



Sally felt herself hurtling through the air and heard the crack of a shot (CHAPTER V)

# DIAMONDS ACROSS THE ATLANTIC

By EDWARD CHURCHILL

*The ace of the F. B. I. sets out on a trail of gem thieves  
that spans two continents and leads to peril at every turn!*

## CHAPTER I *Lady in Black*

AS THE non-stop run of the New York-Detroit Express across the plains of southern Canada came to an end the lady in black powdered her face. Then she applied her lipstick. She was

careful to get the right shape to her lips, though there was really no need. Nature had curved them most desirably, shaded them in carmine.

In fact, Nature had gone exotic in creating Helvig Hoffman. It had endowed her with an ivory skin with satin finish, and dark hair which Helvig, on performing her toilet in Compartment A, Car 77, had given an upsweep which would have done

credit to a Madison Avenue salon.

Her eyes were almond-shaped, long-lashed, and as she looked into the mirror they seemed shaded with violet. Her face was long, rather than oval, and her aquiline nose was long, too. But these added to an air of aristocratic beauty – an aloof and chilling beauty.

As she artfully applied the lipstick with a small, soft brush, she was annoyed to find that her slender carmine-tipped fingers were none too steady this morning. She automatically reached for some soft tissue, placed it between her lips, which she compressed to remove the excess of cosmetic.

There were two sharp raps on the door.

She slipped a beautifully cut black tailored dress over her head, hastily arranged it over her black slip, and surveyed herself with a moue of distaste. She hated black.

High-heeled black suede pumps of Continental vamp added to her slim, five-foot seven-inch height. Black nylon stockings, sheer and expensive, gave a sheen to her long, slim legs. She looked at the berth, on which lay a black coat, a chic hat with a black veil. Her look of disdain indicated they reminded her of something unpleasant.

This time the two raps betrayed impatience.

Helvig Hoffman opened the door. As she did, the train lurched under the scraping application of brakes.

“You’d better step on it, Helvig,” said the man who walked into the compartment. He looked out the window. “We’re in the yards at Windsor.”

“Very well, Johann.”

“John, if you please,” prompted Johann von Grimm.

He smiled, but there was no humor in the small grimace which twisted the corners of his thin, hard lips. Like Helvig, he was tall – taller than six feet. The homburg he wore was slanted rakishly on the side of his head, revealing blond hair. He wore a salt and pepper tweed suit and highly polished black shoes. The cut of the garment set off his slim hips, his flat stomach and his broad shoulders.

**T**HE rakishness of the hat was complemented by a clipped blond mustache. A smooth, stiff collar was centered by a perfectly tied cravat.

His eyes were cold and gray. His singularly bushy brows made a straight line across the lower part of his wide forehead. His nose was straight

and quite narrow, and his small ears fitted tightly against his head.

His eyes distastefully surveyed the disorder of the compartment. His tongue clicked in disgust as he looked into the waste receptacle. His strong fingers gripped the carmine-stained tissue which the woman had just discarded. He crumpled it into a ball, stuffed it into his pocket.

“Fool!” he exclaimed. “How many times have I told you to leave nothing – absolutely nothing! Don’t you know there are technical laboratories in this country which can trace anything?”

“Perhaps it would be well,” replied Helvig, “for you to tend to your own affairs.”

The train ground to a stop. John von Grimm sat down on the edge of the berth.

“The electric switch engine is picking us up for the run into Detroit,” he said, glancing at his watch. “It won’t be long now – then our work starts. Are you nervous?”

Helvig Hoffman appraised her cool beauty in the mirror, rubbed off an imaginary excess of powder with a forefinger.

“No, indeed,” she said. “Are you?”

Ahead lay the yawning mouth of the cement cavern beneath the river. The train gathered speed. It’s length was swallowed by the mouth. It plunged into darkness, rumbling toward the Canada-United States boundary line that lay half-way through it.

The engineer slowed, waiting for the track selection signal which would tell him the proper approach to Detroit’s Union Station. Ahead of him he saw the scurrying figures of track checkers and laborers, their lanterns flashing like fireflies as they got out of the way on the American side. The engine crept slowly abreast of them, then passed them.

Getting his go-ahead, the engineer advanced his control for the upgrade pull into the station – and there was a sudden cessation of power. He jammed on his brakes to keep the train from rolling backwards.

“What the devil!” he exclaimed. “What’s wrong?”

The man on the opposite side of the cab checked his instrument panel.

“Juice is off,” he said. “First time that’s ever happened. Power house failure, probably. They’ll switch to emergency.” A sudden movement behind the engineer caught his glance.

“Look out!” he yelled.

The engineer whirled and found himself

staring incredulously into the black hole at the end of an automatic. Behind it was a man who wore the grease and dirt-stained coveralls of a track walker. The other trainman turned around and found himself in the same precarious position.

“Reach for it,” commanded the man who covered the engineer, “and you won’t get hurt.”

The trainmen elevated their hands.

More than fifty yards down the track, two crews sprang into action. There were four men on each side of the third express car. A ninth directed operations – a gaunt, tall man. One man on each side clipped seals from one of the doors. A second inserted a small cartridge, pulled a pin from it. There were two almost simultaneous, muffled explosions. The doors were blown off their tracks. The men swarmed into the car from both sides. Two men stood guard at the doors.

A worried, uniformed brakeman stumbled down the track, peered into the car. One of the two guards fired. The brakeman’s face was pulped by a shot that caught it full center. He fell into a heap beside the tracks.

The tall, gaunt man, his face smeared with grime, directed the remaining six men as they checked consignment after consignment. Finally, one called, as he inspected the shipping tag on a heavy strong box:

“I’ve got it! Let’s go!”

One of his companions helped him with the box. The others filed forward, some ahead and some behind, weapons ready. They climbed onto the engine. The tall, gaunt man faced the engineer.

“You’ll find your power on now,” he said. “You are uncoupled from the rest of the train. Proceed from the tunnel.”

He emphasized the order by jabbing his gun into the engineer’s stomach. The trainman turned to his controls, his face gray and drawn.

“If I didn’t have a wife and kids,” he muttered, “you wouldn’t get away with this.”

“Shut up!” rasped the tall, gaunt man.

The engineer shoved the controls forward. The engine moved ahead, gathered speed.

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**S**ITTING at his desk in the Department of Justice Building in Washington, Inspector Dan Fowler’s brows were wrinkled in perplexity. He was in a singular and unusual spot for him, he was discovering, as he mulled over the reports before

him. They concerned the most baffling landing of Nazi personnel in the United States as yet to come to the attention of the F.B.I.

Fowler’s dark hair was neatly combed. His leathery face was neatly shaven, the blue, pin-striped business suit he wore was well-pressed, and his black shoes bore a nice polish. But in spite of his perfection of dress, he was feeling distinctly uncomfortable. For Dan Fowler did not like what he was reading.

According to the reports in front of him, the Nazi technique in making this particular landing had been unique. Twelve men, and a woman who had been disguised as a Fisherman, in boots, oilskins and hat, had deliberately walked off the docks after tying up the fishing boat “Codster” in Boston harbor. Not until hours later had the port authorities discovered that the genuine “Codster”, out of Belfast, Maine, was in drydock in Penobscot Bay, The Nazi version was such a perfect replica of the Maine vessel that naval architects declared she had been built from original plans. And evidently she had come across the Atlantic under her own power, flying the American flag.

In Boston, the trail ended.

Agents from the Boston field office of the F.B.I., Naval Intelligence, and other authorities had gone over the imitation “Codster” from stem to stern, finding only a dearth of material which could be classified as clues. One of these clues was on Fowler’s desk now. It was a white envelope containing not much more than a dusting of face powder, which had gone through the Microchemical Department of the Bureau.

Fowler sniffed the envelope for the fifth time or so. The powder had a base of Japanese rice, and other Oriental ingredients, according to findings of the microchemists.

“And,” Fowler told himself, “that kind of Stuff has been unobtainable in the United States for at least four years. Only a Japanese ally – Germany – would have it. So what? It doesn’t show where the Nazi rats went after they left the Boston dock.”

He set aside the chemical analysis and turned to an old preoccupation – reading combat reports on pursuit ship sorties and mass bombing attacks compiled by Army Air Force Intelligence officers. He got a sort of vicarious pleasure from this, for whenever he had an idle moment he wished that Fate had allowed him to be with the Armed Forces. If he had had his choice, he would have picked the

Air Force, and would have trained as pilot, gunner or bombardier.

The mimeographed combat reports were serviced to him by special arrangement, a privilege granted him, because of his years of service in the F.B.I. The sheaf which particularly interested him now dealt with a series of bombings of German objectives from an Italian air base. One phase of one report caught his trained attention, for it had all the elements of mystery – and mystery was the breath of life to him. He read:

On return from the mission over Nuremberg, Lieutenant Colonel Halsey Dakin, commanding, reported that Nazi pilots concentrated on our plane No. 107534, carrying the name "Marrying Maisie." The aircraft, a Liberator (B-24) was practically the only target attempted by the Messerschmitt and Heinkel pursuits. While the AAF flight consisted of 120 planes, No. 107534 was singled out by more than fifty German fighters. The outboard starboard engine was first disabled just after the plane had made its bombing run and had turned back toward its base. The attack was sudden and furious. The plane at first fell back. Then a second engine was put out of commission. When last seen, the airplane was losing altitude rapidly about ten miles south of Nuremberg. The pursuits were still riding it down. It is believed to have crashed. This was the first mission of No. 107534.

Wondering why that ship had been singled out, Fowler went on reading the reports. Half-way through the pile he found another which might well have been a carbon copy of the first, though the aircraft had been a Liberator. It also had been on its first mission. Heinkels and Messerschmitts had swarmed it. The plane eventually had been shot down.

"Why?" Fowler asked himself,

He was trying to find some kind of an answer when a debonair, bare-headed man approached – Larry Kendal, Dan Fowler's assistant and closest friend in the F.B.I. Kendal was a little more than six feet tall, and an expertly cut brown suit clothed his athletic body. His square chin was grim as he advanced, holding out a sheet covered with teletype. The customary twinkle was gone from his blue eyes, and his characteristic devil-may-care expression had been wiped off his face.

"Stop day-dreaming, Dan," he said. "The Director says to drop the spy landing – leave it to

the field offices – until we get a fresh lead. We're off to Detroit to find out why a gang of ten or a dozen men stuck up the New York-Detroit express an hour ago. It's apparently theft from an interstate shipment. Just came off the teletype."

Fowler took the sheet which Kendal extended toward him. He read it carefully, then whistled.

"Well, they did one smart thing, anyway," he exclaimed. "Took the name of every passenger, and pulled the train onto a siding for our inspection. You'd better make plane reservations, Larry."

"Beat you to it," said Kendal. "There's an Army transport waiting for us at Bolling Field."

## CHAPTER II *Powder Trail*



WHEN Inspector Dan Fowler reached Detroit, he lost no time in reaching the scene of the holdup. And when he entered Compartment A in Car 77 of the New-York-Detroit Express, after a futile search of most of the side-tracked train for clues, he had a feeling of encountering something familiar.

After examining the cluttered place, he decided that this stimulus was olfactory, and did some exploratory sniffing. This led him to a shelf beneath the mirror, on which there were several small dustings of powder. He withdrew a pocket knife, opened a blade, began scraping up minuscule piles and placing them in an envelope.

At first the scent was vague and just beyond the fringes of his memory. Then he placed it. It was the same kind of powder, with Japanese rice base and other foreign ingredients, which had been delivered to his desk in the Department of Justice building in Washington!

This, then, was the same variety of powder which had been used by the woman spy who had come across the Atlantic from Germany in the replica of the fishing boat "Codster." And if his reasoning was correct this was no mere coincidence, and he was again in contact with the spy gang!

He counted on his fingers. Eight men, directed by a ninth, had looted the express car. Two had climbed onto the engine. That made eleven. Twelve men and a woman had come across on the spy ship. One man was missing.

He turned to Kendal.

"Who had this compartment?" he asked.

"Miss Mary Smith," Kendal replied. "She's staying at the Book-Cadillac."

Fowler smiled grimly as he inspected an ashtray.

"I doubt both the name and the place of residence, Larry," he said. He examined the rouged cigarette stubs of a popular brand. Then he found others of a different brand without rouge. "Somebody visited Miss Smith," he added, as he inspected a butt. "I suppose his name is John Brown. He probably had Compartment B."

"The occupant of Compartment B, Dan," Kendal told him, after consulting the list, "was one Henry Jones."

"Good enough," agreed Fowler. "That gives us our twelfth male member of the spy gang, and we'd better get going – fast!"

He led the way into the adjoining compartment. A search of the small room at first revealed nothing. Kendal inspected the wash basin.

"He even wiped this out with a towel," he said.

Then he saw something on the floor, and bent over with an exclamation. He picked up a strip of light, semi-transparent material about an inch wide, two inches long and a quarter of an inch thick. It was tinted flesh color. He bent it back and forth to test its flexibility.

"It's some kind of plastic," he told Kendal.

Kendal took it. "I'll check into it," he said.

Fowler turned to another man who had accompanied him – the agent in charge of Detroit field offices.

"I'll leave the rest of the train to you and your men, Dailey," he said. "Give it a good working over. Have you a list of consignments and consignees?"

Dailey passed over a sheet, pointing to one name.

"That ought to interest you," he said.

Fowler read:

Consignee, International Importing  
Corporation, Inc. Consignment not revealed.

"That was in the express car the gang opened," Dailey said.

"I'll get after it," Fowler replied. He looked at Kendal.

"That plastic clue is pretty thin," he conceded, "but go after it as soon as you finish working over

the passenger list. I'm expecting Sally Vane to be here soon, to handle the woman angle. I asked the Director to have Sally sent along – just in case. She can ride herd on our exotic lady spy while we break up the rest of the gang's game before they get started."



HELVIG HOFFMAN

Twenty minutes later Fowler was standing in the outer offices of the International Importing Corporation, Inc., high in the New World Building, a stone's throw from Washington Boulevard.

"I'm sorry," the red-headed receptionist was saying to him, "but our president, Mr. Arthur Jeffrey, is in conference. So is our general manager, Mr. Dalton Arnold."

"I'll wait," Fowler said, and settled himself in a chair.

Almost at once an inner door, labeled "General Offices" flew open. A tall woman who came through the door slammed it, drew herself up to her full height, then her heels beat a sharp tattoo across the reception room floor.

**F**OWLER noted that she was dressed entirely in black, from suede pumps to trim, veiled hat. Her dress was severely unadorned.

Her face fascinated him. It was as cold as marble, even in anger, with high cheek-bones, almond-shaped eyes and firmly drawn carmine lips.

The woman banged the outer door to relieve her taut fury after passing a wastebasket into which she snapped a ball of paper. The paper scattered like confetti.

After she had taken her abrupt departure only a delicate fragrance lingered – an Oriental scent, exotic, captivating. One sniff caused the G-man to leap to his feet. He darted to the wastebasket, quickly gathered the pieces of paper, then sprang to the door, dropping the fragments into his pocket.

If only Sally Vane were here now, he thought!

Then, brushing aside his original plan to talk with the officials of the importing company, he started in pursuit of the woman in black. He found her waiting for an elevator and rode down with her, showing a remarkable indifference to her presence. Reaching the ground floor, both walked outside to the curb. She attempted to hail a taxicab, but had no luck. Fowler, at her side, emitted several shrill whistles and waved his arms at a cruising cab on the far side of the boulevard. The driver nodded, made a U-turn and drove up. The G-man turned to the lady in black, indicated the cab.

"They're hard to find these days," he said. "Won't you share the ride?"

The woman searched the street vainly, gave him a barely perceptible and ungracious nod and got in. He followed her.

"I'm heading for the residential district," he said. "And you?"

"The Cleland," she directed.

"So it wasn't the Book-Cadillac," Fowler observed to himself.

He sat stolidly until the cab swung in front of the hotel. She started reaching into her purse for change.

"I'll be glad to take care of it," he said.

"Very well," she agreed, in a tone which seemed to imply "sucker."

She alighted. Fowler watched her go into the hotel.

"And now," he told the driver, "shoot around the corner and let me out."

He slipped the man a bill. A moment later he was going through the grill entrance. When he reached the lobby he saw the woman at the desk, asking for her key. He made a note of the box from which it was taken and when she went out of sight in the direction of the elevators he took a closer look. She had Room Five-twenty-five. He went to the information desk.

"I have a date," he said to the girl clerk with an engaging smile, "with the lady in Five-twenty-five, and I've forgotten her name. I wonder if you'd be good enough to recall it to me."

The clerk smiled. She scented a "pick-up," but didn't mind.

"Sometimes it's embarrassing, isn't it?" she asked, and winked. She consulted her cards. "Would the name be Martha Marston?" she asked.

Fowler snapped his fingers.

"Of course!" he exclaimed.

He thanked the girl, went to the street and

whistled down another cab. He returned to his own hotel, and went to the mail clerk's desk.

"Any messages for Fowler?" he asked.

"Won't I do?" said a voice at his elbow, and he whirled around.

Sally Vane was looking up at him. He kissed her, held her at arm's length.

"You get more lovely every day," he said.

The pretty, blond young girl who often aided Fowler in his investigations smiled at him. Her eyes sparkled with excitement.

Sally was looking her lovely best in a gray suit, gray stockings and gray pumps. Her blouse was a happy medium between orange and red. The small hat perched on her golden hair was a creation of gray with flowers which blended artfully with the color of her blouse. She carried a large, gray leather hand-bag.

"You've got to get right to work," Fowler said, leading her out of hearing of the desk. "The dame's name at the moment is Martha Marston. And I'm positive she's one of the Nazi spies who unloaded at Boston. She's in Room Five-twenty-five at the Cleland. Play you're a plaster and stick with her through thick and thin."

Sally Vane gave a dutiful nod.

"Okay Dan. And maybe tonight we can look Detroit over."

"Not a chance, darling. We've got business."

He bent, kissed her again, but on the cheek. Sally Vane might be the "big moment" in Dan Fowler's life, but even she must not interfere with duty.

"Very well," she acquiesced. "I'm on my way."

**S**HE turned, went across the lobby. Fowler watched her go, and there was pride in his eyes – and something more. They didn't come any better than Sally, he thought.

He shoved his hand into the pocket of his coat. The scraps of paper were still there, and he must know more about them without delay. He hurried from the lobby by a different door and set off in the direction of the Federal Building.

Reaching the field offices of the F.B.I., he sought out a technician with a small laboratory. He laid the slips of paper before the white-frocked man.

"I think that this is a note of some kind," he said. "It has no discernible writing on it. If you try most of your reagents on it you may find some

though. Beautiful ladies don't usually tear paper to small bits when there's nothing on it – especially when they're in the spy racket."

"I'll give the stuff the works," the man promised.

Fowler hurried back to the offices of the International Importing Corporation to take up his work where he had dropped it. This time, the receptionist said that Arthur Jeffrey was waiting for him.

Fowler entered the door leading to the general offices and Arthur Jeffrey met him in the hall, introduced himself, and escorted him into his large office. Jeffrey was a bluff, hearty man, all of six feet, and weighing more than two hundred pounds, Fowler judged. He wore a tan suit and tan shoes, and was becoming a bit bald at the temples. His eyes were large and brown, and his forehead rather low. His features were squarish, except for his too-pointed chin.

Jeffrey held a large hand out toward three men who were waiting in the office. He introduced the vice-president, Harley Marvin, a tall, thin man with bushy hair and glasses with thick lenses. Marvin's face was long and narrow, and he looked unhappy. His sallow cheeks were deeply lined. He shook hands with Fowler glumly.

Jeffrey turned to indicate another man.

"Dalton Arnold here is our general manager," he said.

Arnold was about five feet, nine inches tall, inclined to pudginess. His bay window protruded as he rose from his chair and extended a flabby hand. His head was egg-shaped, his hair close-cropped. He attempted a smile and the G-man noted a tooth which had turned black. His nose was short and stubby and he nervously licked thick lips with his tongue.

The third man Jeffrey introduced as his confidential secretary, Newton Huntley. Huntley was tall, spare and barrel-chested, with a shock of blond hair. He was big-boned and solid. Fowler judged him to be about thirty-five. He had blue eyes, a rather long nose, and a heavy jaw.

"And now, what can we do for you?" Jeffrey asked.

"I'd like to know what you shipped on the New York-Detroit Express which arrived this morning," Fowler replied. "It's been stolen."

Jeffrey's eyes widened.

"That's news to me! I mean I didn't know – that is, I wasn't aware that we had anything on that

train."

"I'm sure you did, and I'd like to know what it was," Fowler said calmly.

Belligerence, like a summer storm, clouded the face of Dalton Arnold, general manager.

"See here!" he exclaimed. "I'm sick of being prodded by Government agencies. Our corporation's cluttered up with 'em. Every time we turn around, there's another one."

"I'm sorry," Fowler said. "However, I want to know what was in that shipment."

"We'd be glad to tell you if we knew," snapped Marvin. "In many cases, we simply act as agents, or brokers."

Fowler glanced at the faces of the four men and realized that he was getting nowhere. He looked steadily at Dalton Arnold.

"By the way, Mr. Arnold," he said, "perhaps you can tell me what business that very stunning tall brunette who was here a short time ago had with you?"

"I – I don't know what you're talking about."

"Yes, you do. She was in here at about one-thirty, She asked for you."

Arnold recovered.

"Oh!" He seemed to remember. "You mean Miss Marston. Buyer for a Chicago woman's shop. Wanted – er – thought maybe we might know where she could locate some Shantung silk."

Harley Marvin made an elaborate gesture out of glancing at his watch.

"Just about time to close up shop," he said.

"I'll be running along." He measured Fowler. "Glad to have met you," he said. There was no gladness in his voice.

### CHAPTER III *Short Wave*



HE laboratory technician bestowed a wide and triumphant grin upon Dan Fowler when he arrived. "I stuck those pieces of paper you gave together," he said, "and then started using reagents. Just finished the job. The ink was one of those quick vanishing kinds. An acid caught it and brought it out."

"What's the message?" Fowler asked.

"For my dough, it's strictly screwy," was the reply. The technician picked up a piece of paper.

"It says: 'Bertha's baby died last night. She is taking him to South America tomorrow for burial.'"

Fowler took the slip, gave it puzzled study.

"It sounds screwy to me, too," he agreed.

The telephone rang. The technician picked it up.

"Stickney speaking," he said. Then he passed the instrument to his companion. Fowler answered.

"This is Sally, darling," came a voice charged with excitement. "I've got to talk fast before the Marston woman gives me the slip. Take this address - Forty-six ninety-one India Street. She went out there, went inside - it's a broken down old house - and stayed for about ten minutes. I couldn't follow. It was broad daylight, I knew you'd want to look into it. Got that address?"

"Yes," replied Fowler. "Good work."

"So long," said Sally.

Fowler hung up, grabbed his hat, and looked out the window. Dusk was creeping over the city like a blanket, and lights were going on. He bade Stickney good-by and left the building. Outside, he called a taxicab and gave the driver the India Street address.

In a few moments, the cab was threading in and out of traffic on Gratiot. It was dark by the time the driver swung into a side street and proceeded for several blocks. He turned again, this time into a shabby district. Old houses, which never had amounted to much in the first place, were now sorry and weather-stained, squatting on insecure haunches.

Fowler told the driver to pull ahead three houses beyond the one he sought, Number 4691, which was in even poorer shape than the others. He paid his fare, climbed out of the cab, and slowly walked back to it. He cut across what had once been a lawn to a sagging porch. The house was dark, and looked deserted. It had an air of having been vacant for many months.

He walked around it.

When he had made the circuit he stepped cautiously onto the porch, pulled out a packet of keys, and found one that fitted. Swinging the door open noiselessly, he went inside.

The place was unfurnished. His flashlight ray showed him that the floor was thick with dust, except where footsteps had made a path which led through the front room. He followed the trail through a second room and then to a third in the rear, probing ahead of him with his light. Then he

paused to listen. He heard the rising hum of a generator, thin and indistinct. It seemed to come from somewhere beneath his feet.

He sent the light ray darting around. It fastened on a handle in the floor. He lifted a trap-door. Slipping the flash into the left pocket of his coat he drew his .38 automatic from its shoulder holster with his right hand. Then he opened the door wide.

He worked his way down steep steps, found himself in the basement. Ahead of him was a door, with a thin slice of light beneath it. He went to it and pressed his ear against it.

"Get this message out," he heard a voice saying. "'The G-men are on our trail, Bergman'."

The reply was only a thin, blurred sound.

Fowler then heard the querulous request for a contact go through the open places above the earth. There followed the staccato dit and dat of a key pounding out what the G-man thought to be code, since he was unable to read it. Then the voice of another man came through the paneled door.

"Tell them Bertha is ready," he said, "but that her uncle is following close behind and may cause trouble for the family."

So this was one of those underground radio stations which was constantly giving information to America's foes, aiding them in their wild worldwide efforts to stave off defeat! Fowler had no trouble interpreting the last command. It was elementary, as far as the reference to Uncle Sam was concerned. The three men inside whose voices he had heard didn't realize just how close "Uncle" was at this moment, in the person of Inspector Dan Fowler!

**F**OWLER gently tried the handle of the door. It refused to open. If the message was as important as those inside seemed to think it was, the G-man was determined it would not be sent.

Fowler pressed the muzzle of his .38 against the lock and fired. The lock shattered. Fowler lunged against the door and catapulted into the room, his weapon ready for instant action. But before he could accustom himself to the brilliant glare and identify anyone in the room the lights blinked out.

At the same instant ochre flame blasted in front of him. He felt a stinging pain in his right arm. His temporarily numbed fingers released his automatic. It clattered to the floor.

"Jump him!" came the terse command.

The G-man leaped to one side as a shadowy form hurtled at him. As he leaped he swung a wild haymaker with his left. His fist thudded into flesh. He dropped to his knees, groped with his good left hand for the lost weapon, and gritted his teeth with pain when a heavy shoe crunched down on the hand. He managed to get to his feet and began swinging. But the weight of three antagonists bore down on him in spite of his violent efforts to free himself.

Life came back to his right hand. He could feel the warm, slippery blood from what must have been a flesh wound. He lashed out at a body which sprang forward, and felt a stab of pain as the blow landed and his assailant went down. But the respite was all too short. Heavy breathing warned him that someone had closed in behind him. He whirled, swung both fists. They hit solidly, and again he felt pain up to his right elbow. Then he was hit simultaneously from side and rear, and he went down himself.

Something exploded inside his head....

When Dan Fowler regained his senses he was lying on the floor in the back of a sedan, which was jolting to a stop. He was alone in the rear, gagged and blindfolded. His feet were lashed with rope. Manacles were on his wrists. He explored them tentatively. They were his own!

"This is Twelve Mile Road," the man beside the driver was saying with precise, guttural inflection. "The chief said to turn right two miles, then take the dirt road to the water-filled quarry."

"Ja!" exclaimed the driver. "You read the map carefully. We must leave no trace of this dangerous foe. Our chief says to weight his body well, Heinrich."

The driver's accent was definitely Teutonic.

Fowler's left hand groped along the manacles, seeking a hidden spring of which he knew, but which no one on whom he might use them could possibly locate. For he had prepared for just such an eventuality as this with the secret device. A man never knew when he might find himself in just such a situation, knocked out, taken prisoner and secured with his own handcuffs, he had argued.

In a moment, the manacles came apart. Fowler worked fast. He left the gag in his mouth to increase the element of surprise in his hastily formed plan. He loosened the blindfold so he could see from one eye, then slowly and carefully removed the ropes which bound his ankles.

The car had turned from the cement highway



onto the dirt road. It slowed.

"This is the spot," the man beside the driver said. "We drag him out, shoot him, weight the body, throw it in the water, and be gone."

The driver stopped the car. Fowler, lying half on his side, with his feet cocked up, waited. He knew that he had just one desperate chance for life.

He saw the driver open the door. Directly behind him stood the man Heinrich, holding an automatic. The G-man suddenly put all his strength into a mighty lunge, getting his strength from his cocked legs, which were braced against the opposite door. He sent his head into the startled Nazi's stomach with such force that the wind whooshed from his lungs and he toppled backward against Heinrich.

Heinrich's gun blasted, but the shot went wild. Fowler leap-frogged over the collapsing driver, caught Heinrich off balance, applied a ju jitsu hold to his gun arm, and pulled the weapon from his temporarily powerless fingers. He jammed it into Heinrich's side, backed him against the car. The driver crouched on the ground, ready to spring. Fowler tapped him on the side of the head with the automatic and he sprawled, unconscious.

The G-man slapped the handcuffs on Heinrich, pushed him to the ground and roped his legs. He lifted him into the back of the car, then loaded the driver who was still out cold on top of him.

"You two," he said, yanking the gag from his mouth, "ought to be going in the drink over there yourselves. But I've a better use for you."

He got into the car, swung it around, and started back for Detroit.

**I**T WAS after midnight when Fowler reached the Federal Building with his two charges. It was not

until after they were behind bars that he went to the telephone and called Peter Dailey, the agent in charge. He gave a brief resume of his encounter, and requested that Dailey come down to the Federal Building in order to interrogate the prisoners.

He then climbed into the Nazi vehicle in which he had brought in his captives and sped to the house on India street.

He found the front door open and went inside, through the rooms and to the trapdoor. It, too, was open. His flashlight guided him down the stairs and across the basement.

The door out of which he had shot the lock was ajar.

He had started into the room which had housed the radio equipment when he brought himself up abruptly and flashed his light downward. A fine, blackened wire extended across the threshold.

He stepped over it gingerly and flashed his light around.

The room had been stripped. His light found only a box about a foot square and six inches deep. The fine black wire ran to the box. He examined it, found a detonator, and disconnected it. He lifted the box. There was enough dynamite in it, he guessed, to blow himself and the entire house to bits.

What had happened was clear to him. When the two Nazis who had attempted to liquidate him had failed to appear after a certain time, the man they called "Chief," and who had directed them, must have assumed that something had gone wrong. So he had cleaned out the equipment and had set the trap, knowing that if the G-man was still alive he would return for further investigation.

Sure that he was now safe, he made a careful search.

Upstairs, in an old stove, he found several partly burned papers. He felt the side of the stove. It was still warm. He put the lid back on the stove and returned to the basement. Carefully, again and again, he searched the floor. Suddenly he stooped, picked up a small piece of glass, slightly curved, and pie-shaped. It was about a quarter of an inch long, and a quarter of an inch wide at the base.

He found another, then another, and fitted the pieces together.

"Part of a watch crystal, broken in the fight," he decided.

He pulled a small envelope from an inside

pocket and inserted the glass pieces in it. Then he continued his investigation. The only other discovery was a tiny bit of metal less than a quarter of an inch long. It was not more than a sixteenth of an inch thick and an eighth of an inch wide. He dismissed it as part of the radio equipment and slipped it into the small change pocket of his coat.

#### CHAPTER IV *Lesson in Plastic*



IT WAS after three o'clock when Fowler looked at his watch. He returned then to the Federal Building where he found Dailey ready to leave. He asked whether the prisoners had talked.

"Talked?" echoed the agent wearily, "Have you ever tried carrying on a conversation with a couple of department store dummies?"

Fowler asked him for Stickney's telephone number, went to an instrument and dialed. After a few moments he heard a sleepy feminine voice, and finally the laboratory technician mumbled a groggy answer. Fowler told Stickney what had taken place at the India Street address and described the place.

"There are some partly burned papers in the old stove in the back room," he said. "I wish you'd get out there and gather 'em up carefully. Work 'em over and see what you can find out."

Then he hung up and turned to Dailey. The field agent had laid out the possessions of the captured Nazis. Fowler inspected bill-folds which were well-stocked with currency, draft registration and classification cards, and among other things, passports to Brazil.

"All forged, I'll bet," he said. "But why passports to Brazil?"

Dailey shook his head wearily.

"You've got me," he said. "This whole case has got me. What was stolen from the express car? Who's this dame in black? Why did the Nazis come here in the first place? Who operated the radio station? What happened to it, and to the man who directed your would-be executioners?"

Fowler grinned at his perplexity.

"What you need is what's left of a good night's sleep," he said. "I'll see you in the morning — and maybe ask a few questions myself."

He went out the door and into the street. Inhaling deeply of the early morning air, he tried to let it blow the fog out of his brain. On the way to his hotel he found a Western Union station still open, went inside, and wrote a telegram to the Director of the F.B.I. in Washington. It read:

RESPECTFULLY REQUEST IMMEDIATE  
SERVICES OF RADIO EXPERT FROM  
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS  
COMMISSION TO AID IN RUNNING DOWN  
RADIO STATION BELIEVED TO BE  
TRANSMITTING TO NAZIS FROM  
VICINITY OF DETROIT

He signed his name and looked around. The night clerk was busy with another customer: A third man had come in, suffering more than slightly from the effects of a convivial evening. Fowler watched with a smile as the fellow screwed up his face, stuck his tongue in his cheek, scratched his head and made one false start after another in wording a telegram he proposed to send.

"Probably wants money," the G-man thought, "to continue his bat. If that's it, excuses are hard to find."

The clerk came to him, faced him across the counter, and read the message.

"Please give it priority," Fowler said.

The clerk's eyes widened as he saw the signature.

"I certainly will, Mr. Fowler," he replied.

As the G-man left the office he gave another amused look at the drunk. He was apparently getting hold of himself. The fellow had entirely passed from Inspector Fowler's mind, though, as he stepped into the streets, for now Larry Kendal was occupying his thoughts. He wondered what Kendal was doing, what progress he was making.

Larry Kendal had, in fact, spent the remainder of the afternoon after Fowler had left him in searching for fingerprints in Compartments A and B in Car 77 of the New York-Detroit Express, and in questioning the occupants of Compartment C and others on the train in the hope of getting some sort of a description of the man and woman who interested Fowler. The sum total of Kendal's information was that no one had seen either. They had stayed behind closed doors.

Kendal was heading for the hotel shortly before ten o'clock when he slipped his hand into his coat pocket. It encountered the piece of plastic Fowler had given him. He remembered then that

he was to have found out its composition and any other pertinent facts about it. He looked up, found he was passing an open drugstore and, even though it was late, he decided he might find someone who could give him the information. He went into the store, found the telephone booths and consulted the classified directory.

UNDER "Plastics" he found the names of several business houses, but passed them up when the name "Plastics Museum" caught his attention. What was more, it piqued his curiosity. He went into the nearest booth and dialed a number. A man's voice answered, and to him Kendal briefly explained the circumstances and the importance of his mission.

"I think I can identify the plastic," the man assured him, then. "I've just closed up for the night, but I'll wait for you."

Kendal thanked him, hung up the receiver and hurried to the street. He hailed a taxicab and gave an address on Woodward Avenue. In a few minutes he was walking across the sidewalk to a gaudily painted store front bearing the legend "Plastics Museum."

The lights in the windows were out, but a dim glow from the interior cast silhouetted figures behind the glass. They stood out eerily, forms which seemed to be human, and yet were not. He could see the vague outline of Napoleon, his hand stuck inside his coat, his tri-cornered hat down over his brow. In the opposite window a group of G.I.'s were firing a machine-gun, surrounded by man-made jungle.

A shadowy form which lurked behind the entrance doors came to life as Kendal approached. One of the doors swung open. A gnomish little man, stooped and bald, appeared.

"Mr. Kendal?" he asked.

The young G-man nodded.

"Come right in," the old fellow invited. "I'm Professor Gustav Breger, owner and manager of the museum. I've dismissed my staff."

Kendal stared around the huge room. On every side he could see figures in groups or alone. He instantly recognized plump Prime Minister Winston Churchill, teeth clamped on his cigar, in conference with bush-headed, mustached Marshal Stalin and President Roosevelt, complete even to the cigarette in his holder. A caption read: "Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt Conferring at Yalta."

Beyond, a tall, thin man in stovepipe hat, and with a molt on cheek, stood behind a podium. Beneath the heroic figure was: "Lincoln at Gettysburg." Farther along the aisle down which Professor Breger led his guest was a group of Navy corpsmen carrying a wounded sailor into a tent marked with a huge cross.

Washington stood at the prow of the tiny boat going across the Delaware at Trenton. Surgeons operated on a wounded soldier. General MacArthur stood pointing, presumably at the enemy, and ordering an attack.

"Spooky collection of wax," Kendal said. "You'd think some of them were alive."

The little man in front of him stopped, and turned.

"Not wax, my good man, but plastics," he said disapprovingly, "The famous Madame Tussaud if of another era. Her figures looked like department store dummies compared to these. Sometimes I think myself my people might come to life."

He walked to the figure of a soldier reading a letter as he sat on a stump. He pinched his cheek.

"You do that, too," he told Kendal.

Kendal obliged. The tanned, rough-textured "skin" gave under the pressure of his fingers. Except for its coldness, it felt like human flesh. The flesh of a cadaver, Kendal thought,

"It's marvelous what you can do these days," the little man said, and led the way on down the aisle to a brightly lit room in the rear.

He stood aside and waved the wondering Kendal inside. Several partly completed exhibits stood around. Kendal would not have been surprised if some of them had spoken to him at any moment.

The professor extended his hand.

"May I see the sample, please?"

Kendal fished it out of his pocket and handed it over. The professor held it up to the light, twisted it and bent it.

"Probably the most common of plastics," he said. "It's called vinylite. I work with it, lumarith and lucite. I have a remarkable secret process by which I make a gelatinous mass of the vinylite, compress it, color it, and mold it. See here," he said as he walked to a plaster mold. "This was used in making the head of Marie Antoinette."

Kendal studied it, ran his hand over the smooth contours.

He was about to ask a question when there was a sudden movement behind him. He went for



The engineer whirled and found himself staring  
incredulously into the bore of an automatic  
(CHAPTER I)

his gun as he whirled, but he was not quick enough. Two men, one tall and gaunt, the other of medium height, faced himself and the professor, who had also turned.

EACH of the intruders held a gun, one covering Kendal and the other the stooped little man. The smaller man also carried a suitcase.

"I'll take that," the tall man said, with scarcely a movement of his thin lips, indicating the pistol which Kendal had half-pulled out of its shoulder holster. "Butt first, please."

Kendal mutely surrendered his gun. The chilled steel look on the lined features of the tall man told him that a single overt gesture would be suicidal. He looked at the professor, who returned the look steadily. It was filled with suspicion and distrust.

"If you're looking for money," the professor said to the man who covered him, "there isn't any. My assistant took the proceeds from admissions home with him."

"Line up over there – faces to the wall," the tall gunman snapped. He indicated with his pistol.

Kendal, watching for any move which would give him a chance to charge or feint, turned slowly and walked to the wall. The professor did likewise.

"Frisk 'em," said the tall man.

His smaller companion did.

"Good. Now, the adhesive tape."

Kendal felt two-inch strips binding his wrists, then his feet. From the corners of his eyes he saw Gustav Breger getting the same treatment. Next, a gag was fitted into his mouth. Then he was pushed to the floor, striking with a jarring thud. Breger fell on top of him.

"That will hold them," said the tall man "Their workers will release them in the morning."

Kendal saw the smaller man pick up his suitcase. The two men went out. He could hear them moving about in the museum, then the lights were switched out. Just before the inky blackness which followed, Kendal spotted the telephone. He listened intently, heard the receding sound of footfalls, a closing door, and the catch of a latch.

Professor Breger had managed to roll off him and was sprawled out on the floor. The G-man twisted in the direction of the table on which the telephone rested, cursing because he had allowed himself to be trapped. At the same time, he was puzzling over the attack. What had the men wanted?

He got under the table by hitching along on his knees, and up-ended it. He heard the telephone and its base clatter to the floor, the hum of the dial sound as the instrument went one way and the base the other. He worked his way after them, rolled

over so that he could dial "0" with his fingers which were free behind his back, got his throat over the transmitter.

When he heard the operator's query he emitted the only sounds of which he was capable – low, guttural moans and groans. He heard the tone of alarm in the operator's voice as she asked for "Number, please" again and again.

"Get smart," he said to himself, "and trace the call."

Twenty minutes later he heard pounding on a door at the rear, followed by the crash of a heavy weapon against it. It cracked and splintered. At the sound of footfalls he began moaning and groaning again. Heavy steps came toward Breger's laboratory, and a flashlight groped over the floor, finally striking him full in the eyes.

"In here, Clancy!" called the man who held the light. "I've found him." The light darted around. "There's two of 'em!"

A second pair of feet followed the first. Flashlights made darting yellow moons on the walls. A switch clicked, and the lights went on. In a moment, strong hands were removing Kendal's gag. He swallowed and wet his mouth and lips with his tongue. Then, in response to the questions of the two policemen, who had been told of "something being wrong" at the address by the telephone company and had come in a prowler car, Kendal told his story.

Professor Breger listened intently as Kendal talked, and the occupants of the prowler car ripped off the adhesive tape.

"I think I know what they wanted!" he said suddenly. "But it's incredible!"

The policemen helped him to his feet. He rocked weakly from the laboratory, switched on the lights in the museum and headed for an exhibit which was labeled "Maternal Tragedy."

Kendal and the police, following, saw a woman bending over a crib. Realistic tears streamed down her plastic cheeks. Breger peered into the crib, grief-stricken himself.

"My baby!" he exclaimed. "They've taken my plastic baby! The best job I ever did!"

"How'd you guess what they'd taken?" Kendal asked.

"A man came in here one day and tried to buy it – offered me a hundred dollars. Imagine that! My masterpiece! I turned him down. I wouldn't sell that dead baby for –"

"Dead?" asked Kendal.

Breger pointed to the sign.

"The baby was dead, don't you see? That's the maternal tragedy."

"This screwy place is driving me that way myself," Clancy said. "Let's get our information and go, Callahan."

Tears were streaming down Breger's lined cheeks as Callahan looked around the place.

"Say," he said, "this is some joint. I'm going to bring down the wife and kids." He turned to Breger. "Quite a thing you've done here with the wax."

Breger looked at him disapprovingly.

"Plastics, my good man, plastics!" he said sternly.

## CHAPTER V *Curtains for Sally*



LOVELY Sally Vane got her first opportunity for real action as the Floridian Special chuffed southward. The blond girl's assignment had been an onerous one from the beginning. First, there had been the business of tracing the train tickets which Helvig Hoffman, alias Martha Marston, had purchased to Miami via New York. Then Sally had had to get a stateroom on the flyer next to that occupied by the exotic woman, who still dressed in her black raiment, and assumed an attitude of grief-stricken aloofness.

On the train from Detroit to New York, Helvig Hoffman had stayed in her compartment. She apparently had no traveling companion, male or otherwise. At least, she had spoken to no one, and no one had entered her compartment. And once they had reached New York she passed most of the time in a newsreel theatre.

Sally was feeling definitely frustrated as she sat in the dining car, on the way to Miami now, finishing her dessert and peering out into the darkness which was rushing past the window. A vague feeling, something akin to a sixth sense, caused her to glance back into the streamlined car. Standing imperiously, waiting for the attention of the busy steward, was Helvig Hoffman, though of course Sally knew her only as Martha Marston.

Sally had had no opportunity to make the acquaintance of the lady in black, so that she might try to gain her confidence. She knew she never

would have, for she was aware from her long experience in judging women that this one was not the type to make casual friends or to share confidences.

In the morning, the trip would be over, the train would be in Miami. There, the woman might disappear completely, as far as Sally was concerned.

Next to acquaintance, Sally knew, the next best way of learning about a person was to search belongings – and now was her opportunity. She watched her subject walk with a feline, yet regal grace to a table, the focal point for masculine glances. The woman seated herself, consulted the menu, and began writing her order.

Sally, secure in the feeling that she would have at least twenty minutes in which to inspect the woman's stateroom, hastily paid her check, tipped the Negro waiter who had served her, and left the car. Helvig Hoffman paid no attention to her. She was busy listing the items she wanted.

To get to her car consumed only a minute of Sally's time. She slipped into her own stateroom, left her purse, put her flat, compact .25 automatic into the pocket of her blue tailored coat, and went into the corridor. Making sure she was not observed, she entered the stateroom occupied by the woman she was there to watch. She sniffed with distaste the exotic fragrance which permeated a traveling bag as she began going through it rapidly with quick, experienced hands.

Underthings, black, lacy and expensive. Sally surveyed a large collection of Fifth Avenue labels. Nylon stockings – black market, she thought. A black nightgown. Another. Sally felt the walls of the bag to see if she could detect any bulges which might conceal hidden information,

She looked for cuts in the lining. She found none.

Next came a three-suit, a large case which was practically empty because Helvig Hoffman had removed her outer garments and had hung them up to prevent wrinkling. Sally went through the large piece of baggage with the same skilled care she had used on the small one. Still nothing. Then she felt in the pockets of a black suit which hung on a hangar.

She withdrew a small folder.

She found herself looking at stubs – for a full fare ticket and a half-fare.

"What in the world?" she exclaimed to herself, as she gazed on the half-fare ticket. "I

wonder what that means?"

She shoved the stubs back into the folder, and replaced it, still wondering. Another pocket got her attention. Here she found a small atlas. She turned its pages. She became aware of a light penciled line on the most used page – a line running from Detroit to New York, thence to Miami, and then on to Natal, Brazil.

"So that's where she's going!" she exclaimed.

She was returning the atlas to its place when she became aware of the opening of the door. Her heart leaped, pounded. She swung around, whipped out her small automatic.

Helvig Hoffman stepped into the bedroom, eyeing Sally from head to foot with cold and disdainful appraisal. A calculating impersonal smile, chilling and deadly, illuminated her ivory face.

"I suppose you are having fun?" she asked.

**S**ALLY swallowed hard. She felt hot red blood in her cheeks at the woman's insulting demeanor.

"Travel's so broadening," Helvig added, as she moved toward the seat by the window. The muzzle of Sally's gun followed her. "I suppose you enjoyed looking at my little atlas? They're so handy. You should have one of your own."

"I think," snapped Sally, "that we'll dispense with the rather indelicate sarcasm. We'll get to facts."

"Such facts including those that you have entered my stateroom, have indulged in petty theft and prowling, and that you are now threatening me with what might be called, quaintly, a deadly weapon," suggested Helvig. "My dear girl, you're so utterly transparent. You went to the same hotel in Detroit that I did, got a room as near to me as possible, inquired into my purchase of rail tickets, dined at the same time I did. So naive!"

Helvig moved still closer to the window. Sally now had her back to the door.

"Then there was the train ride to New York," the exotic Helvig went on, "and after that, we attended the same newsreel. So cozy! And now, my dear, we're positively chummy. Of course, I've never felt that an automatic is a social implement."

Sally's anger increased. She reached into her pocket, withdrew a leather case Dan Fowler had given her, and then displayed her badge.

"So they give awards on graduation!" Helvig goaded. "May I be the last to congratulate you?"

I've heard of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Where I was trained, we called them boy scouts. And you're a girl scout. I imagine you have several merit badges. Do you rub two sticks together and make a fire on rainy nights, in the open?"

Sally permitted herself the luxury of gritting her teeth.

Her finger trembled on the trigger of the automatic.

"You contemptible –" she began.

She didn't finish the sentence, because she felt a draft of air behind her and a sudden uncomfortable prodding of a metallic nature in her back.

"I'll take that, sister," said a man's voice, and the little automatic Dan Fowler had given her was suddenly jerked cruelly from her hand.

Sally turned, looked up. A tall, gaunt man was standing behind her, eyeing her automatic with disdain.

"Cap pistol," he said.

"You certainly took your time getting here, Otto," Helvig reproved. "I warned you ten minutes ago that this repulsive little creature was going through my things."

Another, and smaller man appeared behind the gaunt individual.

"What'll we do with her?" he asked Helvig.

"You will execute her immediately," Helvig said coldly. "She knows too much. She got hold of my atlas, and now knows our objective. I don't know what else she has found out, but she's been definitely annoying. So get rid of her."

Helvig opened her purse, withdrew a cigarette case. She took a cigarette, put it between her lips. The smaller man produced a lighter, flicked a lever. Helvig leaned forward, dragged the flame into the tip of the cylinder, and inhaled deeply.

"Any particular method?" the gaunt man asked her.

"That's up to you, my sweet."

Sally watched the cigarette smoke filtering through the woman's words.

"Be thorough," Helvig added.

Otto looked at his companion.

"I guess the end of the car's best," he said. "Bring her along."

The smaller man pinioned Sally's arms. Otto opened the door, held it while his companion propelled Sally's slight form through it into the corridor. Sally tried to fight as they went toward the rear, but the cruel grip of her captor was too

much for her strength. Otto followed them until they had reached the platform. He opened the door, raised his weapon until it was level with her forehead.

The grace shot, Sally thought, still fighting against the superior strength of the man who held her in a vise.

Otto reached out and swung open the outer door. The night came in. A rush of warm air assailed her. The streamlined train was traveling at high speed, she knew. The sharp crack of an automatic would be swallowed up by the pound and roar of it, the clatter of steel on steel, and the rush of wind.

She braced herself for a final struggle. She was aware that this was the end, as Otto leveled his lethal weapon. And then, suddenly, the black night seemed a haven to her.

She was rigid and tense against the power of the man who held her.

"I shoot her in the head," Otto said. "She dies. You throw her off the train."

**A**T THAT moment, Sally Vane reversed her technique. The crippling shock of contact with the roadbed might kill her. But then it might not.

Certainly a leap into the Stygian space beyond the door was not so completely final as a bullet in the brain.

She went limp, sagged in the grasp of the surprised smaller man. She felt the sudden contraction of his muscles. She pushed against him and shoved herself into the roaring night.

"Hey, Otto!" the man who had held her muttered. "She's fainted."

She felt herself hurtling through the air. She heard the crack of a wild, ineffectual shot as she plunged downward. Cold, cruel stones ripped at her. Her right leg doubled beneath her. She fell forward, sliding, skidding, twisting along the slanting roadbed. Weeds lashed at her face. She felt herself toppling over and over as the train raced by, the clacking of the wheels making a singsong in her brain, the huge train of steel creating an ever-rising roar.

The receding lights of the last car faded, and so did Sally's reason....

When Sally Vane became aware of the fact that she was still alive and in one piece, she felt a stabbing pain in her right leg. She realized that it was broad daylight, and the events of the night before seemed like something which had been

devilishly conjured in her subconscious during a nightmare.

Her head ached. The sunlight stabbed into her eyes like searing pokers. She was more thirsty than she ever had been in her life. She tried to move. Pain knifed through her body. It started in her right leg.

She managed to straighten herself out, and saw that it was broken and twisted.

"Anyway," she sighed heavily, "I'm alive."

She looked around and saw that she was lying by the right-of-way of the railroad. By concentrating, she could see, across the fields, a white farm house. Smoke was pouring from the chimney. Here, then, was succor and relief!

The farmhouse was perhaps two hundred yards away.

There were times, during that dragging, bitter, aching trip, that Sally was a child again. She wanted water, and her mother was trying to give it to her. But a gaunt man with a pistol, and his smaller companion were holding her mother from her. Again, she was on the desert. Again, she was on an operating table, and the gaunt man was holding an axe in his hand.

"We'll cut off her right leg," he said, over and over again. "We'll cut off her right leg."

Sally, moaning from pain, reached the farmhouse yard. A man carrying two buckets toward the barn seemed to walk interminably before her babblings caused him to stand stock-still, look at the strange creature with torn clothes and stringing blond hair, who had invaded his premises.

"Mary!" he yelled. "Mary, come here!"

Sally managed another yard before the farmer reached her, bereft of his buckets, and bent over her.

"First," she mumbled, "long distance. Gotta talk long distance to Dan Fowler. Then get a doctor."

After that, she didn't remember anything.

She found out later that the farmer and his wife had put her into a clean, white bed, wondering and mystified, and had called the general practitioner in the district on the party telephone. But Sally Vane had been past caring – then.

CHAPTER VI  
*Radio Raid*



DAN FOWLER faced Horace Stickney, the technician in the laboratory of the Detroit field office of the F.B.I.

"I'm sorry, Fowler," Stickney told him, "but out of the entire contents of that stove, I got only one complete message."

"What is that?" asked Fowler.

Stickney produced a paper. Fowler studied it. It read:

ONE-ONE-EIGHT-TWO-NINE-FIVE.  
MAY TENTH.

He looked at Stickney. "I don't get it," he said.

The telephone rang. Stickney answered and passed it to Fowler.

"This is Arthur Jeffrey, president of International Importing Corporation," a voice said. "I'd like to see you, Fowler."

"Very well."

Fowler banged up the receiver and grabbed his hat. Ten minutes later he was seated across a desk from Jeffrey. There were deep blue pockets under the official's red and clouded eyes.

"I think we should have an understanding, Fowler," he said. He glanced furtively around as if he thought the walls were listening. "The shipment of which you spoke and which was consigned to us, then was stolen, consisted of industrial diamonds. They were destined for Detroit's tool designers and aircraft instrument manufacturers. The diamonds are used in precision tools and are also a part of aircraft instruments."

Fowler felt his entire body tautening.

"Didn't I read in last night's paper that there is a paralyzing shortage of those diamonds? How much was the shipment worth?"

"About half a million dollars in this country." Jeffrey replied.

"And in Germany – priceless," the G-man added.

"That's right," Jeffrey said. "The Nazis are starving for production tools and for aircraft instruments. You know what's happened to the Luftwaffe recently."

"So it's a double deal," Fowler said musingly.

"Our aircraft instrument and precision tool makers starve for industrial diamonds and, at the same time, a shipment disappears."

"The biggest since the war started," Jeffrey interpolated.

"And, on the other hand, if the diamonds can be shipped to Germany war production can be increased over there."

"You've hit the nail on the head, Fowler."

The G-man rose to go.

"Thank you very much," he said, and suddenly was remembering the envelope containing the bits of crystal in his pocket. "By the way, can you tell me what time it is? I've an appointment."

"Of course."

Automatically, the president of the importing company pushed back his coat sleeve to look. The watch wasn't there.

"Oh – I'm sorry," he fumbled. "Completely forgot. Broke it playing with the kids last night."

Jeffrey's confidential secretary, raw-boned, shocked-haired Newton Huntley, stepped into the office. He glanced at his chronograph, containing a complicated system of dials, and of the type generally used by airplane pilots. It was of Continental manufacture.

"The time," said the efficient-looking Huntley, "is nine forty-seven."

"Thanks," said Fowler. "I'll be running along."

As he waited for the elevator, he again studied the small piece of metal, less than a quarter of an inch long, not more than a sixteenth of an inch thick, and an eighth of an inch wide, which he had found at the India Street address. He went directly to the Federal Bureau of Investigation offices.

"There's a man to see you," said the receptionist gesturing toward an anteroom.

He went into it. A tall man of perhaps thirty faced him. Fowler introduced himself.

"I'm Nicholas Blade – Federal Communications man," the fellow said, extending a lean, hard hand which Fowler took.

Fowler measured him carefully. He had close-cropped brown hair, narrow, flat eyebrows, was smooth shaven, and well over six feet. He might be a good man, Fowler thought, for he seemed alert and intelligent enough, if not too prepossessing, with those odd eyebrows.

"It'll be a pleasure to work with you, Mr. Fowler," Blade said. "Hear you've a radio problem

on your hands. Incidentally" – he reached into an inside coat pocket and pulled out a wallet – "here are my credentials. You can't be too careful these days."

FOWLER nodded, smiled, looked them over and passed them back. Then he briefly outlined his problem, and told of his experience at the hidden radio station.

"The station has been moved," he concluded. "But it's still operating, giving instructions to Nazi operatives and reporting on their activities. You'll have to knock it out."

"We can locate it by triangulation," said Blade.

"When you're ready to raid, let me know," Fowler instructed.

"Very good," said Blade. "I'll contact my men in this district right now."

He turned, left the office.

Fowler went into his own office and found a shamefaced Kendal, waiting to tell of his experiences of the night before. The younger G-man told of being bound and gagged, with a sheepish expression on his worn features.

"But the darndest part of it all," he said, "was stealing that plastic baby. I don't get it."

Fowler shook his head. Then he reached into his pocket and pulled out the envelope containing the pieces of broken crystal which he had found.

"Go out to the Jeffrey residence," he told Kendal "Pose as a jewelry repair salesman. Talk to his wife. Maybe you can get the watch or find out where he took it to be fixed."

"Okay, Dan."

"And stay out of plastic museums, Larry."

"You needn't rub it in, pal."

Grinning, Kendal slammed his hat on his head and started for the door. Fowler patted him on the back.

Then he turned his attention to a batch of reports stacked on the desk in front of him. One from Sally, dispatched from New York, told of making no progress as far as getting acquainted with the woman they knew as Martha Marston was concerned.

"Good girl, Sally!" he mused. "I'll bet she has good news by now. She never fails."

Another report stated that no trace had been found of the man who had accompanied the Marston woman to Detroit. Still another told that Arthur Jeffrey had left his home alone, late at

night, and that the G-man assigned to him had lost his trail.

Dalton Arnold, a bachelor, had not shown up at his apartment house at all after a shadow had failed to pick him up at the New World Building. Tall, thin Harley Marvin was said to have left the city. Newton Huntley, secretary to Jeffrey, had had a date for dinner, had taken his companion to a motion picture show, and had not come out through the main lobby.

"Any one of them," Fowler mused, "could have been at that radio station – and any one of them could be directing the activities of the Nazis."

The general pattern of the case was beginning to form in his mind now. At least one man, the key mind in the plan, was in full charge of the Nazi plan to seize the industrial diamonds, and to cripple the precision tool and aviation instrument activities in the United States.

Underground Nazi radio had been used to coordinate every phase of it. The key man had traced the shipment of gems, knew where they were at all times. He had ordered the pseudo "Codster" to arrive in Boston on a certain date, and had been the mind behind the theft of the shipment from the New York-Detroit Express in the tunnel.

Now the diamonds, and all but two of the gang and the woman, Martha Marston, were on the loose somewhere in the United States. Efforts would probably be made to get the gems out of the country and to Germany. But how?

Peter Dailey, the agent in charge, came in.

"You were right about those Nazi credentials," he said. "They were all mighty clever forgeries."

Fowler nodded.

"Here's another job," he said. "Broadcast the descriptions, such as we have, of the Nazi mob to all customs and immigration officials before they try to run those gems out of this country."

Dailey nodded.

"I'll get right on it," he said, and went out.

DAN FOWLER realized that Sally Vane was now his main hope in getting a new lead on the gang through Martha Marston. It shouldn't be long before he heard from her.

Kendal came in.

"If you can believe Mrs. Jeffrey," he said, "Jeffrey broke his watch playing with the kids, all right. He came in at nine o'clock, said he'd had his dinner, and helped put the kids to bed. Then he

said he had an appointment and went out again later that night.”

“Where to?”

“Mrs. Jeffrey didn’t know. I found out the name of the jeweler they usually patronize, and he had the watch. But he’d already put in the new crystal and didn’t have any pieces of the old. Said the crystal was all cleaned out when he got the watch.”

“Okay, Larry. And now –”

The telephone rang. Fowler picked up the instrument.

“Nicholas Blade speaking,” he heard. “We’ve had exceptional luck. Your station went on the air, and we were able to locate it. Do you want to hear the message they sent?”

“Let’s have it,” said Fowler.

“It’s ‘Uncle decided against following Bertha. Family very happy.’”

“Thanks,” said Fowler.

His brow wrinkled as he weighed the message. A sudden stab of fear hit his heart. Did that mean something had happened to Sally Vane?

“We’d better raid right away,” Blade pressed. “There are three men at the station now.” He gave the address. “I’ll be waiting at the corner of Sondern and Valencia,” he said.

“We’ll be right there,” Fowler promised, and hung up.

He and Kendal rounded up tear gas and submachine-guns, and left the office.

## CHAPTER VII *Woman Missing*



ABOUT twenty minutes later, Fowler and Kendal turned a corner and beheld the spectacle of residents, a police prowl car, a fire engine, hook and ladder, and a riot car all milling excitedly. Nicholas Blade’s tall figure strode toward them.

“You’re too late!” he exclaimed. “The fun’s over. They made a break, and I shot it out with ‘em. Somebody turned in a riot call and telephoned for the Fire Department.” His face was grim. “It all happened so fast I don’t think I even pinked one of ‘em.” He displayed bullet-holes in the shoulder of his coat and through one leg of his trousers. “Those Nazis aren’t bad shots.”

Fowler shook his head wearily.

“I’m sorry,” Blade said, glumly. “I did my best.”

“Don’t feel badly,” Fowler told him. “No one else could have done better. They got away from me once, you know – and darned near got me as well.”

Fowler invited the Federal Communications man to ride back with him when he learned the Nazi agents had got away with his car. Blade sat beside him and Kendal got into the rear seat. Fowler found that his shoe lace was untied. He bent over, and apparently had considerable difficulty in retying it before he straightened up.

“Maybe we can trace ‘em this time through your car, Nick,” he said.

A few minutes later Fowler drove up in front of the Federal Building.

“I’ve got to make a report,” he explained.

“I’ll wait in the car,” Blade suggested.

“You’re coming inside, Blade, or whatever your name is – and not so fast on the rod!”

Fowler’s right hand whipped like a striking snake and his automatic jammed into the radio man’s side. The man’s hand got no farther than his chest. Fowler’s left hand removed his gun.

“Get out!” he snapped.

Kendal left the rear seat, pulled out manacles and slipped them onto Blade’s wrists. He pulled him from the car.

“You haven’t got a thing on me,” Blade snarled.

“Just a little charge called aiding fugitives from the United States Government to escape,” Fowler said. “I didn’t go for you almost from the first, Blade. I don’t like men who pluck their eyebrows and use wax to plaster them down. Your hair dye was good, but not good enough, when I got a good look at it. And after a while I didn’t like the way you felt for a mustache which wasn’t there.

“It didn’t take me long to figure your racket. That drunk who staggered into the Western Union office the other night was a little too drunk, when I come to think of it, and he suddenly got sober after I left the place. He looked pretty intently at the teletype keys as the night operator got off my rush message for a communications expert.

“And furthermore, Blade, the next time you decide to drill a couple of bullet-holes in your clothing have somebody do it from a distance. If there is a next, and you’re not too yellow. When you fire from a foot away, bullet-holes smell of

two things, scorched cloth and powder. I discovered your trouser leg did while I was tying my shoe.”

The man who called himself Blade paled.

“You won’t get a thing out of me,” he said.

Fowler merely shrugged, led the way inside, and turned Blade over to the office man. Then, without another word he left the building.

As Dan Fowler and Larry Kendal hurried into the hotel lobby a little later, the night clerk beckoned to them.

“Mr. Fowler!” he exclaimed. “Where’ve you been? We’ve tried to locate you everywhere. The operator at Darius. Georgia, has been trying to get you on an urgent priority for three hours.”

Fowler’s first thought was of Sally Vane.

“I’ll take it in the booth over there,” he said.

He strode to it. Kendal followed, listening at the half-opened door. The call went through immediately.

“Oh, Dan, darling – are you all right?” Fowler heard Sally’s weak voice saying.

“Sure!” he exclaimed heartily. “And you? What’s news?”

He felt a warm glow of relief at hearing her voice, but it chilled instantly when she said:

“I’m in Methodist hospital here. Pretty badly bunged up and nursing a broken leg.”

“What happened?” he demanded, anguish in his tone.

SALLY poured out the story of her narrow escape from death. Fowler listened intently to the entire recital.

“The dirty rats!” he exclaimed.

“And two of the oddest things about it,” Sally concluded. “were the half-fare ticket and the light penciled tracing on the atlas which stopped at Natal, Brazil.”

Fowler pondered this information, and a slow light began to dawn in his brain. He realized the need for immediate action.

“Are you sure you’re all right,” he demanded. “You’re not holding out on me? Your injuries aren’t a bit worse than you say?”

“No, dear.”

“Are you getting everything you need?”

“Everything. The people here have been perfectly wonderful.”

“Swell, baby. I’ll get there as soon as possible.”

“I know you will. Good night, Dan – and

good luck.”

“Good night, darling.”

Fowler hung up, turned to Kendal, and relayed Sally’s story.

“And now the picture fills in a little better,” he said. “The gang is using the woman in black to get the diamonds out of the country. They stole the plastic baby from the museum, put it in a coffin, loaded it with the gems, and sent that woman off to Miami and to Natal, jumping off place for Africa and Europe. She’s using a full fare ticket for herself and half-fare for the alleged child. Nobody’s going to bother a grieving woman, mourning the death of her infant. If anybody’s ghoulish enough to take a look at the baby in the coffin, he’s going to see what looks like a dead one. From what you told me that plastic job’s perfect. It even feels dead.”

Kendal, eyes wide, nodded wonderingly.

“A genius dreamed up that one!” he exclaimed.

“Yes,” agreed Fowler, “and the genius is still loose.”

He turned to the telephone again, dialed a number, and was connected with the Air Transport Command. During a moment of silence on the wire, he turned to Kendal.

“Get upstairs and pack,” he ordered. “We’re on our way to Miami!”

An hour later they were flying southward out of Wayne County Airport in a silver Beechcraft transport with the Army’s star and band on the fuselage and wing. The next evening they were in Miami, checking in at the United States Customs Building. The Collector of the Port, in full cooperation produced a guard who admitted that he had passed Martha Marston, the woman in black, and her pseudo baby.

“All the papers were in order, including the death certificate and the undertaker’s affidavit,” the man said defensively. “I checked into everything. There wasn’t a slip-up or loop-hole anywhere. Everybody helped her to get on the boat.”

Fowler leaned forward.

“What boat?” he demanded.

“The S.S. San Rosario, a passenger-freighter, heading for Natal and Rio,” the man replied. “Her tickets were for Natal. The boat’s due there May ninth.”

Fowler rose hurriedly. Kendal was right with him.

"That's all I want to know," Fowler said.

He contacted Navy radio and sent a message to the captain of the San Rosario. His orders were to hold the woman known as Martha Marston until he boarded the vessel.

"Larry," he said, "you'd better start checking the Florida, Mississippi and Louisiana Coasts.

Kendal nodded, and the men shook hands....

It was almost midnight when Fowler started to shuttle across the Caribbean toward Puerto Rico in a big, twin-engined Navy flying boat – a Catalina. The pilot flew while Fowler, who was an expert flier himself, sat in the co-pilot's seat, taking over the controls now and then. The co-pilot and navigator were scanning the dark seas beneath for the San Rosario, and the radio operator was trying to reach her.

The operator established first contact. He laid aside his earphones, reported to Fowler:

"The San Rosario is cruising at eleven knots about five miles off the north coast of Puerto Rico. Here's her latitude and longitude." He passed the G-man a piece of paper, and Fowler turned it over to the pilot. The pilot eased back on his throttles slightly, and the steady drum of the engine lessened. The nose of the plane lowered.

"She ought to be about twelve miles east of Point Vacia Telegas," the navigator said.

"We'll be beside her in half an hour," the pilot predicted.

"Make it twenty-eight minutes," said the navigator. "Don't forget that quating tail wind."

**J**UST twenty-five minutes later the co-pilot sighted the San Rosario. The vessel flashed identification signals. The plane did the same, circled, and settled into the wind onto a long, rolling swell. A small boat had put out from the wallowing passenger-freighter and Fowler clambered into it from a forward compartment door.

"We'll stand by, sir," the pilot said, "for further orders."

"Very good," said Fowler.

The small boat cast off.

In a short time he was facing a troubled, in fact nonplussed captain in the officers' quarters.

"I'm at a complete loss," he said. "On receipt of your communication we went to the Marston woman's cabin. It was empty. We made an investigation and found that she had bribed a steward to take her to the child's coffin and leave

her. Her overwhelming grief, she told the unsuspecting lad, made the trip necessary. The steward left her in the baggage hold, alone with her sorrow. And that's the last we've seen of her."

Fowler asked that the quartermaster who had been on duty at this time be summoned. Shortly the officer stood before him.

"Did anything unusual happen on your watch?" the G-man asked.

"One odd thing, sir. I'm quite sure I saw two red lights and a white light flash about a thousand yards off starboard at nineteen hours, twenty-six minutes. It wasn't repeated."

Fowler told him to stand by, and summoned the steward who had guided the supposedly distraught mother to the coffin.

"What time did the woman contact you?" he asked.

"I think it was about nineteen hours, ten minutes, sir," he said, "when I left her kneeling beside the coffin, praying. It was very embarrassing."

"I understand," said Fowler. He turned back to the quartermaster. "Do you think the lights you saw came from a submarine or a flying boat?"

The officer shook his head.

"I couldn't tell, sir," he said. "It's a black night."

Fowler smiled grimly. "So I've discovered," he said.

Obviously there was nothing more to be done aboard here, under such peculiar and entirely unsuspected circumstances. Thanking the San Rosario's captain and the offers he had questioned, Inspector Fowler returned to the plane that was waiting for him, to gird himself for what lay ahead of him in Natal on the morrow..

The big Catalina circled over the war-swollen jumping off place on the bulge of South America – the strategic little city of Natal, Brazil – just before sunset. Fowler, looking through the fat plastic port blister of the lumbering amphibian saw the harbor, green and blue, the place itself with its paste-hued buildings of Portuguese architecture, the white beaches beyond. From an elevation of half a mile, the place looked sleepy, peaceful.

But the G-man was well aware that it was neither. The harbor of the equatorial aviation center was crowded with allied seaplanes and ships. From his perch in the air Fowler could see that the few streets were crowded with ant-sized, scurrying humans, and vehicular traffic which

ranged from huge Army trucks to tiny jeeps, from Army cars to civilian equipages of all types and sizes.

Once this place, with a normal population of forty-two thousand, had basked in continual siesta under the tropic sun, a thousand miles south of Belem, safe in the thought that the shores of North Africa, then being ground under the heels of Mussolini's Hitler-goaded legions, was more than sixteen hundred miles away.

Fowler shot the table down on the man, then felt strong arms close about him.  
(CHAPTER IX)



Now, below him, the G-man saw permanent barracks marching row on row toward the steaming jungles and the hazy hills – geometric Panamarin Field, its transoceanic runways crisscrossing in careful pattern. Pursuit planes destined for refueling at Britain's Ascension Island, a thirty-four mile square dot in mid-Atlantic, covered whole sections of the Field, wing-tip to wing-tip. Splay-footed Liberators in the same neat rows, covered acres.

In the distance, the tent city built for transients formed another, distinctly different pattern of squares. It was a haven for military and civilian personnel waiting for transportation by the Air Transport Command to Africa's Gold Coast, to Sicily and the Italian battlefield, to Khartoum, the lower Nile Valley, to India and even over the hump to China.

Fowler marveled at the thought that here, through the cooperation of the Government of Brazil, flights of pursuit, transport and bombing planes left every hour of every day. American clerks, maintenance crewmen, air-way control men, meteorologists, air crews, and thousands of other personnel toiled around the clock to speed the war effort of the Allied Nations.

The original staff of two American officers had grown to twenty thousand, and nearly a hundred thousand enlisted men worked under them. There were twenty thousand civilian employees, many representing airlines, oil companies, and aircraft engine manufacturers.

And, besides all this, there was intrigue. A constant effort on the part of ever-active enemies to harass, to destroy, to spy, to obstruct!

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Natal*



OWLER was awakened from his moment of reverie when the amphibian's wheels and flaps were lowered. He saw that the plane was gliding straight toward the longest runway on Panamarin Field. It leveled, settled, and was soon rolling down the runway, directed to its parking place by the control tower.

When the engines coughed and died, Fowler scanned the faces of officials outside it for a familiar face. He thought of several Brazilian

police officers who had received training at the F.B.I.'s National Police Academy under special wartime arrangements, and of numbers of F.B.I liaison agents who had been assigned to South American countries at their request. It was possible he would see any one of them here.

He remained aboard during the spray given the plane by the malaria patrol. As he left it for inspection, for atabrine and quinine instructions, clearance and vaccination, he heard a voice calling his name.

"Greetings, Senor Fowler!"

A dark-skinned Brazilian police officer, wearing full uniform, with a Sam Browne belt darted forward and embraced him.

"Amelio Barrios!" Fowler exclaimed. "The last time I saw you was at Quantico. What brought you to the field?"

Stocky Barrios drew himself up to his full height of five feet, eight inches, threw out his chest and clicked his heels. On his round face was a proud smile.

"It is the F.B.I. training!" he announced. "Since my return here, I see that my office gets a manifest of all incoming airplanes by radio even before they arrive. You see we are alert. This is how I find you, my good friend!"

He reached into his pocket, produced a couple of teletype messages.

"These have come for you," he said. "Furthermore, I have engaged a room for you at our Grande Hotel. This is very difficult. Also, when you have completed the formalities, I will drive you into our Natal in my official car."

Fowler grinned and nodded his thanks, then tore open one of the messages. It was from Peter Dailey, in charge of the Detroit field offices, and read:

NICHOLAS BLADE DEFINITELY IDENTIFIED AS COMPANION MARTHA MARSTON ON TRIP TO DETROIT BY PULLMAN AND RAILROAD CONDUCTORS. RIGHT NAME JOHANN VON GRIMM. BORN AND EDUCATED AS RADIO ENGINEER IN UNITED STATES. RENOUNCED CITIZENSHIP TO JOIN NAZIS NINETEEN THIRTY-NINE.

"The dirty traitor!" Fowler exclaimed. He continued reading:

ARTHUR JEFFREY, NEWTON

HUNTLEY, HIS SECRETARY, AND DALTON ARNOLD ESCAPED NET, LEFT CITY, WHEREABOUTS UNKNOWN. WE ARE CHECKING.

The second message was from Larry Kendal, and read:

NINE MEN ANSWERING DESCRIPTIONS. MEN WHO ROBBED TRAIN SPENT PART NIGHT ON MARQUESAS KEY. SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED. BELIEVE HEADING FOR BRAZIL. JOINING YOU NATAL.

Fowler shoved the messages into the pocket of his coat, which he was carrying over his arm, due to the intense, sweltering heat. With Barrios guiding him, issuing instructions and making explanations in both English and Portuguese, the formalities of arrival were soon put behind. The two men got into Barrios' radio-equipped car and started on the half-hour drive into Natal.

"And now, Senor Fowler," Barrios asked, "why are you here? It is no vacation, that I am sure. You are not the happy, vacationist type. You Norte Americanos, you work always. Such energies!"

"That's right, Barrios," Fowler said. "So you want the story? Well, here it is."

He started at the beginning, told the entire saga of pursuit. Barrios' eyes grew wider and wider as the tale unfolded, and he gave vent to explosive Latin American exclamations.

"It is a great mystery," he said, when Fowler had concluded. "You think here may be the rendezvous of the spies, now they have done their work, and they take the diamonds to Germany, eh?"

Fowler nodded. "You have Nazi shortwave stations here," he said.

"But of course!" Barrios assured him. "Have you ever tried to catch the mole, the small animal in the garden just beneath the ground? You set the trap, the mole digs around it. You set the trap, the mole digs around it again. So it is with the Nazi radio stations."

"Any operating now?"

"One we have not locate. She is broadcasting to German-occupied Italy, we thenk. The last message we hear... Wait a minute!"

He fished into his pocket, handed Fowler a slip of paper. Fowler read:

ONE-ONE-EIGHT-TWO-NINE-FIVE.  
MAY TENTH.

It was the G-man's turn to show surprise.

"Why, we picked up that same message in Detroit!" he exclaimed. "Detroit – Natal – German-occupied Italy. Thence into Germany, I suppose. I don't get it yet."

**B**ARRIOS shook his head uncomprehendingly. "I've got to find that radio station and knock it out," Fowler said. "Say, what day's today?"

"May ninth."

Fowler pursed his lips.

"Looks like we've got a deadline."

"Come, come, Senor Fowler," admonished Barrios. "You are very tired. You have work hard. Now comes the rest for one night. For your pleasure we have the Wonder Club and the Ideal Club, filled with gay life and great merriment."

"Thanks, but not tonight," Fowler replied.

He thought of the gay night clubs, and then pictured Sally Vane in a hospital bed, her leg in a cast. If she were here, he might be tempted, but not as things were.

The car was drawing into town now. As Barrios swung into the palm-lined main thoroughfare the G-man noted the Army vehicles, the passenger cars looking hunchbacked with charcoal burning equipment rigged behind them, members of the Women's Army Corps, corporals, sergeants and commissioned officers; Naval men in whites; dark-skinned natives; pilots proudly wearing their silver wings and rows of ribbons on their chests. A confused collection of humanity and vehicles they were, Fowler thought, as pedestrians overflowed the tile sidewalks, cut across the street, and traffic jammed in all directions, some horns plaintively complaining, other horns throatily commanding.

Then, ahead, his eyes fell on a sleek Mercedes sedan. A man sat behind the wheel. Pushing her way across the sidewalk ruthlessly toward it, unmindful of the rights of others, went a tall woman. She was fifty yards away, but Fowler recognized her although she was no longer in black. He knew her by the ivory color of her skin, her high cheek-bones, the slim, aristocratic lines of her figure. He stiffened in his seat, sat bolt upright.

"Martha Marston!" he exploded.

Barrios' glance followed his pointing finger.

The exotic spy climbed into the Mercedes.

The sleek, low vehicle rolled into the traffic ahead with roaring exhaust and imperious, blasting horn.

"After her!" Fowler shouted to Barrios.

Cars to the right of them honked and blared, complaining, insistent. The car in which Fowler rode was bumper to bumper and fender to fender with others on both sides.

Barrios lifted his hands from the wheel in a gesture of complete resignation to the surrounding traffic, the fates, and the heat.

"It is too bad, senor," he said desolately. "Perhaps we find her later."

Fowler leaped from the car and tried to push his way forward on foot. The commanding horn was faint in the distance. But completely blocked, Fowler was forced to give in to Barrios. The lady in black, now gay in a flowered dress, was once more on her way....

Night had fallen when Inspector Dan Fowler, having refreshed himself with a cold shower, shaved, and changed his clothing in his room at the Grande Hotel, was finishing his dinner at the sidewalk cafe of the jammed hostelry. Idly he peered across the street at the vague outlines of a church spire, watching the crowds sweep by in unending procession.

The bustle and hustle reminded the G-man of Barrios' story about pre-war business men going home, having lunch, donning *pajamas* and enjoying a mid-day siesta.

"Those days," the easy-going Barrios had said sadly, "are gone forever. Me, I miss the siesta."

Fowler fought against a feeling of impatience at Barrios' "leave it to manana" attitude. He glanced at his watch. It was nearly nine o'clock.

Fowler had prodded the Brazilian into abandoning his plan to see the night-clubs, in favor of a search for Martha Marston. Barrios should be along at any time now.

He glanced up as three men entered the cafe, and gave a start of recognition. He felt a piece of the melon he had ordered for dessert stick in his throat. Tall Arthur Jeffrey, president of the importing company the Inspector had under suspicion led the group, following the head waiter. Egg-headed Dalton Arnold, the general manager, came next, followed by Newton Huntley. All three wore immaculate white linen suits.

Fowler suddenly lost interest in the tropical melon, laid down his napkin and called for his check. He paid it, rose and went to the table occupied by the trio.

"Good evening, gentlemen!" he said. "This is a real pleasure."

JEFFREY and Huntley rose to their feet. Dalton sat stolidly. The standing men bowed stiffly.

"Just goes to show you what a small world it is!" Huntley said genially.

"It's rather unusual, seeing you here," Fowler said. "May I ask your business?"

Dalton glared up at him. "Our private affairs are still – private."

Jeffrey smiled apologetically. "Dalton's upset, because we're on a little junket seeking post-war business," he said. "He doesn't want to reveal our plans to anyone."

"I don't see any reason for this secrecy," Huntley said. "Certainly Mr. Fowler isn't going to inform our competitors what we're doing."

"Of course not," agreed Jeffrey. "You see, Mr. Fowler, under present regulations, civilians are permitted to travel on Air Transport Command planes if they can show good and sufficient reason, and pay the required fare, so we are taking advantage of this."

"I understand that," said Fowler.

Newton Huntley was eyeing his expensive Continental chronograph. Fowler glanced at it. His right hand groped in the pocket of his trousers, and he felt the small piece of metal there.

"Importing makes for world contacts, Mr. Fowler," Jeffrey was saying. "We handle Oriental rugs, perfumes from Paris, jewels from India and South Africa, and other luxuries which Americans will want after the war. In addition, we have pressing war commitments. Huntley, here, was fortunate just at this time, to secure Government approval for our trip."

"If you'll excuse me, gentlemen," Huntley interrupted, "I have to run up to my room. Forgot something." He turned and left hurriedly.

Fowler, still clutching the tiny piece of metal in his pocket, said: "Please excuse me, too. I'll see you later."

CHAPTER IX  
*Nazi Hang-out*



BY THE time Dan Fowler reached the lobby, Newton Huntley's white-coated back was just being obscured by a closing rear door. The G-man darted in that direction, saw the importing company's confidential secretary hurrying down an alley. He followed. Huntley threaded his way onto a tiled sidewalk, continued down the main thoroughfare, then shot into a side street.

Fowler turned the corner just in time to see his quarry going down the steps leading to a small cafe. The door closed behind him. Fowler gazed up at the sign. It was "The Old Vienna." Underneath was the word, "Hofbrau."

"They're pretty brazen about it," the G-man told himself.

He swung open the entrance door and stepped into a long, wood-paneled room. On the ledge which ran around it were old steins, large and small. The tables were covered with red and white checked cloths. At a piano, a woman was playing a Strauss waltz.

Fowler judged there were about twenty people in the cafe. There was a sudden hush and the patrons glanced up as if on signal as he entered. His sharp glance darted around the place searchingly and settled on a nearby table. Newton Huntley was sitting at it. So was Martha Marston. Both were looking at him. In the hush, Fowler walked to the table.

"Mind if I sit down?" he asked.

"Not at all," Huntley replied, "if Miss Marston has no objection."

The woman's eyes made a scorching survey of the new arrival.

"It's Mr. Fowler, isn't it?" she drawled. "I believe we've met before. You paid my taxicab fare – and then sent a blond little minx to accompany me on my trip south. I never forget a favor."

"Nor do I," Fowler said, thinking of Sally. "Darned nice of you to help her off the train."

He sat down across from Huntley, took the confidential secretary's left wrist.

"That's an excellent chronograph you have there," he said. He reached into his pocket. "What are the dials and gadgets?"

"Oh, those?" Huntley eyed the G-man. "Well,

there's the telemeter. You can measure the distance of a storm with that, for instance. Start the sweep second hand at the flash of lightning, stop it when you hear the thunder. The dial tells you how many miles away the flash was.

"There are many other uses. The sweep second hand and the hour recording dial are handy for checking flight time. You start the sweep second hand just before take-off, and the combination tells you how long you've flown when you land. You can stop the dials, and hours later refer to them for exact flight time. If you know the distance between two points, you can determine your ground speed by consulting the figures on the little red circles."

"I take it you fly?"

"I've had some experience at the controls."

Fowler looked at the chronograph again.

"I understand how you stop and start the sweep second hand, but just how do you return the hand to zero?"

"There's a little knob –" Huntley began, then paled.

"A little piece of metal that's missing," Fowler finished. "Parts for such a chronograph are hard to get, aren't they?"

"Right now – yes."

Fowler tossed the small piece of metal onto the table.

"Here's one," he said. "I'm always doing favors. Can't help myself. Happened to find this in the basement of a rundown house on India Street, in Detroit. Try it."

Huntley fitted it.

"It does fit," he said. "Quite a coincidence."

"So much so," said Fowler, his voice hardening, "that I think you and Miss Marston and I had better go to the American provost marshal."

"Your jokes are so utterly naive," cut in Martha Marston.

Fowler's eyebrows lifted. Huntley answered his unspoken question.

"In the first place, Fowler, you're not in the United States, but in a foreign country, Brazil. In the second place, I deliberately led you here, because this is a little piece of Germany, whether you know it or not." Huntley's face relaxed into a smile. "You know, Fowler," he said, "you won't go out of here alive."

He glanced around. Fowler followed his survey. A tall, gaunt man sat at a table close at hand. Across from him was a shorter man. From

another table, four other men eyed him. Three others were nearby, also showing an unusual interest.

"Nine in all," Fowler mused.

"There were twelve. You got three."

FOWLER felt his spine stiffen. His hands shot beneath the table and the next instant the table was soaring upward, over and down on top of Newton Huntley. Fowler leaped to his feet, started to swing around. The tall, gaunt man was too fast for him. Before the G-man could whip out his automatic, he felt strong arms close about his neck. Another set of arms encircled his waist.

He looked at Martha Marston. She was smiling enigmatically, cool and unruffled. She held a pistol in her hand, raised it slowly.

"This gives me a great deal of pleasure, Mr. Fowler," she said. "You have been an enemy of the Fatherland too long."

As her hand compressed on the weapon, Fowler, using every ounce of muscle he possessed, doubled forward. The tall, gaunt man hurtled over his head as the woman fired, and fell in a sodden lump of lifeless flesh. Fowler's hands went to his belt line, and bent back two thumbs.

Smiling coldly, the Marston woman fired a second time, just as Fowler broke the grip that held him erect and rolled sideward. He saw Newton Huntley getting to his feet. Other men lunged at him from behind.

Martha Marston took careful aim for the third time.

There was a loud report.

A look of amazement swept the woman's pale features. Then she pitched forward over the table. The weapon fell from her hand.

Amelio Barrios, smoking submachine gun in hand, stood just inside the doorway. Behind him stood two of his men, similarly armed.

"It was your life or hers!" he called to Fowler. Then, to the room in general: "Everybody, hands up!"

From the corners of his eyes Fowler saw Huntley, bent over like a football player, dart through a rear door. Then the place was plunged into darkness. Yellow blasts flashed momentary light.

Fowler raced for the rear door, bullets crashing around him. He made it, dashed into a small room. Dim light which came through the high windows revealed to him a radio transmitter

as he tried a second door leading into what appeared to be an alley or areaway.

Outside, he heard the grind of a starter.

He grabbed the handle of the door, wrenched at it. He groped, found a night latch. Outside an engine roared. He pulled open the door, darted through it. Others were hurtling through the room behind him. He saw a racing roadster speeding up the alley, sent spurts of flame from his automatic after it.

Something hit him from behind and he went to his knees, momentarily stunned. He shook his head to clear it. Men darted by him into an areaway. Somehow he followed.

The Mercedes sedan, engine running, doors open, strained at the curb, a driver at the wheel. Three men dived into the car and it raced away. The two policemen who had been with Barrios stepped into the street, blasting after it.

"Fowler—this way!" yelled Barrios' voice.

Barrios was climbing into his own car. Fowler raced after him, leaped in beside him. Barrios thrust a submachine-gun into his hands.

"Take this!" he commanded. "We'll chase."

He sent the car away from the curb, tires spinning under the impact of power. The Mercedes was at least two blocks ahead now, making fast headway against the thinning traffic.

Barrios bent over the wheel, jamming all his weight on the throttle.

"How did you —" Fowler began.

"You Norte Americanos," the police officer panted. "So — impulsive. I knew you would get yourself into trouble — in no time at all. So I put what you call a tail on you. He report to me. That is all."

Barrios sent the car hurtling along a palm-lined highway on the outskirts of the heat-soaked city. Far ahead, and growing dimmer was the tail-light of the pursued Mercedes.

"Must have an aviation engine in her," Fowler mumbled. "Is this crate doing the best it can?"

"Si, senor," Barrios said.

When they had gone perhaps five miles, Barrios slowed, handed his trim cap to Fowler. Ignoring the G-man's questioning look, he reached beneath the instrument panel, got earphones which he slapped on his head, hit a switch, turned a dial and unhooked a microphone, which he placed to his lips.

He released a torrent of Portuguese. Then he listened. He released another torrent. Then he

replaced the microphone and headphones, took his cap from Fowler, jammed it on his head, and showed white teeth in a wide smile.

"You see how modern we are?" he asked.

"Fine," agreed Fowler, "But why the slow-down?"

"Because there is only one place this road can go and that's to the abandoned airport, and we are just there."

**T**HE road took a sharp turn.

"I think they have an airplane, those four in the car. I tell my headquarters to contact the air warning posts to watch for this airplane. At the same time, I tell them to call Brazilian Army Airport and have fastest two-place pursuit plane on the line, with best pilot, who speaks English."

Fowler shook his head wonderingly. Suddenly, Barrios pointed into the night off to the right.

"Look, my friend!" he exclaimed.

Fowler looked. Perhaps a quarter of a mile away he could see the dim outlines of a transport, its accelerating progress along the ground revealed by the blue exhaust flames from its twin engines. He knew that he had little chance of scoring at four hundred yards, but he let loose a blast from the sub-machine-gun as Barrios stopped the car.

Barrios called his headquarters again. He turned to his companion.

"The pursuit plane is ready," he said.

He wheeled the car around, raced back down the road, turned off to the right and drove about five miles.

Fowler saw hangars limned against the black sky which precedes the dawn. Then the car was on the ramp. Silhouetted against the dim held lights was a two-seated, low-winged monoplane, its engine idling. As it was outlined in Barrios' lights, the G-man saw the pilot wave his arm and signal for him to hurry. He jumped from the car, ran to the side of the plane and climbed in. The pilot's head was bent as he checked his instruments.

The canopy over the rear cockpit was open. Fowler had scarcely climbed into the seat and put on his parachute when the pilot gunned the engine and the sleek big plane started rolling down the runway. Fowler looked back at Barrios. As the plane pulled away, accelerating under full take-off throttle, he saw Barrios gesticulating wildly. Another man had joined him and was waving his arms, too.

Fowler turned his attention to his safety belt, locked it across his midriff. Then he put on the headphones. The plane's wings lifted into the night. Fowler reached up to pull the canopy over his head. He pressed the release, but he could not get the covering back. It seemed to be jammed.

He looked ahead of him. The plane was heading for what seemed a tropical storm. It plunged into rough air. He cinched up his safety belt – and felt it snap and go limp. He pulled the loose half up, ran his finger over the webbing. All but a fraction of an inch had been sliced cleanly. Less than that was frayed. Alarmed, he reached for the parachute rip cord. The handle was gone!

At this instant, he felt the nose of the ship come up slightly and air speed fall off a trifle. The next thing he knew the right wing dropped, the left came up.

"What the devil!" he yelled.

The wind which whipped around the open canopy tore the words from his lips.

The plane continued its roll. Realizing that he would be hurtled to his death if he didn't act quickly, Dan Fowler thrust his hands beneath the seat. His strong fingers closed on tubing just in time. The plane stayed on its back for a moment. Then the pilot pushed the stick forward in an inverted climb.

The maneuver added centrifugal force to the pull of gravity, and the G-man felt as if his body weighed a ton, that *his* fingers could not possibly hold their grip. After what seemed to be an eternity, the pilot leveled out, rolled into normal position and looked back.

Expecting to find the rear seat empty, his face whitened with surprise, disbelief and then fear – for he was looking into the muzzle of Dan Fowler's .38 automatic.

And Fowler swallowed hard, too – for he was staring at the face of Newton Huntley.

## CHAPTER X

### *Death Knell for Nazis*



**G**RIMLY Dan Fowler motioned Huntley down, using his left hand. Huntley's startled stare melted into a laugh. Fowler knew what that meant. The man would try other maneuvers until the G-man was hurled to his death.

Then, at the right side of the plane, he saw the wing-tip of another, so close it was almost touching the fuselage of his plane. Twin fifty-caliber machine-guns were trained on it. Huntley's laughter died. He swung around. The plane turned and the other plane followed like an avenging angel.

Huntley lined up on the field, lowered his flaps and wheels and landed. The second pursuit covered him as he slowed to a stop at the end of the runway.

He climbed from his cockpit, lined up with the barrel of Fowler's automatic. The G-man turned to Barrios.

"Slip cuffs on him!" he ordered.

"This Huntley," Barrios said, as he complied, "he has two-way radio in his car. He hear my orders for a plane, he comes to this airport and hides in bushes outside the pilot's ready room. He taps my friend, Arturo Villegas, on the head, takes the airplane."

"How's about Villegas getting me out of here?" demanded Fowler.

"Fine!"

Fowler started for the plane.

"The air warning system report the transport fifty miles southwest," Barrios called after him. "Must be heading for Bolivia or Paraguay."

Fowler leaped into the rear cockpit of Villegas' plane, checked the safety belt, lowered the canopy, and told the pilot over the intercommunicating telephone to proceed. The plane sped down the taxi strip, onto the runway, and took off.

The plane flew for an hour, guided by reports from ground stations on the progress of the fleeing twin-engined transport. Dawn lighted the sky. Villegas pointed excitedly to the right. Fowler saw a pinpoint in that direction in the sky.

The pursuit plane changed its course and Villegas pushed his throttle to the limit. As the pursued plane became larger and larger, Villegas tried to call on the radio. In response to his request to turn back came a string of defiant expletives.

The Brazilian was above and behind the transport now.

"I give him a run," he said.

The nose of the pursuit went down, the engine wound up, and Fowler felt his back press against the seat under the acceleration. As the plane passed the larger one, a stuttering blast of yellow flame appeared. Fowler felt a series of small jars and

looked back. The rear of the fuselage showed a line of punctures.

He swung around, unlimbered, and charged the two fifty-caliber machine-guns in the rear cockpit as Villegas pulled out of his dive.

"Okay," he told the pilot over the intercom. "Let 'em have it!"

The battle was short-lived. It was only a matter of seconds before blasts from the pursuit sent the lumbering and then faltering transport, one engine out and the other burning to crash into the jungles below and send a burst of exploding fire into the air.

Villegas throttled back and made a long, slow turn so that he and Fowler could examine the scattered, charred wreckage.

"All dead," Villegas decided, over the intercom

Fowler agreed....

Just at sunrise, the Brazilian pursuit streaked high over Panamarin Field. Fowler's active mind had been hard at work, trying to solve the mystery of the diamonds. He wondered why he kept thinking of that morning at his desk in Washington when he had read the combat reports. He wondered about the strange, concerted attacks on the Liberator bombers which had taken off from the field below him for North Africa, thence to delivery to combat crews in Italy for the raids on Germany.

Below him he saw Liberators, crawling like huge beetles, one after another down the taxi strip toward the main trans-Atlantic runway. He remembered that it was now the morning of May tenth.

"One-one-eight-two-nine-five," he said to himself. "What does it mean?"

Then the frown of perplexity left his brow and his jaws clamped together. He reached for his transmitter.

"Villegas," he demanded, "are you permitted to land at Panamarin?"

"Si, señor!"

"Then land. I'm playing a long hunch. Notify the control tower to advise the dispatcher's office that if Bomber Number One-one-eight-two-nine-five is in the flight now leaving it cut it out and hold it."

FOWLER listened in and heard Villegas carry out his instructions, followed by the puzzled assent of the tower operator. Villegas throttled

back, circled, came in at traffic level, and landed.

A squat, deadly-looking Liberator was being taxied toward the ramp. Fowler issued instructions to a group of groundmen to search it from nose to stinger when he saw the fateful number on the vertical stabilizer.

**T**WO hours later, it was Fowler himself who noticed a slight bulge in a hat stringer which ran along the side of the interior of the fuselage. He himself investigated – and the diamonds were behind it, stowed in chamois sacks....

Amelio Barrios and Larry Kendal arrived too late to participate in the final action, but it lost none of its drama in the telling when Inspector Dan Fowler relived it for them later in Barrios' office.

"The plan to seize the diamonds and get them into the hands of German industrialists," he told his assistant and the Brazilian, "was one of the most diabolical in history. For some time the Nazis had been secreting the gems in American planes in Natal and letting our bombing crews deliver them. The modus operandi was apparent in the combat reports I studied in Washington, but I didn't realize it then.

"The gems were first stolen, then were stowed in Liberators far out on Panamarin Field by spies who eluded the guards. The numbers of the airplanes were transmitted by underground short-wave radio to Germany. German Intelligence notified the Luftwaffe to be on the lookout for these planes and to shoot them down. The gems will stand any kind of heat, so that even if the bombers on which the fighters converged and shot down were burned, the diamonds were undamaged – though heaven help the poor American crew members!"

Fowler paused, gripped with the thought of what he had just said.

"What's the low-down on this Newton Huntley?" Kendall asked.

"He's an American rat who saw a chance for easy money," Fowler replied. "He controlled and coordinated the entire plan. We were thrown off from the first when I found out that Martha Marston whose real name we know now was Helvig Hoffman, visited Dalton Arnold, the general manager of the importing company. Actually, she used Dalton to get into the office, pretended to be a buyer in search of silk. At the end of the interview, she sneaked into Huntley's office to get the quick-vanishing message which

contained her instructions. She was pretty mad when she left his office. Apparently she didn't like the job assigned to her.

"Neither Dalton Arnold nor Arthur Jeffrey – nor, in fact, anyone else connected with the importing company, including sour-pussed Harley Marvin, had any idea of the vast, vicious activity in which Newton Huntley was involved. Huntley was in an ideal position as confidential secretary to the president of the importing company to carry out all details of the plan. He arranged the trip to Natal, of course, to coincide with this shipment. Things were getting pretty hot for him, and he figured a trip to Europe, possibly in company with the gorgeous Helvig Hoffman, would permit things to cool off."

"It will be a long time, senior, before this Hoffman woman with the form of an angel and the mind of a devil go any place again," said Barrios,

"And then," said Fowler, "she'll go to – trial."

"That was a nice job of connecting that little metal button with Huntley's chronograph," Kendal said.

"I was too slow on it," Fowler replied. "The second time I went to the importing company offices Huntley told me the time. I realized that something was wrong with his chronograph, but it wasn't until I looked at it again in Natal that I saw the little black hole where the button had been."

Amelio Barrios rose and stretched.

"Enough of this business talk," he said. "All the underlings are dead except the three you have in jail. Five in the Old Vienna, including your friend, Otto. Four in the plane crash. The Hoffman woman is in the hospital. Huntley is ready for his trip back to the United States. What you say we go to the beach and lie in the sun? We have quaint merchants there who sell pineapples, bananas, watermelons, fresh shrimp. We will get a cabana, bathe – and then the siesta!"

Fowler rose.

"Thanks, Barrios, but some other time. Maybe when the war's over. We'll have to be getting out to Panamarin. The air Transport Command is flying Kendal, our dear friend, Huntley, and myself back to the United States in just two hours."

Barrios gave his shoulders an eloquently disappointed, disapproving shrug.

"You Norte Americanos!" he exclaimed, and then sighed. "So impetuous. So rushing in where the angels fear to tread." He shook an admonitory finger at the smiling G-men, "Some day, if you

keep on rushing into things, I think maybe you get  
hurt.”

**THE END**