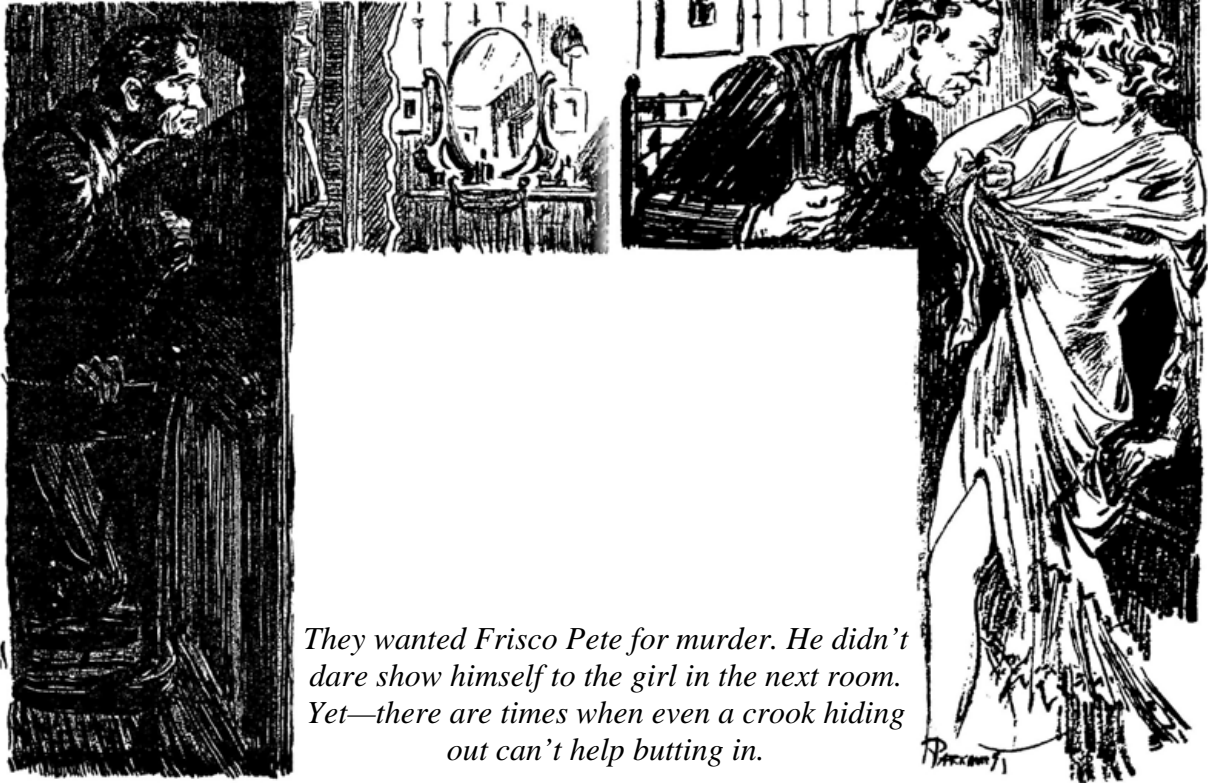


MURDERER'S BAIT

By JEROME SEVERS PERRY



They wanted Frisco Pete for murder. He didn't dare show himself to the girl in the next room. Yet—there are times when even a crook hiding out can't help butting in.

FRISCO PETE CLANCY paced the shabby little bedroom like a caged animal. God, how he hated the very sight of this joint! It was worse than being in stir!

A single unshaded electric bulb cast a sickish yellow glow upon the unkempt bed, the rickety chair, the broken-down bureau. A cockroach scuttled across the bureau-top, gorged on the grease from an emptied tin of sardines.

Sardines! Frisco Pete almost gagged. For a week, now, he'd been living on sardines and soggy crackers and tepid water from the washbowl spigot in the corner of the room. For seven days he hadn't dared venture out, for fear

the cops would spot him. And it might be another full week before things grew quiet enough for him to take it on the lam.

He cursed his luck. He cursed that damned punk of a jeweler's messenger for having been born with a tissue-paper skull. Frisco Pete hadn't conked the messenger hard enough to bump him off. Or rather, the blow wouldn't have killed an ordinary guy. But the jeweler's messenger had had an egg-shell skull. Frisco Pete's blackjack had smashed that skull like an over-ripe watermelon.

Murder! That's what it was. Frisco Pete ground his teeth in futile rage. Of all the lousy breaks! And now, here was Frisco Pete Clancy, holed up in a cheap tenement bedroom, waiting

for the roar to die down.

IT WAS hell, being cooped up this way. What good was he getting out of those damned unset sparklers? He had them in a leather pouch-belt next to the bare skin of his belly. But he didn't dare try to fence them. Stolen diamonds were easy enough to dispose of, ordinarily. But not when they'd been stolen after a murder.

Frisco Pete clenched his fists. Everything had gone haywire! The stones would have brought him ten grand, easy. And with ten grand, he could have had a hell of a gay time! Whiskey. Glad rags. Dames—

Dames like the broad in the adjoining room, for instance. She'd just moved into the joint day before yesterday. A young, red-haired bimbo who looked hard as nails.

Frisco Pete went for red-haired dames. And it had been a long while since he'd held one in his arms!

Thinking about her had caused Frisco Pete to whittle a peep-hole in the thin door that separated his room from that of the girl next to him. He tortured himself constantly by watching her through that peep-hole. Just seeing her powder her nose did things to him. Made his blood pound; filled him with raging frustration. . . .

Several times he'd been on the point of knocking on that intervening door; walking in on her. But he couldn't quite bring himself to do it. She looked like the sort who was after the dough. And Frisco Pete had no dough to offer. All he had was those damned unset sparklers, and he didn't dare flash them.

If only he could lay his hands on enough jack to pay his fare to the coast! Out there, he could fence his stolen sparklers with impunity. Again Frisco Pete Clancy cursed his luck.

Then he heard voices drifting from the next room. The red-haired jane evidently had a visitor—a man visitor.

Bitter jealousy flooded Frisco Pete's heart. What right had that red-headed floozie to entertain a man in her room when he, Frisco Pete, was all alone and starving for a woman's kisses. . . ?

"Damn them both!" Frisco Pete muttered savagely. He switched off the light in his own room, crept toward the door in which he had whittled a peep-hole.

THE red-haired girl was standing in the center of her blowsy room. She had a sleek, smooth body, generously curved, that showed plainly through her sleazy black negligee in the glaring light from her unshaded electric bulb in the ceiling.

She was wise beyond her years. It showed in her eyes. Sullen, heavy-lidded eyes that flashed scornfully and somehow fearfully at the man.

The man was big, broad-shouldered, yellow-haired. He was grinning. He said: "So you recognize me, eh, baby?"

The girl said: "Yes. You're Del Nelson, private dick."

In the darkness of the next room, Frisco Pete felt his hands getting clammy. For God's sake—the guy was a shamus! What the hell did that mean?

He watched, listened, every nerve taut and tense. The red-haired girl was saying: "You needn't think you can get heavy with me, snoop. I don't have to take any of your damned lip. You haven't got anything on me, and you damn' well know it!"

Frisco Pete saw the big, blond man take a step toward the girl; heard him say: "Baby, what's the use of handing me the run-around this way? Let's get together. I like you. I could go for you in a great big way. You've got what it takes."

The girl sneered: "Lay off! Lay off, or I'll see to it that you get a slug through your stinking guts just as sure as my name's Marie Sloane!"

Frisco Pete stirred. Her name didn't mean anything to him; but somehow he was glad to learn it. Again he glued his eye to the peephole in the door. He could see the dick reach out, catch Marie Sloane's wrists with a grasp whose pressure was so tight that the girl's fingers went white.

"Think you're a hell-cat, don't you?" the detective rasped. "Well, have another think. I'd just as soon ram my knuckles down your kisser as look at you!"

"Hard guy!" the girl tried to jerk loose.

"Sure. Hard. And tough. The toughest private snoop this side of hell. But I'm human. I like broads. Especially when they're built like you!"

In the darkness of the adjoining room, Frisco Pete felt himself trembling with rage. The big blond private detective's frigid, Arctic-blue eyes were wandering greedily over the swelling curves of the girl's figure . . .

To Frisco Pete, it was almost like seeing a play on the stage. Only this wasn't a play. This was life.

The red-haired girl was saying: "I wouldn't let you near me if you were the last man on earth!" Then her annoyer grabbed her, hauled her against himself. "Now, get this, you red-haired floozie!" he barked, "I'm making you an offer, see? A chance to get out from under the axe that's hanging over your noggin. Play ball with me and we'll both be in clover. Get goody-goody on me, and you'll wind up in the hoosegow for a nice long stretch. Take your choice."

In the darkness beyond the intervening door, Frisco Pete Clancy grew taut.

The girl's voice had a quaver in it. "Nuts to you!" she was snarling at the private dick. "You can't arrest me. You're nothing but a cheap, chiseling, private snoop. You haven't even got a badge!"

"No. I haven't. But I stand aces with the bulls at headquarters. One word from me, and

they'll haul you to the clink faster than you can whistle 'Marching Through Georgia'. You know that, kiddo."

"And I'd be out again inside twelve hours!" the girl blazed. "You can't make anything stick on me, Sherlock. You lay off me, or I'll have Charlie the Finger feed you some lead pills."

THE detective laughed raucously. "That's a joke! Maybe you didn't know it, sweetness,

but they've got Charlie the Finger where the moths won't bite him. Yeah. Your sweetie's in the can. They dusted out a cell for him this afternoon. By this time next week he'll be a number instead of a name!"

The red-haired Marie Sloane drew a sharp breath that accentuated the pouting curve beneath the black negligee. Her hand went to her heart. "You—you're stringing me!" she panted.

"Like hell I'm stringing you. The flatties put the arm on Charlie this afternoon."

"My—my God!" the girl moaned. "I didn't know—"

"Sure, you didn't know. That's why I'm here. Never mind how I found you. But I beat the bulls to the punch this time. It may be another three or four hours before they finally locate you—or maybe even a day or so. And in that time, you and I can be far, far away—with maybe forty or fifty grand in our kicks. That is, if you'll listen to reason."

Through the hole in the door, Frisco Pete could see the girl's shoulders droop; could see her red, full lips sagging at the corners. "J—just what's on your mind, Nelson?" she asked.

"I'll come clean with the whole works, sister. In the first place, I know it was your boyfriend, Charlie the Finger, who petered Doc Morrow's safe and swiped that hundred grand worth of hot stuff. Charlie left his trade-marks all over the job. Okay, so the cops collared Charlie. But they don't know where he stashed the swag. And he isn't telling."

“He wouldn’t!” the girl said proudly.

“Sure not. But I’ve got everything all figured out, girlie. It’s my guess that Charlie brought that hot stuff to you. You’ve either got it right now, or you know where it’s hidden. And it won’t be long before the bulls get that same hunch. They’ll look you up, find you, and put the arm on you.”

The girl said: “Okay. So what?” Her bravado was palpably assumed, her bluster false. Her tone carried an undercurrent of fear.

The big dick grinned. “Hell, baby—don’t be dumb. You know damned well what will happen. You’ll get the works like nobody’s business. You can’t take a third-degreeing the way Charlie the Finger can. They can push him around for a month and he’ll still keep his kisser buttoned. But you’re different. You’re a dame.”

“They—they wouldn’t dare hurt me!” Marie Sloane whimpered.

“No? Don’t kid yourself, sister. I know those rats at headquarters. First they’ll yank off your clothes—*like this!* Then they’ll grab you—*like this!* They’ll squeeze—*like this!*”

IN THE next room, Frisco Pete raged silently. The red-haired girl was wailing: “Stop! You—you ‘re hurting me.”

“Yeah? That isn’t a patch on what the coppers will do to you! They’ll maul cancers on you! Then they’ll take a red-hot poker. . .”

“Don’t touch me—you damned son of—”

“Nix, sister. Lay off the dirty names I’m just showing you what you can look forward to in case the flatties get their mitts on you.

Beyond the intervening door, Frisco Pete Clancy felt surges of anger sweeping through his veins. Del Nelson had torn the girl’s negligee until it was half open, exposing glimpses of smooth white skin. Frisco Pete watched as the girl drew together the tatters of her kimono.

And now Frisco Pete could hear Nelson saying: “Well, what about it, Marie! Do we talk

business??” The girl said: “Just—just what’s your proposition!”

“Well, to be frank, the private detective business hasn’t been any too damned hot recently. Here’s my offer. You show me where that hot stuff is hidden—I’ll take it and fence it for maybe forty grand. Then the two of us will lam for South America.”

The girl’s lips were tremulous. “Can’t—can’t you give me time to think it over?” she whispered.

“Time, hell! I want action!” The private dick stepped toward the girl. His arms pulled her so close she couldn’t move.



In the next room, Frisco Pete’s eyes widened at what followed. It was so unexpected that it almost choked the breath in his throat. He saw the girl struggling with the private detective; saw her give the big guy a sudden shove. The dick staggered backward; tripped on the worn rug. He fell. His head struck against the side-rail of the bed. He sprawled limply on the floor!

The girl wailed out a frightened cry; went to her knees. Her hand touched the guy’s hair—and when her fingers came up into the light, they were stained with thick crimson!

Like a flash, she ran to the hallway-door of her room, opened it. She stared out into the darkness. Then she returned, grabbed the fallen detective's limp form, started dragging his hulking weight out of the room.

Frisco Pete could hear her panting progress down the hallway; could hear the slithering sound of her burden being dragged along the uncarpeted length of the unlit corridor. Then, silence. . . .

A SUDDEN plan leaped full blown into his mind. He knew now that the red-haired girl was a safe-cracker's moll. He knew that she was concealing stolen valuables—valuables worth forty grand.

And what was to prevent him from glomming onto that stolen swag, taking it for himself? Then he could lam for the coast!

A crooked grin twisted Frisco Pete Clancy's lips. He went to the door, stepped out into the hallway. He walked a few steps, came to the open door of the red-haired wren's room. She wasn't back yet. Frisco Pete entered. Strode to a corner. Crouched silently. Waited.

Pretty soon he heard stealthy footsteps. He tensed. The red-haired Marie Sloane stepped into the room and closed the door behind her.

Frisco Pete walked forward and said: "Hi, baby."

The girl whirled toward him. Her face went white. "What—who—?" she gasped.

"Take it easy, sweetness," Pete said. "I'm not gonna hurt you—if you act sensible."

"Who—who are you?" the girl whispered.

"Me? My name's Clancy. I live in the next room. I heard what went on in here just now. I seen you bump off that shamus. What didja do with the carcass?"

"I—I—oh, God!" the girl moaned. "I hid it in—in a closet down the hall . . ."

Frisco Pete grinned again. "Swell!" he said. Nobody's liable to find him until tomorrow. And by that time, you and me will be on our

way."

"Wh—what do you m-mean?"

Clancy stepped close to her, touched her shoulder. "Listen, babe," he said with an oily smile. "You can trust me. I hate cops. And I know you're in hot water. I want to help you out."

"Help me . . . ? H-how?"

Frisco Pete eyed her. She had permitted the torn folds of her negligee to gape open, exposing a hint of the lyric sweep of her figure. The sight of her intoxicated him. He was hungry for kisses, for the feel of warm arms about his neck and a soft body pressed against his own . . .

"Sure I can help you!" Frisco Pete chuckled. "I can fence that stolen junk of yours; get enough dough out of it to keep you in clover a hell of a long while."

"Stolen stuff ..." the red-haired girl whispered. "Then you—you really did hear everything Nelson said to me!"

"Yeah! I heard it all. But like I said, you can trust me."

The girl surveyed him nervously; then she smiled. "I believe you!" she said. "I know I can trust you to help me." Then, in a sudden burst of generosity, she added: "I'll give you a third of whatever you can get out of the junk I'm hiding."

Frisco Pete shook his head, waved his hand in a magnanimous gesture. "Nuts, kiddo," he grunted. "I don't want no dough for helping you."

"Then—then what do you want?"

Frisco Pete shot her a meaning glance; permitted his eyes to lick over her. "Guess!"

Marie Sloane flushed and lowered her eyes. "You . . . like me a little . . . ?"

"I like you plenty! You've got me ga-ga, babe!" Frisco Pete swept her into his arms, forced her chin upward so that he could fasten his mouth against her parted, warm lips. He could feel the warm soft, curves of her body as

she locked herself against him. The blood began to pound in Frisco Pete's veins.

Then, at last, she broke away. "I—I'll get you the stuff," she whispered. "It ought to bring at least forty grand. It's worth a hundred." She went to the room's only closet, fished in a battered suitcase. She turned back toward Frisco Pete Clancy; and she bore in her hand a peculiar-looking metal box.

SHE handed it to Frisco Pete; and he was surprised at the weight of the thing. The box must have been made of thick sheet lead, with the joints carefully overlapped and sealed. Pete took it, hefted it. He said: "It's too late tonight for me to find a reliable fence, baby. I'll have to wait till a tomorrow morning, early."

The red-haired girl looked disappointed. "But—but it's dangerous to wait, now that Del Nelson is . . . dead. . . ."

Frisco Pete grunted, "You stowed away his corpse. Nobody'll find him tonight. We can wait till morning without any danger."

"But—but I d-don't want to stay h-here in this room where Nelson d-died . . ."

Frisco Pete felt a surge of elation stealing through him. "That's okay, kiddo," he said, "Come on in my room. We'll keep each other company."

"You—you won't mind?"

"Mind, hell! I can't wait!" Frisco Pete whispered. He tugged at her wrist, drew her out of her own room, hauled her into his shabby chamber. He closed and locked the door, switched on the light. He placed the girl's heavy leaden box in his bureau drawer; then he turned to her, smiling with anticipation.

"How about another kiss, sweetness?" he licked his lips.

The girl's eyes met his gaze boldly, audaciously. Her expression was challenging. "There's no barbed wire stopping you, is there, big boy?" she smiled. She swayed provocatively.

"God. . . !" Frisco Pete said as he gathered her into his arms. He pulled at the torn negligee on her shoulders, crushed her against him. He kissed her parted lips, his mouth tasted the smoothness of her throat, her shoulders. . . .

She was breathing faster. Fire was in her smouldering eyes—

A LONG time later, Frisco Pete opened his eyes. He must have dozed. He scowled. He stole a glance at the girl. Her eyes were closed. Her breasts rose and fell gently, evenly.

Pete quietly got to his feet. Everything was working out with camel's hair smoothness. Now to glom that swag out of the box which the girl had entrusted to his keeping. Then lam out of the room, leaving her still asleep and unsuspecting-Pete chuckled soundlessly as he opened the bureau drawer. His fingers fumbled silently at the catches of the queer, lead-covered box. He got it open.

The inside of the box was also of lead, heavy and solid. Within the thing, Frisco Pete found several rather large capsules, almost the size of his thumb. The capsules were of some opaque substance; Pete couldn't see what they contained. But they rattled when he shook them. Probably the capsules held unset gems of some sort, although Frisco Pete had never seen stones concealed in such fashion before. However, he had no time to waste in wondering about that. He had to move fast.

He pulled out his shirt. Next to his skin was the chamois pouch-belt in which he was carrying those other unset sparklers—the ones he had stolen from the jeweler's murdered messenger.

Now Frisco Pete took the capsules from the lead box and thrust them into the pouch-belt. Swiftly he tucked in his shirt. Very quietly he put the emptied leaden box back in the bureau-drawer. He turned, started for the door of the room. Started to make his get-away. And then—

"Where are you going?" the whisper came from the bed.

Frisco Pete whirled, muffled the curse that arose in his throat. The red-haired floozie's eyes were open, staring at him.

How much had she seen! Did she know that he had taken those capsules from the lead box? Did she suspect him of trying to double-cross her? Pete had a funny sensation at the pit of his belly—a burning feeling. He had to do something, say something. He had to allay the jane's suspicions, get her back to sleep so he could slip away without her trailing him . . .

He summoned a grin. "I was just goin' down the hall," he lied.

She got up, came toward him, put her arms around his neck. "Don't leave me. I'm scared to be left alone. I just had a dream . . ."

"A dream?" Frisco Pete humored her, although he felt a riptide of resentment flowing through him. He wanted to take her throat in his hands, throttle her; but he didn't dare. She might make a noise. Might bring somebody to see what the commotion was about.

The girl nodded as she clung to him. Yes. I dreamed I saw that private dick—Nelson—getting up out of the closet where I hid his . . . corpse. He came at me—"

Frisco Pete patted the red-haired wren's nude shoulder. "Forget it, kiddo. Dreams don't mean nothin'."

"But—but this dream was so *real!* I thought Nelson took that leaden box away from me and opened it..." The girl drew back, and her eyes were troubled. Her breasts rose and fell sharply. "The box—it is safe, isn't it?" she whispered.

"Sure it's safe. It's in the bureau drawer."

Marie Sloane grabbed her torn negligee from the bed, wrapped it around her. Then she went to the bureau, pulled the top drawer open. Looked at the heavy little box. Touched it.

FRISCO PETE held his breath. If she opened that damned thing, he was sunk. Again he

felt a burning sensation on his stomach. Maybe he'd have to kill this meddling fool after all!

She was unfastening the catches of the leaden box. Frisco Pete tensed his muscles, ready to spring at her if she made a beef. He saw her open up the lid of the box—

She whirled, and her face was corpse-white. "The capsules—gone!" she rasped harshly.

Frisco Pete set himself. His jaw jutted. "So what?" he grated. "If you make one peep, I'll bash your skull!"

"But—but—you don't understand!" the girl moaned. "You don't know what's in those capsules! It's death! *Death*, I tell you!"



Clancy stared at her. "What the hell are you gettin' at?" It was funny, the way his belly burned.

The red-haired girl said: "Can't you see! Don't you understand why the capsules were kept in a lead container!"

Frisco Pete shook his head. He was beginning to feel bewildered; and his stomach was itching, stinging. "Quit talkin' riddles!" he snarled. "Come to the point! What's on your mind?"

"*Those capsules are full of radium!*" the girl moaned. "If you've got them anywhere near

you, they'll burn all the way through your body! You'll die—horribly!”

Frisco Pete felt the blood draining from his face. Then, frantically, he pulled out his shirt, tore off the chamois pouch-belt that was next to his skin. He stared at his abdomen. Just below his navel he saw an angry red burn. It was already blistering!

“Radium—!” he gibbered. “I'm burned! I'm roasted! I'm gonna die—!”

Pain gnawed at him; fear ate at his craven heart. “You gotta do something for me!” he choked out. “You gotta—”

The girl said: “Quick! Put those capsules back in the lead box. Then come with me. I know a doctor. A radium specialist. He might help you. Maybe he can cut away the outer skin from your stomach, keep the radium from penetrating. But we'll have to hurry. . . .”

Frisco Pete was already clawing the capsules out of his discarded pouch-belt. He hurled the deadly things back into the leaden box from which he had stolen them. Now he knew why that box was made of lead. And he cursed himself for not having guessed the truth before this. Lead was the only thing that would keep radium from burning a guy. He'd read that somewhere. But he'd forgotten it—until now. Good God! He'd actually had the stuff right against his bare belly! And now he was blistered—maybe dying—!

THE girl grabbed up the leaden box, ran into her own room, swiftly donned a dress and a cheap coat. Frisco Pete followed her, snatching up his discarded pouch-belt as he pelted out of the room. The pouch-belt contained those unset sparklers he had stolen from that jeweler's murdered messenger; and he might need them.

The girl was clutching at his arm now. She was dressed. “Come on—hurry!” She was panting.

Together, they raced downstairs and out of

the house, into the late night.

There were no cruising night-owl cabs in that frowsy neighborhood. They had to hoof it. But the distance wasn't far. Only six blocks. Then they reached a dark, brown-stone-front house. The girl said: “I'll go in and tell the doctor what's wrong. I'll fix things. He . . . owes me a favor. I'm sure he'll help you . . .”

Frisco Pete moaned: “Make it snappy, for the love of God!”

The girl dashed up the steps of the house, rang the bell. Then, after what seemed hours, the door opened. The girl disappeared inside the house. Was gone maybe three minutes. Came back again. Beckoned to Pete. “Come on in!” she whispered.

Frisco Pete hurled himself into the place after her. The girl led him down a pitch-black hallway; came to a closed door. She pushed it open, and brilliant white light streamed out into Frisco Pete's agonized eyes.

He saw what seemed to be a small private surgery. There was a man standing alongside an operating-table. The man was clad in a white surgeon's smock; wore a gauze antiseptic mask over his face, concealing his features. He was tall, and his eyes were cold, icy. He looked at Frisco Pete.

“You're the man with the radium burns?” he said.

Frisco Pete nodded. “Yeah.” Then he gulped: “Doc—for God's sake can you do anything for me? Can you keep me from dying?”

“Maybe. I might peel away the burned tissue. But it's a delicate operation. It'll cost you plenty.”

“But—but I ain't got any dough . . .” Frisco Pete whispered.

“Then I'm not interested. Sorry.”

Frisco Pete's knees turned to jelly. “God—you can't let me die, Doc! You gotta help me! You gotta!”

The masked, gowned surgeon shook his

head coldly. "No money, no operation. That's that."

Then the red-haired Marie Sloane stepped forward. "Listen. You'll accept jewelry, won't you, doctor?"



Frisco Pete clutched at this straw. He said: "Yeah! That's an idea! How about it, doc? I got some sparklers." Desperately he dragged out his pouch-belt, opened it. Into his palm he spilled the unset diamonds which he had stolen from the jeweler whose skull he had bashed.

The surgeon fingered the stones. "Where did you get these!"

Frisco Pete shivered. "What difference does it make? Take 'em—and start cuttin' on me before it's too late!"

"Not unless you tell me where you got these diamonds."

"You—you won't let me die if I spill the truth, doc?"

"I won't let you die of radium burns."

"Okay!" Frisco Pete sobbed in desperation. "I conked a jewelry runner last week. I swiped 'em off his corpse after he was dead!" Sweat poured into Pete's staring eyes as he gibbered the confession. "Now start cuttin' on me!"

The masked surgeon said: "No. I'll just handcuff you instead!" And he whipped out a pair of steel bracelets, snicked them on Frisco Pete's wrists. Then he raised his voice and yelled: "Okey, boys. Did you take down his confession? Got it on the dictaphone?"

TWO uniformed coppers strode into the room. "Yeah, lieutenant. We got it all."

They grabbed Frisco Pete, pinioned him.

With widened eyes, Frisco Pete stared at the masked surgeon. The guy was removing his gauze mask. And when it was removed, Frisco Pete saw the features of—

"Del Nelson! The private dick who was bumped off in Marie Sloane's room!" Frisco Pete whispered.

Nelson shook his head. "I'm no private dick. I'm a lieutenant in the homicide squad. And I wasn't bumped off in Marie Sloane's room. That wasn't blood on my skull; it was red ink. Marie and I staged the whole scene for your benefit, Clancy. We had trailed you; we had a hunch you'd killed that jeweler's messenger and robbed him. But even if we'd found the stones on you, it wouldn't have been conclusive proof. A smart lip could have got you out of a murder rap. We had to have your own confession. So we rigged up a scheme."

"A—a scheme?"

"Yes. You see, Miss Sloane is really a policewoman—a detective. We planted her in the room next to yours. Staged our little act for you to see. And you fell for it."

"But—but that radium—and the burns on my belly—"

"There never was any stolen radium. There never was any Charlie the Finger. It was all faked. We knew you'd try to double-cross Marie Sloane and get away with the plunder you thought she had. And you walked right into our trap."

"But there musta been radium! I got the burns . . ."

“No. Last night while you were asleep, Miss Sloane put some raw mustard on you. That’s what blistered you. Mustard. It scared you into confessing you were a murderer!”

Frisco Pete turned dull, defeated eyes on the wren who had brought him to justice. “You—you let me . . . make love to you just so you could put me in the hot squat!” he mumbled.

The red-haired girl flushed. Her chin came

up defiantly. “Yes,” she said. “And I’ll tell you why I did it, you rat! The man you killed—the jeweler’s messenger—was my brother!”

Frisco Pete closed his eyes wearily. It was all over. The jig was up. Numbly he wondered if the electric chair would burn him any worse than the mustard that now blistered him.

He found out, a month later . . .