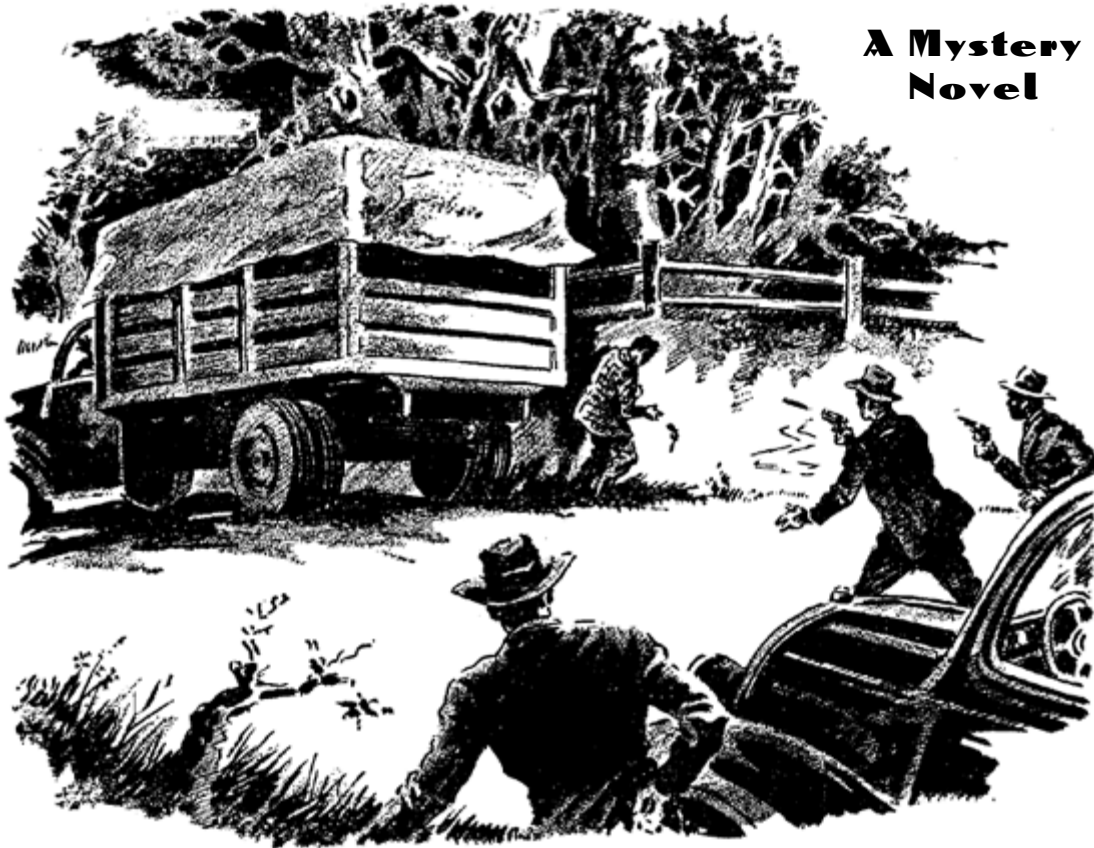


**A Mystery
Novel**



A figure hurtled from the truck, gun blasting, as Fowler fired (CHAPTER VI)

ESCAPE FROM ALCATRAZ

By EDWARD CHURCHILL

With a dangerous killer from the Rock on the loose, Dan Fowler and his aides battle against odds to stem a grim tide of violent crime that sweeps over the West Coast!

CHAPTER I

Rock Crushers

KILLER Joe Boyd, knowing that a steel-jacketed bullet might drill a hole through the back of his big, black-matted head at any moment, drew great draughts of fresh, salty air into his barrel chest at the surface of marrow-chilling San Francisco Bay. Not enough yards behind his hard, lean body lay Alcatraz, the Rock, dismal in the damp night air, coldly menacing—a cement-hearted mistress who had embraced him for five years and even now was loath to let him go.

Somewhere, not far away in the wisp-draped, icy waters was Boyd's pal, Harry "The Snatch" Drake, alternately straining his weaker muscles and smaller lungs in the same mad effort to flee a life which was no better than death. That is, Drake had been a pal for three years of preparing for the crush-out. Now he was, potentially, a hindrance. "Killer" Joe Boyd had no more use for the kidnapper who had worked with him to make the escape possible.

Yes, the granite-faced warden and the Federal rats who worked for him claimed that escape from the Rock was impossible. A prisoner couldn't get free of surveillance. He couldn't whip bars, locks and alarm systems. If he finally got into the bay they would put

The Old Hogan Gang is Through — but Its Menacing Shadow Rises from the Past!

lights on him and blow off the top of his bobbing head, or round him up with boats. Finally, the strong currents of the bay would conquer the strength of any man, turn him into a water-logged corpse.

The inspiration for the break, plus promise of help once it had been made, had come from outside long ago. After that pledge to aid him, Killer Joe Boyd had made a comprehensive, methodical plan. Then he had timed it. That was the secret—timing and planning.

First, he had needed help inside, as well as from beyond the walls of that grim prison in the center of the channel. He had taken Harry Drake into his confidence. They had first set their sights on jobs involving the maintenance of the powerful engines of the prison's launches and speedboats. As both had had experience as mechanics before stepping outside the law, they got the jobs.

The knife which had reached the hearts of two guards this night had been made from the handle of a wrench supposedly dropped carelessly overboard. For months it had been taking shape as a knife, always concealed in the bilges of the launches when not being hammered into a sharp, pointed weapon.

KILLER Joe Boyd had watched the tides and had developed his own tables as he worked on the boats. He had watched the courses taken by uncounted pieces of floating debris to learn the treacherous, deadly currents. He had observed the weather until he could tell by the feel of the air just when a fog would roll in. He knew the nights on which there would be either a fingernail moon or no moon at all, just in case the fog lifted at the wrong time.

For many months the two prisoners had tried to contrive a plan by which they could steal a speedboat, but had given it up as impossible. The next best thing was to take to the water, leaving behind them vessels with crippled engines—one with spark plug points touching, another with a gasoline line plugged, a third with a distributor head missing.

This night they had left their jobs with their work well done—for themselves. Then, by careful timing, they had made their rendezvous. Harry Drake had used the knife neatly and quickly while Killer Joe Boyd had choked their two unwary victims.

Boyd lunged from the depths for air, dived quickly, swam for about fifteen yards with the current—not against it—wondering when their escape would be discovered. The next time his head emerged, he got the answer. Bells were clanging, sirens were wailing inside the prison. Huge searchlights darted over the water, filtering through the thin gray veil. The fugitive turned for an instant, saw the stuttering ochre of machine gun fire.

He filled his lungs, glad in this fateful moment that he had cut out cigarettes six months before, had practiced deep-breathing exercises, and had timed



DAN FOWLER

himself while he held his breath to accustom himself to the torture of lungs trying to burst under water. He had been smart to strip every bit of unneeded weight from his six-foot-two-inch body.

Every inch he went meant the difference between life and death. He fought against panic. The next time he came up, his small, narrow-set black eyes told him his carefully laid plans were menaced by a filmy white glow. Harry Drake was no more than fifteen feet away. He was limned in the fog-dulled edge of a searchlight.

“Save me, Killer!” he heard Drake shout. “I got a cramp!”

Killer Joe Boyd faced death—and Drake was the cause of it.

“Work your way over here!” Boyd shouted.

Drake floundered in his direction. Boyd rolled over on his broad back, treading water. He was thinking that with the searchlights on them, one head was better than two.

“Get on your back, Harry,” he directed. “I’ll hold you up until you shake the cramp.”

The unsuspecting Drake back-watered toward Boyd. Boyd’s hairy, gorilla-like left arm closed over Drake’s windpipe, not over his chest. His right hand went to Drake’s waist and removed the knife. The thin, luckless Drake fought for a moment—until sharp steel sliced between his ribs.



Fowler fought off the beast, and went for his gun as the dog leaped again (CHAPTER X)

Machine gun and rifle bullets kicked up little geysers around the pair. Boyd pushed Drake from him, looked at the fading walls of the Federal prison while he made bellows of his lungs.

“Shoot at Drake!” he thought. “He won’t mind.” Then he went under again. This time, when he emerged, the walls of the dread prison were behind a curtain of fog.

Now Boyd played his final card. Wrapped around his body was a heavy muslin cloth, the type of cloth used in water wings. It had been formed into a tube. The soaking it had received made it waterproof. Boyd pulled a narrow neck of the fabric to his mouth, blew into it, sending air into the muslin roll which encircled him.

Then he knotted the neck.

Even Harry Drake hadn’t known Boyd had made that simple lifesaver.

Currents indicated that he was moving fast toward the Golden Gate. If he had figured right, he would soon be close to the Marin County shore.

Using the dull glow of the fog-blurred searchlight rays to give him his direction, he swam powerfully.

Two hours before dawn, colder than he had ever been in his life, panting and spent, he felt his feet strike muddy bottom. His chest ached worst of all, the result of a bullet wound he had received in a gunfight long before.

But who cared about aches and pains now?

He was safe for the moment. He had memorized the address where, in a small private garage, an automobile, clothes and a gun were waiting him.

They had taken five years of his life away from him. Now he would make up for it. Inside of a week, he would be a millionaire!

TALL, angular, rough-hewn Inspector Dan Fowler, for years one of the F.B.I.’s most resolute man-hunters, ran a ruffling, tired hand through his already mussed dark hair as his long legs drove him across an inner room in the San Francisco field offices of that organization. He stopped at the window, looked down onto the night-darkened city from far above teeming Sutter street. His square-cut chin showed what shaving advertisements called a “five o’clock shadow,” but it was nearer midnight than that hour. His usually clear, piercing gray eyes, set wide apart, were red-rimmed and bloodshot from lack of sleep. His face was heavy with perplexity.

He swung around alertly at the click of a latch.

A tall, slender and impeccably dressed young man of his own age grinned at him. Not so tall as Fowler, not so broad of shoulder, but alert-muscled beneath the perfectly fitting sharkskin suit. Debonair as he was, he had the chilled look of the skilled sleuth in his twinkling eyes, which were shaded by a rakishly worn soft fedora.

Inspector Dan Fowler shook the fatigue from his body as he detected news in Larry Kendal’s expression. After working together for years in the service of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, these two men literally read each other’s thoughts.

“You’ve found something?” Fowler suggested, hopefully.

“Could be,” replied Special Agent Kendal. “The Coast Guard patrol stumbled over a body on the beach just south of the Cliff House. I hopped to it. It’s Harry ‘The Snatch’ Drake, in a highly malodorous condition after three days in the drink.”

“But no trace of Killer Joe Boyd,” Fowler said, his face muscles sagging, giving him a gaunt expression.

“Not a lead, Dan. We found out that Drake was killed by a stab wound, not by drowning. Same kind of wound as those in the bodies of the Alcatraz guards. Plain he hadn’t drowned, because there wasn’t much

water in his lungs. We identified him from fingerprints at the Rock.”

“Which means that somewhere along the line of escape, Boyd used a knife on Drake,” said Fowler. “One thing that it does show definitely is that our murderous Boyd was still alive when The Snatch went to his just reward. But that doesn’t mean anything now, because we already know from several different sources that Boyd was still healthy a long time after that. Honestly, this gets me, Larry.”

“Me, too.” Kendal shook his head. “A sadistic killer like that, with a record a yard long. A rat who got life in Alcatraz for kidnapping. He’s known all over the world. He’s in every crime file.”

“It’s a challenge to me, Larry,” Dan Fowler declared furiously. “For three days we’ve had hundreds of F.B.I. men working on the case. We’ve had the full cooperation of more than ten thousand local enforcement officers and of the Armed Services. We’ve broadcast pictures, descriptions and fingerprints. Yet the trail disappears as if Boyd had taken off on a magic carpet. It’s the first time I’ve failed.”

“What about Sally Vane, the beautiful blond G-lady?” Kendal asked. “She usually comes through for you. What’s she uncovered in Seattle? Wasn’t she supposed to watch Boyd’s moll?”

“Just talked to her on the phone. The moll’s moved six times in the last year. Sally can’t even find her.”

“She will,” Kendal said, philosophically. “She never fails to get her woman. And some day she’ll get you. She’ll tag you with a summons to matrimony, and that’ll be that.”

Fowler smiled.

“I wish she would. For me, that’ll be just the beginning.”

“I can take my love or leave it alone,” Kendal said. “But let’s skip my bachelor tendencies. What’s new? The last I heard on Boyd was that he’d been near Sausalito.”

“That’s only the start,” Fowler told him. “He got a gun, clothes, and a car somewhere and lammed. A California Highway Patrol car picked him up east of Sacramento and shot it out with him. The patrolmen ditched his car and wrecked it, but he killed one officer, wounded the other, and got away on foot. He apparently hid out for a day near the California-Nevada state line. Then he stole a car at Reno, gunning the owner.

“Next he shot the proprietor of a filling station just outside Winnemucca, Nevada, when the fellow refused him gas without ration stamps. Filled his tank, loaded three five-gallon cans of gasoline, cleaned out the till and jerked a fresh set of license plates off a wrecked car. Then he vanished.”

“Hear anything from around Winnemucca?” Kendal asked.

Fowler pointed to a paper-littered desk.

“Had plenty of telegrams and telephone calls,” he said. “But there wasn’t a follow-up in a carload. I’ve checked back on every tip. I’ve even run down a few myself. And there’s not a thing. If—”

HE WAS interrupted by a knock on the door of the outside office.

“I’ll get it!” Kendal exclaimed.

He hurried from the inner office and returned, holding a telegram toward his running mate.

“You open it,” Fowler directed “I’ve had enough bad news for one day.”

Kendal did, and reported:

“It’s from a gent named Bill Agee, Chief of Police in a place called Fort Centralia. The telegram says: HAVE FOUND HEADLESS HANDLESS MALE TORSO FIVE MILES WEST OF CITY. MAY BE WORK OF KILLER JOE BOYD.”

He tossed the telegram on the top of the already littered desk.

“You’re right, Dan,” he agreed. “Every time a killer gets on the loose every smalltime peace officer with crime on his hands thinks the fugitive did it.”

Dan Fowler leaped forward and snatched up the telegram.

“Wait a minute!” he exclaimed. “I’ve got a hunch. Look at this!”

He turned, went to the wall map, where he traced a line from Winnemucca to Fort Centralia, a town the map indicated had a population of thirty-five thousand. It was located near the Canadian border.

“We know Boyd was driving a nineteen-forty Prescott sedan when he hit Winnemucca. That car has a capacity of fifteen gallons and cruises about fifteen miles to the gallon. In other words, with a full tank Boyd could only go two hundred and twenty-five miles. But he wanted to get a lot farther than that—about four hundred miles without stopping again on his trip and either getting picked up or leaving a trace.

“To cover that four hundred miles and still have a safe margin of fuel he needed fifteen more gallons. Put yourself in his shoes there at the filling station. Cars were passing on the highway, and anyone might stop for servicing. The filling station man was lying on the floor, dead. Boyd was the hottest fugitive in the country, and he knew it.

“If he had wanted to go farther than four hundred miles, he would have taken the time to find one or more additional five-gallon cans and filled them. If he didn’t want to go that far he would have loaded less gas. He stole just the amount he needed because every minute he spent at the scene of his crime threatened him with apprehension, the rope, the chair or the lethal chamber.”

“Very neat,” conceded Kendal. “But you overlook the fact that he could go four hundred miles in just about any direction from Winnemucca except due west.”

Fowler smiled indulgently.

"Six years ago, when you were out in Utah investigating those interstate silk shipment thefts, Adolph Mannerheim, the brewer, was kidnapped from his New York penthouse and held on Long Island for two hundred thousand ransom. At that time, Butch Hogan, the Brooklyn gang leader, who had turned from brewing beer and running whisky in prohibition days, to the policy racket, gambling houses and kidnapping, was suspected of the snatch. Mannerheim paid off, and there was evidence to show that Butch Hogan got the dough, and he and his right-hand man and liquidator, Killer Joe Boyd, had a falling out."

"I get it now!" Kendal exclaimed. "If I remember correctly, Butch Hogan's butchered torso was found in a ditch near Amityville, Long Island!"

"Right," said Fowler. "His head and hands were gone—the killer had cut up the body to destroy identification. Killer Joe Boyd was tried by a New York criminal courts jury and acquitted for lack of evidence. But we later proved the kidnapping of Mannerheim was his work, and he went to Alcatraz."

"For life, and that wasn't long enough," Kendal added.

Fowler nodded.

"Grab a telephone," he said, "and charter a plane. This murder at Fort Centralia looks as if Killer Joe Boyd is up to his old tricks. Looks as if he might have squared an old account, and could have gone on to Canada. I'm going to call Chief of Police Agee in Fort Centralia and see if there's anything new on the crime."

CHAPTER II

Headless Corpse



INSPECTOR Dan Fowler and Special Agent Larry Kendal looked down on the battered, mutilated, nude torso of the unknown victim. Four men who had accompanied the F.B.I. investigators to the grisly grave not far from a majestic pine tree on the slope fifty yards from a little-used dirt road, also stared morbidly. The seventh man had been introduced as Sheriff Hal Twoomey.

The slanting, golden rays of the morning sun made the brutally butchered flesh even more repulsive than it would have been in a morgue or a crime laboratory. Fowler found it difficult to reconcile the hate and cruelty of such a murder with the beauty of the pine-covered hills, the rolling, misty, tranquil countryside.

"When I saw the timber wolf, he was chawin' on somethin' right here," a tall, thin man in blue jeans, high-heeled boots and flannel shirt open at the collar,

was telling Fowler. "I rode over the rise yonder just at dusk.

"My cattle range here, and I been havin' trouble with wolves. I been watchin' for 'em. When I seen this big feller I fired from the saddle—and missed. The wolf ran into the timber. I come down here and found—this."

He pointed at the torso. Then he grinned sheepishly at Fowler.

"I was ridin' a new sorrel mare and she was gun-shy. The light was bad, too. First time I ever missed a wolf."

"No alibis, Lem," admonished Chief of Police Agee, grinning at the cowman. "You're talking to the F.B.I."

Agee was blond, blue-eyed and young of face in spite of three years in the United States Marine Corps. Prior to that, Agee had informed Fowler, he had held his present job and had been graduated from the F.B.I. National Police Academy. Fowler noted his calm, hard-muscled body, his quality of alertness. He wore a green uniform of military cut.

Fowler drew a deep breath of clear, pine-scented air.

"Suppose everything's the way you found it?" he said to Agee.

"Agee's had me out here guardin' it all night," Sheriff Twoomey was truculent. "Nothin's been touched."

Fowler eyed the sheriff. The man was about fifty. He had only a fringe of hair around his squarish head. He was about six feet two inches tall, and weighed all of three hundred pounds. He had small, red-rimmed eyes, a flat nose, and a too small, thin-lipped mouth. He chewed with stained teeth on a frayed, unlighted cigar. Whiskers covered a double-chinned jaw which developed into three when he spoke. He wore a ten-gallon hat, vest with star on it, Western-cut trousers and high-heeled boots.

"Isn't the grave pretty shallow?" Kendal demanded.

"Shore is," replied Twoomey. "If it had been dug deeper and if rocks had been put on it, the wolf probably would've passed it up."

As the result of this deduction, he shot a triumphant glance at Agee.

"This here's a county case and it's mine," he added. "I aim to investigate properly. There ain't no clothes anywheres around. There ain't no other grave nearby where the head and hands is buried. There ain't no identification. The man's been shot once through the left side of the chest. And he's plenty dead."

"Very good, Twoomey," Agee said easily. "But your man evidently was killed some miles from here and some time before he was buried."

"What makes you guess that?" Twoomey asked sullenly.

"The wound didn't bleed during or after burial. The murder which caused the bleeding occurred hours earlier, and possibly miles from here. That makes it anybody's case."

He turned to Fowler.

"We've had posses out, Mr. Fowler, looking for clothing and the missing hands and head. We've dragged Snake Creek, looked in ravines and gullies, watched for loose earth. In Fort Centralia I personally saw that manholes, sewers, garbage cans, the garbage dump and the hotel were checked."

"Is your coroner competent to perform a complete autopsy on the remains?" Fowler asked him.

"He's a good man, and he has the equipment, including X-ray," the chief replied. "He runs a small hospital in Fort Centralia."

"Fine. There's nothing more we can do here. Leave someone on guard until the coroner arrives." He leaned over the torso, pencil in hand, pointing to the chest. "That looks like an old bullet wound. Have the coroner investigate that further. There may be other means of identification. Also, be sure and have him examine the contents of the victim's stomach to determine how long before he died he had something to eat, and what the food was."

ALMOST as an afterthought, Fowler placed the pencil in his pocket and drew out a knife and a small white envelope. He opened a wide sharp blade and began scraping the skin of the torso. He put flakes which gathered on the blade into the envelope.

As he scraped, Kendal, who had been eyeing a dark, stocky man wearing a deputy sheriff's badge, suddenly asked the man:

"What's your name?"

The man started and scowled at the abrupt question.

"Howard Collins," he replied. "Why?"

"Where've I seen you before?" Kendal queried.

"You've never seen me before in your life," Collins answered, his face reddening. "I've been West since I was in rompers."

"Thanks," Kendal said easily. "No offense meant."

Fowler finished scraping, closed the knife and sealed the envelope. He and Kendal separated from the others. Twoomey stayed on guard. Agee, Collins and Lem, the cowman, climbed into a sedan and headed back toward Fort Centralia. Fowler and Kendal followed in the coupé Chief Agee had placed at their disposal.

"Hasn't Collins one of the finest Brooklyn accents you've ever heard west of the Hudson?" Kendal asked Fowler as the car rolled away from the scene.

Arriving in Fort Centralia, Kendal and Fowler registered in the town's only hostelry, Central Hotel, and went at once to their room. They unpacked their few belongings and were freshening up after their trip from San Francisco—they had slept but little in the chartered plane—when there was a knock on the door.

Kendal was in the midst of shaving. Fowler answered it.

In response to his inquiry a voice replied:

"It's Bill Agee."



The luckless Drake fought until sharp steel sliced between his ribs (CHAPTER I)

Fowler opened the door for the Chief of Police.

Agee's usually rosy cheeks were more flushed by excitement.

"I want to take you to Dr. Blakeley's hospital—he's the coroner—to see what he's found," he said hastily. "It's only a block and a half from here. He's turned up some pretty hot stuff, even if he hasn't finished with the autopsy."

Kendal washed the shaving soap off his face, put on a shirt, tie and coat. Two minutes later they were walking down Main street. They turned into Second, went into a two-story white stucco hospital. Agee led them to the rear of the first floor and into an immaculate, white-tiled operating room and laboratory.

Agee introduced them to Dr. Phil Blakeley, who was still working over the torso, wearing rubber gloves.

"Mr. Fowler," said Blakeley, "you were particularly interested in the victim's last meal. I found the stomach well-filled, and digestion had progressed far enough to indicate that the man was killed about two or three hours after eating"

"Nice going, Doctor," Fowler said. "What did he have to eat?"

"Some kind of soup, I believe. Lettuce and tomato salad. String beans. Steak and French fried potatoes."

"Holy mud!" exclaimed Agee. "There's only two restaurants within a hundred miles that serves steak these days—the Rendezvous and the Golden Eagle, both on Main street here."

Fowler turned to Kendal.

"You and Agee dig into those restaurants. Try everybody from the manager and the cashier to the waitresses and cook."

"I canvassed every place in town once," said Agee.

"It's worth another attempt, now that you know the exact menu. And you've got a better description of the dead man. Take along a photograph of Killer Joe Boyd. Maybe he and his victim ate together."

"Okay, Dan," Kendal said. He turned to Agee. "Let's get going."

The two men went out. Dr. Blakeley turned to Fowler.

"Now, about the bullets," he said.

"Two?" asked Fowler.

"Two. Here they are." He went to a white-tiled sink and pointed to the pellets, each of which was resting on cotton in individual paper boxes.

"The thirty-two caliber lead is the lethal shot," the doctor explained. "It pierced the heart. The thirty-eight caliber, steel-jacketed slug was shown in the X-ray photos you requested. I found it embedded close to the spine.

"I believe it had been there for a considerable length of time—possibly years—due to formation of scar tissue. It's only an opinion, but I think that it was there simply because any attempt to remove it would have caused death. It had nearly pierced the spinal column."

DAN FOWLER studied the two bullets. "I'll send these to Washington," he said.

"If you want a comparison microscope, we have one here," Dr. Blakeley declared proudly, pointing to a large instrument covered with rubberized cloth on the shelf. "It's our finest possession. Bill Agee had a tough time talking the county fathers into buying it."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Fowler. "In that case I'll send only the thirty-eight and the envelope containing the scrapings from the dead man's skin over to our technical laboratory."

He picked up the small box. Dr. Blakeley supplied wrapping paper. Fowler made up a small package, addressed it, and asked directions to the post office.

"Mind if I take you there?" Blakeley asked. "It's nearly closing time, and I haven't picked up my mail yet. You've kept me busy."

"I'd be very glad to have you show me the way."

Dr. Blakeley slipped out of his long white jacket, got his hat and coat at the office. The men walked into Main street. Fowler followed Dr. Blakeley into the rustic, log cabin type of building which served as the post office. Dr. Blakeley introduced Fowler to the postmaster, whose eyes showed his interest.

"Fowler?" he repeated. "You're Inspector Dan Fowler?"

The G-man nodded.

"You may have a package for me from Washington," he said. "I ordered it sent here before I left San Francisco."

"Just came in, airmail, special delivery."

CHAPTER III

Enter a Dame



FOWLER mailed the package, took the one the postmaster handed him, and Dr. Blakeley got some letters from his box. They walked back into Main street together.

"By the way," Fowler said, "I've been thinking about that thirty-two caliber bullet. There's just a chance Boyd might have got a gun here. Who sells 'em—hardware stores?"

Dr. Blakeley smiled.

"We've a sort of monopoly here. Have a blind gunsmith, who's been around for years. He knows every firearm in the county." He glanced at his watch. "I'll introduce you. We'll have to hurry. It's just about time for him to knock off, although we can always find him He lives in back of his shop."

Dr. Blakeley led the way.

"There he is now—on the other side of the street," he said.

Fowler's glance followed the surgeon's indicating arm. The blind man, limping, led by a Seeing Eye dog, was reaching an intersection. Man and animal hesitated at the curb. The dog led his master to the opposite side as Dr. Blakeley hurried forward.

"Oh, Tim!" he called. Man and animal stopped, waited.

"Tim," Dr. Blakeley said, "I'd like to have you meet Dan Fowler, of the F.B.I. He's investigating that torso murder, and wants to ask a few questions. Mr. Fowler, this is Tim Cody."

The men shook hands.

"Always did want to meet one of you G-fellers," Cody drawled. "Just closed shop and was aimin' to get a bite to eat over at Bob's lunch. Be right glad to take you back and show you my shop."

"Some other time," Fowler said. "I wouldn't want to delay your meal or put you out. I just want to ask you one question—has anybody bought a thirty-two revolver from you in the last few days? Specifically, day before yesterday? Probably in the afternoon."

Tim Cody lifted his free hand, shoved his wide-brimmed hat forward, scratched the back of his graying head and screwed up his tanned face in an effort to think.

"I reckon not. I reckon I haven't sold such a gun in nigh once a month."

"Thank you very much."

"Sure you haven't got time to come see my layout?" asked Cody. "I've got one of the finest in the state. Welcome anytime. You're purty interested in guns, eh?"

"I'll bring Fowler around when he isn't so busy," Dr. Blakeley said.

"Okay. I'll be seein' yuh." Tim Cody limped away.

They watched the dog lead him up the sidewalk.

"Had to be abrupt with the garrulous old coot," said Dr. Blakeley. "Otherwise he'd have talked your head off."

"Thanks," said Fowler. "What happened to him?"

"Says he was shooting fireworks when he was a kid and a giant pinwheel went off in his face. The shock partially paralyzed his left leg. You have to give a man credit for overcoming handicaps like that."

Fowler nodded. The men said good-bye and the G-man returned to the hotel. In his room, he opened the package the postmaster had given him and scattered on the bed photographs of the members of the "Butch" Hogan gang and anyone else who had figured in the crime life of Killer Joe Boyd. He tossed fingerprint cards on another section of the bed. He put data concerning each member of the mob on the desk.

As he started going through the photographs, his eyes focused on a beautiful brunette of about twenty-two years. Her face fascinated him because it lacked all of the hardness of gun moll features, as typified by Evelyn

Frechette, Helen Gillis, Marie Conforti and other notorious intimates of the public enemies of the Thirties.

Even in the police photograph, this girl smiled slightly. Dark hair crowned her head. Her eyes were far apart. Her nose was straight and pert. Her lips were full and her chin delicately rounded. So fascinated was Fowler that he ignored all the other likenesses. He flipped the paper over and read on the back:

Dixie Hogan, wife of Harry "Butch" Hogan, held for investigation by New York Police in Hogan's murder, May 14, 1939. Released under bond. Appeared as witness in trial of Joseph "Killer Joe" Boyd.

His curiosity satisfied, he turned to the printed records of the various criminals. He picked up that of Boyd. One paragraph caused him to stiffen in his chair, his heart pounding. He had started to his feet when there was a knock at the door.

"Come in!" he called.

KENDAL entered, his face hard with suppressed excitement. He was followed by Agee, who was livid with the same emotion.

"What do you think, Dan?" Kendal exclaimed. "We found out that a man built like a wrestler or a heavyweight fighter, about six-feet-two inches tall, had dinner at the Golden Eagle restaurant. He sat at the counter. The reason Agee didn't catch it before is that the night waitress, who came on at eight o'clock, was off when he made his first check. We routed her out. She remembers the mug well—so well that when we showed her a picture of Killer Joe Boyd—"

"She identified him," finished Fowler. "She said he was a stranger in town, that she never had seen him before."

"How'd you know that?" demanded Agee.

Fowler's intent expression relaxed for a moment.

"We know that Killer Joe Boyd came to Fort Centralia for some purpose, undoubtedly criminal. He apparently was seeking something. Probably he was willing to kill to gain it."

He picked up the record of Killer Joe Boyd that he had been studying.

"Listen to this," he said. He read:

Shot in the left chest by Special Agent Harry Botsford, F.B.I., during running gunfight in an alley extending from Baylor Avenue to Fuller Street, Thirty-eight hundred block, Brooklyn, October Fourteenth, Nine-teen-thirty-nine. Steel-jacketed bullet from Botsford's thirty-eight automatic lodged close to spine and was not removed by surgeons at Mercy Hospital due to fact said removal might cause death. Identifying feature—bullet embedded in tissue at left of spinal column twenty-two and three-eighths inches from tip.

Kendal whistled.

“So Killer Joe Boyd came up here, maybe to bump somebody, and got bumped instead,” he said. “Whoever that somebody was amputated his head and hands and buried him to avoid identification and to keep the heat off himself. He didn’t want the Feds prowling around.”

“Or for revenge,” Fowler prompted. “Remember that the same butchering was done on Butch Hogan’s body.”

Fowler reached for the telephone, put in a priority long distance call for the F.B.I. Technical and Research Laboratory in Washington. It went through immediately. To the Director of Firearms Identification, he explained the nature of the contents of the package he had sent.

“When the bullet comes in,” he directed, “check it against those fired by the gun Special Agent Harry Botsford used when he drilled Killer Joe Boyd. And pass along word to the chemical investigation boys to test the skin scrapings for a large salt content and possibly flakes of dried salt. They’ll probably find Boyd had been in salt water.”

He held down the stop for an instant, called Dr. Blakeley after getting the number from Agee. He told the coroner to measure the distance from the tip of the torso’s spine to the embedded bullet and to check as to whether it had been on the left side. He said he would call the coroner later.

“Well, that’s that,” he said. “It’s self-evident, but we’ll back up the identification legally and with the findings of Doc Blakeley and the technical lab. Anyhow, I’m satisfied.”

He glanced from Agee to Kendal.

“We’re up against an entirely new set of circumstances now,” he remarked. “We know the dead man is Boyd. He didn’t go to Canada, or any other place on the globe, but to where all bad boys go. We can assume, without a great deal of contradiction, that he was killed here in Fort Centralia. He arrived, ate, and less than three hours later he was dead. Somebody sliced him up and buried him five miles from here.

“Let’s ask ourselves some questions. Why did he come here? Who did he meet, or who spotted him? Who killed him? Where was he killed? What was the motive? Why were his hands and head removed—to destroy identification, for revenge, or for both? What became of the car he drove? How was the body cut up? How was the body taken to the burial place? I guess we’d better start at the beginning.”

Larry Kendal leaned forward.

“One thing we do know,” he said. “Somebody in Fort Centralia is a killer. I can’t see anybody making a date to meet him here, and coming from some other place. The killer was waiting for him, like a spider in his web waiting for a fly to get caught in it.”

“To me,” said Agee, “we should begin at the Golden Eagle restaurant. Boyd had been afraid to eat on the trip. Probably he was darned near starved when he hit here. He was driven to food. He gorged himself.”

“Who was in the restaurant?” Fowler asked.

“The cook, Bert Johnson, the owner and cashier, and the waitress who served both counter and booths. It’s not a big place.”

“Any patrons?”

“The place was almost empty when Boyd came in,” Kendal replied. “It was nearly nine o’clock. Maybe that’s why he chanced it. There were two people in one of the booths—Madeline D’Arcy, who runs a curio shop on the main drag, and Arch Andrews, a local lawyer.”

“They’re carrying the torch,” Agee added.

“I think we’d better reenact the whole thing,” Fowler decided. “We’ll want all of the live principals. We’ll have to wait until nearly closing time to do it.” He glanced at his wristwatch. It was after seven o’clock. “I’m plenty hungry. I could go for a steak myself. We can go to the Golden Eagle and see what the place looks like.

HE GOT a chorus of hearty approval, “By the way,” he asked Agee, “are those steaks legal? They’re rare these days—no pun intended—what with the OPA and red points.”

Agee grinned.

“Some are and some aren’t. I can get you legal ones, though. I know how you fellows feel about rackets. However, there are a lot of cattle in this country. Sometimes a steer has an unavoidable accident, like our friend Boyd had. Then, somehow, the steer shows up at the Rendezvous or the Golden Eagle.”

“Which means,” suggested Fowler, “that somebody looks the wrong way at the right time, and that it’s probably Sheriff Twoomey.”

“I’m not saying,” Agee countered.

Kendal, who had been studying the photographs of the members of the Hogan gang, suddenly picked up one and grabbed Fowler’s arm.

Fowler looked at the picture.

“Who is it?” Kendal asked.

Fowler and Agee eyed the likeness.

“I would say offhand,” volunteered Fowler, “that the gentleman is Deputy Sheriff Howard Collins, the son of the Golden West with the Brooklyn accent, taken when he was about five years younger.”

“You are now the apple of teacher’s eye,” Kendal said.

He turned the picture over. The caption read:

Antonio “Tony” Blue. Nickname, “Absent-minded Tony.”

“He certainly is,” agreed Kendal. “To think he’d forget all about life in Brooklyn.”

Fowler showed them the caption which read:

Minor member Hogan gang. Held on suspicion of murder of Guiseppe “Muddy Mary” Marinello, August

15, 1937. After evidence was gathered by Kings County district attorney's investigators he was indicted for murder by grand jury. Tried in Kings County Court. Acquitted February 19, 1938. Believed to have gone West.

"Nice, wholesome people you have around here, Agee," Kendal said.

Fowler reached for the telephone, got Sheriff Twoomey's number from Agee and called. He heard the slurred, drawling voice of the sheriff.

"Twoomey," he said, "this is Fowler. Is your deputy, Collins, there? I want you to keep him there until I arrive. I want to talk to him. You won't? Listen, Twoomey! How'd you like to explain how steaks get from steers to two local restaurants? Oh, you'll hold him after all? I'll be right over."

He slammed up the receiver, and turned to the others.

"He's too dumb to know that the F.B.I. doesn't investigate steaks," Fowler said.

"You're entirely wrong, Mr. Inspector," said Kendal, grabbing his hat. "I'm heading for the Golden Eagle right now to do just that. Providing they're not the black market kind. As Agee says, there's no use encouraging any rackets. They grow too fast with patronage."

"You fellows go ahead," Fowler said. "I'm going to have a look in on Tony Blue, alias Collins, and join you later."

CHAPTER IV

Who Is She?



GEE and Kendal were just finishing their desserts when Dan Fowler walked into the Golden Eagle. He sat down beside Kendal in one of the booths, studying the small eating establishment as he did, and placed his order.

"What about Collins, alias Blue?" Kendal asked.

"He broke down, all right. I caught him with his back to me, called 'Hey, Absent-minded,' and he swung around as if he'd been shot at. That got him. He spilled his whole past—that is, his version. I called national headquarters, got a quick check on whether he was wanted or not, but there was no red card against him.

"Twoomey says he's going straight and that he wouldn't consider firing him. Said he'd guarantee Tony. If he guaranteed a watch I'd throw it away. But I just dropped the whole matter then and there. There's no use putting the hoodlum in jail, even if we could. Better to let him loose. Maybe he'll lead us to some more of Hogan's Brooklyn gang, and maybe he'll hang himself."

Kendal nodded approval. Fowler hurried through his meal. The restaurant was nearly empty now, he discovered, as he looked around.

"Might as well get started," he told his companions. "Agee, you said you'd contacted both the D'Arcy dame and her lawyer friend, Arch Andrews. How's about fetching 'em?"

"You bet," said Agee. He rose, left the café.

"What's for me?" Kendal asked.

"While I finish this apple pie, you call Doc Blakeley and find out how far it is from a spine tip to where a bullet used to be."

Kendal nodded, got the use of the telephone from the proprietor. Fowler concentrated on the pie. Kendal returned in a couple of minutes.

"How far?" asked Fowler.

"Twenty-two and five-sixteenths inches."

"I'll settle for that. After all, what's a sixteenth? Boyd had been sitting down a lot."

"Doc says your spine shortens as you get older."

A furtive, squint-eyed little man, bowlegged, and about the size of an ex-jockey, sidled up to the table. He seemed to have come from nowhere. He talked from the side of his mouth.

"You fellas strangers in town, eh?" he asked.

"Sure," said Kendal. "What's on your mind?"

The gnomish fellow glanced around quickly. The proprietor was busy making change.

"You know there ain't no scotch in this town, nor anywhere for that matter. You look like a couple of good sports. Now, I got connections. I can slip you a case of McBray and Meigs for sixty bucks—deliver it right to your hotel room."

The proprietor bore down on the booth.

"Scram, Billy!" he snorted.

Billy filtered away like water through litmus paper.

"If you get annoyed again, holler," the proprietor told Fowler.

"What was that strange thing?" Fowler asked.

"Billy Hornbeak. He sells scotch hooch from over the border. But his prices are high. I can get you the same stuff for fifty-five."

The last customer waited at the cigar counter. The owner hurried away to take his money.

Kendal shook his head dazedly.

"First it's murdered torsos, then Brooklyn gangsters, then unrationed meat, and now bootleg hooch. I'm afraid this is getting me."

There was a bustle and stir at the door. A statuesque blonde and a man of about thirty-five were literally being herded into the place by Agee.

"But this is an outrage!" the woman was protesting. "I don't care if it is the F.B.I.! I simply won't be treated this way!"

"Now, Madeline," soothed the man, whom Fowler and Kendal immediately assumed was Arch Andrews,

"this isn't a formal investigation. You've done nothing wrong, and you've nothing to fear. I'll inform the gentlemen that your civil rights are not to be violated."

The blonde started for the door. Only Arch Andrews' ready arm restrained her. Fowler darted forward, followed by Kendal. He smiled at the blonde.

"Mrs. D'Arcy?" he asked, smiling.

She nodded. He introduced himself and his companion.

"This'll only take a minute. I want you to assume the places in the booth you occupied night before last. Just remain there for a few minutes, until I tell you to leave."

"This is ridiculous!" Mrs. D'Arcy began.

"Glad to be of service," said Arch Andrews. "Come Madeline."

M HE TOOK her firmly by the arm and led her to a booth. They found their places. Agee turned to the owner.

"Demetrios, you go behind your counter, like I told you."

He turned to the waitress.

"Gracie, what seat did the man take?"

"That one." She pointed to the third from the end.

"Very good," said Fowler. "Now, I'll be the man."

He walked outside the building and came in. He hung his hat on a rack, went to his seat.

"Did I hang my hat in the right place?" he asked Gracie.

"Yes, sir."

"Good. Now I order. I eat. I'm through. Mrs. D'Arcy and Arch Andrews are still in the booth?"

"Yes, sir." Gracie lowered her voice to a whisper. "I want to see you about that after they go."

Fowler nodded.

"Now give me my check."

The girl complied.

He rose, went to Demetrios.

"Now what did he do?" he asked.

"He paid his check, turned to the left, got his hat, and went out the door."

Fowler did as he was told, came back in.

"Did I do it right?" he asked Demetrios.

"You did."

Fowler hurried to Mrs. D'Arcy and her escort. He looked down at the blonde. Something troubled him. He couldn't put his finger on the spot in his mind which was doing nip-ups.

"That'll be all, Mrs. D'Arcy," he said. "I want to thank you both very much."

"You're quite welcome," the woman replied.

Her manner was totally changed now. Fowler caught Andrews' almost imperceptible nod of approval to her for her performance. Andrews rose and assisted her from the booth. He stuck his hand out to Fowler, who shook it.

"We'll be running along," he said.

Fowler watched them go, his mind still groping. Alice, the waitress, motioned to him.

"What I wanted to tell you, Mr. Fowler, was that their positions in the booth was reversed. Just now, he was facin' the door. Before, she was facin' the door. About halfway through the meal she wanted to go. I thought they was having a fight. He grabbed her by the wrist, and I heard him say, 'Shut up, you fool. You'll stay here.'"

"Did you hear anything else?"

"No. Just them words. He sort of hissed 'em."

"Fine, Alice. Thank you very much." He turned to Demetrios. "Thanks," he said. "I'm sorry I've put you to this trouble, but in a case like this, we can't miss a point."

He turned, walked out of the café. Agee and Kendal followed.

"What do you make of it?" Agee asked, when they were outside.

"There's a cog spinning loose in my brain, and I don't know all the answers, but I can tell you this much. The thing I originally wanted to find out, I found out. Boyd looked in and thought the place was empty. He came in, went through all the business of eating his meal and left without ever seeing anyone in that booth. At no time was he in a position where he could see either Mrs. D'Arcy or Andrews.

"But Mrs. D'Arcy could see him. So we know at least half a dozen people, including Demetrios and the café help, saw Boyd up to that point. Incidentally, Demetrios, the last person to see him in the café, doesn't know which way he went when he left, whether he was on foot or used an automobile."

"That automobile thing has me stuck," said Kendal. "Agee's had every available man looking for it. I think I'll walk over to the station with him and see if they've found it."

"Okay," said Fowler. "I'm going to duck back to the hotel and see if I can unscramble my brains."

Preoccupied, Fowler walked down Main street, entered the hotel, got his key, and went to his room. He began pacing up and down methodically, torturing his mind into some kind of action. He had paced for several minutes when the truth struck him like a bolt of light. Madeline D'Arcy was a blonde and the proprietor of a curio shop in Fort Centralia. Dixie Hogan, widow of Butch Hogan, gang chief, of Brooklyn, was a brunette.

But they happened to be one and the same person!

F OWLER stood rigidly still as he contemplated the implications. Killer Joe Boyd, a member of the Hogan gang. Collins, alias Tony Blue, same. Mrs. Dixie Hogan.

Finally he turned, bent over to pick up the picture of Dixie Hogan and study it again. As he did there was a

crash of glass and a stinging splatter of plaster on a line with the area his head had just occupied. He continued to bend, threw himself sideward, whipped his automatic from its shoulder holster and shattered the light globe with a bullet. At the same time he leaped toward the window through the darkness, gun ready.

He peered from a corner of the window frame. Outside, the glare of streetlights turned the flat roof of the building opposite into contrasting, stygian blackness. Below there was shouting, and feet were pounding on the pavement. He raced downstairs, gun in hand, through the lobby and into the street. He met Kendal racing toward him, clutching his own automatic.

"What's up?" Kendal shouted.

Fowler gave a staccato explanation.

"Follow me," he said then.

They raced to the back of the building, but saw no one. They worked their way up it, Kendal taking cover on one side and Fowler the other. The two reached the end without trace of the assailant, nor was there any sign of him in the adjoining streets.

"Maybe he's in the building," Kendal suggested.

They found the rear door locked. A metal fire escape extended to within about seven feet of the ground. Fowler seized the bottom rung, swung up, and found himself alone on a gravel roof. Kendal was coming up behind. Fowler pulled out a pocket flashlight and penciled its ray about the surface of the roof. His companion did the same thing.

"No ejected shell, no footprints possible on the gravel, and not even a cigarette butt," Fowler finally said, as he switched off the torch. "We might as well go back to the room." Then he brought himself up short and demanded. "Say—where's Agee?"

"He took a powder just after we left the Golden Eagle," Kendal replied, realizing the significance of the question with a jolt. "When we reached his car he suddenly said he had some unfinished business, excused himself, and climbed into it. I went on to the police station. There wasn't any trace of the car Boyd drove. I was on my way back to the hotel when I heard a loud report and then a muffled one."

"I shot out the light," Fowler said.

They went to their room. There they found there was no hope of using the bullet for identification purposes. It had mushroomed against the wall plaster and had been cut to pieces by the abrasive action. As Fowler found the bullet and studied it, he told his associate about his discovery that Dixie Hogan and Madeline D'Arcy were the same person. Kendal exclaimed, studied the photograph and agreed.

Fowler looked in the telephone book, jotted down a couple of addresses.

"I've a craving to ask Mrs. D'Arcy a few questions," he said. "Let's get going."

CHAPTER V

Trap in the Night



AN FOWLER jammed his hat on his head. Kendal grabbed his own headgear and they went to the lobby. They were accosted by the manager.

"I'm so sorry that happened," he said lugubriously. "I'm having a man make repairs right away."

Fowler slapped him on the shoulder.

"It's all my fault," he replied.

"Put it on my bill. I'm old enough to know I ought to pull my shades down."

The men went out into the night, got the coupé Agee had loaned them and drove to an address on Maple avenue. It proved to be a white frame one-story cottage surrounded by trees. All lights were out. Kendal automatically slipped to the rear among some shrubs to watch the back door as Fowler went onto the front porch and rang the bell. The men could hear it distinctly. Fowler pressed the button again and again, but there was no response.

Kendal returned to the front.

"Apparently nobody's sleeping," he said. "Windows are all closed and locked. There's no garage. Probably hasn't a car."

"Then we'll try the next address. Maybe Mr. Archibald Andrews has some ideas—or even a visitor."

They climbed into the car and drove to a more pretentious two-story home, set well back among the trees, on Summit street. They followed the same procedure. This time, after several rings, they had more luck. Lights went on.

"Who's there?" a voice asked from inside the front door.

"Fowler, Federal Bureau of Investigation," the G-man replied.

At the sound of voices, Kendal ran up on the porch. The door opened slowly. Arch Andrews was wearing a bathrobe over his pajamas and blinked sleepily. Fowler looked at the bulge in its pocket.

"May we come in?" he asked.

"Certainly, certainly," the lawyer replied. He ran his hand through his rumpled hair. "Excuse my appearance. I'm not used to having callers at this time of night."

Fowler pointed to the bulging pocket.

"I see you're well prepared to greet them."

Andrews grinned sheepishly.

"You forget this is the wild, wild West."

"Mind if I look at the greeting card?"

"Not at all."

The lawyer produced a .32-caliber revolver, handed it to Fowler, butt first. Fowler sniffed at the barrel.

"It's been fired recently," he remarked.

"Target practice," Andrews said smoothly.

"On whom?" asked Kendal.

"Jokes at this time of night!" exclaimed Andrews.

"You'll pardon my curiosity," the G-man countered. "So many guns seem to be going off around here these days I thought it was a Frontier Day celebration."

Fowler slipped the revolver into his pocket, lifted an eyebrow at Andrews.

"You don't mind?"

"Not at all."

"I hate to rob you of your protection. I could call for it tomorrow."

"That's all right. I've a shotgun upstairs."

"Much better at close range," offered Kendal. "It saves chopping off the head later."

Andrews led the men into the living room and switched on a light.

"We thought maybe you could tell us where to find Mrs. D'Arcy," Fowler suggested.

"I couldn't. Isn't she at home?"

Fowler shook his head.

"She's apparently taken a run-out powder."

"I can't enlighten you on that, either."

"You wouldn't be covering up, would you?"

"Mrs. D'Arcy is my client. It would be a violation of professional ethics to reveal her whereabouts—if I knew."

Andrews smiled blandly. Fowler saw that he might as well be fencing with a world champion.

"I think that'll be all for now, Mr. Andrews," he said.

Andrews showed him and Kendal to the door.

"Better luck next time," he offered. A guileless smile still lifted the corners of his mouth.

"I'm afraid there will be a next," said Fowler.

The G-men got into the coupé.

"Now let's try something easy, like milking a tarantula," Kendal suggested. "I'd like to know what he knows about what she's done, what she knows about what he's done and both."

FOWLER raced through the gears, sent the car into Main street, pulled up in front of a combination all-night lunchroom, pool hall and bus station. They approached the man at the ticket counter.

"Know Mrs. D'Arcy—Mrs. Madeline D'Arcy?" Fowler asked.

"Shore do. One of our best bus customers."

"Which one did she take this time?"

"The nine-two for Spokane."

They thanked the agent, hurried to their room.

"She didn't waste much time taking off," Kendal said.

Fowler put in a call for Sally Vane at the Multnomah Hotel, Seattle. In a moment or so he heard her sleep-dulled voice.

"This is Dan," he said.

The sleep went from her words as she exclaimed:

"Dan, darling! I've been so worried."

"Everything's okay," he replied, and advised her of all that had happened to date, with the exception of his narrow escape from the would-be assassin's bullet.

"The D'Arcy woman's probably somewhere in Spokane by this time," he said then. "Get down there. The only thing I can tell you is that she makes trips there quite often. Your job is to find her and to stick like a plaster until you uncover what she had to do with Boyd's murder. I'll send a photo and data to General Delivery, Spokane." His voice softened. "And good night, darling."

Kendal was slipping the picture and record into an envelope when Fowler hung up. Fowler addressed it, took it to the desk, and returned to the room. As he walked in, the telephone rang. He picked it up.

"Fowler?" a muffled voice asked.

"Correct."

"You're looking for a car that was driven by Killer Joe Boyd," the voice rasped. "It's under a bunch of cut tree limbs. It won't be there long."

"Who's this speaking?" Fowler asked, giving Kendal a high-sign. Kendal had already started from the room to check the call.

"I'm just trying to help you, so don't get too curious," the voice replied. "Get this—you take Highway Nineteen due north toward the border. You go twenty-five miles, see? You come to an unmarked road branching off to the right. Take it for three miles. The road starts around the rim of a gully. You'll see the tree-covered car down below. Step on it. The bus'll be gone by dawn."

Fowler heard a click and the buzz of a dead wire. When Kendal returned his superior was slipping on an extra shoulder holster.

"No go," Kendal said. "The switchboard operator did everything she could for me, but it was a public phone in a crossroads store about fifteen miles north of here that's been closed for a month. Somebody must've busted in."

Fowler got six extra cartridge clips from his suitcase and slipped them into his pocket. As he did, he gave his running mate the gist of the information the unknown had given him. Kendal wearily strapped on an extra holster.

"Sounds like a trap," he said. "My, my! What'll these boys think of next?"

In as swift a time as possible the trim little coupé, lights out, purred noiselessly toward the curve in the narrow road. Fowler drove. Kendal sat tensely peering into the night, his right hand cradling the butt of an automatic. Pine trees stood tall against the black sky, boulders were stacked like snowballs which had rolled down hill.

The road started to bend.

"We're here," Kendal said. "About fifty feet to the right it looks like the rim of the world."

His companion swung the car off the road, stopped.

"We'll stay near the car," he said. "Somebody might jam it up. It's a long walk back."

"And when one of us looks into the gully, the other'll keep watch," Kendal added.

They got out of the car, swiveled their necks as they strode to a point where the rolling land broke abruptly into nothingness. Both eyed the boulders and trees around them.

Kendal looked over the edge of what he could see was a precipice while Fowler kept on the lookout.

"Gully, my eye!" the younger G-man exclaimed as he tossed a rock into the abysmal hole. "Somebody's moved the Grand Canyon up here."

Fowler heard a twig break in the distance. He made a clicking sound with his tongue to warn his teammate, who swung around. A gun cracked. The bullet struck a boulder and ricocheted. Fowler saw the flash of the weapon fifty yards away and stabbed a reply. Another weapon opened up.

AS THE two G-men took cover behind the boulders a fusillade stung into the darkness. Lead splatted against boulders, lead whined into the night.

"It's a trap, all right," Fowler snapped hoarsely. "If somebody hadn't stepped on a twig we'd be full of lead and over the precipice by now. Looks like there are only two of 'em."

"Let's give 'em the Eisenhower treatment," Kendal suggested between blasts.

Fowler's answer was to take to the cover of a boulder a few yards ahead. Kendal picked another and, running like a fullback charging a line, moved forward a similar distance.

Fowler caught a glimpse of a shadowy, indistinct figure in retreat. He took careful aim and fired. They heard a low moan. The firing ceased abruptly, and there was the sound of the attackers crashing through the underbrush in full flight.

"At 'em!" ordered Fowler.

The men advanced, ducking now and then as an occasional shot ripped through the underbrush within a few feet of them or plopped into one of the trees. Then they heard the sound of a starter grinding, followed by the muffled roar of a powerful engine.

"Quick!" snapped Fowler. "Back to the car!"

At the sound of his voice there was the crash of a weapon in the dark and the bullet missed Fowler by a hair's breadth. He whirled and fired quickly in reply, but he hadn't seen the flash of the foe's gun, so the G-man's shots were wild. Again the foe's gun spat, but Fowler and Kendal were running toward their own car.

They sensed the plan to hold them back until the killers could load a wounded man in the getaway automobile that had started to move in the brush.

"Don't shoot again," Fowler warned Kendal. "They're running for it."

CHAPTER VI

Border Murder



UT ahead, Fowler and Kendal heard the attackers' car rolling through its gears, and taking flight to the east. They raced to their own coupé, leaped in, and Fowler started the engine. He could not see the car ahead of them. Content to stay well back of it at this point, he did not turn on his lights. Frequently he shoved in the clutch and cut the ignition switch so he could hear the

engine of the fleeing car.

The road turned north. The coupé bumped and jogged. When the sounds made by the car ahead grew fainter, Fowler speeded up. When they became louder, he dropped back. The road narrowed and was rougher so that Fowler was forced to slow to almost walking speed to keep the springs of the car from breaking.

Soon it was necessary to keep twisting and turning the steering wheel to remain on the winding course. The car started downgrade. Fowler turned off the engine, rolled along the steep, torturous path which passed for a road. He stopped twice. The first time they heard the soft, distant roar of water and the engine of the pursued car. The second time, they heard nothing but the water.

"He's stopped!" Kendal exclaimed hoarsely.

His companion found a clearing, rolled the car noiselessly off to the side. He set the brakes and he and Kendal got out. Kendal slipped a fresh clip into one of his automatics and unlimbered the other. Fowler drew his. They started down the slope on the balls of their feet.

Then, not ten feet from them, came the hoarse command:

"Reach for it! You're covered!"

Both men swung in the direction of the familiar voice.

"Agee!" Fowler exclaimed.

"Is that you, Fowler?" came the answer. The voice was filled with wonder. Both Fowler and Kendal were ready to blast in the direction of the voice, when the Police Chief added: "Thank the gods you're here! Come this way. Don't flash a light. Walk lightly."

The G-men hesitated, wary of another ruse.

"Come forward with your hands up, Agee!" Fowler demanded. "We want to see you first."

Agee advanced, his arms in the air.

"I don't blame you boys," he said. "Sorry I had to run out on you. But I've been trying to put the finger on some hoods who have been running scotch in from Canada. This is it."

"Okay," said Kendal. "What's the score?"

"Come this way."

They followed Agee around a couple of bends to a ledge which looked down into a chasm.

Far below, playing flashlights and parking lights limned a huge covered truck and a tow car. Shadowy figures snapped off the lights almost instantly, both engines leaped to life, and the vehicles started lumbering up the grade.

"Coming this way?" Fowler demanded.

Agee shook his head.

"They swing around the bend to a little better road," he said.

"Let's go!" ordered Fowler. The three men raced back to the coupé.

"You drive, Agee," Fowler snapped as they leaped into it. "You know the way. Keep the lights off."

Agee tooted the little car to the creek, swung the wheel, and started up another winding road.

"Canada's just across the drink," he said. "The rumrunners take the back roads to avoid customs and immigration stations. The truck can't pull this grade we're on, so a tow car helps out. With a scotch shortage in the States, the boys are cleaning up almost as much as they did during Prohibition."

Fowler grunted.

"Chasing rumrunners isn't our job," he said, "but there are a couple of lugs in that tow car who tried to push us into the hereafter tonight. What's more, I think the murderer who bumped Boyd took a potshot at me at the hotel, then later tried to shoot both of us and roll us off the edge of that cliff, is one of the pair."

Agee whistled. He pushed the coupé as fast as he dared over the rocky, winding, climbing road. Fowler estimated that by this time truck and tow car must be about half a mile ahead.

Soon they came out on the level. Agee picked up to a speed which threatened to throw them all through the top of the car. Fowler, sitting on the right side, wound down the door window and swung out his pistol.

The huge truck abruptly loomed ahead of them. Fowler sent four shots into the double rear tires. The truck swerved to one side of the road and then to the other, careened half onto its side, lurched and scraped to a stop.

FOWLER leaped from the coupé, followed by Agee and Kendal. A figure hurtled from the truck, gun blasting. Fowler fired. The man clamped his hand on his right shoulder and the gun fell from his right hand.

Fowler kept going, ready to meet the others in the tow car—but the tow car wasn't there!

He whirled on Agee, who was covering the swaying figure of Tony Blue, alias Deputy Sheriff Howard Collins.

"Agee," he snapped, "you bring Collins in."

Kendal had vaulted onto the side of the angling truck. He saw a small cowering figure. "Out!" he commanded.

"Honest," said Billy Hornbeak, from the corner of his mouth, "I ain't done nothin'. I just come along for the ride."

Kendal pulled him from the cab, shoved him toward Agee.

"You can have this rat, too," he said.

"I'll hike 'em both to my car, drive 'em back to Fort Centralia and lock 'em up," Agee declared.

Fowler was already racing for the coupé. He jumped in, started it, switched on the lights. He was rolling slowly when Kendal joined him. He nearly cracked up the coupé getting by the truck, roared into high and started pounding down the desolate road. It was smoothing out now, but still bumpy.

Kendal held his weapons in his lap.

Mile after mile rolled by until finally, Kendal said, in a low, tense voice:

"There she is, Dan."

A moment later, the back end of the speeding, careening tow car with its crane, winch and other wrecking equipment was outlined in the headlights. Kendal stuck his right arm and head out of the window, aiming at the tires. Fowler, driving with his right hand, poured more shots with his left.

The tow car swung wildly to the right, cut back onto the road, swerved to the left, and from the right door hurtled a large, shapeless vaguely human form. It fell across the road. The car ahead careened again, straightened out, and spurted forward.

The body lay across the road.

Clenching his teeth, Fowler jammed on the coupé's brakes to avoid hitting it. The little car skidded sideward, came to a jittering halt with its front wheels almost touching the form.

The G-men leaped out, rolled the form face upwards. They found themselves staring into the sightless eyes of Sheriff Hal Twoomey.

"Holy mud!" exclaimed Kendal.

He and Fowler lifted the body to one side after they had made certain Twoomey was dead. They jumped into the car, raced down the road. After covering perhaps twenty miles at breakneck speed, they had to admit that by dumping the body of the sheriff in front of their car, the killer had managed to outwit them.

They turned back to recover Twoomey's body and to meet Agee and his prisoners.

Making all speed possible back to Fort Centralia, Fowler had Twoomey's body taken at once to Dr. Blakeley's hospital for an autopsy. The G-men stopped at their hotel, but in an hour had returned to the hospital for a report.

Dr. Philip Blakeley looked up at Dan Fowler from the mortal remains of Sheriff Hal Twoomey, stretched out on the operating table.

"Your bullet," he said to the F.B.I. inspector, "struck our late and unlamented sheriff in the left arm. He or his as yet unidentified companion bandaged it crudely to stop the flow of blood. The bullet passed through the fleshy part of his arm—there was plenty of flesh to navigate—and chipped the bone. You might look over there on the sink and see if that bullet wasn't fired from a Colt thirty-eight automatic."

As Fowler did, Blakeley was working with long forceps. The G-man turned to find the coroner examining a second bullet.

"Funny thing," Blakeley said. "With all your marksmanship, you fellows missed."

"Try shooting through a crane and winch some time," Fowler had begun when he stopped short as the significance of Blakeley's remark struck him. "Wha-a-t?" he demanded.

"Sheriff Twoomey was plugged in the tow car by his pal," Blakeley continued, studying the bullet. "I examined and tested his vest. The bullet was fired into his left side and, from the powder marks, it was practically a contact shot. Your murderer apparently was driving the car with his right hand. He sneaked his gun out with his left, jammed it into Twoomey's ribs and pulled the trigger."

He smiled at the expression of incredulity on the face of the G-man.

"Furthermore," he said, holding the forceps closer to Fowler, "it might interest you to know that this is a thirty-two caliber bullet."

DAN Fowler glanced at the comparison microscope. The coroner washed off the pellet. They set it and the one taken from the body of Killer Joe Boyd beneath the dual lenses, and Fowler began his examination. For some time he rotated one of the leads. Then he looked up.

"This bullet is from the same gun that killed Boyd," he said. "Take a squint for yourself."

Blakeley peered into the microscope and nodded agreement.

"We've got to find—" Fowler began.

Agee popped in the door to interrupt him.

"We found the tow car abandoned on Holcomb street," he said. "Wiped clean of fingerprints. Harvey Hastings, the owner, reported it stolen when he opened his garage this morning. That makes the third one

they've taken like that. The thefts started me doing a little investigating."

He noticed the tense expressions on the faces of his audience.

"Say, what goes with you?" he demanded.

Fowler told him about the matching bullets.

"Hal Twoomey may have been mixed up in a lot of rackets," he concluded, "but somebody was bossing him. That person killed Boyd, made two passes at me, one at Kendal, supervised Twoomey's rumrunning activities, and then killed him. He's still on the prowl and we're getting nowhere. Seen Larry?"

"He's down at the county jail working over your friend, Blue, and Billy Hornbeak," Agee replied.

Fowler got the number and stepped out of the laboratory to telephone. When he returned, he reported to Agee and Dr. Blakeley:

"Kendal says Billy and Blue are sticking to their original stories. Blue says he always drove the truck for Twoomey—this was his third trip—but that he had never carried anyone with him before. Twoomey, he says, always came alone in the tow car. He claims he isn't really sure that there was anybody with Twoomey this time."

"That makes Twoomey bumped by a phantom," said Agee.

"That phantom also knows how to drive a car and stop pursuit by tossing bodies in the road," Fowler agreed. "And as for Billy, he still says he went along for the ride." His brow wrinkled in thought. "The next step is to find out who owns thirty-two caliber weapons within a radius of at least fifty miles," he said.

"That won't be hard," Agee offered. "Old Tim Cody has a record of every gun owner in the county. If he hasn't sold somebody a gun he's repaired it for 'em, or he's sold 'em shells."

Fowler reached for his hat.

"Let's go," he said.

The men were leaving the hospital when Kendal drove up in the coupé. On learning their mission he offered to drive them. In a moment or two they were going into the Cody gun shop. The blind, crippled owner greeted them cordially.

"Knew you'd drop around, Mr. Fowler," he said, and acknowledged his introduction to Kendal. "As I was tellin' you, I've got a modern, complete shebang here. There's lots of old weapons, too. Mebbe you'd like to see what some claims to be one of the rods Wild Bill Hickok sported durin' his shootin' days."

"We'll skip that today, Tim," Agee said. "What these gentlemen are after is a list of names of everybody in Centralia County who owns a thirty-two caliber weapon of any kind."

The blind man whistled.

"That's a mighty big parcel, but I can do it."

"Right away?" asked Fowler.

Cody, using his fingers and hands to guide him, moved around a lathe, passed a case of drills and tools, and opened a drawer. He took a ledger from it, and tapped it.

"It's all in here—every name, number and owner," he said. "I can get little Mary Twitchell, the gal that keeps my books and tidies up—lives back of the shop, you know—to come down tonight, and twist what I remember and what's writ, I'll have the list for you tomorrow."

"That's a lot of trouble," Fowler said. "We'd be glad to pay you for it."

"Pshaw—it's for the gov'ment, ain't it? I'm right, glad to help you fellers. Now if you'd like to see some of my guns and the way I work, I can show you."

"Some other time, Tim," Agee said. "See you tomorrow."

"That's okay." The men heard the tone of regret at having them go in Cody's voice. His dog rose, stretched, eyed the visitors sleepily as they left the shop.

"We might as well return Andrews' gat," Kendal said when they reached the sidewalk. "He couldn't have used it last night because we had it in the room."

"Better than that," Fowler suggested, "we'll turn it over to Agee for tagging and safekeeping until we've cleaned up this mess."

The three men went to the room. Fowler opened a bureau drawer. He opened three other bureau drawers. Then he whirled on Agee and Kendal.

"The gun's gone!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER VII

Missing Lady



SALLY VANE arrived at the railroad station in Spokane wearing a powder blue tailored suit, a pert little sailor hat which slanted forward and down onto her smooth, wide forehead, the sheerest rayon stockings she could get, and high-heeled black patent leather slippers. Her hair had a sheen in the morning sunshine, her eyes were bright.

Sally really looked very much like a saleswoman for a wholesale house dealing in women's exclusive fashions, and a model for the product. Only her firm little chin and the set of her mouth could possibly give a clue to the most observant that she might be on a more important mission. No one would guess, however, that in the bright patent leather bag she carried rested a very businesslike .25-caliber automatic which Fowler, had given her, and which she had used effectively when there had been need for it.

Her first call was at the post office, where she picked up the photograph of brunette Dixie Hogan. Fowler had told her that the woman was now Madeline D'Arcy and a blonde. She studied the picture, then pored over the woman's record.

Her first six hours of effort at finding Madeline, though, were totally unavailing. She visited hotels, boarding and rooming houses which were listed in the newspaper, want ads, the bus terminal, the railroad station, constantly asking questions which remained unanswered.

Then, with inspiration born of a quick mind and long experience, she turned again to the biographical data. One paragraph caught her eye. It read:

Dixie Hogan has two children—John, three years old, and Gary, one year old.

Sally looked at the date on the record. It was 1939.

"Let's see," she mused. "John would now be nine, and Gary would be seven. Dan said this Dixie-Madeline made frequent visits to Spokane. Possibly that was because the youngsters are in school here."

She consulted the classified telephone directory for private and boarding schools, made a list. Then she hailed a taxi.

Her first two visits were fruitless. The owners of the places had never heard of Madeline D'Arcy and her two children. At the third, however, she struck pay dirt.

"Mrs. D'Arcy," the principal said, "left John and Gary with us for about six months. There was—ah—a slight misunderstanding in the matter of tuition."

"You mean she couldn't pay her bill?" asked Sally.

"That's a bald way of putting it."

"Do you know where she took the children?"

The tall, austere woman nodded.

"I believe Mrs. Beacon, who operates the Beacon School for Big Little Men took them in. She can't say I didn't warn her. However, she's very easily put upon."

"Thank you very much," Sally said.

She left the school, consulted her list, and gave the address to the cab driver. After a few minutes ride she found herself being driven up a curving drive to a large two-story frame house which apparently at one time had been the estate of some local millionaire. A sign identified the institution.

She told the driver to wait, went across the wide veranda and pressed the bell. A short, plump woman wearing a stiff white waist, dark skirt, and low-heeled shoes came to the door. When Sally asked for Mrs. Beacon, the woman wordlessly showed her into a study.

Mrs. Beacon rose from a desk and came forward.

"What can I do for you, young lady?" she asked. She was dressed as was the other woman, and wore tortoise-shell-rimmed glasses.

"I've come about John and Gary D'Arcy," Sally replied.

She heard Mrs. Beacon's quick intake of breath.

"I—they—they aren't registered here," she faltered.

"But they were?"

"They—that is—" The woman got possession of herself. "I must ask you—are you representing Mrs. D'Arcy in any way? Or are you a member of the—er—press?"

"Neither," replied Sally.

She reached into her purse, produced her credentials. The school head looked surprised and her hand shook as she returned the papers.

"You can speak to me in complete confidence," Sally said. "I'm mainly interested in finding Mrs. D'Arcy."

"I frankly don't know where she lives, Miss Vane. She refused to tell me."

"She's disappeared," Sally told her. "Suppose you give me the whole story."

"Mrs. D'Arcy," Mrs. Beacon said, "came here about six months ago. I had reason to believe that she was not financially—er—responsible. But the children were very sweet and very tractable, and I rather took pity on her. She said she was doing war work, and simply had to find a place for John and Gary.

"She gave me a small advance payment for their tuition, and then made a strange request. She asked that we tell no one they were in the school. Of course, I complied with her desire. She was a close-mouthed, mysterious person, though she called to see the children frequently. I was constantly forced to ask her for further tuition payments. She made promises, but no money was forthcoming.

"The last time she was here, I told her that she would have to place the children somewhere else within a week unless she met her obligation. Shortly thereafter, a man appeared with a note purportedly from Mrs. D'Arcy telling me he was to take them. He said he was their uncle, and paid the bill in full to date. Naturally, under those circumstances, I released them."

SALLY VANE leaned forward intently.

"Will you describe the man, please?"

Mrs. Beacon shook her head.

"I can't tell you much. He called on the telephone first and requested that I have the boys' things packed and the boys dressed to leave. It was at night—about eight o'clock. He came and stood in the hallway. His overcoat was turned up around his neck, and he did not remove his hat. He had paid me, and was ready to leave when the telephone rang. I answered it. When I came out, he was gone. I hurried to the front door, and a taxicab was just pulling away."

"What kind of a cab?"

"A Black and White, I believe."

"Thank you," Sally said. "Now go ahead with your story, please."

"Mrs. D'Arcy appeared here late last night. When she heard what I had done, she at first flew into a rage and hit me. Then she became hysterical. Finally, she collapsed completely. When she recovered she left, threatening dire revenge. She said she'd wipe my school from the face of the earth. You see why I was so loath to give any information. I really don't know what's going to happen."

Tears streamed down Mrs. Beacon's face.

"I didn't mean to do anything wrong—I honestly didn't. This school—is all I have."

Sally rose, patted her shoulder.

"Don't worry, my dear lady," she said. "And now I'd like full descriptions of Mrs. D'Arcy, the children, and please—try to remember more about that man."

Half an hour later, Sally left the big, rambling building. The taxicab driver took her to the Black and White garage. There she interrogated cabbies until she found the man who had driven the kidnapper and children from the school.

"I took 'em to the bus station," he said.

"Then take me there, too," Sally requested.

On the way she tried to get a more detailed description of the abductor. It was dark, the driver said. The man had his hat-brim pulled down, and his coat collar turned up. No, the kids didn't like the fellow. The younger one started to cry.

"The lug hauled off and bopped him one—hardern' I'd ever bust one of mine," he said. "Made me mad."

At the bus station, none of the ticket sellers remembered the trio. Sally sought out the manager, checked with him in regard to the sellers on duty. Then she got a timetable. The cab driver stayed with her.

"What time did you get down here?" she asked him.

He went to his car, consulted his call sheet and returned.

"Eight-thirty, on the dime," he reported.

Sally eyed the timetable. Only five buses left after that hour. Two went to Seattle, two to Portland, and one to Arapaho. The situation looked hopeless until Sally saw that the Arapaho bus passed through Fort Centralia.

"He may have taken the eight-forty-seven to Arapaho," she said.

"I'll call the ticket sellers who were on duty at that time and you can talk to them," the manager said.

He did, and the second seller recalled the man.

"Yes," he said, "the fellow bought two half-fares for the kids and one for himself. The tickets were to Fort Centralia. I remember him because the kids were screaming like devils. They wanted their mother. They kept yelling 'Where's Mummy? We want Mummy.' The fellow dragged 'em out of the station. Guess he must've walked 'em around until the bus came."

Sally thanked him, and hung up.

"I'll take a ticket to Fort Centralia," she told the manager. "Will the same driver be on the eight-forty-seven Arapaho run?"

"He always makes it, except Mondays," he replied. "That's his day off."

At eight-forty-five Sally boarded the bus. Yes, the driver remembered the man with the two kids. The kids raised the very old Ned. Turned the bus into a bedlam and kept the passengers awake. The fellow got off about two miles this side of Fort Centralia, took a dirt road leading to the left.

"Let me off there, too," Sally ordered.

After what seemed hours, the bus slowed.

"This is the spot, lady," the driver said. "You walk right up that way. But you ought to have a big, strong man with you, cutie-pie."

He winked.

SALLY alighted, crossed in front of the bus, groped in the darkness for the road. The vehicle roared, snorted and, as it became just a red light in the distance, Sally wished she was back on it—in fact, she had an almost uncontrollable desire to sprint after it, and to Dan Fowler, who was only a few miles away now.

But Sally clenched her fists tightly in firm resolution. Dan had given her this assignment, and she couldn't run to him for help right in the middle like a silly baby. Besides, those kids were in danger, and every minute counted.

She had walked perhaps a quarter of a mile, intermittently using her small flashlamp to guide her, when she saw the dim lines of what appeared to be a deserted, one-story cabin-type house with a lean-to garage. She reached into her purse and pulled out the automatic. Holding it ready, she advanced on the eerie old structure.

She took a deep breath and knocked. At the same time she put her feet close together to keep her knees from knocking.

There was no answer. She tried the door. It opened easily. She thought she detected the sound of a moan, coming from a rear room. She was sure she did when she heard the low sound a second time. Forgetting the fear which dried her mouth, made her legs weak and her backbone like jelly, she darted forward toward the rear room. The moan came again. She faced another unlocked door, opened it.

She used her left hand to operate her flashlamp. It's inquiring beam fell on one small human bundle and then another. Wide, terror-stricken eyes stared into the light. The two children were bound and gagged, hand and foot. Their little mouths were covered with adhesive tape. A woman's compassion and motherly instinct swept over her at the pitiful sight.

"You poor dears!" she exclaimed, as she darted forward, wondering how long they had been without water or food.

Her hands sought the tape which sealed the lips of Gary, the youngest, and at that instant, something exploded inside her head and she toppled forward into a void.

CHAPTER VIII

Brooklyn Story



HEN Sally Vane regained consciousness, her first realization was one of intense pain. Her head ached and pounced miserably, and she ruefully wished she had been wearing a steel invasion helmet rather than the over-the-brow straw she had purchased with the single idea of intriguing Dan Fowler.

She opened her eyes and saw that the sun was shining brightly outside. A moan reminded her of the children. They lay on the floor near her, trussed tightly, staring at her wonderingly, as if she was a creature from another world. And she, too, she discovered, not only had tape over her lips but was tied hand and foot.

"Those unlocked doors should have told me this was a trap!" she told herself. "And then, of course, when I saw the children suffering, I had to rush forward like a scatterbrained little idiot instead of looking behind me."

It was quite obvious to Sally that her assailant had stood behind the door, waiting. Whoever it was had probably seen her flashlight blinking on and off as she had come down the narrow, desolate, winding road.

Now what to do? The cabin, she saw, was very old. The floor was covered with dust and rubble. Whitewash was flecking from the plywood walls. The ceiling above her was sagging. The door was literally hanging on its hinges. That was it—the door!

At the point of weeping because of the damage she was doing to her trim new powder blue suit, she rolled to the door. Then she got on her knees and finally to her feet. She stood about two feet from the door, and fell against it. It was stronger than she thought. It failed to budge. Desperately she tried again and again, each time painfully picking up her battered body.

Then Johnny, his bright eyes warm and friendly now, began rolling across the floor. He managed to get to his feet beside her and motioned with his head as if to say:

"Let's bump it together!"

She nodded, and together they fell. This time, the door gave a little, its rusty hinges creaking and the lock snapping. Johnny looked at her questioningly. Gary was rolling across the floor. All three fell against the door. It

groaned weakly, flew open, and they were catapulted into the front room.

The front door was far more staunch than that between the two rooms, and Sally knew that her remaining strength, with what help the children could give, would avail nothing. She rolled and hitched herself from one window to the next—there were only three—and saw that each was locked.

Painfully she managed to get into the back room again. Her hands closed over her purse. Its lightness told her it had been rifled, that the automatic had been taken. But it still remained a woman's weapon. She gripped it behind her with her bound hands, hitched back to the front room.

The children still watched wonderingly. She turned her back to one of the windows and from that awkward position swung the purse with all her strength. The glass cracked. A second blow knocked out part of the pane.

She tried to cut her bonds on the remaining jagged glass, but found this impossible. Then, using the purse to protect her hands, she pushed out the glass, piece by piece. The work was dangerous and laborious. She scratched her hands. The glass slashed the purse. Now and then she was forced to lean against the wall and rest.

The sun was far past its zenith when she finally sagged onto the sill, hitched her legs over the denuded frame and dropped in a heap on the ground four feet below.

The shock of the fall partially stunned her for a moment. She ached in every muscle. But she must make the highway, a quarter of a mile away. She must make it for the sake of the children, for law and order—and for Dan Fowler. And she must get away before the person who had slugged her returned and reduced her gains to nothing, perhaps killed her and the children.

That quarter of a mile looked like a transcontinental journey. She set forth, keeping warily from the road. The rough terrain made the going harder, but she stayed just far enough away from the road so she could see anyone coming or going. What if the kidnapper returned, decided to move or kill the children to cover tracks?

By late afternoon, through rolling, hitching herself along on one side and then the other, getting to her knees and falling forward and then drawing her knees up under her for another thrust, she had covered about half the distance. Her clothing, she reflected, was practically in shreds.

INQUIRE as he might, Dan Fowler could find no clue as to the identity of the person who had unlocked his door, sneaked into the room and stolen Arch Andrews' .32-caliber revolver. He questioned the chambermaid and the only bellhop. They had seen no one. He took up the matter with the apologetic, but by this time, harassed manager.

"My good man!" the manager protested. "Even if I'm sorry, what good is that? Everybody in town was in this hotel at one time or another yesterday. We had the Rotarians at noon and the Better Business Men's Association at dinner!"

Fowler did his best to suppress the wry smile which threatened to engulf his usually grim features.

"Just pretend I didn't ask you," he told the fellow.

Fowler left the lobby and was walking up the street toward the police station when Agee's car came skidding to a halt at the curbing. Fowler started to the car, sensing that something sensational had happened.

"Fowler!" Agee exclaimed, excitedly. "Deputy Collins has escaped from the county jail!"

The G-man leaped into the car as Agee swung the door open.

"How'd he do it?" he demanded. "When?"

"Seems like he hid his master cell key—all the deputies have 'em—just before he was searched. The night jailer came on at eight o'clock. Collins socked him with something, knocked him out. The day man found the poor turnkey still unconscious. They've taken him to Dr. Blakeley's hospital. The cell door was open."

Fowler shook his head grimly.

Agee stopped the car in front of the police station.

"We've got to get out a general alarm at once," Fowler said.

"Kendal's already doing that. He's inside now."

The men entered the station. Kendal was just banging up the telephone. No sooner had he replaced the receiver than the bell rang.

He picked it up, held it out to Fowler, who answered.

"This is Arch Andrews, Fowler," he heard. "If you'll come to my office immediately, I believe I can furnish you with a few rather startling developments."

Fowler grabbed his hat and told Kendal and Agee to continue to broadcast the alarm for Collins.

"Tim Cody brought in a complete list of the owners of thirty-two caliber weapons," Agee said. "I darned near forgot in the rush."

"Hold it until later," Fowler ordered, and darted out the door.

Five minutes later he was sitting in Andrews' office, listening attentively. Andrews sat behind his desk, smoking a cigar. Dixie Hogan, alias Madeline D'Arcy, sat opposite him, dabbing at her eyes.

"So, whoever he is, has stolen my children," she was saying.

Fowler put his hands on his knees, bent forward.

"You'd better let me have it from the beginning," he said.

Madeline D'Arcy sniffled.

"Very well," she said. "Shortly before my husband's—ah—death, he made a trip West, for his health."

"I can understand that," said Fowler.

“Out in San Francisco, managing the western end of his—business.”

“What kind of business?”

“Can’t we just skip that, Mr. Fowler? Anyhow, his brother represented him in California. His name is Steve Halloran. Perhaps you have heard of him.”

“Steve Halloran!” the G-man exploded. “California’s king of the rackets—until he disappeared when it got too hot for him!”

“He was very successful,” Madeline D’Arcy agreed. “Butch, my husband, was making thousands, and even tens of thousands of dollars every week. He never confided much in me, but I know he was afraid of banks. He said bankers were crooks. So he conceived the idea of burying goodness knows how many hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of cash and negotiable securities out West. He confided in his brother, Steve. He told Steve that if anything happened to him, Steve and I were to share equally. He said he was going to draw a map.”

“Did you ever see your brother-in-law, Steve?” Fowler interrupted.

THE woman shook her head.

“Anyway,” she continued, “Steve doublecrossed my husband. It was some kind of an important business deal. They never spoke again. Some time later, my husband, whose closest Eastern associate was Mr. Boyd, called Boyd and me together in our library. He had two pieces of paper. The large one was square. The smaller one was jagged, and had been torn from the center of the big one. Butch said that he loved both Mr. Boyd and me very much, and that he loved Johnny and Gary, our two children, even more.

“He made us pledge that if anything happened to him, we would get the cash and securities. This time, I was to have two-thirds on account of the children and Mr. Boyd one-third. He gave me the large square piece of paper with the center gone out of it.

“Shortly after this he met his—with an accident. Mr. Boyd was tried for the crime and acquitted. Then he was sent to Alcatraz. All that time, I tried to get his part of the map, promising to use his share to get him out of his—difficulties. He simply laughed at me. After he got to Alcatraz, I saw that any further dealings with him were useless.”

“By the way,” said Fowler, “hasn’t Uncle Sam a lien of about a million and a half on that dough?”

“That’s correct,” interjected Andrews. “My client has no desire to withhold any monies due as the result of income tax litigation.”

“Go on,” Fowler told the woman.

“I was penniless,” she continued. “I had my two children to support. My parents had disowned me for marrying Butch. For a while, I got jobs around New York, but sooner or later someone identified me as Mrs.

Butch Hogan and I was—my services were dispensed with.

“Thing got tougher and tougher. I came to San Francisco, hoping to make a deal with Mr. Boyd, but couldn’t. I worked in defense plants and in the shipyards, and I still kept losing my jobs, because of my fingerprints, even though I’d changed my name.

“I did finally manage to get a little money ahead, and I came here thinking that maybe my part of the map would show enough for me to locate the valuables. It didn’t. I was about to leave when Mr. Andrews offered me a job. He said he would start a curio shop, as the town needed one. There is a lot of resort trade, you know.”

Fowler nodded impatiently.

“Goon,” he prompted. “What about Tony Blue—Deputy Collins?”

Madeline D’Arcy paled, looked at Andrews questioningly.

“Tell him everything,” the lawyer directed.

“When my husband took his trip west for his health, and to hide the securities and things, he took a bodyguard. That was Tony Blue. Maybe he’s the one who wrote the ransom note.”

“Good heavens, woman!” exclaimed Fowler. “What ransom note?”

“It demanded my part of the map, or else Johnny and Gary would be killed. Mr. Boyd had then just escaped from Alcatraz. Naturally, when I saw him in the Golden Eagle restaurant, I was terrified. That’s why I wanted to run out, and Archie—I mean Mr. Andrews—made me sit still. He said Mr. Boyd couldn’t see me where I was and didn’t want me to attract attention.”

“Where’s your part of the map now?”

“That—that’s the whole point. I mailed it.”

Fowler leaped to his feet.

“Who did you mail it to?”

“To a Mr. Tom Price, General Delivery, Spokane, just the way I was told. I wanted to save the lives of my children. Now they’re gone, and I don’t know where they are, and I think I’ll go insane if I don’t find out something pretty soon.”

“And Nero fiddled while Rome burned!” the G-man exclaimed, as he started toward the door.

“Where’re you going?” Andrews demanded.

“To the Spokane post office!”

The lawyer glanced at his watch.

“That mail must have gone down on the nine-o-two for Spokane,” he said. “If it did, it’s probably at the General Delivery window there now.”

“Providing,” said Fowler, “that it was mailed at all.”

He left the office.

It was doubtful if Fowler would be able to reach Spokane in time to intercept the man who would ask for the letter at the post office. But he had to try. And that meant burning up the road.

When he reached his coupé, his jaw was hard set. Putting the car in gear, he drove at a normal rate of speed out of Fort Centralia, letting the engine warm up. Then, at the outskirts of town, he stepped on it.

The coupé bounded forward, special rubber tires snatching at the road. He took the turns under full power.

CHAPTER IX

Kendal's Disaster



KENDAL, unable to get the murder of Sheriff Hal Twoomey out of his mind, borrowed Dr. Blakeley's car and drove north toward the Border. He found the spot where Twoomey's body had been pushed from the speeding tow car. Along the road, to the southward, were the tire prints made by the swaying vehicle as the killer had righted it.

But these identifying prints had no value to the G-man now, for the car had been shown to be the property of Harry Hastings. Kendal devoted himself to searching both sides of the narrow, bumpy thoroughfare in the hope that in the effort to get the hulking body of the sheriff out of the automobile, the murderer had pushed something else out, too.

He not only searched the road itself, but proceeded down both sides of it for a quarter of a mile, believing it possible that the fugitive might have ditched the gun he had used to send the sheriff to his death. After several hours of search, he felt sure that he had exhausted every opportunity to find a clue and wearily got back into Blakeley's automobile.

He drove slowly southward. It was almost sunset, and golden rays slanted across the road. He felt completely let down in the warm glow, and had to fight himself to keep his eyes open.

He drove for about ten miles, sleepily reviewing the case and trying to find some solution for the series of crimes. Then his eyes opened wide and he was suddenly alert and erect. Something on the right side of the thoroughfare had picked up the last of the sun's light and had metallically reflected it to his eyes.

Kendal stopped the car, got out, and picked up a small, jagged piece of metal about an inch long and half an inch wide. It was thin as a wafer, curved as if it might have been part of a small tube, and highly polished.

Continuing down the road on foot, he found a similar piece, another, and then a third. But these were all he uncovered, even after an exhaustive search. Darkness brought an end to his efforts.

He put the jagged metal fragments into his pocket and started driving into Fort Centralia. After some

thought, he pulled out the pieces and sniffed them. He smelled powder.

As he stepped on the accelerator he was still pondering curiously.

It was after dark when he reached the police station. The night desk man greeted him.

"Harry Hastings has been tryin' to get you," the clerk said. "Wants you to call him. Here's his number."

Kendal took the slip, dialed. When Hastings answered, he identified himself.

"Just finished dinner," the garage man said. "Where are you? I'll come right down."

Hastings arrived as Kendal was trying to fit the little pieces of metal into some kind of a pattern. They made a tube, all right. The garage owner held out a section of cylinder about two inches long. Obviously, an end had been shattered.

"Heard this rattlin' on the tin under the seat when I was goin' out on a call with the tow car this afternoon," he said. "Thought maybe it was somethin' you boys would like to see."

Kendal took the tube, studied it for an instant. One of his jagged pieces fitted to its broken end. He looked up at the man on the desk, who was eyeing him curiously.

"What are you toting?" he asked.

"Colt's thirty-eight Police Positive."

"Loan it to me."

The desk man passed over the weapon. Kendal rubbed his fingers over the outside of the tube, saw and felt the lands and grooves which were on the inside of every revolver—except that they were in reverse. The grooves protruded and the lands were indentations.

Carefully, Kendal fitted the tube into the muzzle of the .38. It slid in with a curving motion. He held the gun up to the light, looked through the tube. He could see lands and grooves on the inside of it. He passed the gun to the desk man.

"That's a new way of making a thirty-eight fire a thirty-two cartridge," he said. "Somebody made this sleeve, knowing that it could be discarded. Once destroyed, the bullets fired into Boyd and Twoomey never could be traced to any revolver in the world. Probably it would fire only one shot at a time. But that was all the killer needed."

He eyed the revolver, turned the jagged pieces over in the palm of his hand.

"The sleeve is mighty thin," he commented. "My guess is that when the killer fired the second shot—the one into Twoomey—the sleeve cracked under pressure and the broken pieces fell down behind the seat of the car. The smaller ones were shaken onto the road through a crack or vent."

AS HE spoke, he wondered who might have contrived such a lethal weapon, which could be

used so cleverly to avoid identification. He now had the inside track on the killer!

Tim Cody, the gunsmith, might possibly know.

He rose, slipped the metal tube from the desk man's .38, returned the weapon to him, put the tube and the jagged pieces into his pocket. He thanked Hastings and hurried into the night.

He walked to the gunsmith's shop. The gunsmith would surely be there, as his quarters were in the rear, making it exceptionally handy for him in the face of his handicap. There were no lights apparent. Nevertheless, Kendal knocked. He got no answer. He knocked again. He suddenly found himself possessed of a desire to see the blind man's lathes and drills. Could they possibly have turned out a .32 tube to fit into a .38-caliber revolver?

He examined the lock on the door and saw that it was of a type which would yield to one of his set of master keys. Drawing a flat packet from an inside coat pocket, he went to work. In two minutes the lock turned. Kendal stepped inside,

"Tim!" he called in the direction of the rear of the shop, where the gunsmith lived. "Tim Cody!"

His answer was a flash of ochre flame. Larry Kendal felt as if his head had exploded, and he pitched forward on his face. . . .

Inspector Dan Fowler dashed into the post office at Spokane with such speed that his coattails sailed out behind him, the climax to a wild ride from Fort Centralia in Agee's coupé. He faced the clerk at the General Delivery window.

"Do you have a letter for Tom Price?" he demanded.

The clerk eyed him suspiciously.

"A fellow called for mail for Tom Price an hour ago," he said.

Fowler shoved his credentials under the wicket.

"What did he look like?" he asked.

"Sorry, Mr. Fowler, but in this business, you concentrate more on names than on faces. The fellow was smooth-shaven, of medium height, and could be anywhere from thirty to fifty. He had a hat pulled down over his eyes. Sort of tanned, he was. And nervous. He drummed on the ledge while he waited."

"You aren't so bad at descriptions after all," Fowler said. "But not quite good enough. Thanks."

He hurried back to the coupé. There was no time to lose now. The kidnapper-murderer had what he wanted and would be hightailing back to Fort Centralia to dig up his loot, probably head for the Border, and possibly be lost for all time. With that amount of money, a man might well buy safety and security for years.

As Fowler drove swiftly, once he had cleared Spokane traffic, he sent his mind back over the case. Who could the killer be? His logical processes took up the evidence step by step. The killer was a man who, first of all, knew that Dixie Hogan, now Madeline

D'Arcy, had part of the map which would disclose the whereabouts of probably three million dollars in cash and negotiable securities.

Evidence which Fowler had gathered showed that five people, at least, knew of the existence of the buried treasure. They were Madeline D'Arcy, her suave, quick-thinking attorney, Arch Andrews, Tony Blue, alias Collins, who had accompanied Butch Hogan west on his "health trip," Killer Joe Boyd, who was dead, and Butch Hogan's brother, Steve Halloran. Sheriff Hal Twoomey also might have known, but he was dead now, too.

Would the kidnapper-killer be Madeline D'Arcy? He crossed her off the list. Her children had been snatched, and her story about sending her part of the map for ransom evidently was straight. Arch Andrews? Could be. True, Fowler had left Andrews behind in Fort Centralia, but there were various ways to get to Spokane faster than he had himself—a more powerful car, a different road, short cuts, possibly an airplane.

Steve Halloran? Definitely he could be the killer. Blue, alias Collins? Collins had escaped from jail the night before, possibly so that he could get that letter at General Delivery.

The modus operandi was simple. Come to Fort Centralia, and seek the hidden wealth. Collins had done that. Andrews, already there, had learned of the treasure. Halloran, a marked man, his reign of terror in California at an end and the heat on, might well have picked such a prosperous small town in which to disappear.

Next, when the wealth wasn't found, the holders of the map parts must be brought into the net. Killer Joe Boyd? That was easy. Plant escape in his mind. Offer to help his getaway. Tell him to come to Fort Centralia. Pretend that he, the murderer, had the other part of the map, and set forth that they would share equally. Then kill, and get Boyd's jagged possession.

THE other half? Keep track of Dixie Hogan, alias Madeline D'Arcy. She might come to Fort Centralia of her own accord. If she failed to come, write her a letter, saying that he had Boyd's half of the map—another lie.

Luckily, she had come of her own accord. Kill her, and have the heat on? Not at all. Play a waiting game until Boyd freed himself. Then kidnap Dixie's children. Killing her didn't mean finding the map. It might be in a safety deposit box a thousand miles away.

She loved the kids. Snatch them, and she would give up her part for ransom. Spring the trap. Get Boyd's part of the map. Get Dixie Hogan's half. Make it clean, quick, and get out.

Fowler couldn't get his mind off Steve Halloran. Where was he, and who was he? He couldn't be Blue, or Collins, because that mobster had been identified. His part was known. Arch Andrews, until a few months

before, had been a successful attorney and a man of substance in the community.

On the surface, he still was. He couldn't be Halloran.

If Halloran had come to Fort Centralia, it was obvious that he would have to assume a new personality. Steve Halloran, known to Federal investigators, local police and to the public, would have to destroy his identity. The disguise would have to be drastic.

Who could Halloran be?

Fowler gripped the wheel tighter as he thought of Tim Cody, the blind, limping gunsmith. Dr. Blakeley had said that Tim Cody had been in the West all his life, and that he had been blinded and made lame by the explosion of a firecracker. Fowler knew criminals often made up stories about themselves to cover their pasts. Fowler could grill Cody about that story of his, but there were other ways of breaking him down, if he was the guilty man. One in particular!

The coupé was bounding into the outskirts of Fort Centralia now. Dan Fowler wheeled into Main street, headed for the gunsmith's shop.

CHAPTER X

Succor



EVERY muscle in Sally Vane's bruised body was aching, but she gritted her teeth and rolled to the edge of the highway leading into Fort Centralia. Dirty, disheveled, her clothing torn and bloodstained from small cuts, she sighed with relief. This was freedom—perhaps. She was careful not to get onto the road. It was dark now, and she might be hit by any vehicle which came along.

She lay close to the edge, and as each vehicle passed her, she rolled, tried to raise her numb, lashed arms as she lay on her stomach. One car. Two cars. A truck. Another car. Then a fifth rolled by, and slowed. Sally's heart leaped with hope. It was stopping, hesitating, as if the puzzlement, curiosity and disbelief of the driver were being transmitted to it.

"Back up!" Sally prayed. "Please back up!"

The car obeyed. A man climbed out and came to her. Wouldn't the fool ever pull off the adhesive? He reached out an exploratory hand.

"I'll be doggoned!" he exclaimed.

His hands fumbled with the adhesive. He pulled. Sally winced with pain. He pulled again. Pretty soon most of it was off, and Sally was working her mouth so she could speak coherently.

"Get my bonds off, please," she said, trying not to be impatient.

"I'm a'hurryin'," the fellow said.

Sally saw that he was a typical rancher, about twenty-five years old. Soon she was free. The rancher picked her up, set her on her feet.

"How come?" he demanded.

"Get in the car, quick!" Sally ordered. "There's not a minute to lose. We'll go down that road there and stop at the first house."

As if hypnotized, her rescuer obeyed. He stopped in front of it. Ordering him to come with her, she went inside. The children were still alive and safe, thank heavens! With the rancher's help she freed them.

"I'm hungry," croaked Johnny.

"I'm thirsty, too" said Gary. "I want my mummy."

"You shall have your mummy," Sally promised.

Johnny could walk and she led him to the car. The rancher picked Gary up in his arms and followed.

"I'd sure like to know about all this," he ventured, as they were driving into Fort Centralia.

"First," said Sally, "get us to the police station."

Sally prayed that she would find Dan Fowler there.

At that instant, however, the ace G-man was groping through the shop of Tim Cody. He went into the living quarters, intent on just one thing—finding a pair of shoes. He found a closet, groped, switched on his flash. He saw two pair of shoes, conventional oxfords, one pair much used.

He picked them up, turned them over. Both were equally worn! That meant that when Tim Cody was not masquerading as a blind man, he did not limp. For Fowler had noticed his shuffling, scraping gait, and how much more worn was the Western boot he wore on the foot of the crippled leg than the other. Tim Cody was two identities!

He put down the shoes, went back into the shop—and tripped against something soft and yielding. He flashed his light downward. The ray found the pale features of Larry Kendal. His head was bloody. There were dark stains on the floor. Fowler swallowed hard, fought to control himself, bent quickly.

As he did, he heard a rush behind him, a savage, wolf-like snarl. The next instant he was struck by a hundred pounds of furry flesh. Tim Cody's Seeing Eye dog!

He felt hot breath and the dig of fangs as the animal sought to sink them into his throat. He fought off the beast, and went for his gun. The dog leaped again. Fowler felt the impact as he tried to straighten up. The berserk animal's teeth tore at his shirt, ripped his flesh.

He hated to kill a dog—but it was the dog's life or his. He fired. The jaws relaxed, causing the upper part of the animal's body to rock backward as another explosion echoed through the shop.

Dan Fowler lunged forward, this time closing in on human flesh. His hand gripped an arm. He twisted. Two shots plowed in the floor, and a gun clattered after them. A fist clipped him on the side of the head, dazing him.

He shook himself, lashed out. He heard a moan, a falling body. Then there was silence.

Dan Fowler groped for a light switch. He turned it on.

Larry Kendal was still lying there. Fowler bent, felt his aide's skin. It was warm. Larry's heart was beating.

The dog's body shook in a final spasm of death.

Tim Cody, the gunsmith, was almost flat on the floor, his head propped up by a wall. He was breathing heavily. Fowler stepped forward and slipped manacles on the man's wrists.

"You rat," he said, wearily, and without passion. "You even taught your dog to kill."

He went to the telephone.

CHIEF of Police William Agee was the last person to enter the law offices of Arch Andrews. Already seated there were Andrews, presiding at his desk, Dixie Hogan, alias Madeline D'Arcy, looking ten years younger. Larry Kendal was there, his head wound covered with bandages placed there by Dr. Phil Blakeley's skilled hands, and Sally Vane, wearing a trim new powder blue suit and a straw sailor which tilted down over her wide forehead. Dan Fowler now eyed Sally with great admiration.

Agee's face was flushed and his features were lifted by an almost boyish smile.

"All here, eh?" he exclaimed. "Well, I've good news for you. They just nailed Collins, alias Blue, trying to get across the Canadian border."

Fowler sighed.

"Well, that just about cleans up the case."

Agee looked at Andrews' desk, piled high with bundles of bills and negotiable securities.

Andrews caught his glance.

"There's nearly four million dollars there," the lawyer told him. "Some of the bonds have appreciated considerably since the war."

"More money than I've ever seen in my life!" Agee exclaimed.

"And probably more than you'll ever see again, you being an honest cop," Fowler said.

"There was a time when you weren't so sure," Agee reminded him with a grin.

"Right," admitted Fowler, "and that goes for Mr. Andrews and Mrs. D'Arcy, too. I had my doubts about them. In fact, the first one I suspected was Twoomey—until he said that no Westerner would have buried Boyd's torso in such a shallow grave, and would have put rocks on it. Collins rightfully came in for his share of suspicion, also."

"Have you found Boyd's head and hands?" Andrews asked.

"Buried in three different places," Kendal said. "Halloran, alias Cody, was thorough. He told us where to find them when he confessed."

"What else did he tell you?" Mrs. D'Arcy asked.

"His story parallels Dan's deductions in every way," Kendal told her. "Steve Halloran stepped too far beyond the California law. The heat went on him. He took the disguise of a blind gunsmith and came up here to see if he could find that stuff." Kendal indicated the pile of green paper on the desk.

"He had no luck. He's had some mechanical experience and was apt, so his business prospered. But his very nature made him find something dishonest to do. So while he was importuning Boyd to escape, and was tracing Mrs. D'Arcy, he enlisted Sheriff Twoomey and Deputy Collins in handling black market meat and running scotch. Collins never knew him as anyone except blind Tim Cody.

Twoomey did know he was living a dual role, but was too dumb to realize he was Steve Halloran.

"Boyd's escape was the signal for Halloran to go into action. After burglarizing Mrs. D'Arcy's home and curio shop so that he would know what was going on, he kidnapped her children, demanding her part of the map as ransom for them. When Boyd arrived, Cody—or Halloran—lured the fugitive to his shop on the pretext of showing him that part of the map he didn't have, and shot him with the thirty-eight which had been converted into a thirty-two through the use of the steel tube, or sleeve."

"That's why he was so willing to help us round up every thirty-two within miles," Agee interjected. "He thought we were just chasing our own tails. And he wanted to mislead us."

"Correct," said Fowler. "He was doing all right until he lured us to the precipice. He failed to kill us and got panicky. He was afraid Twoomey had been spotted—which he had been—and would talk. So he killed Twoomey. He didn't expect that the thirty-two tube would shatter. He didn't even know it was broken until he got back to his shop. After that he stole Andrews' thirty-two from our room, hoping we'd suspect Andrews.

"He had just returned from Spokane when Kendal came in to his place. He shot Kendal. He was packing in the dark, planning to dig up his loot and leave for Canada when I knocked. He concealed himself and the dog. You all know the rest of the story."

Mrs. D'Arcy reached over and patted Sally's hand.

"Thank you, my dear, for saving my children. I can never repay you. They've been asking for you all day."

"I'll come to see them before I go," Sally replied. "They're wonderful kids—the kind I'd like to have myself."

She shot a covert glance at Fowler.

Fowler was looking at Mrs. D'Arcy,

"Your share will be more than two million," he said. "I suppose some of it will go to give the boys a good education."

MRS. D'ARCY shook her head, and looked appealingly at Andrews. He nodded assent to her unspoken question. Color rose to her cheeks.

"After all," she said, "my late husband was in an—ah—irregular business. I would not want to touch such proceeds. After the Government is paid, I am going to divide the balance equally between the U.S.O., the Red Cross, and the National War Fund."

"But how will you provide for the boys?" protested Sally.

Mrs. D'Arcy looked again at Arch Andrews.

"Archie—Mr. Andrews—has been a very successful lawyer," she said, "and the curio shop is doing well. I think these will take care of all of us, after we're married."

Andrews cleared his throat.

"You must all come to the wedding. And Fowler, you'll be my best man."

Fowler shook his head. There was genuine regret in his expression.

"Sally, Larry and I would give anything to be there," he said, "but I'm afraid Uncle Sam has arranged another date for us—and it isn't social."



FURTHER EXCITING EXPLOITS OF DAN FOWLER
IN

DOUBLED IN DEATH

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