

There was nothing beautiful about the corpse in the beauty shop— but plenty that was queer. For the finger pointed to the driver of the laundry truck parked outside. And why would a laundryman make a

Delivery to the Dead

By Stuart Friedman



IT WAS 2:12 a. m. when the phone rang. At first Martha Walters didn't hear it. She sat in the old-fashioned round-backed rocker as though she would never rise. There wasn't even enough energy in her big red hands, lying quietly in her lap, to pin back a fallen strand of her gray hair. This time she

didn't know how to fight.

Then at the second peal of the bell, hope surged again, washed the dull glaze from her eyes. She hurried into the hall, snatched off the receiver.

"Missing Persons calling—" a voice said.

"Yes—"

“We haven’t found your husband. But we’ve located the truck up on Sixty-sixth Street.”

“But Joe—how about Joe?”

“We’re doing all we can, Mrs. Walters,” the voice told her reassuringly.

“But this is worse,” she cried. “If you found his truck and not Joe, it means—”

“I wouldn’t worry too much. He’ll probably turn up—”

She put the phone back, stood looking at it for a moment. Then, abruptly, she picked it up, ordered a cab.

Two minutes later Martha backed out of the front door, one arm in her coat, hat jammed on her head, her enormous purse clamped under her chin. She locked the darkened house, went down the porch steps, maneuvering into the other coat sleeve. She could imagine Joe kidding, “Take it easy, Mart.”

But for thirty-two years she and Joe had met everything together. They’d reared three kids. Young Joe was piloting a pursuit plane—somewhere. Terry was with the Marines—somewhere. And Ruth—Ruth was far out on the West Coast, recovering from a recent illness. Martha hadn’t been able to go to her.

Because after thirty years Joe was suddenly too old to handle his route. That’s what the new owners of Atlas Towel and Linen Rental Service had said.

That had been six months ago. She and Joe had gambled every penny’s savings. They’d bought a secondhand truck. They’d bought thousands and thousands of towels, tablecloths, napkins, waitress uniforms, professional smocks, jackets. Half a dozen washing machines and ironers went into their basement.

Martha had learned all over again what it was to fight. She’d spent 12 hours a day, laundering, ironing, making up the bundles for Joe’s route.

They had known what it was to work till they were too tired to talk to each other. Martha could remember those voiceless, frightened mornings when she’d been tight with fear as Joe started out, not knowing if there’d be a single customer left on the day’s route.

For Joe had to fight not only the company which had fired him. The seven other companies in the business of renting out laundered towels and linens had joined Atlas in a war to keep Joe out of the field.

They sent their bright young men trailing Joe’s truck, soliciting every customer he had managed to get. They offered free service. If a month’s free service didn’t tempt Joe’s customers, the offer went up—two months, three, six. In four cases, they went as high as a year!

Martha and Joe had borrowed money to eat on, and had matched every offer of the big companies. Some weeks, their income couldn’t buy gasoline. But they had won! People liked Joe, because he liked everybody. He was still a small-town boy, with an ear for everybody’s troubles.

Not only did he hold his new route but word got around among his old customers—from the Atlas route. Those old customers had not only flocked to him, but had of their own accord solicited new business for him!

Now every stitch of toweling, every apron, cap, and tablecloth was theirs. The legend on the side of their delivery truck – WALTERS’ SNOW WHITE TOWEL AND LINEN RENTALS—was really a banner—a banner of victory.

And now something had happened to Joe. Martha knew her going to the police station was impulsive, and would accomplish no more than waiting at home would. But she just had to go.

THE cab deposited Mrs. Walters between the dim blue lights of the station. She

walked inside, a rangy, powerful woman, and confronted the desk sergeant.

“Has Joe Walters been located? I’m his wife.”

“He’s here,” the man said. He slid an interoffice phone in front of him, spoke into it briefly, his eyes steady on her.

She stood staring, gathering questions in her mind, suddenly apprehensive at the sergeant’s expression. He had scarcely replaced the phone when a man appeared in a doorway beside the desk.

“Mrs. Walters? I’m Lieutenant Higgs. Will you come with me?”

Lieutenant Higgs turned before she could answer. She fell in step behind him. He opened a door twenty paces down the narrow hall, motioned her inside with his head. Automatically, her strong fingers tightened into the leather purse as he shut the door behind her, moved around the large flat-top desk.

“Just sit down,” he said, taking his own chair. He reached for a pencil, leaned back, rolling it lightly between his palms. “We think we’ve found your husband.”

“Think?” she said, hollowly, lowering herself to the edge of her chair. “Don’t you know?”

“He claims he’s not Joe Walters. He doesn’t know who he is,” Lieutenant Higgs said. “I’ll have him brought in, and we’ll see—”

She sat, scarcely breathing, her tensed legs holding more of her weight than the chair. It seemed an eternity before a side door was opened.

“Joe!”

He stood in the entrance, just ahead of a uniformed policeman. His white duck jacket and pants were wrinkled and grimed with dirt in a dozen places, but it was Joe. He was big and broad, with laugh crinkles edging his eyes, with thick black hair that was hardly gray at all. Martha didn’t notice in that instant his flat lifelessness, nor the fact that he didn’t

smile at her, or speak.

She rushed to him, flinging her arms around him, words swelling within her, choking out incoherently. Joe twisted, stepped back from her, his arms tight at his sides. He shook his head slowly.

“I’m sorry, Mrs. Walters. Believe me. But I am not your husband—I have never seen you before in my life.”

Martha stepped back as from a physical blow. She felt Lieutenant Higgs’s hand on her arm, heard his voice, very low.

“He has a head injury,” he said. “It has apparently produced amnesia. We found him asleep in a West End Park.”

Martha extended one hand fearfully, touched Joe.

“Joe,” she whispered. “Look at me—you got to know me.”

His eyes were vacant.

Lieutenant Higgs spoke to the policeman behind Joe. “Take him on to the hospital, Sambly . . . Now, Mrs. Walters, you may be able to help. Apparently Joe wasn’t robbed. But he was attacked. I don’t find a route sheet in his truck. Do you know his route?”

“Every inch,” she said quietly, staring at her husband’s back as he walked out with the policeman.

“Maybe you can tell what delivery he made last, then.”

IN THE GARAGE of headquarters’ basement, Martha Walters opened the rear doors of their truck, snapped on the overhead light. The rear space was piled with cloth bags, fat with the soiled returns. Farther up, behind the driver’s seat, were neat brown-paper packages of undelivered laundered supplies. She studied billing slips, then rummaged inside the bags of returns. At last she got down.

“He’d finished Sixty-fifth Street. He delivered at one stop on Sixty-sixth Street – Lornegan’s Beauty Shop in the 800 block—”

Lieutenant Higgs nodded. “Checks.

That's where we found the truck."

"But," Martha said, her eyes worried, "he didn't finish. He took in her clean towels and white uniforms, and also those for Zinn's Barber Shop, next door. Zinn was closed yesterday afternoon - Thursday - and should have left his returns with Mrs. Lornegan."

"And he didn't?" Higgs asked.

"Neither his nor Mrs. Lornegan's returns are in the truck."

"In other words," Higgs said, "he took in clean stuff, but didn't bring anything out—"

Lieutenant Higgs stopped talking abruptly. His jaw tightened as he moved past Martha. She caught her breath in sharply, for she saw it too, uncovered by her shifting the laundry bags. A small, rolled towel. A manicure towel. But the red blotch wasn't nail polish! Higgs weighed it for an instant on his palm, then took an edge, let it unroll slowly as he lifted.

A straight razor fell out. The blade was folded in the pocket, and the flat surface bone handle was clean. Lieutenant Higgs touched his nail carefully to the steel, swung the blade out. It was caked with dried blood. When he looked up, his dark eyes had retreated, and two downslashing furrows appeared at the corners of his set lips.

"Maybe Joe Walters has good reason for getting amnesia!" he said coldly. "What do you know about this Mrs. Lornegan?"

"She—she's been a good friend to us. She got several customers for Joe," Martha said faintly.

"Know where I can get in touch with her this time of night?"

"She lives back of her shop, alone."

Back in Higgs's office Martha stood uneasy, as the lieutenant dialed Mrs. Lornegan's number. As seconds ticked by without answer, a cold dread welled inside her. Lieutenant Higgs watched her narrowly. He lowered the mouthpiece under his chin.

"She lives alone, you said. Widow?"

"Divorcee. That's what Joe said. I never met her. Her husband was a dope fiend."

"Chummy, giving her life history to the laundryman," Higgs said slowly. "How old a woman?"

"In her thirties."

He slammed the receiver. "Well, she doesn't answer."

"Maybe—maybe," Martha said, clearing her throat, "Mr. Zinn would know. He's her neighbor—the barber."

Zinn answered almost at once.

"Lieutenant Higgs of the police calling. We're trying to locate Mrs. Lornegan." He glanced up at Martha. "We've reason to believe something may have happened to her."

Martha and the lieutenant waited, watching each other in silence.

"All right," Higgs said at last. "Call me back immediately."

He cradled the phone, reached absently for a pencil on the desk, leaned back.

"He can't rouse her. She should be in. Zinn is going after Mr. Mill, who owns the building, and get a key," Higgs explained. "About what time would your husband have delivered the towels to Mrs. Lornegan?"

"Between two-thirty and three. There's three deliveries at that stop—hers and Zinn's and the druggist's, Mr. Mill."

"The same Mill that owns the building?"

Martha nodded, backed to the chair, sat down heavily. "There's only three storerooms. And they all have living quarters back of their stores."

Higgs began studying the pencil between his hands.

"How's your personal life, Mrs. Walters?"

She gathered her big body forward, bristling. She grasped one end of her purse, brought the edge of it down on the desk. "Joe was my man. He never had a reason not to be!"

"It's been my experience," Higgs said, still watching the pencil, "that men don't forget unless they *want* to."

"No," Martha said. "No! Mrs. Lornegan was his friend—our friend. Joe was hit on the

head—”

Higgs snapped forward, caught up the phone as it started to ring. Martha watched his face, saw the furrows pull the corners of his tense mouth, saw the muscles of his tense face go rigid.

“She’s dead. Throat slit from ear to ear. Murdered!” Higgs said.

LIEUTENANT HIGGS drove at the head of the flying procession of official cars toward Sixty-sixth Street, his face a quiet mask. Martha sat facing him diagonally, dividing her worried glances between him and the back seat. In the dark, Joe showed only as an indistinct space of muted white, jammed as he was between two detectives. But she could feel the very tenseness of his body, share the helplessness. The police had turned threatening, brutal now.

Sixty-sixth Street was a neighborhood business section, clean and still in street light and occasional neon signs. Lieutenant Higgs slowed in the middle of the 700 block, veered toward the curb, banked into it fifty feet beyond the next corner.

Two men waited on the broad sidewalk before Lornegan’s Beauty Parlor. It was the center store in a flat one-story square structure, flanked on the corner by Mill’s Family Drugstore, and on the left by Zinn’s Barber Shop. Higgs got out, went around the front of the police car.

“Who is Zinn?” Lieutenant Higgs asked the two men.

“I’m Boris Zinn,” one said in a deep, soft voice.

“You were up when I called,” Higgs accused. “How well do you know—or did you know, Mrs. Lornegan?”

“Well enough,” he said slowly, “to love her.”

Boris Zinn was tall, bony, with a massive head. Deep socketed eyes and hollow cheeks gave him a melancholy appearance. He was wearing the white duck pants of his trade, and

a red sweater, with its collar rolled up behind his ears.

“I was not up when you phoned,” Zinn added. “Ellen’s—Mrs. Lornegan’s phone bell woke me.”

Higgs turned away, watched as photographers, sketch men, fingerprint specialists, and other detectives unloaded from a couple of cars. He turned his attention to Joe as the men brought him out. Martha touched her husband briefly.

“Joe—Joe, you’ve got to remember. Here’s Mr. Zinn, and Mr. Mill—”

Ralph Mill, the druggist, took a step nearer Joe, craned at him, blinked his colorless eyes nervously behind glasses.

“Why, it’s Joe Walters! What’s wrong with you, Joe? Didn’t get my jackets and towels yesterday. And how come you walked right by me and wouldn’t speak, eh?”

“What time was that?” Higgs said quickly.

“Time?” Ralph Mill said. He regarded Higgs, his body very stiff, his lids fluttering. “Two till four. Exactly.”

“We’ll come back to that,” Higgs said. “All right, boys, bring Walters inside.”

Higgs strode across, opened the door to Lornegan’s Beauty Parlor. He switched on the lights, stood aside waiting for the other detectives to enter.

Martha took in a deep breath as Joe’s two guards started forward with him. She noticed, and glancing up quickly, saw that Lieutenant Higgs in the doorway noticed too that Joe pulled back. Not hard. Not even obviously to one who wasn’t watching for it. She and Mill and Zinn entered the little shop last.

All of them crowded into the small waiting room, with its round wicker table and pair of matching chairs. Lieutenant Higgs slipped through the white-curtained partition into the modest shop beyond. Martha leaned against the wall, faintly nauseated at the odd odor permeating the confined space. Higgs thrust his head out.

“Stand Walters right here, front of the

curtain.”

Boris Zinn had his arms thrust straight down, his knobby fists clenched. Ralph Mill adjusted his glasses, then clasped his hands tight together, shot quick nervous glances at the detectives. They stood Joe face to the curtain.

Lieutenant Higgs suddenly flung the curtain back in a noisy clatter of the rings above. Joe wasn't the only one to jerk.

Ellen Lornegan was on her back. The white starched uniform, badly stained from the waist up, contrasted violently with the blackish-purple encrustation which made a monstrous pattern on the linoleum. She had been slim and fair, with a profusion of flame colored hair. It was matted to the floor. Her arms formed parentheses about her head, as though she had reached up, or back of her, in that last desperation. Her fingernails were clawed into her palms. A ghastly wound half severed her throat.

JOE'S body shuddered violently. Lieutenant Higgs leaned toward him. “Come outa that act—you! You came in here and killed this woman. You knew you'd be caught. So you thought fast, slugged yourself on the head, tried to cram the amnesia gag down my throat. Snap out of it. You'll hang anyway.”

“I never saw her. I never saw her. Never!”

“Why did you kill her? Why? Tell me why? She was your friend. She got business for you. Were you in love with her? Answer me, damn you!”

Joe Walters yanked violently against the detectives at his side. They snapped around, pinioned him tighter.

“Martha Walters is framing me to protect her husband,” Joe cried frenziedly. “She's hiding him. Find the real Joe Walters!”

“The act stinks,” Lieutenant Higgs said contemptuously. “You came in this shop before 3 p. m. You walked past Mill's

drugstore about four. Why were you in here an hour, Walters?”

“I was never here!”

“I should know Walters,” Ralph Mill said, his nervous eyelids moving incessantly. He stepped forward, his rigid body moving oddly, like a marionette's. “That's Walters.”

Boris Zinn, the gaunt barber, cleared his throat, spoke slowly.

“That is Joe Walters, of course. “I know him well.”

Martha moved forward abruptly, thrust by the detective at Joe's left to where she could see her husband's face.

“Joe,” she begged. “Look at me. Remember! You must remember what happened. You hear, Joe?” Martha felt herself grow rigid as their eyes met. Then tears welled up hotly, leaving her throat dry. There was none of the warmth and laughter that had been Joe—only the mindless fright of a trapped animal, completely at the mercy of the police.

Lieutenant Higgs turned, opened the door in back of him. He switched on lights, revealing Ellen Lornegan's living quarters.

“Bring Walters,” he said, facing them. “Zinn and Mill and Mrs. Walters, come back here too. Sergeant, get these men to work. Let me know when the coroner comes.”

Martha watched them lead Joe around the body, through the door. She waited as the barber and Mill edged around the late Mrs. Lornegan. For an instant she wanted to give way to the surge of tears. She and Joe had become so nearly one that his helplessness drew the strength out of her. Then she squeezed her eyelids together, swiped at them with the back of her hand, and clamped her lips.

Higgs was occupied at a small writing desk in a corner of the intimate, gayly furnished room, when Martha closed the door after her. For several silent minutes he studied the pages of a ledger. Then he flipped it shut, got to his feet, and paced slowly. Finally he

focused his gaze on Zinn, standing uneasily alongside a radio cabinet.

"You loved her," he said. "She love you?"

"She said she did," Zinn said.

"How about her first marriage? Where is this Lornegan? She ever see him?"

"No!" Zinn said, his deep voice raised slightly. "She hated him. He was a dope addict."

"You must be an honest man," Higgs said tightly, "because you don't lie worth a damn!"

"All right," Zinn said, the hand on the radio closing into a fist. "He was here, passing through from Florida. He stopped at Mill's drugstore, and saw the name Lornegan on her shop. He stopped in to say hello."

"In my store, Zinn?" Mill said. "When?"

"Day before yesterday. He was the fellow in the flashy cream colored coupe," Zinn said peevishly.

"I believe I did see it parked across the street. I didn't see who drove it. Matter of fact I only saw the hood. Had a Florida license plate, didn't it?" Mill said.

"Yes."

MILL stared at the barber for a long moment, his lips moving soundlessly. Then his eyelids began blinking swiftly. "That car wasn't here day before yesterday, Zinn. It was yesterday. Just after Joe Walters passed me without speaking. That would be at four o'clock."

"Thought you weren't in your shop yesterday, Zinn," Lt. Higgs snapped.

"I wasn't! I was in town. I saw that car day before."

"A barber in love," Higgs said thoughtfully. "A razor for a murder weapon. . . Tell me, if it was your day off, why didn't you have a date with your lady love in the evening? Or why did you see her at all last night when you got home?"

"It was late. Ellen had appointments till about nine o'clock. When I got home at midnight, her lights were out. I didn't bother

her," Zinn said, his deep voice hoarse. "Ten people at least can vouch that I was with them from about noon till after seven. We have a symphonic record club. We listen to music, then dine every Thursday—"

Higgs returned to the small writing desk, consulted the ledger. "Who is Lea Herver?" he said. "She had an appointment for a manicure at two-thirty. There were appointments every half hour from then on till nine o'clock. But Lea Herver's is the last one checked off. Anyone know her?"

Mill nodded his head jerkily. "She was in my store about ten of three. Said she'd just come from the beauty shop."

Martha Walters spoke suddenly, shifting her eyes from Joe, seated between detectives on a lounge. "Wait—Joe came in here before three—or should have. He didn't come out till just before four. But how about the appointments Mrs. Lornegan had at three and at three-thirty?"

"How about them?" Higgs asked.

"They aren't checked off. The women didn't get their work done. Why not?" Martha said, stopped. Her face compressed into a frown, and she worked her fingers in and out of the leather of her purse.

"Because Joe Walters was in here with her—the door locked," Higgs said. "Maybe they had a date—got in a fight—"

"Bah!" Martha bellowed. "She wouldn't have made those appointments if she was going to have a rendezvous. And if Joe came in to kill her—which he didn't because he didn't have any reason—but just say he did. Well, he'd have got out right away, not waited an hour.

"I say Mrs. Lornegan was dead when Joe came. The killer was behind the curtain that cuts the shop off from the waiting room. He heard Joe, lurked there, hit him over the head as Joe started through the curtain—"

Martha suddenly turned to Mill. "Mr. Mill, did you see Joe leave the beauty shop? Did he stop, or anything?"

"I saw him. He just walked out, slammed the door, came toward me without speaking—like a man pursued—"

"All right!" Martha said, nodding vigorously. She walked to the desk, ran her finger down the ledger. "Mrs. Toby had an appointment at four o'clock. The door was unlocked then, because Joe had left it without locking it. It takes a key, and he didn't stop. Mrs. Toby had an appointment at the same time Mr. Lornegan's car was seen parked. She could have come in the shop. If she did, why didn't she report the death, if Mrs. Lornegan was dead then?"

"Think that's the coroner," Higgs said, moving to the door. "I'll find out the time of death close as I can."

MARTHA sat at the little writing desk, going over the beauty shop appointment books and master records of customers as Higgs went out. She checked several times, but the name of Mrs. Toby appeared nowhere except for the four o'clock appointment. All the other women's names were listed with addresses and phone numbers. Apparently Mrs. Toby wasn't a regular customer.

"Mr. Zinn, did you ever hear of the name Toby?" she asked.

"Only Ellen's husband's name—Toby Lornegan."

Lt. Higgs had returned, stood in the open door listening without speaking. Then he slammed the door, stood facing one after the other.

"Mrs. Toby. Toby Lornegan. But Mrs. Lornegan was dead before that four o'clock appointment. The coroner confirms it. Walters, you'd better talk."

The silence was unbroken. Joe's lips opened and he shook his head. He kept shaking it, helplessly, his eyes raised to the lieutenant. Higgs shrugged.

"Take him downtown," he said dispassionately.

Martha just stood for several seconds after Joe had gone, trying to control the emotion that threatened to rack her big body with sobs. She heard Higgs talking to Zinn and Mill, then Higgs phoning. She turned to watch him, her eyes stark.

Lt. Higgs cradled the instrument, then sat back, toyed with a pencil on the desk. Martha saw the rigid little druggist blinking fascinatedly at him from behind glasses. Zinn had crossed to stand by Higgs. The big barber's hands were in constant motion, his fingers stretching, knotting into fists over and over.

"Lieutenant," Zinn said, at last, "I think you should find Toby Lornegan."

"It's the call I'm waiting for," Higgs said, arching a look up at the barber. "This case isn't closed. I've got hours of checking to do—including some alibis. You didn't like Lornegan's visit to his wife, did you?"

"I'd have killed him," Zinn said. "Once, under the influence of his dope he struck her—so hard she was laid up for weeks—"

The phone cut him off. Higgs took it up.

"Registered at the Bleigh Hotel two days ago? Mr. and Mrs. Toby Lornegan of Miami Beach? Okay," Higgs said.

"Do you want us any more tonight?" Mill asked.

Lt. Higgs shook his head as he replaced the phone. "Go back to bed. Both of you. Mrs. Walters, I'll take you home."

Martha stared ahead as Higgs drove toward town.

"Could her husband have done it?" she said, her voice hushed. "Or maybe the second wife? I know Joe didn't, lieutenant. I just know. Even out of his head he wouldn't—"

"We'll see," Higgs said tightly. "You do as I said—identify the second Mrs. Lornegan—or Mrs. Toby as the woman you saw enter the beauty shop at four yesterday. I think we'll find the real motive for the kill if we can scare the wits out of her and her husband."

Lt. Higgs pulled to a stop half a block from the Bleigh Hotel. He glanced at his watch, then sat waiting. They waited ten minutes.

“Why don’t we go in?” Martha ventured finally.

“We will,” he said. “I just wanted to make sure there was plenty of time for the murderer to contact Toby Lornegan. Let’s go, now.”

HIGGS led the way from the elevator to the door of the second floor suite. A frail, black-haired girl in a flowered housecoat opened the door after a long time. Higgs had a Police Special in one hand.

“This the woman?” he asked.

“Yes,” Martha said. “I saw her enter Lornegan’s Beauty Parlor at four o’clock yesterday.”

“Why, sister?” Higgs said, his eyes hard on the girl as he slipped the door closed behind him. “Did you just go for a look at your hubby’s ex, or are you on the dope, too?”

“No. I don’t take dope. Honest. I just wanted to see her. He was always talking—” she said. Martha watched her closely. The girl’s hands clenched at the folds of her housecoat. Her eyes were enormous, and she kept wetting her lips. Then Martha saw something. One of the girl’s hands unclenched, and one finger pointed across her body.

Instinctively Martha’s eyes moved in the direction of the pointing finger. Higgs saw, too, and the next question stopped in his throat. The door leading to the other room of the suite opened a slit. A gun barrel was trained on the girl from that opening.

“Come out of there, Lornegan!” Higgs yelled suddenly.

The second Mrs. Lornegan suddenly broke into a hysterical scream.

“I can’t stand it. He’ll kill me, too. I can’t stand it! He killed Toby—”

Martha lunged forward, her big shoulders catching the girl’s slight body. They spilled to

the floor together a flash before the thunderous sound of a shot. Higgs’s jaw hardened. His own gun spoke three times, splintering the panel of the door to the other room. A shrill cry of pain cut through the suite. Higgs ran to the smashed door.

Higgs stood trembling as Martha entered the next room. Toby Lornegan lay shot in the bed. By the door at Higgs’s feet Ralph Mill sat sobbing, a bullet hole gashed in his side.

“Double kill,” Higgs said grimly. “I didn’t count on this, though. I didn’t think he’d kill Lornegan, too. He was a scared man, this dope peddler.”

“Dope?” Martha asked. “Mr. Mill a dope peddler?”

“Maybe part of a ring,” Higgs said swiftly. “Remember, Lornegan, a confirmed addict, went to Mill’s drugstore his first day in town. When the dead Mrs. Lornegan saw the two together she was suspicious. She probably snooped around the building. Mill caught her, and realized she hated narcotics too much to accept a bribe or keep quiet. He had to kill her.

“So he spied on her from her own apartment. He owned the building, could get in her back door. At the first lull between customers, he killed her. But at that moment, Joe Walters came in with his delivery. Mill was frantic. He didn’t want Joe to recognize him. So he hid behind the curtain where Ellen’s body was. Just as Joe was about to draw the curtain open, Mill hit him on the head. Joe collapsed, and when he later came to, had amnesia.

“Mill was smart. He knew Zinn, the barber, was in love with Ellen, and would therefore be suspected. But Zinn was gone, and would have a legitimate alibi. That’s why Mill had used a razor. He then hid the weapon in Walters’ truck, not to frame Joe, but to make it look as though Zinn was framing Joe.

“Mill was clever enough to realize a razor was too obvious a weapon for a barber to use. But, remember, this kind of killing doesn’t go

by the rules. The razor in the truck made it look—or so Mill hoped—as though Zinn had lost his head.”

“Lieutenant,” Martha asked, “how about Joe’s amnesia?”

“It’s not always permanent—and the city

has the best docs in the world. Don’t worry too much.”

“I’ve done all the worrying I got time for,” she said with a sad smile. “Meanwhile, I got a truck route to keep going!”