched between his teeth. The butt of the cigar was jammed to the ground as Bob stopped him abruptly on the back with his open hand. He side-stepped with agility.

"Hold it," he protested. "I'm no punching bag. You're sure more welcome back than a bouquet of flowers in May, but you don't have to cripple me. What you been doing?"

"Ask the little lady," said Bob. "There wouldn't be any fight coming off to-night if it hadn't been for her. I've been a nut, Slim."

"You're telling me!" said the manager emphatically. "Hello, Miss Emery. You've been a bit longer than I expected. Have much trouble?"

"Nothing to speak of," said the girl airily. "Bob and I are supposed to be dead, that's all. Burnt to death. Let's get inside, because there's certain people I wouldn't like to have to know we've recovered yet. And I'm surprised to see you wandering loose round the countryside. I thought you'd be sticking close to Frankie. How is he?"

Slim opened his eyes widely but showed no other sign of concern or curiosity. He was getting used to Val.

"The last I saw of him," he remarked, "he was telling Mr. Corson exactly what was in his heart. They should be a good bit on the way back to London now."

"Damn! Val let the explosive slip between her teeth. "Corson got him away from you? I thought you were safe. Anybody hurt?"

"Nobody but Corson," declared Slim, "and he's not hurt enough, although I certainly got a few seconds of enjoyment out of the affair. This is how it was—"

Back inside the camp the two bits of steel were removed from Bob's wrists, and he was led, huffed, manacled and put to bed to catch up on his rest. While some of these things were happening Val and the manager cleared up their stories. Slim was apologetic.

"It sounds like I was a sap falling for those two bogus cops like that," he said, "but having got my head in the bag I didn't see what else I could do but let Frankie go. Perhaps it's all for the best. He's square and he's wise to Corson now. He'll keep his mouth shut. We don't have to worry about him. But I'm sorry about your shortcomings. That's a heap more serious. I knew Swiss was a wicked guy, but I'd never have let you go alone if I'd guessed that he'd go as far as murder."

Val rested a finger on the slumped in her chair.

"That was Swiss's own idea. Corson would never have agreed to that. I'm wondering what his reaction will be when he knows. He won't care to be an accessory after the fact, but if Swiss can

convince him that all the tracks are covered he may make the best of a bad job. At any rate, he'll be convinced that Bob won't enter the ring to-night except as a ghost—and maybe he doesn't believe in ghosts." She chuckled. "We won't let anything leak out. I believe I'll have to talk to Uncle Mike. He'll be interested, and it's the least I can do."

"There's the phone," said Slim. "I'll go out if you want to be private, and see that you aren't disturbed."

The red ring through to Scotland Yard and in a little while found herself speaking to the Chief Constable.

"Hello, darling," she murmured. "I just wanted to tell you that I am all right. I felt you might be getting nervous. I took your advice, although it hasn't worked out in the way that you planned."

"So it's you again, headcase," he grunted. "I don't know what you're muddering about. I didn't give you any advice, and if it means that you're in a jam again please keep me out of it. I don't want to know if you've been doing something illegal."

"Am doing anything illegal?" she exclaimed. "How could you think such a thing, Uncle Mike?"

"I'm crossed up mind," he said dryly. "You might at least pretend to be pleased," she complained. "Any something nice like 'Thank heaven you're safe.' But I don't suppose you'd be really worried about a little thing like some thing trying to run me to death. It nearly came off, too. But I won't bore you by telling you about it. So long, Uncle Mike."

She made no attempt to put down the receiver, however.

"What—what's that?" he snapped. "Don't ring off that gun. Let me have this straight."

"Ah, I thought you didn't want to know anything!" She dropped her bustling tone and gave him a brief outline of happenings since she had seen him, although she perhaps selected some of the details. The Chief Constable snorted as she finished.

"You expect me to believe that this Mike, Fighting Frankie, whom you'd never spoken to in your life before, let you make him from his sleep and lead him out handcuffed like a pet lamb? You want take me for a No. 1 man to wash anything like that. Let it pass. I'm more interested in the other part of your yarn. That show is serious. I don't like men and attempted murder. I'll have Mr. Swiss Emery and his girl friend rounded up right away. I won't take long to attend to them."

"There you go—headstrong again," she said. "Why the hell? Just for the sake of a few hours you'll go and spoil everything."

"So there is something else in your mind? Let's have it."

"It's the tin, Uncle Mike," she said in hurried tones. "If you send your bright boys around making arrests two soon, certain people will know that Bob Sage is alive and healthy. Now if that setting was on the other side of the Atlantic you wise men is a good honest working girl and her friends to get the long odds is a piece of money that she's thinking of investing! If you let her for a couple of hours Swiss will probably take it for granted that no one's on to his little con. Then he'll show up by himself and save a lot of trouble."

"It seems to me," he said heavily, "that you're under the impression that Scotland Yard is a branch of your 100-pot detective agency. Don't try me too far, believe, I

premise nothing. But I might as well use this light. Do you think that your friend Wright could get me tickets—four should be enough?"

"Certainly," she laughed. "I'm sure he will. Four tickets each. Call 'em your share of the graft."

THE LAST ROUND

ON the way back to London Corcoran had done his best to restore some semblance of smooth relations with Frankie, but the boxer had remained aloof and resentful.

"As far as I remember it didn't say anything in my contract about having to talk to you," he cut short some of the manager's explanations. "If you're trying to make out that all of this shakedown was carried out by Swish behind your back and without your knowledge, you're wasting your breath. I've got some fresh ideas about that. If I hadn't found someone to wise me up I might have been put down as just another of your molasses. I'll fight it right because I'm contracted to. That's all. So stand up unless you have anything to say."

Sharky, who was one of the party in the car, was indiscreet enough to break his silence.

"You'll be extra grateful to the boss when you find yourself in line for the championship of the world," put in Sharky. "We gotta deal together, Frankie. This fight business ain't a young lady's high school. Why nurse a grudge?"

"You," said the younger man curtly, "had better put a sock in it, too."

In this unamiable frame of mind the party reached Town. Corcoran was stopped by one of the hotel staff when they entered the lobby.

"Somebody's been ringing you half a dozen times since you've been away, Mr. Corcoran, but wouldn't give any name. It's marked 'Urgent and Personal.'"

It did not need more than two guesses to hit on the name of the persistent caller, and Corcoran tore open the note with a sense of foreboding. There were only a few words in it, and it was unsigned. He turned to Sharky.

"See that Frankie is made comfortable, and stay around. I've got some business to attend to."

He strung off at a furious pace with a furrowed brow and his mouth pressed in a thin straight line. His journey did not take him far from the hotel. Presently he turned abruptly into a little alley off Regent Street, and a few paces along entered the door of a small restaurant. There were a couple of people drinking coffee at one of the small tables, but a glance showed him that neither was the person he wanted. He rattled vigorously with his fist on another table and the proprietor, short-sleeved and blue-climbed, appeared from some remote room.

"Why, how do you, Mr. Corcoran—" he began, but the other cut him short.

"Swish Sherry here? I want to see him."

"Swish?" The man pulled back a curtain disclosing a narrow flight of stairs. "He's expecting you. On the second floor."

Corcoran climbed the narrow stairs and knocked at a door—which hadly turned a coil of paint—which he found leading him to a room which was opened by Swish Sherry himself, who gave an ejaculation of relief.

"Hot dog, it's you. I was getting wind up, Eddie. I found you gone and not one of the boys around anywhere to give me the wire where you were. It was beginning to get on my mind that you'd taken it on the lam. Have you heard?"

Corcoran noted a couple of bottles on the

table. On a coast, disturbed and asleep, was Daisy Boatman.

"Heard what?" he demanded. "You've been drinking. What are you doing up here in this dog's hole? Why aren't you looking after Bob and that Jane? Don't tell me—"

"Hold hard," said Swish. "Looks like you ain't heard. Everything's all right—right as rain. I ain't drunk though I've had one or two—and, by heck, if you'd been through what I've been through you'd have needed a drink—maybe two or three."

Corcoran gripped him by the shoulder and shook him.

"Out with it!"

"Don't get excited," protested Swish. "There won't be any fight to-night. Frankie's win by default. Then he'll bust the clamp and we'll all be on top of the world." He grinned furiously. "Cue



Sherry had a clever plan to cover his tracks—a new arson set-up.

Bob Zeppe won't fight any more fights—ever. He's disappeared—vanished—him and the dame. All like a confounding trick. You don't have to worry any more, Eddie."

But he had said more than enough to add to Corcoran's worries already. The manager left him abruptly and went down to the restaurant, returning with a cup of hot, strong black coffee. This he forced the reluctant Swish to drink. Then he took him to a tiny bathroom which formed part of the flat, and forced his head under a tap of cold water. When he had finished Swish was very much nearer a sober man.

"Now let's have it out," ordered Corcoran. "Talk plain, or I'll know the reason."

"I'll talk plain enough," said the other. "Them two are rubbed out."

Corcoran gripped the lapel of his coat tight with one hand. His eyes were fevered. He had feared something like this. He pushed at the door with the toe of his boot to make sure that it was closed.

"Murder!" he said. "You've murdered 'em! You drunken punk, couldn't you handle it different from that? You might as well think that way on the other side and get away with it. But not here—not in

England." He rested the tips of his fingers on the top of a table and glared down at the seated man. "I'm outside this, do you hear? You can't drag me into this."

Swish began solemnly to roll a cigarette. "So that's it. You think I'll be the fat guy. Well, if I'm for the rap maybe I'll have to spill what I know. I wonder who the cop'll believe—me or you?"

"Me," Corcoran smiled roddly. "All I know is that you're in with a betting mob on this fight. There's only your word that I directed you to do anything. If the police come to me on your say-so I can tell 'em enough about you to make 'em believe me. And you'd hang. Your best bet is to leave me right out of this."

"I see. Likely there's one or two things you've overlooked, Corcoran. You'd better hear about them before you start me to be the goat. I had a talk with the little dame. She knew everything. She even had the wires tapped and a record of some of your talks with me. And don't forget it was your car we used, and your house to which we took Bob."

A touch of pallor crept into the manager's face. He knew he was in a hole, but he wanted to be sure how deep the hole was. He managed a half-hearted laugh.

"Don't get me wrong, Swish. I'm not thinking of getting on you. I always stand by my pals. But this has got me a bit taken aback. How'd it happen?"

Swish spat out a bit of stray tobacco.

"That's got you altering your tune, Eddie. As long as you understand we're in the same boat it's all right with me. My hand was forced. If I'd let that dame go, knowing what she did, me and you would be in the cooler right now. I had to play the cards the way I did, but if we finish the hand right any nobody can prove anything, whatever they may think." He went on to tell of the discovery of Vel at the cottage.

"It was her thinking, Eddie. Now the way I taped it out was this: that dame came there alone. I don't know why, but it starts to reason she wouldn't have risked what she did if she'd had help at hand. Who knows that she was there? Who knows that Bob Zeppe was there? Nobody. So what? Just another country cottage burned down. If there are any wires left—and I don't reckon there will be—that do they amount to? Two unidentified holes—"

"Three," interrupted Corcoran. "You're forgetting Mike."

"All right, three holes burnt beyond recognition. Where's that got us with us?"

Corcoran stroked his chin. The case as set by Swish did make a difference.

"If it was sure you hadn't blundered this might be handled yet. Of course, there'll be trouble about Bob disappearing, and we may be asked some questions, but as long as they don't know anything he's dead or alive they can't pin anything on us. I got a stone wall now, and I can be the one for you with some of the boys. Maybe it wasn't such a rangle play as I thought." His eyebrows came together. "Only one thing occurs to me. Why, if you feel that we're in the clear, did you want to hide here?"

"To tell the truth," admitted Swish, "my nerve rather gave out. I thought it best to stick under cover until I've had a word with you. Then I found that everyone had vanished and it didn't look so good to me. I thought maybe something had slipped. How about Frankie?"

"He's back. The boys are busy about that and that's why there was no one around. Now, listen. Mr. 262 to 260

through with this from now on as if nothing had happened. You were second. Show yourself. And keep away from the boxes. What about her?" He indicated the sleeping Daisy.

"I get you," Smith was relieved. "I'll fix her. Looks like everything's going to be O.K., Eddie."

"It's got to be," said the manager.

The last of the preliminary fights was drawing to its end. Uncle Mike, in an expanse of white shirt front, sat in the front row and tapped his pipe out on the heel of his boot.

"Better have a look round, Toby," he muttered to the man on his right.

Detective-Inspector Toby Sims nodded, and made a quiet round of all the rows, and made a quiet round of all the rows. At each seat from the ticket takers and other official positions there was a little group of men, with some of whom he exchanged a word. He returned to his place by the Chief Constable.

"All set," he muttered. "They're all here, including the girl. If anyone tries to walk out on to the stage just quietly yank 'em into a police van."

"Then we can relax," said Uncle Mike, and refilled his pipe.

In his dressing-room Fighting Frankie was submitting to a few final attentions from his trainer. He still had little to say to Corson who, with Sharkey, was in and out of the room, but he was less sorry to the manager than in the morning. Corson was a crook, but all that was now washed up. Win or lose he would cut loose after the fight, and there was no point in nursing a grudge.

Corson was in good spirits. Everything seemed to be going well. The covering papers had had a paragraph about the fire but with no hint that there was anything unusual in it. Quite likely the bodies had been totally destroyed. If Sims might was worried he had put up no public squawk. The only people who seemed at all disturbed were the officials sitting for the prosecution. One of them spotted his trousers to Corson.

"In no time at all that light should be on, and neither Slim nor his main have showed up. Slim has telephoned it will be O.K. and that he'll have Bob in the ring at nine-twenty. Says he'll dress in the car. Squawk damn funny to me. His handlers all here, but they profess to know nothing. You get any ideas, Corson?"

Corson suppressed a grin. No doubt might was hoping for something up to the last moment.

"Too bad," he said. "I'd hate to claim the fight."

"Yes—you would!" agreed the other sceptically. "But what I'd particularly hate is a riot if there isn't any fight. Listen to that." A roar of applause mingled with a few cheering hoars penetrated to the corridor. "Sounds like the dash of that boat. Better get your main ready for the ring."

"She's all set," Corson glanced at his watch. "I've done my part. The fight is fixed for nine-twenty. Better tell the referee to have his watch ready. If Zippo isn't here by nine twenty-five we claim the fight."

The ultimatum did not appear to cheer the other man up in any degree. Corson left him and made his way into the arena. They were introducing himself being noticeable from the ring, and as he watched he suddenly saw Slim might moving down an aisle, one hand in his pocket and a cigar lit between his teeth. The other manager seemed quite at his

ease, and passed from time to time to exchange jocular greetings with various people he knew. Corson could not quite make his comportsance out. Was he just putting on a front, or— Well, at any rate, he was sane.

He caught the eye of Smith, who was standing in the gangway leading to the dressing-rooms, and saw it quiver in a wink. Smith seemed confident enough. If anything was going wrong there would surely have been some sign before now.

The official who had been so perturbed hurried to Slim and, catching him by the arm, dragged him aside. He appeared to be engaged in animated expostulation. Prigitt, lifting his cigar in a gesture, seemed to look right through Corson.

Smith moved across to a seat that had been reserved for him about four rows back from the ring. Daisy Squawk was sitting by his side. The introductions from the ring had finished. A spotlight played on the gangway from the dressing-rooms. Fighting Frankie, in a bright blue dressing gown, walked swiftly into the arena, climbed beneath the ropes, and waved acknowledgement as a shower of applause broke out. There were seconds at both corners, but no sign of Bob Zippo. Corson took another look at his watch. It was seventeen minutes past nine. Frankie beckoned to him and looked down between the ropes.

"Bob Zippo isn't here," he whispered. "If you've been up to any monkey business—"

"Ay—forget it," snarled the manager. Another cyclone of applause interrupted him. His jaw dropped as the spotlight shined and threw up the little figure of Bob Zippo—the man he had been told was dead. His eyes sought Swift Cherry. But Swift's seat was empty. So, too, was that of Daisy Squawk.

They had seen an apparition just about thirty seconds earlier—an apparition that would have meant nothing to Corson because he had never actually met Val Emery. She had come in quite quietly and taken a seat immediately behind the Chief Constable.

In the ring Frankie and Bob had exchanged a few words that were mystifying to the very few who overheard.

"Hi yeh, Bob. I'm more pleased to see you than a million dollars. I'd have been walking out myself in another minute. I wasn't going to get this fight savings but by winning it."

Bob grinned.

"I been hearing about you, Frankie. You're a pal, and I'm not likely to forget it. Sorry we can't both win—"

The fight started. The experienced Frankie, knowing that his antagonist had an advantage of nearly ten years had decided to make the battle as short as possible. Although he would scarcely have admitted it he knew that he was the heavy likely to tire if the fight went the full distance. He started out with the intention of carrying the fight to his opponent.

Bob met him as willingly as a thunder-bolt. It was he who launched an attack that made Frankie dive into a clinch. He retreated, ducking and sidestepping, but Bob clung to him like a shadow. It was he who demonstrated tactics. Frankie was on the defence instead of the attack, but he fought back steadily, waiting for that storm of driving fists to slacken. He was being smacked on the ropes when the gong went.

"That," remarked Val, reaching forward and touching her uncle on the shoulder. "won't last five rounds."

In his corner Frankie was receiving encouragement from his seconds.

"Box him," one of them advised. "Punch him off. He's trying to win quick. He'll blow up at that pace."

"I've never met a faster man," said Frankie.

But when he tried these tactics he found that all his skill could not stop the incessant attacks. Bob never relaxed for an instant. Frankie tried all the tricks of ringcraft but he was not allowed to fight back. He covered up, ducked and stalled, but he failed to stifle the impetuous assault. Bob insisted on inquiring, breaking through Frankie's guard again and again. With tigerish ferocity he sent in short, crushing drives to the ribs, with every ounce of his weight behind them.

It was the same story in every round until the sixth. By then Frankie was obviously weakened. Bob shifted his attack to the jaw, the overture being a wicked overhead right delivered from a crouch. It struck a trifle high, but Frankie went down. At the count of eight he got up groggy. Bob crossed him to the ropes, belted, and then crossed his right fairly to the chin.

Before the referee's arm had descended twice to mark the count Corson knew the worst. His face became a mask as he moved swiftly down the gangway, not waiting for the formal verdict.

As Corson reached the exit his way was barred.

"We'd prefer you to stay," said a young man, and just then Uncle Mike snarled them. "I'm Detective-Inspector Sims. You're under arrest."

"What's the meaning of this outrage? No arrests! It's ridiculous! What for?"

"We haven't considered all the charges as yet," put in Uncle Mike. "Consorting to administer a noxious drug for one thing. Accessory after the fact to the murder of a man known as One-Eyed Mike for another. That will do to hold you for a while."

"It's a lie!" flamed Corson. "Who says—"

"It may be news to you," said Toby Sims, "that while this fight's been going on Mr. Swift Cherry and his lady friend have been doing a little talking. They walked into our arms as soon as they saw that Bob Zippo wasn't dead."

Into Uncle Mike's room next morning there walked a fresh and smiling girl.

"Well, hello," said Uncle Mike. "You look awsum. Pleased with yourself?"

"Why shouldn't I be, darling? I did get my lot and a bit more on backing Bob Zippo. One way and another I've raked in a thousand quid. A nice windfall for a working girl. I'm going to ask you to dinner. I want you to meet my friends Bob Zippo, Fighting Frankie, and Slim Prigitt. Bring Toby Sims. They all want to thank you for the arrangements last night. They were perfect."

"I wonder if Corson and his friends think so," said the Chief Constable.

"By the way, is Frankie very upset?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"He's a philosopher. He knows it was bound to come one day. Says he's glad he was knocked out by a man whom his living boss could live against. It's a thousand-to-one on Bob being the next champion."

"Right!" said Uncle Mike, abruptly turning to his desk. "Now get out and leave me to my work."

THE END.

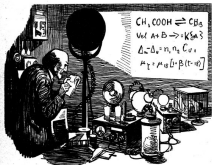
(Write to the Editor, THE THRILLER Office, The Publishing House, Pall Mall Street, London, E.C.1, and let him know your opinion of this story. Don't forget it's a BRITISH story next week. See page 425.)

The BRAIN!

AN AMAZING STORY OF
A RUTHLESS SCIENTIST
AND THE MOST DAN-
GEROUS EXPERIMENT
EVER KNOWN

By **WALTER TYRER**

(The Author of *Old Si and Young Jed*)



JUST TO REMIND YOU

PROFESSOR OSCAR PROBYN was one of the cleverest scientists of his day. There was only one brain greater than his—the brain of his brother, **PROFESSOR SCHEER, F.R.S.E.**, who lived the life of a hermit in a house at Epsom. Oscar Probyn promised help to **FLORENCE WILD**, the daughter of a woman he had loved in his youth. But strange things happened before that could begin.

A queer, unexplained episode, named **HANDBRICK SHAKEL**, who worked for Oscar Probyn, covered the genius of Oscar Probyn and the secret and mystery it would bring. He predicted the moment of bringing a brain alive and functioning after the body was dead. He killed Oscar Probyn and stole his brain.

MARTIN, Oscar Probyn's foreign manufacturer, secretly is working for the Maldivian Government, and his lover, **KATE**, planned to steal certain instruments and kidnap Oscar Probyn. They were too late.

Shakel noticed the aid of **GEORGE HARRIS**, a private detective, to solve the mystery of Oscar Probyn's disappearance. Somehow, Shakel found the stolen brain in a device certain people were in him. He tried to sell them to the Maldivians (Shakel came from Oscar Probyn). But Kate was sure she would know that Oscar Probyn was dead. Shakel was finally detected in the laboratory.

Marty and Florence had traced Shakel to an old, deserted island. Marty landed on early late in the morning, but when he failed to recognize Florence, he took her to the local Chinese. They found Marty's companions, and led to the body of a dead Chinese.

There was a police inquiry later. Marty's story is recorded at the end of the novel. The role of the dead Chinese accused Shakel of being the heir of a great name.

(See read on)

JUST LOOK.

FOR a moment George was too aghast to speak, standing there gaping at them, at the Chinese woman who was giving evidence so meekly. Then indignation swelled his breast and these pouring out in a flood from his lips.

"Have, ha! a minute!" he gasped. "What's the point in it, about? I don't know anything about it, except a little white powder! I've never set eyes on her before, nor her husband either. I'd never seen him before they found him tied up to me!"

The coroner leaned over towards him and frowned, and waited for him to take breath.

"Mr. Harris," he said, "you have had your chance to give evidence, and I have no doubt that you will be given a chance to defend yourself. We have listened with patience to your somewhat extraordinary story, and now we would like you to give this witness the same chance you had yourself."

"That's all right," raged George, "but when she starts saying foul things like that—"

A shadow fell across him. He discovered that a large, blue-clad policeman was standing on one side of him, looking at him sternly. Another police officer took his place on the other side. For the first time George began to feel uneasy, and he suddenly dried up. He didn't like this a bit. And he didn't like that shabby little woman with a yellow face and a blood nose. She didn't look nearly so innocent now.

"You are sure," the coroner said to the witness, "that the professor standing there is the same gentleman who gave your husband money?"

"Oh, yes!" the Chinese woman said smoothly. "His blue white packets, too. My two children, they see him often, too. They say what I say, too."

"They'll say what you tell 'em to, you jing!" George burst out furiously, but he was instantly silenced. He stood there looking pained, feeling that every hair turned towards him was hostile. But he realized that it was no use raging here. He was up against something bigger than he had realized, and his anger passed, and he decided the time had come to be on his guard.

The coroner was speaking again.

"We have heard some really remarkable evidence this morning," he said. "In the circumstances I do not feel like going on with the inquest. I think I had better adjourn while the police make some further inquiries. I am sure that is what

they would wish, and that would best serve the interests of justice."

The little court broke up, and there was a buzz of talk. "There was no sudden crawling towards the door. People had learned to stare, and George realized that they were staring at him. George found a little man peering eagerly at his coat-leeve.

"Like to make a statement, Mr. Harris?" he whispered eagerly. "I'm from the 'Daily Press,' and you can rely on the 'Press' to put your case fairly. Only too glad, and—"

George looked with baffling at the representative of his late employer, and then made a statement, brief and unprintable. George found a hairy man inserting a pair of broad shoulders between himself and the reporter, and a genial stranger told the Pressman to run away and play. He turned to George with his friendly and twinkling eyes.

"I'm Inspector Showler, Mr. Harris," he said. "My chief asked me to have a word with you. You don't mind, do you?"

George found himself being eased along to a door at the back of the court. He looked wildly round for a friend, glimpsed Professor Probyn, hunched and pushed about by the crowd. But the professor was trying to hook his glasses round his ears again, and couldn't see George, while Pringle regarded George across the crowd with an expression of reticence and scorn.

"Look here," George pleaded, "can't I send a message to my girl friend?"

"Plenty of time," Mr. Showler told him. "I just want you to have a little chat, then you can go and tell the girl friend all about it yourself."

They were proceeding rapidly down a flagged corridor now, and George swung along beside Mr. Sawyer as closely as though he was introduced to him, and he had the uncomfortable feeling that he might be, at that.

"Aren't I under arrest, then?" he demanded.

Mr. Sawyer turned without slackening his stride, and he gave the hearty laugh of a man standing with other men at a bar.

"Under arrest? Good heavens, no! We're just going to have a little friendly

chat, that's all, and you're going to tell me all about it calmly, without being harassed and stared at. Then I'll see what we can do for you. That's what you want, isn't it?"

It was all very friendly and nice, but George felt that Mr. Sawyer's manner was uncomfortably reminiscent of the wolf in the early part of the adventure of the three little pigs. He was shown into a comfortable office, pressed into a chair, offered a cigarette. But he noticed that his chair confronted the glaring light of a large window, while his questioner sat in shadow.

"Now, Mr. Harris," Inspector Sawyer said, "suppose you tell me all about it from beginning to end?"

George told him laboriously. It occurred to him that he had told this story quite often, and it was beginning to sound unreal to himself, so he didn't know how it would fall on Mr. Sawyer's ears. But Mr. Sawyer listened with the courteous attention of a young man meeting his girl's father for the first time.

"This Jap fellow," Mr. Sawyer asked, "that you saw down in the cellar. You consider, of course, describe him?"

"Well, you know how it is. These Japs look all alike."

"And the Chinaman, what did you say his name was? Did you glimpse anything of him down the cellar?"

George shifted warily.

"I didn't say his name, because I'd never heard it before I got in the woman's room. And I'd never set eyes on him in my life before. All I saw down the cellar was this little Jap, and he picked me up and threw me against the wall. Head first. If you think I'm telling lies and you are going to arrest me, you'd better give me a chance to see a lawyer. But I tell you that woman was lying, and I'd never seen her or her husband before, and I've never given him or her any money or packets of dope, or—"

"Dope?"

George stopped, feeling absurdly guilty, and he realized that a deep red flush was creeping over his face. He felt like a criminal trapped by the one slip they are all supposed to make. And Mr. Sawyer was looking at him gravely, as though upon the whole he thought it was rather odd.

"Did she say dope?" he said blandly.

"She didn't," George roared. "I did. Damn it, man, when you hear about Chinamen and little packets of white powder, what's the first thing you think of? Monomate of soda? She meant to make out I was the leader of a dope ring, and I'd got rid of my husband because he was getting awkward or he knew too much, or something. But I ask you, do I look like the leader of a dope ring? If I ask, I haven't done very well out of it. Look at my clothes! Look at this shirt!"

And I live in a back room over a bone yard because it's cheap, and because no one else can stand the smell! If I'm the master mind of dope, what's my luxury apartment, my yacht, my diamond?"

Mr. Sawyer leaned back in his chair and laughed, and he had a pleasant laugh that George found extremely disarming. Now he stood up, and he dropped his hand lightly on his shoulder.

"That's all very true, Mr. Harris," he said. "Very true. But you know, people do run down in London, and they use Chinamen for it, and some of them make a lot of money out of it for a time. Naturally, they are clever men, and they are not going to make a parade out of their profits. Usually the people who make the money keep in the background. They employ

someone else to poll their chestnuts out of the fire."

He was thoughtful, almost as though he was talking to himself, and George was listening intently.

"Now and then," Mr. Sawyer said, "they will employ young men of good family, young men who have been decently educated and have fallen on hard times. Youngsters like that get bitter; they sometimes feel Society has given them a dirty deal. Can you blame them altogether when they fall victims to cunning, smooth-tongued scoundrels who offer them easy money and excitement?"

George was thrilled. He stood up, his face thoughtful. Mr. Sawyer gave him a warm handshake that gave an impression of friendliness. It was only when he had walked out of the police office and out of the building that he stopped dead. It had just occurred to him that Mr. Sawyer was a very clever man indeed.

"Good boy!" he whispered. "He was talking about me. That's what he thinks I am, a man for someone else higher up in the dope game! He was either warning me or trying to get me to break down and sob it all out on his chest. He believes what that damned little woman says. What a job!"

If it was a job, George looked unreasonably grave about it. He walked on, turned down a quiet street for a short cut to the bus route. Besides, he needed quietness and an interval for thought. But as he walked down the street he was aware of other footpaths echoing on the almost deserted pavement.

George turned and walked back. He met a tall and burly man in a very shabby suit and a broken peaked cap, who very elaborately didn't look at him. The stranger was powerfully built, and his shoulders were square, while his eyes were clear and his face had a well-defined look. Not by any means a man who needed to be as shabby as he looked.

George realized that he was being followed, that he was going to be followed.

"I've been framed," he whispered. "This is what it means to be framed."

And then something else occurred to him, and he went straight home very quickly. He locked the door of his bare little back room and looked around him. Then he went to it and started the most elaborate search he had ever made in his life. And in the end his patience was rewarded. George turned back the carpet, uncovered a loose floorboard, and reached his hand into the filthy darkness beneath. He brought out a number of small paper packets, and when he opened them each one contained a certain quantity of white powder.

George emptied them all, lit the powder flapper from the window out over the bone yard. He burnt the packets on the small hearth stool, and he sent all the black ashes fluttering out of the window as well. His face was grave. He realized whoever had tried to frame him was willing to take considerable pains. It was only luck that he'd found that stuff before the police got around to searching his room. And if the police had found those packets first it wouldn't have been necessary for them to follow him any more. They'd have put him where they could find him when they wanted him.

BRANDT'S PLAN.

MIROSAKI, the pleasant little Japanese, crossed his legs comfortably as he sipped tea in the presence of Colonel Karl Guttenberg, of the Moldavian Army. Mirozaki was completely at ease, but the colonel's face, as far as it

could bear any expression at all, was struggling to look dumfounded and incredulous.

"You tell me, then," he said slowly, gutturally, "that the thing that throbs in the jar is the living brain of Professor Boris Prezyn?"

"Wonder of science truly amazing!" agreed Mirozaki. "Consider the telephone and also safety-cannon. All unknown to our ancestor, same as woman on bicycle."

"Yes. But a human brain—living—thinking, writing—"

"Through living human hands," Mirozaki reminded him. "You have seen Brain work with hands of Mr. Brandt. Hand of Mr. Brandt write post-card in writing of dead Professor Prezyn. All the papers say so, everyone who knows Professor Prezyn. But hand that write was hand of Brandt."

"That's true," said Karl slowly. "I saw him do it, after we strapped that thing on his head. It's—It's amazing! We can make Professor Prezyn think for us, express himself through Brandt. Unless we can do without Brandt. Suggesting that you, Mirozaki—"

Mirozaki spread out his hands regretfully, while his face registered sorrow.

"Regret not can do," he said. "Mirozaki only humble servant of Mandarinn Brandt. Brandt took the Brain and kept it alive, found out how to keep in touch with it. Brandt knows how the Brain must be nourished and cared for. Without him it would fall sick."

"You mean—we need Brandt?" Karl said. "A pity. We thought perhaps we could—er—liquidate Herr Brandt. You are so much more understanding."

Mirozaki looked regretful.

"Only too anxious do anything to serve very good Mandarinn friends, but regret cannot control Brain as does Mr. Brandt."

"I'll see Brandt," Karl said slowly.

He mounted the carpeted stairs, passed from the wide staircase to a narrower flight of stairs, passed up these to a place of darkness, narrow passages, black-locking, locked doors. He came at length to a long corridor with a single door at the extreme end of it. Outside this door was a chair and sitting on this chair with folded arms was a lady's head whose face was distinguished by the male stupidity of an ox. He jumped in his belt when he saw Guttenberg, clicked his heels, stood like a sentinel.

Karl ignored him, took out a key, passed through the door. He saw a bare little room lit from a small square window of wired glass set in the high ceiling. There was a camp-bed in the corner of the room, and lying there, shivering under brown blankets, was Mandarinn Brandt.

"You are better?" Karl said coldly.

"My head," whispered Brandt. "My brain feels it's trying to burst outward, and when I close my eyes I see nothing but flashing lights and whirling wheels. When I had left that thing on me another moment I should have died."

Karl sat down on the bed and spoke to him quite pleasantly.

"Herr Brandt," he said, "you are a very clever man. But you were a very stupid man to come here and try to make a bargain with me."

"You wouldn't have believed me if I'd told you the truth," Brandt moaned.

"No," Karl agreed. "We would not have believed. But since the Brain has been brought to us, and we have seen it working, and we have heard from your assistant, Mirozaki, its properties, now we know that what you say is true. The brain of Boris Prezyn belongs to you. You

can control it. But, my friends, we cannot allow you to slide its discoveries out to us piecemeal, to bargain with us for something that may be more than vital to Molavia.

"Here Brandt, we are prepared to make a reasonable arrangement with you. You will realize, perhaps, that it would not be wise to bargain, for we are in a very strong position. We have the Brain, and we also have you. But it is our wish to be fair.

"Fair!" gasped Brandt. "When you have kept me a prisoner here, when you have stolen the Brain and brought it here, when you took me and strapped me to a chair and forced the skull-map on my head so that the Brain-process of Boris Probyn could thread through my skull, when you let that devil stir to life and nearly kill me, as he killed that Chinaman?"

"All that was necessary," said Ostlenberg. "But now you are given the chance to be reasonable. Now! You will be our friend, you will serve Molavia? After all, no foolish talk of prisoners can hold you back. You were prepared to sell these things for money. If you agree you will be treated with honor, and you will not be left without money. And all you have to do is to form our connecting link with the Brain—"

Brandt blanched, and he covered back against the wall, while his thin face had gone as white as a sheet. There was no doubt the man was in genuine terror.

"No, not!" he gasped. "I won't do it! Not, if you kill me first! It would be the same thing in the end, for I know I'd die miserably. I nearly died when I wrote that simple post-card. The Chinaman did die; he couldn't stand the Brain of Boris Probyn. And the Brain hates me; it's waiting for me there in the jar, waiting to be released on me! Twice it has nearly had me, and if I deliver myself up to it again I'm lost. Kill me, if you like, but I won't deliver myself up to the Brain again!"

Ostlenberg's face was stern.

"It may be necessary to use a measure of force," he said. "It would be possible to dose Molavia a weapon that Probyn would devoutly intended to serve her. We can compel—"

Brandt had yellowed, but now his face was glowing. He reached out his hand, claw-like, towards Ostlenberg.

"You wouldn't do that!" he pleaded. "You wouldn't do a human soul tortured! After all, you're a soldier. You fight clean, and you are ready to die clean. Not—not horribly. Besides, it would be no use to you. You'd have me lying there dead, and the Brain—the Brain tucks, rolling away. No one else can care for it, can extract its wonderful secrets."

His face changed. There was a glimmer of hope in his eyes.

"Besides," he pleaded, "there is another way. The way I first planned to use the Brain. A better, more certain way. But it was too expensive, too long a process for me to use alone. That was why I came to you, because I needed money to extend the Brain properly."

He leaned forward, holding almost hysterically, drawing on the brown blanket with his long finger, trying desperately to convince Ostlenberg. Ostlenberg listened in growing concentration. Presently he nodded.

"It is possible," he said.

MIRIAM'S AGAIN.

GEOFFREY HARRIS inserted his two fingers in the coin box, dialled the number he had pencilled on the wall

before him, listened. He heard the clear and pleasant voice of Penny Wise at the other end, and a somewhat goaty look came in his. Rather more sharply Penny demanded to know who was there, so George came down to earth, pressed button "A," answered.

"Listen," he said. "This is me."

"George!" she exclaimed. "Where are you? You sound quite near."

"So I am. I'm in the rail-box at the end of the street."

"Well, why don't you come round? You know we are just closing the shop."

"I'm not coming," George said doggedly. "I don't want to see you or be seen with you."

There was a silence, and then he heard Penny's voice again, considerably more aloof.

"I see. Well, of course, if that's how you feel. Mr. Harris. But—"

"Wait, Penny!" he gasped. "Of course I want to see you, and I'd be round there like a flash, but I can't see. The police are watching me and someone else. Someone dangerous. They've tried to frame me. They've tried to make out I'm a dope runner."

"George!"

"It's true."

He told her all about it, and Penny listened attentively. George finished up finally.

"So you see, I can't come round to see you. They are dangerous, my dear. And they're clever, too, whoever is behind all this. They are trying to get me, and if

NEXT WEEK

"SOHO NIGHTS"

By John G. Brandon

(Five pages 354-358)

they trace you through me they'll try to get you, too. I'm going to keep away from you. We mustn't be seen together, our names mustn't be coupled. I shouldn't be surprised if I'm in jail before tonight's out. And if I'm not in jail the others will know the plot has failed, and they'll try something else. If you are seen with me it means you will be in the same danger. From both sides. The police—and these others. So, you see, it would be better if we kept apart."

"There was a silence."

"You understand?" George said. "I'm only doing this for your own good. I'm not going to come near you, have anything to do with you. You agree that's best, don't you? Don't you, Penny?"

Another silence. George had the charged feeling that he had been talking in a dead line. He moved the receiver holder up and down, and had a brief passage of arms with the operator, but without satisfaction. It dawned on him that Penny had hung up on him. Unless—

And then fear gripped him. Fear for Penny. Penny was in this up to the neck, and they'd go after her as they'd gone after him. They'd try to get him behind bars, but it wasn't out of mercy they'd chosen to act that way. To his suspicion on him meant to clear up the case, save themselves unsuspected. But they'd use other methods if cunning failed. More violent methods. Suppose they used them against Penny? He turned quickly,

fumbled for the handle of the door, burst from the telephone-box, and found a flushed and rather breathless Penny almost in his arms.

"You!" he said. "But I just—"

"I know," she said. "I left the receiver swinging and ran all the way here when you said that about keeping away from me because of the risk. I knew it was no use arguing with you over the telephone, so I just came."

She caught hold of his arm, and they moved off slowly side by side, quite oblivious to anyone else. A tall, thin man on the other side of the road uncoiled himself from the lamp-post on which he leaned and moved off parallel with them. But George was oblivious to his escort. He only knew that Penny's arm was through his, and her bright and eager face was looking up into his own.

"Listen, George," she was telling him. "Why don't you realize that I'm in this as much as you are? After all, you are in it because I'm in it, because I brought you into it. I thought you were a detective, and—"

"What do you mean? I am a detective!"

"Yes, dear. Of course you are. But never mind about that now. I'm not having you in danger unless I'm going to share it. Boris Probyn means nothing to you; it's just a name you've heard. But he was someone who was fitted to be, someone my mother cared about once. And I want to know what has happened to him."

"The post-card—"

"Post-cards can be forged—or people forced to write them. It's Boris Probyn I want to see, to stand here to face with him. You know what people are saying? They say there's something in—something in all this talk about Molavia. You know how Molavia is in everyone's mind nowadays. There's the feeling that sooner or later the clash must come, they'll force us into war. Well, people say that Boris Probyn has noticed that, he's been bought over by Molavia, that he's holding them, for money, in exchange to fight his own country, that he's supplying them with details, ideas that will help them to destroy his own countrymen!"

"Yes," George said; "I've heard that, too."

"Well," Penny said earnestly, "I don't believe it. Boris Probyn isn't like that. And I'm going to prove it somehow. Suppose they are keeping him prisoner somewhere locked up? Suppose they made him write that post-card?"

"It's possible," George said. "But I don't see what we are going to do now. We had Brandt to work on, but now Brandt's gone. There was that chapel, but the old chapel has been searched, and there's nothing there. When I tell people about finding that Japanese there they look at me odd, and I can't tell they don't believe there ever was a Japanese at all."

"I believe you, George," she said.

"What we need," George said thoughtfully, "is a clue. But there isn't any clue."

"There's that post-card," Penny said. "I mean, you might see what sort of a post-card it was, find out where it was bought. Couldn't you go and ask the 'Daily News' to let you see it?"

"I don't like the 'Daily News,'" he replied. "But I'll go."

He went down to Fleet Street, and looked downy up at the office of the "Daily News." There, in a hooter up his courage, he dropped into a bar for a drink. There was a young man with dark hair

(Continued on last page.)

RIVER OF DEATH

**A POWERFUL STORY
OF THE SHADOW—THE
WORLD'S SLICKEST
CRIME FIGHTER**

**By
MAXWELL GRANT**



THE STORY SO FAR

DART JONES was the name by which the man who controlled the largest ring of river gamblers was known. His lieutenant, named **PIKE**, took a party to raid the big figure.

LAMONT CRANSTON, otherwise known as **THE SHADOW**, the world's slickest crime fighter, got on the trail. Close he picked up involved a girl, **HEATH TURNER**, who was captured by **BOB BENLISTER**, a despising broker. Cranshon, learning that Edith Turner's father, who ran a saloon there on a boat moored in the Thames, is asked on a creek named **BLUE CHIP BRIDGE**, decided to investigate at the Turner's home. There he discovered a mysterious connection between Pike and Red Turner. Pike brought Turner's boat that had on the bridge the address of **11255 BRIDGE**, a building. As Pike could not read, his second cousin and uncle of further inquiry.

ANTHONY BAXON, a theatrical producer, called on **Brody's** bookshop. **Brody** went to a secret passage, and there Turner was seen and headed into a lake back inside which was under level. But **Dart Jones** himself, in an elaborate disguise, arrived on the scene, learned **Brody** stole and engaged with the people **Deegan** and **Steen**, a girl dancer, were introduced in the plan.

Cranston visited **The Floating Palace**, Turner's river cottage, and learned what happened **Brody's**. **Pike** again was mentioned that same night. Cranston was the last to see her. He was then frustrated by a raid by Pike on another vessel.

Unable to uncover the identity of **Dart Jones**, Turner and Pike kidnapped both **Deegan** and **Steen** and took them to their riverboat hide-out. Cranston followed them, with his assistant **Clyde Drake**.

(See next page)

THE TRAP.

THERE was no sign of Turner, **Brody**, or the ugly hooded **Pike**. They had vanished somewhere with the kidnapped **Anthony Baxon**.

Now was there any sign of **Kay Hollister**. Evidently he had left his hiding place soon after the others had abandoned the boat.

His probable method of escape from the inner lock was no mystery to Cranston, after the ray of his torch flashed along the ceiling of the enclosed chamber. The square outline of a closed trapdoor was visible almost directly above the black speckhead.

Lamont Cranston motioned quietly to **Clyde Drake**. The two men stopped in the apartment. Reaching backward, Cranston removed a plug from the heavy wall of their craft. It was a dangerous place to their presence, if spotted by Turner or any of his men. The sun-blasted plank cut off sight with a faint gurgle.

Clyde understood what he had to do

next, when he saw Cranston spread his feet apart and brace them solidly on the plastered floor of the black craft. **Clyde** scrambled to Cranston's shoulders. He was able to lean outward and hustle at the exact of the trapdoor in the ceiling with nervously eager fingers.

He was too nervous, too eager. Before he realized it, he had leaped too far. He tried to save himself by clanking at the Shadow, missed, and plunged with a splash into the water.

Instantly Cranston went off the boat in a clean dive. Unlike **Clyde**, he made no splash. His fingers caught the reporter's shoulder in a grip that, to **Clyde's** horror, he found himself being drawn downward, instead of being pulled to the surface!

The work of rapidly making footings was audible above the ceiling of the lock. **Clyde's** upward splash had been heard. There was a squeak as the trap lifted. Dim light flooded through. The pale blue of a face peered.

But the face was exposed for so brief an instant that it was indistinguishable. The flashlight in the crook's hand was held in such a way that it afforded no chance to identify his face. In his other hand, a gun glittered ominously.

He stayed for a breathless instant at the speedboat beneath the partly opened trapdoor. Heat and water alike appeared empty. **Clyde** had not recognized on the surface, nor had Cranston.

That was the reason why Cranston had dove overhead. Clutching **Clyde's** shoulder, he had drawn his companion instead of up. The two passed like squaring fish beneath the keel of the speedboat, their heads to emerge on the other side of the craft.

A space of only a few inches was open between this side of the boat and the concrete wall of the lock. The craft's overhead had the almost submerged heads of the two men.

But the splash which had been made by **Clyde's** body was not so easily camouflaged. It was that sound which had drawn the evil figure above the trapdoor.

Cranston deceived the man by deceiving his mind. He presented a false sense impression to him, saying the man would accept the explanation automatically.

His submerged palms began to wave back and forth. The motion set up a quick current. Waves began to roll against the concrete wall and splash. They moved rhythmically, one after another.

Above, the unseen man uttered a hoarse laugh. He stood atop as Cranston intended it should. He thought that the ripples were caused by the wash of a

steamer going down the river outside. Those boats produced a strong wash along the shore in the relatively shallow water. The agitation of the water would permeate even to the interior of the lock. It was a logical explanation to the man above.

The trapdoor dropped with a bang; his footstep receded.

Continuously the dripping body of Cranston emerged quietly from the water. **Flame** seemed to writhe in the depths of his eyes as he lifted them toward the trapdoor.

THE SUPREME FIDELITY.

NED TURNER sat in the center. The **Alf** silver pocket lay on the table before him. To the right of Turner was faintly smiling **John Brody**. **Pike** sat on the left.

Red Turner had changed his abandoned gravel warehouse to suit his own purposes. The cost had been considerable, but Turner had already received a princely profit on his investment.

He chuckled with delight as his itching fingers opened the pocket that lay before him on the table. Gems spilled out in rich profusion. It was the loot that had been successfully stolen from the **Silver Knave** by **Pike**, in spite of the deadly onslaught of the Shadow.

Turner played greedily with jewels. "What about the prisoners?"

Pike grinned, said:

"They're **O.K.** **Baxon** was easy to handle. **Blue Chip Deegan** was a bit tougher. But we don't have to worry about either of them any more. They're ready for the finish, as soon as you say the word."

Brody spoke for the first time.

"Too bad about **Deegan**. A smart man! If he wasn't such a damned lone wolf he might have made himself a lot of money. Come on! Why waste time? Let's put a slug in him."

Turner smiled.

"I'm not sure that this is the proper time to kill either **Deegan** or **Baxon**."

"The hell you say!" **Pike** growled. He looked like a tiger from whom a juicy morsel of meat has been suddenly withdrawn. "What's the idea?"

"I'm using my brains. I'm waiting for a bigger victim. Time enough to get rid of **Deegan** and **Baxon** after we've captured the man who's been posing as **Dart Jones**!"

There was a gasp from **Pike**, a faint sigh from the more quiet **Brody**. Both gazed at Turner.

"I've found out who he really is," Turner continued. "He's the man who nearly ruined our raid on the **Silver Knave**. In other words, he's the Shadow!"

"What good does that news do us," **Brody** commented quietly, "if we don't know who the Shadow is—and have no way of capturing him?"

"To-night will answer both those questions," Turner replied. "In the first place, I know already who the Shadow really is. He's the very handsome gentleman who plans to marry my daughter. In other words, Mr. **Kay Hollister**!"

"Hollister—the Shadow? Why, I thought—"

"Are you sure that you—"

Turner's gesture silenced the remarks of his hearers.

"Take that sock off his head!"

Clyde's face was bluish from the pressure of the garrote cord about his throat. His fingers quaked ineffectively at it.

A medley of curses greeted the exposure of his agonized face. The trio of criminals stared at one another in astonishment. The prisoner wasn't Ray Hollister! They had never seen this man before.

It was John Brody who flung himself at the captive. His fingers dived into Clyde's pockets, searching there with swift thoroughness. Suddenly, he uttered a cry.

"We've a pack of fools, Ned!" he cried

serenely. "This fellow isn't the Shadow! He's a reporter for the Morning Sun! Look at that!"

He was holding a scrap of pastebond in his shaking fingers. It was Clyde's press card.

Pike was too startled to utter a sound. Turner swung sideways towards him.

"Where the hell is Hollister? Did you let him get away from you? There must have been two of them down below!"

Pike shook his faded head. "There was only one, I'm telling you! How the hell

did a reporter get in through those water locks? What does it mean?"

"It means the cops are on to us," Brody said in his cold, silky voice. "I've heard about this Clyde Burke. He is friendly with the police. Inspector Carter is his best friend. If Burke is here, it means that Craton and his cops are somewhere nearby, either above or on the floor."

"Move! This chap wants for the Shadow," Pike snarled.

"We'll find out," Turner said.

He whipped the cord from Clyde's throat. Liquid was poured into his open mouth. The reporter gasped as the sticky larded with sewing strength in his stomach.

Brody did the questioning. There was a kind of inner joy behind his eyes.

"O.K., Mr. Clyde Burke, you're on the spot! We want the right answers. All the cops in on this little raid of yours?"

"No," Clyde said feebly. "If you'll give me a chance to—"

He was trying to gain time. But Brody gave him no chance to temporize.

"Were you alone when Pike grabbed you?"

Clyde didn't reply.

"Were you with the Shadow?"

Again Clyde was silent.

"Take him, Pike!" Turner, breaking in, snarled.

The husky monster threw himself at the reporter, sent the dazed Clyde crashing to the floor from a powerful blow. Having tied Clyde's wrists and ankles, he removed his wet shoes and socks. Lifting the unresisting victim, he carried him to a table.

Turner had leaped toward a dusty cupboard. He removed something and handed it to Pike. It looked like a plumber's blowlamp. Under Pike's expert touch, flame jetted from the thing in a hissing blur. Pike held it close to the side of Clyde's bare feet.

"How about answering those questions, sweetheart?" Pike crooned.

The curl of the flame maddened Brody on the bare flesh of Clyde's feet.

The secret of the wall mechanism did not delay Craton very long. Fear spotted his graying fingers—fear for the missing Clyde Burke. Craton had a vivid idea of what would happen to Clyde if rescue was too late in arriving.

Having passed the barrier in the dark masonry, Craton began to advance at a snail, though not slow pace. He raced along the narrow passage that had already swallowed up the figure of Clyde and his captor.

In a few moments, Craton came to the dead end that had lured Pike briefly. He saw the barred tunnel that led to left and right. Pike had gone to the left. But Craton chose the corridor to the right.

His choice was dictated by a faint glow he heard. Hurrying forward, he came soon to a small, earth-voiced chamber in which two men lay helplessly fettered.

One of them was the big-nosed Anthony Saxon. The other was Ike Chip Deegan.

It was Saxon who had grunted. Deegan's lips were taut; his eyes were narrowed in the glare of Craton's torch.

"Help!" Saxon whispored.

Deegan said nothing. He waited until Craton leaned over him—then his muscular hands shot out and grappled with his deliverer! Saxon sprang up, too. Both prisoners were not as helpless as they pretended. They had managed to

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