



The gun filled the garage with a booming roar

SWEET MURDER

By JOE ARCHIBALD

Detective Martin Proves He's the "Smartest Man in the Department" When He Leaves a Clue to His Killer That Only His Sidekick Terry Shane Can Figure Out!

"THE smartest cop on the payroll," the men at Headquarters said when anyone brought up Lew Martin's name.

But Lew Martin did not figure he was any smarter than the next guy. Most of the good work he had done for the Department he put down to luck. This job he was

working on now, it was all a piece of good luck.

He had been sitting in Pete Miola's all-night lunch three miles outside of town, the night the truck loaded with sugar was knocked off not fifteen miles from Pete's place. Two more tons of the sweet stuff. First it had been beer, now it was sugar.

Lew Martin had chased a tire thief out of town earlier that evening. He had given up the chase seventy miles away and it had been three in the morning when he got to Pete's place. It had been a chilly night and he had felt the need for coffee.

He had gone in and had taken his time with the coffee, and while he had been there some truck drivers had trickled in, most of them a little bleary-eyed from long hauls. Two of them had climbed onto stools close to Lew Martin and one had taken off his hat and wiped sweat from his face. The other had smelled of it pretty strong, and the detective had wondered about that, for it had been too brisk a night to make anybody sweat.

"Had tire trouble maybe?" Lew Martin had asked one of them. "Must be a job changin' them on the big trucks."

The man he had spoken to had been short and solidly built. His face had shown a trace of shock and his answer to the apparently friendly remark had been ugly.

"Yeah. We had to change a wheel, Mister. Anythin' great about that?" The square-faced man with the pock-marks on the right side of his face had spat to the floor and had turned away from him.

Several hours later, Lew Martin had thought of the two sweating men again, while he stood near the sugar truck that had been knocked off. The guy who had been driving it had lain nearby with a blanket over him.

"This is the third truck that's been hijacked," a cop had said. "A sweet racket."

LEW MARTIN had guessed that the men who had transferred the load would have had to be pretty husky guys. The sugar the government was relegating to the warehouses came in hundred-pound bags.

"The way they worked it," another cop

had said, "they'd get a truck off the road somehow and start unloading. Anybody comes along they can tell them the truck broke down and that they had to move the stuff off it. It would seem a likely story to the average man. Six tons of this stuff has been taken already."

Lew Martin had spent three days trailing the short, barrel-chested man. He had finally found him coming out of a building near the waterfront, and there had been a sign just over the door that said:

TRUCKMEN'S UNION No. 631

A few minutes later, he had followed the man to an apparently deserted garage near the railroad tracks on the South side. Which was where he was now.

Yeah, this was a piece of good luck. He would wait until the man left the place, then he would get in there somehow and look around.

The husky man left the garage ten minutes later and walked right by the doorway where Lew Martin was crouching. The detective counted off a couple of minutes, then moved across the street.

The front door of the garage was locked and he went around to the rear and climbed over some old auto parts and old boxes and tried a small window. He used all his strength getting it open and lost some skin off his shins getting through it.

The detective found himself in a filthy washroom and he went to the door of the long narrow room and shoved it open. He found himself in the garage then, and the boards buckled under him. There were only two small windows in the whole place and they were opaque with dust and cobwebs.

There were two big trucks in the garage, both spattered with mud, and the stuff was only half-dry. Lettering on one

of the trucks said:

INDEPENDENT MOVERS, INC.

Lew Martin climbed into the back of one of the two-ton trucks and flashed a light. His shoes ground against small granules of stuff and he bent over and rubbed his fingers over the boards. It was loose sugar all right. Sometimes the big bags spring a leak or break open when they are dropped.

"Looks like I'm lucky all right," Martin muttered aloud, and climbed off the truck.

"Think again, pal."

Lew Martin spun around and saw the hard-faced, stocky man grinning at him, not more than six feet away. Another man was with the truckman, a tall and nattily dressed man with a gun that was leveled. Martin had his thoughts just before the gun filled the garage with a booming roar of sound.

He wasn't so smart, and he was not lucky this time. Somewhere before he had seen the face of that man who was finishing him off. Lew Martin's fingers were still inches away from his own revolver when he felt himself break up inside. He knew he was done.

Voices came from a long distance away, resolved into meaningless humming sounds. Martin felt himself sinking through the floor and he fought to hold on so that he could remember a face. Blackness poured over him, blotted him out. . . .

THE man with the nice clothes looked at the truckman.

"Bat," he said, "these trucks are in your name, aren't they?"

"Sure, Boss."

"And they're hot as inferno's fire, Bat."

"I'll take care of them. I'll strip them, and—"

"You're hot too, Bat. Maybe this copper gave your set-up to another copper and he'll trail you to me."

The bulky man saw the gun in the hand of the nattily dressed man come up, and he talked fast. His voice was shaky and terribly thick.

"No, Boss! Listen! I won't get within a mile of you. I—"

"In this racket, Bat, I don't take chances. There's a war on and anybody who's caught exploiting the war gets a big rap when he's caught. Too bad, Bat."

The gun went off and the short, barrel-chested truckman spun half around, then staggered toward the door. He took another bullet in the back when he opened a small door built into the big sliding door. He reeled out into the street, groping his way blindly. A block away, he dropped to the pavement on his face.

Lew Martin was tough. The wick that had been snuffed out inside him had a little spark of light left in it. He recovered consciousness for a few moments and during the short space of time left to him, his brain was amazingly clear.

He did not dare move, for he was not sure the crook had gone. He thought of Terry Shane who had worked with him off and on for the past five years. He and Terry had made a date for Sunday, to go after weakfish. Terry was pretty smart himself and Lew Martin wondered if Terry would be smart enough to figure out what his pal had done before he had caved in.

Lew Martin remembered now where he had seen the fancy pants. And he had to let Terry know.

"Fancy pants," Martin said to himself. "But don't know his right name. I got to tell Terry."

He didn't dare fumble for paper and pencil and anyway, he did not have

strength to do that. He lay on his side and his right hand slipped into the pocket of his coat. There was a lump of sugar there. He only used one lump in his coffee. The restaurants doled two out to a customer these days and Lew always saved one of them for traffic cop O'Malley's horse.

"Sugar," Lew Martin mumbled when he withdrew his hand.

That was the last thing he ever said. Just as he died he wondered if death were going to be as sweet. . . .

A patrolman came upon the body of the truckman twenty minutes later. He ran to the call box and called the precinct station. A prowl car came up and two big cops got out and looked the corpse over.

"He left a trail of blood," the patrolman on the lonely beat said. "It goes across the street there."

The dead wagon rolled up and the crew of the prowl car followed the blood spots to the garage. One of them turned the body of Lew Martin over. He looked up at his companion, his face getting bleak.

"Lew Martin!" the cop said. "We'd better call Terry Shane. This is his business."

"Got it cold, he did, Mac. He didn't clear his gun at all. Somebody got him quick."

WHEN Terry Shane got the news that nearly flattened him, he lost no time in getting to the South Side. When he knelt beside the body of Lew Martin, he tried to act all business and show how hard-boiled he could be. But his eyes were a little too bright when he took Martin's police persuader off the corpse and broke it. Not a shot had been fired.

Then Shane saw that Martin's right hand was balled into a fist and he pried the hand open. A lump of sugar fell to the floor of the garage. A cop whistled softly.

"That's a queer one," Terry Shane

said, picking up the sugar.

He got to his feet and paced back and forth, wondering what cryptic message was in the one thing Lew Martin had left behind.

"I wish I was smart as Lew was," Shane said, his voice breaking a little. "He wasn't telling me he was working on the sugar business. He knew I knew that. I'll get it if—if it takes me a year. It has to do with the guy that shot him."

The cops had no comment to make save that they were positive that Lew Martin had finally got a lead on the sugar racketeers.

"The bullets that got both Lew and the guy out there came out of the same gun," Shane said. "I'm sure of that. You said there was no gun on the corpse you picked up a block from here?"

A policeman nodded.

Terry Shane examined the trucks while the men from the morgue lifted Lew Martin off the floor. He checked the license plates and was climbing into the back of one of the trucks when one of his men brought him the wallet taken off the body of the short, barrel-chested man.

"His name's George Murtz. Here's his driver's license and registration."

Terry looked them over. He nodded and put them in his pocket. When he had examined the floor of the truck he jumped down and shouldered his way past some newspaper men. He told them there was nothing to go on. There might be in a day or two.

He watched the men from Headquarters take pictures and make tests for fingerprints on different articles in the garage that men would have to handle.

"Get the tire patterns on this truck," Terry said. "I want to compare them with the moulages that were taken of the marks found out there where the last load of sugar was knocked off. I'll see you at

Headquarters.”

Terry Shane sat in the D.A.’s office while a surgeon probed for bullets in the bodies of the two dead men. He held a lump of sugar in the palm of his hand and flipped it up and down as the D.A. stared at him.

“A mighty small clue,” the D.A. said. “It might mean nothing, Terry. Lew might have instinctively taken it out of his pocket when he was going out. There’s no way of telling what a man does when he is dying.”

“Maybe,” Terry Shane said. “But Lew Martin was the smartest guy in the department and I know he wanted me to get this thing. It means something, Chief. I’m going to find out what it means if it takes me the rest of my life.”

THE bullets that came out of the bodies of Lew Martin and the truckman, Murtz, were turned over to the ballistics experts and Terry Shane was shown the markings on the slugs through a microscope. They had been fired by the same gun all right.

A few hours later the police had proved that the truck in the garage labeled INDEPENDENT MOVERS, INC. had been used to hijack two tons of sugar. Not only were there those traces of sugar on the floor, but the truck had been seen at the scene of the hijacking.

But the man who owned the truck was dead, so the police had to start all over again. Every square of available space in the buildings near the garage had been covered, but not an ounce of sugar could be found.

For three days after Lew Martin was buried, Terry Shane walked his feet off and wore his brain thin trying to solve Martin’s last message to him. At times there was a vague stirring in the back of his mind, an elusive thought that was shut in and was trying to make itself felt.

Shane had been getting little sleep and it was beginning to show on him. He walked into the D.A.’s office a week after the slaying and shook his head.

“You’re following a will-o’-the-wisp, Terry,” the D.A. said. “I don’t believe that lump of sugar meant a thing. You’ve got to lay off for awhile, Terry. You need some time out.”

“Maybe I’m nuts,” Shane said. “But I’m trying to think of something. One little thing. Funny—it is a kind of association of ideas. When I walk down the street the hunch gets strong. At night I mean, while the lights are going on and off.”

“Look, Terry,” the D.A. said. “You’ll break wide open if you keep it up. I’m taking you out tonight. I’m taking you to a bright spot and let you hear the music and look at some beautiful girls. Maybe a couple of stingers will put you on your feet. Don’t argue with me, Terry. Meet me at eight o’clock in front of the Hotel Parkhurst.”

“Yeah,” Terry Shane said. “I guess it won’t hurt. And thanks.”

The D.A. picked up Terry Shane at the appointed time and they went to a small night-club on a side street, watched the floor show, and had their dinner. Terry Shane sipped at a tall drink and felt that disquieting disturbance in the furthestmost corner of his mind.

He began to get restless.

“We’ll get out of here, Terry,” the D.A. smiled and said. “I know a place that’s live enough for you. If that place doesn’t snap you out of it, I’ll give up. Relax, man.”

Terry Shane toyed with a lump of sugar, stared at it for fully ten minutes. He dropped it into his pocket when he got up with the D.A.

The big car pulled up in front of the city’s most famous night-club. The neon sign said:

GAUCHO CLUB

The head waiter bowed to the D.A., greeted him cordially, and Terry Shane followed at the D.A.'s heels to a good table near the waxed floor. His heart began to pound blood against his temples and his nerves began to sing.

It was not the sight of the six scantily draped girls going through their routine that upset him. The number that the orchestra was giving to the classy clientele had never stirred him like it had most people.

My ma-a-ama done to-old me . . . a woman's a two faced . . .

Blu-u-u-u-ues in the night. . . .

TERRY SHANE nodded when the D.A. suggested a drink. "I need it," he said. "I got the shakes."

"I told you you was getting close to the deep end, Terry. I'm going to see you get a week or two off. You like to fish. It'll take the butterflies out of your stomach."

The announcer stepped up to the mike, and held up his hand. The lights dimmed and Terry Shane could hear the customers shifting in their chairs.

"She's a beauty," the D.A. said leaning toward Terry. "Wait until you see her. And what a voice. She—"

The master of ceremonies gave the star of the floor show a great build-up before he shouted out her name.

"Sugar Kayne!"

Terry Shane spilled his drink. One of his hands dropped like a heavy weight against the D.A.'s arm. His eyes were bulging when he saw the red-haired girl come out and fit into the spotlight. She wore a green-silk gown and it was apparent to everyone that there was little under it but her skin.

"Got it!" Terry said.

"Easy, guy," the D.A. whispered. He stared at the detective, wondered at the cold grin on his operative's angular face.

"Sugar," Terry said under his breath. "I've been dumb, Lew. A name, that was it. But that gal wouldn't pack a gun so—I'll look into it, Lew."

Terry Shane watched Sugar Kayne go through her number and when she walked off with the thunder of applause nearly lifting the roof, Shane said to the D.A.:

"Thanks for the binge. I'm leaving you here."

"You're nuts all right," the D.A. said. "You can't get within a mile of her dressing room."

"Some guys can," Terry Shane said. "That's what interests me."

Terry Shane went out of the Club Gaucho and he asked the doorman a couple of questions.

"The redhead?" The big man grinned. "She generally comes out about two in the morning. You've got three hours to wait. But you'll have to get in line."

"You got me wrong, pal," Shane said. "You got an idea who has the inside track with that number?"

"Sure," the doorman said.

He turned away and walked to a big limousine at the curb, helped a party out of it. He came back and spoke to the detective.

"At the moment she gives a certain playboy most of her time. Of course, it don't ever last long."

Terry Shane knew that a buck would get the name of Sugar Kayne's latest Lochinvar and he peeled the bill off a small roll and slipped it into a grateful palm.

"Name's Arno Santi," the doorman said. "A handsome brute. Generally gets here about one o'clock. You'll see his name in Hinchell's column if you read the

tabloids.”

“Thanks,” Shane said. “What’s his business?”

“Who knows?” the big man said. “Who cares as long as he gets what it takes?”

“That’s a matter of opinion,” Terry Shane said, and he fingered the lump of sugar he had in his pocket.

Looking back, he remembered that Lew Martin had liked the tabloids. Lew had liked his night life, too.

TERRY SHANE went across the street to a poor man’s bright spot, and he sat where he could get a view of the sacred portals of the Club Gaucho. He was waiting for a car to pull up there and disgorge a single passenger.

When that happened, Shane paid his stint and left the tavern. He saw the big man in evening clothes speak to the doorman, then walk down the block. He disappeared from view when he reached a narrow side street.

Shane walked up to the doorman again, asked him where Sugar Kayne lived.

“I’m getting suspicious of you, Mister,” said the doorman.

“Go right ahead,” Shane said acidly. “Maybe you remember I went in this joint tonight with the D.A.”

“Yeah, you did,” the man said. “She lives at the Shenton only two blocks from here.”

Terry Shane went to the Shenton. He sat in an obscure part of the lobby and waited until the redhead came in. She got there at two-thirty and Arno Santi was with her. He was tall and well set up, and he had a face that looked a lot like Gable’s. But the man’s long thin nose spoiled his chances of doubling for the movie actor.

Santi saw the redhead to the elevator,

talked with her a couple of minutes. Terry Shane slipped out of the hotel and walked across the street. He got into a cab.

“I’m Shane from Headquarters,” he said to the driver. “When I point out a guy to you, see which car he gets into and don’t lose it.”

“Okay.”

No use letting this dish get cold, Shane thought. It was tough warming them over sometimes.

“That’s the guy,” he said, when he spotted Santi coming out of the Shenton. “He’s getting into the checkered cab.”

“Got him,” the cabby said.

Terry Shane trailed Santi to an apartment house on the fashionable West Side. It was not in a class with most of the big buildings in the neighborhood. He let Santi have the time to get into the place and go to his rooms, then he paid the cab off and sauntered across the street.

There was a sleepy-looking colored man at the little switchboard in the lobby. Terry Shane told him he wanted to see Arno Santi.

“He’s got company right now, Mistuh,” the lazy attendant drawled. “Two gen’men was waitin’ for him for about fo’ hours.”

“Yeah?” Shane said. “I’m going up. What’s the number of his apartment?”

“Six B, Mistuh. But he’s goin’ to be awful mad. I gotta ring him first off. I don’t want t’ git fiahed.”

“Okay,” Terry Shane said, and stepped into the elevator.

He pushed the button marked with the figure “6” and the lift started rising. Maybe he was crazy. But he knew Lew Martin never had been. Lew had been the smartest guy in the Department.

He got to the sixth floor and walked along the corridor about fifteen feet to a door marked “6B.” He started to knock, but drew his knuckles back when he heard

voices. Inside Santi's apartment the phone was ringing.

It kept ringing. Shane wondered why no one answered it.

HE LEANED against the door and he heard a man say:

"Put on your coat, pal."

"You've got me wrong," another voice said, and there was fear in it. "I didn't kill Bat. You can't get away with this."

"You'll see, Santi. Like Bat, us guys do the tough part of this business. You sit back and handle the folding money. You got both Bat and that copper, Santi. Okay. We're going for a ride in the country. Get his gun, Sammy."

"You guys can't work without me," Santi argued desperately. "I'm the brains. Look, let's sit down and figure this out, guys. Five thousand bucks is yours if—"

"You knocked off Bat, Arno. Your brains? We'll try and get along without them. How long would we live maybe if we didn't get to you first? Okay. Out the door, and the first peep out of you gives a bullet right through the spine. Just walk along nice, Arno."

Terry Shane heard Santi try to say something, but the man's voice broke off when somebody got to his mouth with the flat of his hand. That was the way it sounded.

A good thing Terry Shane had not let this dish get cold. Santi would have been a corpse by morning and another lead would have been gone. The lump of sugar would have been anything but a sweet lead.

Terry Shane backed away, walked swiftly toward the lift. He turned a corner and flattened himself against the wall. The light was pretty thin there. A door opened and shut and in a few seconds three men appeared. Arno Santi was in the middle, the other two crowding him close.

Santi's face was ashen. He wore the clothes he had put on only hours before, but they did not seem to fit him so well. Terry Shane guessed fear was shrinking Arno as he drew his gun and got set for the blow-off.

The backs of the three men were to him when he called out:

"Everybody play dead. Make one move and you won't be playin'. I want Arno Santi's gun."

"What the—"

"Lift them up high," Terry Shane snapped, and then he tensed and swung his revolver at the man standing at Santi's right.

He had seen the man get set and he was shooting even as the crook crashed against Santi and knocked him over backward. He thought of Lew Martin as he fired and he knew he could not miss. He dropped his man with two quick shots, then leaped forward to stand astride Santi, his gun pointed at the stomach of a man who was in the act of grabbing at the gun that had fallen out of a dead man's hand.

"**G**O AHEAD," Terry Shane said, and he kicked Santi in the back of the head as the big man tried to knock his feet from under him. "Pick it up, pal."

"You win," the man said and lifted his hands high. "You're Shane from Headquarters. Who tipped you off? Nobody had an idea—"

"Nobody but Lew Martin," Terry Shane said, kicking guns across the carpet. "He left me a lump of sugar, Arno."

"Huh?"

"Yeah. He couldn't think of your name with that bullet of yours in him, Santi. But he knew that wherever a redhead was, you'd be nearby. Sugar Kayne. We've got the bullets you fired into Martin and Murtz. Now we have your gun."

“We’da saved you the trouble of burning him,” the surviving member of the two-man reception committee growled.

“That’s murder, pal,” Shane ground out. “It ain’t sweet, like sugar. To convince the D.A. that you wasn’t with Santi when he killed those two men, you’d better tell him where you got the sugar stored. It’ll help you a lot.”

“I’m not dumb, copper,” the man said. “I got enough of this dirty business.”

“Let’s get going,” Shane said, and he felt like an arsenal all the way to Headquarters.

When he had his prisoners locked up, he went to the D.A.’s office and lay down

on a leather couch and slept until morning. The D.A. found him there and shook him out of his slumber at eight-thirty.

“Good morning, D.A.” Terry Shane grinned. “Did they show you the catch?”

“Sure,” the D.A. said. “That was smart work, Terry.”

“On Lew’s part,” Shane said. “He was the smartest guy you ever had in this Department.” He took a lump of sugar out of his pocket and flipped it up and down in his hand.

“I better go out and give this to O’Malley’s horse,” Terry Shane said, and his eyes were a little bright once more. “Lew would like that.”