



# A Man Named MIKE

By WAYLAND RICE

## ***Rookie Cop Dolan Lets a Killer Get Away - Once!***

**P**ATROLMAN Terry Dolan hung his nightstick from his badge and wrapped both arms around himself to try to gather in a little more heat. The wind off the river was strong and bitter and Dolan wondered why he had ever cursed those South Sea Islands during the war.

The beat was one of those which nobody wants and rookies get. There were big, somber warehouses along the riverfront and the wind whistled between them with wails that were blood-chilling.

Nothing much happened here from midnight, when Dolan's tour of duty began, until dawn when the first trucks rumbled up to loading platforms.

He saw the car as he rounded a corner. It stood at the curb, as close to the river as a car could get. It didn't belong here, at this hour of the night—or practically any hour of the day. The section didn't go in for sleek four-thousand-dollar jobs.

Dolan had veered to the edge of the sidewalk toward the car when he caught a glimpse of a shadowy form slinking into

one of the deep and dark doorways. The rookie freed the nightstick from his badge, transferred it to his left hand and reached into and through the ulster pocket to get at his service pistol. He walked to within ten yards of the doorway, and stopped.

"Come out of there," he ordered crisply.

There was no reply. The shadowy form didn't move. Dolan raised his voice.

"Come out, with your hands up, or I'll come in and get you."

Only an eerie silence answered him. He could faintly see the form, and a little reflected light illuminated a pair of highly polished shoes and trouser legs with a knife crease.

There was a low moan from the doorway. The form began sliding down. Fingernails scraped against the wooden wall of the doorway. Dolan let go of his gun and jumped forward to seize the figure before it fell.

There was a crash. The figure didn't fall, but Terry Dolan did. What felt like a sledge-hammer swept out of the darkness and struck him squarely on top of the head, where his uniform cap gave no protection at all. The weapon was heavy and Dolan felt the cold pavement against his cheek. He was dimly aware of someone running. He turned his head. The person in the doorway was lumbering toward the big car. He ran clumsily, as if he were not used to running. Then Dolan lost interest in all such things. . .

**H**E HAD no idea how long he had been unconscious when he opened his eyes, but he guessed it had not been for long. He sat up, with a splitting headache and a scalp so sore he couldn't touch it. Nothing had changed, except that his assailant was now gone. He still recalled the floundering footsteps.

Dolan got to his feet, retrieved his hat

and nightstick and looked around again. The big, sleek car had been moved. It was now crushed against a light post. He went over there, wondering if the fugitive was in the car, injured.

The car was empty. Dolan got out his flash, turned the beam onto the front of the car and saw how both headlights had been smashed, fenders badly dented, and the bumper hung by one pin.

The front seat gave him nothing of interest. He opened the rear door—and gasped. The seat cover was linen and cream colored. Or had been. It was now decorated with wide splotches of blood. There was a lot of it and even more on the floor. There was also a length of iron pipe. Dolan guessed this was what had struck him. He didn't touch the pipe.

Using his flash, he went around the back of the car to the opposite side. There he saw marks where something—or someone—had been dragged across the sidewalk toward the river wall. On that wall he found more smears of blood. His flash darted down to the swirling high water but picked out nothing. If a corpse had been dumped in here, it was probably a mile downstream by now.

Dolan went to the nearest call box and made a terse report. Then he returned to the car, sat on the running board and waited. They were not going to compliment him on this feat of police work. He had been easily tricked into range of that length of pipe. He had let a murderer get away, even after the killer had wrecked his escape car in his haste to run for it.

Captain McMillan was one of the first to arrive. He was a dour, uncompromising detective-captain in charge of the Bureau on the night shift. He sat on the running board beside Dolan and listened to his story.

"All right," McMillan said. "At least

you're not trying to hide anything. No facts could be any worse for your record. But you're new. We don't expect miracles, and the same thing might have happened to the best of us. I'm taking you off the beat. You'll come with me after we find out who owns this car. Just in case we run across someone who might remind you of that shadowy figure."

Dolan nodded. "Thanks, Captain. I know I bungled it. I also know I haven't a prayer of working on the case."

"That's right," McMillan said. "This is strictly Homicide stuff now. Of course we'll find a corpse in the river somewhere. Go get in my car."

McMillan had a two-way radio system in the official car and he called Headquarters, gave the marker plate numbers of the wrecked sedan, and waited while they were checked.

"Put down the name and address when it comes over," McMillan told Dolan.

The information came quickly and Dolan dutifully wrote, "Carl Webb, 1369 Waverly Boulevard." There was no report on file about the car having been stolen.

A detective hurried over. "Captain, he said, "we found three strands of blond hair on that pipe. Woman's hair. There are also prints on the vanity mirror. That is, the vanity that is built right into the car."

"Thanks," McMillan said drily. "Now all we have to do is find the woman whose prints match. Take over. I'll be back soon."

The address turned out to be in a good section, a large house and obviously an expensive one. The first floor was well illuminated. McMillan rang the bell. "Dolan," he said, in a low voice, "if you see anybody who corresponds to the size and shape of the killer, don't say a word. Just give me a nudge."

"Yes, sir," Dolan replied. "But I didn't see much of the man."

The door opened and a man of about forty, dressed in a rather gaudy lounging robe, stood there staring at them. He held a half-finished highball in one hand. He saw Dolan's uniform and slowly backed away from the door.

"Something has happened," he said.

"That's right. Are you Carl Webb?"

"Y-yes. Yes, I'm Carl Webb. Is she—badly hurt?"

"Who?" McMillan asked bluntly.

"Why—why I thought you came here to tell me something about my wife."

McMILLAN stepped in, waited until Dolan was in the hallway, too, and had the door closed. Dolan eyed this man carefully. He wasn't the assailant. He was too tall, too broad-shouldered. Besides, his shoes were brown while the man in the doorway had worn black shoes.

"Mr. Webb," McMillan said, "so far as we know, nothing has happened to your wife. That is, we have no direct evidence. But I'd like to know why you jumped at such a conclusion."

Webb slowly raised the glass, took a short drink, then led the way into a nicely furnished living room. He sat down, motioned to a couple of chairs, and had another sip.

"I think you're holding back," he said. "Yes, I did half expect my wife was in some sort of trouble. We had an argument tonight—around eleven o'clock. We—"

"An argument about what?" McMillan broke in.

Webb shrugged. "If you must know, Irene was seeing too much of another man. I called her on it tonight. We'd been at a social affair and my wife made a phone call from a room upstairs. She refused to tell me whom she had called, but I thought I knew. At any rate, when we were on our way home the argument became hotter and hotter. I was out of cigarettes so I pulled

up in front of a drug store and went in to buy some. When I came out, Irene had driven the car away.”

“Anything else?” McMillan asked.

Webb hedged. “Tell me first, what brings you here?”

McMillan told him, in detail. As he spoke, Webb grew paler and paler. Finally he arose, went to the sideboard and poured himself half a glass of straight whisky. He downed this in two swallows and poured some more.

“All right,” he said. “Irene is dead. After the way she treated me, I shouldn’t feel sorry for her but I do. He killed her. This man Mike, whom she was seeing on the side. He was a clever one and Irene never did have too many brains. I also know why he killed her.”

“You’re assuming a lot,” McMillan said, “because we haven’t found any corpse. But then, you may be right. Go ahead.”

“When I returned home, just a short time ago, I started looking through her desk. To see if she had written down Mike’s full name or anything about him. She hadn’t, but I found our bank book. She had cleaned out our account this afternoon. Took every dime of cash we had—and this man Mike engineered it. All he wanted was money, and he got it.”

“Did you ever see this Mike?” McMillan wanted to know.

“Only once, and then just from the back. He was running away when I returned early one night. He was about five feet five, slim-waisted and narrow-shouldered. That’s the best I can do.”

McMillan glanced at Dolan, who gave him a nod. The description fitted about as well as any. After that McMillan really went to work. Dolan was sent home because of his headache. Molly, his wife, put him to bed and nursed him as she had taken care of those G. I.s during the war.

Two days went by before the body was found, some six miles downstream. Carl Webb identified it. The fingerprints checked with those found on the vanity mirror. A blood type compared with the blood in the car and on the iron pipe. The hair was identical with the strands left adhering to the murder weapon. By the time the week was out Carl Webb had buried his wife.

Out of sheer curiosity, Dolan drove his old car to the cemetery. There was a fairly large crowd and McMillan was present, too. The dour detective-captain saw Dolan and came over to climb into his car. It was raining hard, and he was grateful for the protection of the car.

“Well,” McMillan said, “what brings you out here, Dolan?”

Dolan smiled. “I’m plain balmy, I guess. It’s just that I’ve had a feeling about this case. It doesn’t smell quite right, and yet it must be right.”

McMillan nodded. “I know how you feel. I was full of suspicion too, when I was a young pup like you. It’s cut and dried, Dolan. All we have to do is find this man Mike, though nobody seems even to have laid eyes on him. Far as I can learn, Mrs. Webb’s two-timing was kept under wraps and no one suspected.”

“She was pretty badly banged up, wasn’t she?” Dolan asked.

McMillan gave him a swift glance. “She was in that boiling river for darn near three days. But there was no question of identity. Dolan, do you know something?”

Dolan shook his head. “No, sir. I swear I don’t. It’s just that—well, this funny feeling I have.”

“Get over it,” McMillan advised.

**D**OLAN drove home and on his way stopped for groceries. He got soaked during the trip from the car to the store and back again. He was still thinking of the

Webb affair when he walked into the house, dripping water on Molly's freshly scrubbed kitchen linoleum. She faced him, arms akimbo, in a defiant gesture.

"The lord of the house returns, dripping wet. He forgets the groceries."

Dolan sat down and took off his heavy shoes. He slid them under the stove.

"The groceries are in the car." He grinned, not at all fooled by Molly's pretended impatience. "I'll get 'em in a minute."

"You will not," Molly said. "And drip more water on my floor. I'll get them myself."

She went out on the back porch, took a look at the rain and the soggy ground between the house and the garage. She came back into the kitchen and kicked off her slippers with the bright red pompoms. With a grin at Dolan, she pulled his heavy shoes from beneath the stove, slipped her small feet into them, and fled.

Dolan watched her running toward the garage. He thought he had never seen anything so funny in his life. She floundered around, encumbered by the big shoes. She threw sprays of mud and ran practically pigeon-toed. Dolan was laughing his head off when she scrambled back onto the porch. Then his laugh died. Suddenly he seized her by the arm.

"Molly—do that again! Run to the garage again. Please—and don't ask any questions. I'm all right in the head. But please do as I say."

She obeyed without question, though she regarded Dolan with a strange look when she was back in the house. She sat down and Dolan took off her shoes. He put them on his own feet.

"I'll be back in time for dinner," he said. "Keep it warm, like a good girl. This is important, darling. Believe me, it is."

"If I didn't think it was, I'd sue you for divorce." Molly helped him with his

raincoat. Her hand touched his hip pocket. "You're carrying your gun, Terry."

"Have to." He kissed her nose. "Rules say a cop is on duty all the time. See you at dinner."

He hurried to the garage and drove downtown. There he changed his mind and drove over to the riverfront where the murder had been committed. He studied the light pole which still bore marks of the crash. He idly kicked a few bits of headlight lens lying in the water-filled gutter. Then he went to Headquarters and talked to the sergeant in charge of the Missing Persons Detail.

There was no lengthy list of missing persons on file and Dolan became immediately interested in the one listed under the name of Thelma Morely who had lived near the Country Club, and had disappeared one evening only a few days ago. Dolan made a few notes and went out to face the rain again.

He drove to Carl Webb's home and found the house tightly locked. Dolan knocked on a neighbor's door.

"Webb moved out," the neighbor said. "Said he couldn't stand living in the house any longer. He didn't own the place anyway, just rented it. Matter of fact we expected him to move away even before his wife died. The business he ran was on the rocks."

The neighbor was one of those priceless sources of information which a policeman looks for, but, she was a garrulous woman and Dolan had difficulty in getting away from her. Even then she said something that made him stop.

"Sometimes I hardly blamed Mrs. Webb for running off. It wasn't that Carl isn't a nice man. Her husband, I mean. But I was at the party they both attended that night at the Country Club and Carl drank too much, as usual. We were worried about him when he drove off."

There were things to do and Dolan had to do them himself. If he had had anything definite to go on, he would have called Captain McMillan, but he didn't want to be laughed at. Dolan drove to the one railroad station in town. Webb's suitcases and a trunk were still there. They were neatly tagged and he made a note of the hotel address in a big city five hundred miles away.

Then he had to call McMillan.

"It's that Webb affair," he explained. "I'm still worried about it. Was there any insurance?"

"Five grand," McMillan said. "Listen, Dolan, if you know anything—"

"I don't—not yet—but when I do, it's all yours, Captain. I'll be seeing you. Oh yes, call my wife, will you? Tell her I may be late."

Dolan took the next plane out. By nine-thirty he had checked his raincoat in a station locker and walked through the streets of the city to the hotel where Webb had ordered his bags sent. Dolan showed his badge, examined the register, and found that Webb had checked in. The man was certainly not acting suspiciously.

Terry Dolan went up to the room on the ninth floor. He listened outside the door for a moment, then knocked. There was a rather long pause before Webb opened the door. He seemed startled at the sight of Dolan.

"What in the world—" he began.

Dolan grinned at him, looked over the man's shoulder and into the room behind him. There was no one else there, but a door to the adjoining room was closed.

"The Captain sent me, Mr. Webb," Dolan said. "There were a few more routine questions, but I thought I heard a woman's voice in here."

"Nonsense," Webb snapped. "Well, go ahead with the questions."

Dolan brushed by the man and didn't stop until he was halfway into the room.

"I know I heard a woman's voice," he insisted.

"I tell you there's nobody here!"

Then a woman's voice came from behind the closed door.

"What was it, Carl? Is it safe for me to come out now?"

Webb developed a sickly grin. "Okay, so you know. My wife had her Mike. Well, a man can't live like that. I found someone I liked, too. That's why I never made much of a fuss with Irene."

"Sure, I understand," Dolan said. "I guess I've been pretty thick-headed not to have understood before."

Webb bit his lip. "I—don't like that tone, Officer."

Dolan suddenly twisted Webb around, held one arm pinned to the small of his back where it would break if he moved. He clapped his other hand across Webb's mouth.

Dolan spoke loudly. "I'm going to see who that woman is, Mr. Webb. I'm going in there."

He propelled Webb across the floor, opened the door and shoved him through it. This time the club was a whisky bottle. It was wielded by a woman wearing too much rouge—or maybe it only looked as if there was too much, for otherwise she was deathly pale. The bottle hit Webb across the head and floored him.

Dolan leaped over the fallen man. He snapped a handcuff on the woman's wrist.

"That'll be all, Irene Webb," he said. "And don't attempt to lie out of it. I know darned well you'd try to club me again, just as you did in that warehouse doorway. So I sent your husband in first this time."

It was morning when Captain McMillan arrived by plane. In the big city police station, Dolan told him the story.

“Check the Missing Persons’ Bureau,” he said, “and you’ll find a Thelma Morely missing since the night of Mrs. Webb’s supposed death. You’ll also learn that Thelma Morely lived near the Country Club where Irene and Carl Webb were attending a party, and where Carl got himself pickled. Thelma Morely left her home to take a walk. The Webbs, with Carl driving even though he was drunk, hit Thelma Morely and probably killed her.”

McMillan didn’t look too happy. “Okay, okay, I’ve guessed as far as that. The Webbs had a body to dispose of if Carl didn’t want to face a manslaughter rap. So they piled the dead woman in the car and made some plans. They could get rid of her, get out of facing a prison term, and pick up a little insurance money on the side.”

“That’s right,” Dolan said eagerly. “The amount of the insurance confused me though. Five thousand isn’t enough to risk a plan like this, so there had to be something else. When I learned Carl had been at the Country Club, had got himself drunk and driven off in that condition, it tied up with the mysterious disappearance of Thelma Morely, who had vanished not far from the road to the clubhouse. Furthermore, she about matched Irene Webb in size.”

**M**CMILLAN did an unusual thing. He handed Dolan a cigar and even held the match for it. Dolan puffed appreciatively and went on with his story.

“Then they had to rig an alibi for Carl. Irene, dressed in man’s clothes, drove the car to the waterfront and waited for a sucker to come along. That was to set the time of the supposed kill so that Carl could prove he was elsewhere. And Irene Webb donned men’s clothing because they didn’t want anyone else in on the scheme, and naturally a woman couldn’t have set the

stage because they also planned to have us chase this Mike whose identity they made up.”

“Okay—keep talking,” McMillan said grimly.

“I saw the car, saw Mrs. Webb hiding in the doorway and she lured me close and slugged me over the head. The body was already in the river, with bloodstains neatly arranged to prove it. She drove the car into that lamp post. The accident would obliterate all signs of the first accident when Thelma Morely was killed. Webb, meanwhile, alibied himself very well indeed. Mrs. Webb changed clothes somewhere and went to the city. That’s all there is to it.”

“All except how you got wise,” McMillan grunted.

Dolan chuckled. “Molly—my wife—told me. She doesn’t know it, though. Something about the affair puzzled me. I couldn’t make up my mind what it was, but when Molly put on my brogans and ran to the garage from our house, she flip-flopped all over the place. Women can’t wear men’s shoes and not run funny. It was exactly the way that figure in the warehouse doorway had run after knocking me down.

“So I guessed I had been struck by a woman, and there was no woman involved except the victim. Only a man named Mike. A purely mythical Mike, Captain. Still a woman’s corpse was found. Carl hadn’t been fooling around with women. Then I found out about Thelma Morely being missing and her description as to size tallied with that of Mrs. Webb. I found out Webb was drunk that night. The rest I guessed, but it wasn’t a bad shot in the dark. I came here—”

“Without telling me,” McMillan thundered. “I’m in charge of this case. Harness bulls don’t handle murder stuff.”

“Murder?” Dolan’s features were

purely innocent. “Oh—that. Sure, murder is your business, Captain. I don’t deny it, and I wasn’t working on any murder case. I was after Mrs. Webb who had slugged an officer while he was on duty. All I’m charging her with is assault. You can book her for murder. I just didn’t want any black mark against my record for letting myself get banged on the head by someone who got away from me. . . .”

Back in their home town, McMillan drove Dolan home from the airport. Molly was on the porch, arms akimbo again.

“A fine time to show up for dinner,” she said, in the sternest voice she could summon. It wasn’t very stern. There was too much pride in it.

Dolan gathered her in his arms. “Sure, kid.” He grinned. “I said I’d be home for dinner, but I didn’t say what day. You’re not going to make trouble because of a little technicality.”

Molly didn’t make any trouble. None at all.