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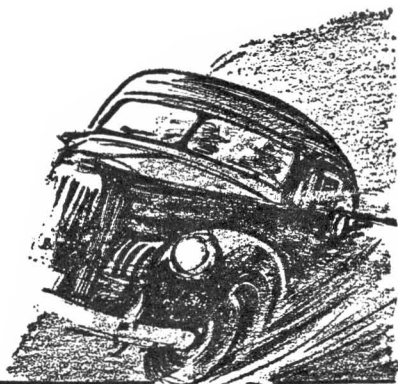
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By DAY KEENE

*When tough Tom Doyle contracted to help nice old Mrs. Clancy find her lost grave, he was signing up for a death-race against the police department, the D. A.'s office, a crooked detective agency, and every blood-hungry mobster in town—not to mention the dead that rest uneasily in their coffins!*



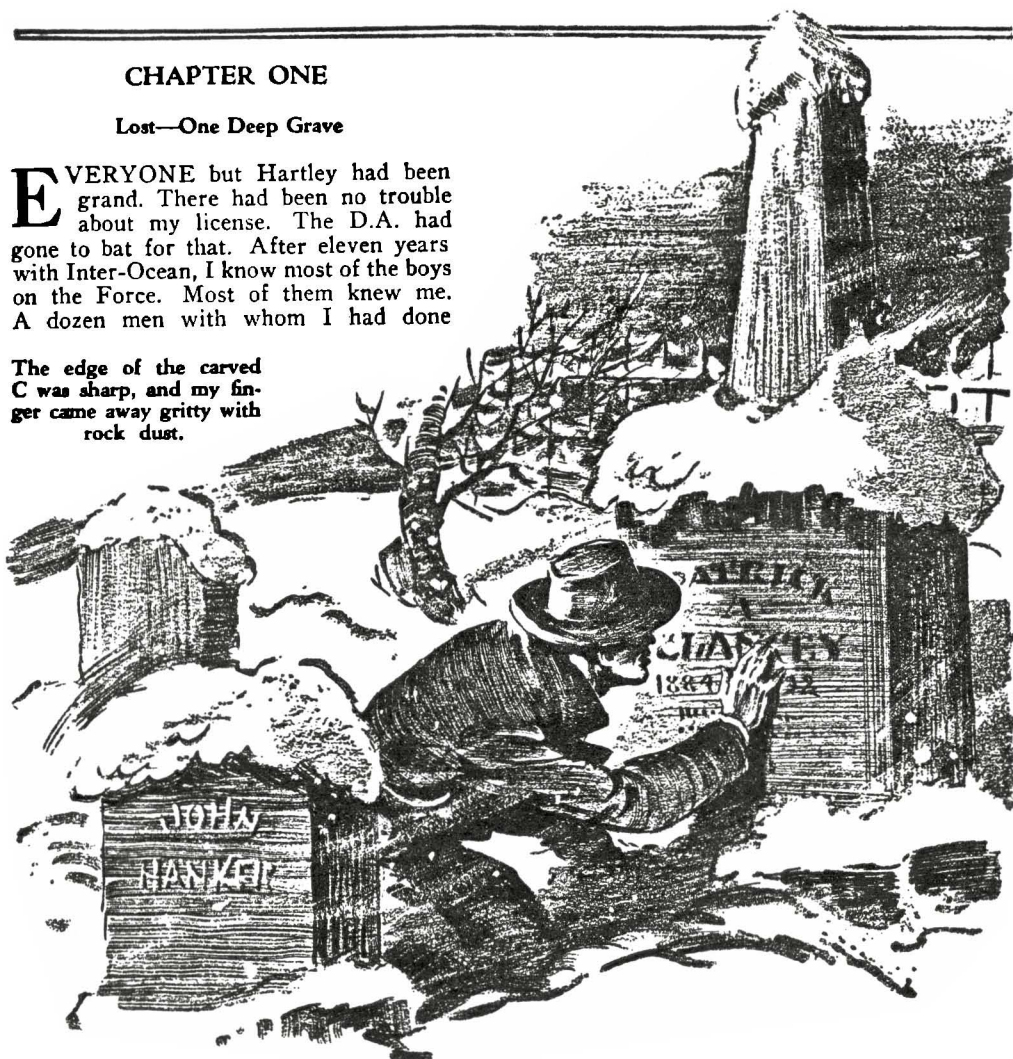
## Brother, Can You

### CHAPTER ONE

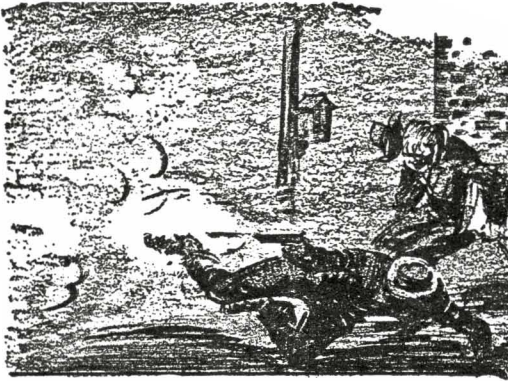
#### Lost—One Deep Grave

**E**VERYONE but Hartley had been grand. There had been no trouble about my license. The D.A. had gone to bat for that. After eleven years with Inter-Ocean, I know most of the boys on the Force. Most of them knew me. A dozen men with whom I had done

The edge of the carved C was sharp, and my finger came away gritty with rock dust.







## Spare a Grave?



*MRS.  
PATRICK  
CLANCEY*



business had promised me their crime. I had an office, a secretary, and a rep.

I should have been sitting on top of the world. I wasn't. My name had been on the door for two weeks and this was my first client.

Sue towed her into the inner office. "Mrs. Patrick Clancey . . . Tom Doyle," she introduced us. She flipped open her shorthand pad and winked at me. "It seems that Mrs. Clancey has lost her grave."

"She what?"

"I've lost my grave," the old lady told me fiercely.

I've handled a lot of cases, mostly grand larceny and murder, but this was the first of its kind that I had encountered.

"Would you please repeat that?" I said.

"I've lost my grave," she told me.

"You have advertised for it?" Sue asked her soberly, her pencil poised over her pad.

The old lady turned on her hotly. "Shame to you." She raised a plump white hand. "Now begone an' lave me alone to talk wid your boss or I'll be taking the flat of me hand to where your snuggies fit the tightest."

She meant it. Sue blushed and left the office. I was disappointed.

I offered a chair to Mrs. Clancey. She was between sixty-five and seventy. Her hair was snow white and neatly coiffured. Her clothes, if not expensive, were tasteful and in keeping with her age. Her face was unlined.

Her cheeks had had polished red apple gleam that some few old people's cheeks have. Her eyes were blue and unfaded. A thick old fashioned gold wedding ring gleamed dully on the plump hand that she had raised.

"Okay," I said. "Let's have the story."

It wasn't what I thought at all. In 1913 she and her husband had purchased an eight-grave lot in Maplewood Cemetery. Her husband and six of their children had been buried in it. She had believed the lot to have been paid for in full. The last five years she had spent in Florida. On her return she had visited the cemetery to find the eighth grave occupied—by a stranger.

I COPIED the name on the pad that she had copied from the headstone on the intruder's grave. It was Stan Wolkowysk. The girl in the office of the cemetery would give her no satisfaction except to tell her that the lot never having been fully paid for, the eighth grave had been sold to make up the balance due on the contract.

It didn't sound legal to me. I said so. "And what you want me to do," I suggested, "is to—"

"Get that man out of my grave," she broke in hotly. "I've a right to sleep me last sleep with Pat. And Mr. Wolkowysk is going to get out of me bed if I have to dig him up myself."

I told her that I didn't think that would be necessary. "Of course," I put on the bite, "there'll be—"

"Expenses," she said shrewdly. She took a roll of bills from her purse. There may have been some twenties. Most of them were fifties and one hundreds. She counted out ten fifties on my desk. "And the back of my hand to that poor stick of a Mr. Hartley who wouldn't even listen to—"

"Then you went to Inter-Ocean first?" I asked her.

"That I did," she answered. "And Mr. Hartley wouldn't even listen to me story. He treated me like I was mad and suggested that I see you. He said that you were the best detective and trouble shooter in the city."

I grinned. Inter-Ocean took no charity cases. They passed them on to some poor devil like myself who was scratching for a living. Only this time, Hartley had swindled himself by not hearing the old lady out.

She eyed the money, her thumb poised over the roll. "Five hundred will be enough?"

I told her that it would be sufficient, at least for the time being, wrote her name, hotel, and room number on my pad and bowed her out of the door of the inner office.

"Don't worry about a thing," I assured her. "I'll have your grave back in two days."

She took my hand and pressed it. There

was a suspicion of tears in her eyes. "'Tis comforting to know," she said simply.

Sue heard the door close and came in. "Well, did you find her grave?" she asked dryly.

I tossed her the bills and told her to deposit them to my account as I lifted my skimmer from the peg.

"Mi Gawd!" she gasped as she thumbed them.

"More," I grinned, shrugging into my coat, "I've learned how to handle you. All that I have to do is—"

She pulled her skirt tight. "You just dare try to!" she dared me.

\* \* \*

Maple wood is on the outskirts of the city but inside the corporate limits. I stopped the car in front of the wrought-iron gates and looked it over.

The Army had taken over the acreage just across the railroad tracks that border the cemetery on the west and turned it into a motor park.

Huge searchlights had been rigged on poles. There was a noisy coming and going of trucks. Alert sentries, their collars turned up against the cold, paced the boundary line.

I drove in through the gate and a bell began to toll. I hoped that it wasn't symbolic. I parked in front of the office and told the girl at the desk who I was and what I wanted.

She admitted, "We've been afraid that there would be trouble ever since Mrs. Clancey was here. You wait. I'll call Mr. Cook, the manager of the Association."

I knew his type as soon as I saw him. He was a smooth worker who would stay inside the law but who could talk a widow into signing up for an eight grave lot as the best possible investment for the deceased's insurance money before she could say "perpetual care."

I gave him my business card.

"It's a mess," he admitted frankly. "But I'll be damned if it's our fault. In the first place we were informed that Mrs. Patrick Clancey had died two years ago in Lakeland, Florida. In the second place, the Association didn't sell the grave. It was sold by a smart young punk here in the office who knew that we had written it off the books and saw a chance to make himself a quick fifty."

I asked to see the punk.

"Hell. We fired him two months ago for dipping into the petty cash. But we didn't know about this lot deal until Mrs. Clancey came out here yesterday and raised hell."

"And Wolkowysk was buried when?"

The girl looked up the records. "In June of this year," she said. "That's," she counted on her fingers, "four, five months ago."

"So?" I demanded of Cook.

He shrugged. "So we'll do what's right. We'll move him. I'll even donate a grave. But you'll have to get an exhumation order from the D.A.s office and also written permission from Wolkowysk's mother. I called her last night and told her what had happened."

"And?"

"She cursed me in Polish for twenty solid minutes. All that she said in English was 'No!'"

I asked for her address and the girl wrote it down on a card. "She bought the lot from this punk?"

Cook shook his head. "I can't tell you that. We have no record of the transaction. I didn't even know that the lot had been sold until yesterday."

I tossed the card back to the girl. "Give me the punk's name, too," I told her. "Also his last known address."

She looked at Cook. He nodded and she wrote—

*Clarence Freeman  
4821 W. Division St.*

"You'll try," Cook added as I put the card in my wallet, "to handle this with as little unfavorable publicity as possible, won't you, Doyle?"

I told him that I would. As an afterthought I asked for the location of the Clancey lot.

**I**T WAS almost on the west border of the cemetery. The sentry patrolling the motor park gave me a dirty look as I brushed the snow from an expensive hunk of carved granite to read the names.

The space under 'Mother' was bare. 'Father' was filled with—

**PATRICK A. CLANCEY**  
1884—1932

Under it were the names, Terrence, Aloysius, John, Mary, Sarah, and Baby Maureen.

To one side of the larger monument was a small, cheap headstone with the name Stan Wolkowysk chipped in it and under a glass inset a picture of a husky looking lad who wasn't Irish.

The sentry had stopped to stare at me.

"Don't let 'em creep up on you, soldier," I kidded.

He forgot General Order No. 7 long enough to thumb his nose. "Nuts to you, wise guy."

By the time I got back to the car it was beginning to grow dark. I went to see Mrs. Wolkowysk first. I didn't expect to have trouble. I had it.

She lived in an old frame two story house on Clybourne Avenue that did a Gilda Gray

every time a street car passed. A long flight of stairs led up from the street. Mrs. Wolkowysk opened the door a crack but didn't invite me in. She was a big, raw-boned woman with work reddened hands and tired eyes. The law had called on her before. She had me spotted for a copper before I could open my mouth.

"What John do now?" she demanded.

"I wouldn't know that," I told her. "It's Stan that I want to talk about."

She brushed back a lock of dank hair. "No," she said flatly. "I tell the man no last night. It not good to move when you die. Stan stay where he is."

I tried to get into the hall. It was no dice. She kept me standing in the cold while she talked through the crack of the door. I talked for fifteen minutes. I pointed out Mrs. Clancey's feelings and appealed to her as one mother to another. I promised her fifty bucks cash and a new stone for Stan with two angels and a harp.

When I mentioned the angels she weakened. Then she said, "No," and slammed the door in my face. I still was banging on it when a lad of about nineteen drove up in a big new car and came up the stairs. He was squat, and blond, and bad—a dead ringer for the lad on the stone.

"What gives, chum?" he demanded.

I asked, "You're Stan's brother? You're John Wolkowysk?"

He said, "So what!"

"So listen."

I sold him the bill of goods.

"Sure. For fifty bucks I'll square it with ma," he said when I had finished. "What difference does it make where a guy is planted? Look. You come back tomorrow, Mister, about this same time."

I gave him a ten spot to bind the deal, and nodded at his car. "A pretty neat job."

"Yeah." He evaded my eyes. "It belongs to the guy I drive for." He wanted suddenly to be rid of me. "Look. You come back tomorrow, Mister."

I filed the numbers on the car's plates away from force of habit. Wolkowysk stood watching me from the porch.

"By the way," I called. "Who bought that grave for your brother?"

The young Pole shook his head. "I said I'd see that he was moved. Wise up. Play smart, Mister. Just let it go at that."

He went into the house and slammed the door. I pointed my own car west. There was something in this mess that smelled. I was beginning to have a hunch it was the dead man.

I hadn't gone twenty blocks from the house when a big car came up from behind and curbed me. It was either pull over and stop or take a chance on blowing two tires. I

swung to the curb in front of the high board fence of a lumber yard and sat with my hand on my gun.

A lad got out of the other car, leaving one lad at the wheel, and one in the back seat. It was too dark to see any of their faces clearly.

"If it's dough, I'm flat," I told the big lug who stuck his head in the window.

He looked at the gun in my hand and hesitated. "Okay. Let's just talk business," he said. "Who's hired you to dig up Stan?"

I was beginning to get sore. "No one. I guess I'm just a ghoul at heart," I told him. "Now pull your head back through that window or I'll plug you right smack through the teeth as sure as my name is Tom Doyle!"

He scowled and looked around at the car behind him for instructions.

"Doyle. Tom Doyle!" a familiar voice from the car said sharply. "Why the hell didn't somebody say it was Doyle? Come on, you fool! Get out of there or he'll do just what he says he will!"

Wolf-tooth backed out unwillingly. "Okay. So long for now, chum," he said in parting. "But forget all about moving Stan Wolkowysk. Or we'll be seeing you—later."

## CHAPTER TWO

### Red-point Sacrifice

**T**HE big car backed a few feet to clear my fender, then roared on down the street. I lighted a cigarette and sat trying to place the voice. When I had it, I moved on. If the man who had been in the car was the man whom I believed him to be, I had muscled in on something big. Dennis Corbin didn't play for peanuts.

More, there was no need for immediate worry. If I was to be mowed down, Corbin wouldn't be sitting in a car five feet away. He'd be playing pinochle with six judges or kissing the prize baby at some church social.

I stopped at the drug store on the next street car intersection and made a phone call.

"No," a polite voice informed me. "Mr. Corbin is not in. Whom shall I inform him phoned?"

I said that it didn't matter, hung up, dropped another nickel, dialed the Detective Bureau and asked for Lieutenant Nobby's extension.

"This is Doyle, Harry," I told him. "Look. What have you on the books against one Stan Wolkowysk, four or five months deceased?"

He said that there wasn't a thing. Wolkowysk had never even been booked. . . .

The number on West Division proved to be a rooming house in a not bad section of town. I leaned on the bell and waited. If there was a key to the picture, this punk Clarence

Freeman should have it. I rang once more.

An old man opened the door and cupped one hand to his ear.

I said loudly, "I want to see Clarence Freeman."

"Oh. You want to see Clarence," he said. He held the door open. "Come in. He must be in some kind of trouble. One plainclothes man just went up stairs. What are you, another copper?"

He cupped his hand to his ear again. I nodded and let it go at that.

I walked up stairs wondering who the other dick was and if he was a district hack or one of the boys from down town. As I made the bend on the second floor a pert little blonde struck her head out a door and smiled.

"Were you looking for someone, dearie?"

"Yeah. I'm looking for Clarence," I told her.

She said, "Swish!" and slammed the door.

I started up the next flight.

The door at the head of the stairs was closed. I rapped on it.

"Yair?" a man's voice demanded.

"Tom Doyle of the Doyle Agency," I called. "And whenever you're through with the lad, I wouldst have words with Clarence."

"The door's open. Come in," he invited.

I opened the door and stepped in. A slim, black-haired youth in trousers and undershirt was lying on the bed. He didn't move as I entered.

"What gives—" I began, then ducked as the lights of the room blacked out and a sap swished down where my head had been.

I came up with my gun in my hand. But the man in back of the door had moved. As I blasted into the wall, he swung the sap from behind me and the gun jumped out of my hand. I dove for it, got it, and rolled, emptying the rest of the clip.

All of them didn't miss. I heard him suck in his breath with pain. There was a moment of absolute silence while I fumbled for a fresh clip. I had it in my fingers when he realized that my gun was empty and jumped me.

Down on the floor below, I could hear the little blonde screaming but no one attempted to interfere. First he rode me across the floor, then I rode him, beating at his head with my gun butt.

He was big and a clever fighter. Also a dirty one. He twisted and squirmed and arched, the sap in his hand never still. I got to my feet and he tripped me. Before I could get up again, the sap connected.

Everything was suddenly fine. Fists ceased to batter at me. The shadows of the room turned to sunbeams and I was dancing in a green meadow. It didn't last long enough. I was as suddenly tired of dancing. A cold wind began to blow. Then the room turned black

again. The last thing that I remembered was a glass crash and a distant shrill tooting of whistles.

When I came to, the room was filled with uniforms.

Jim McCarny of the Division Street Station prowl car helped me to my feet. "You hurt internally or something?" he demanded.

I asked him how the hell he expected me to know. Outside of being sick to my stomach, the lump in my jaw where the sap had connected, and a splitting headache, I felt fine.

I walked over to the bed. The slim, black-haired youth in trousers and undershirt was still lying as I had seen him. He had good reason not to move. Where his right eye had been, there was only a bloody hole.

Sergeant Cooper, in charge of the prowl car, came in from the hall. He looked at me suspiciously. "Where do you fit in, Doyle?"

"I'm just the guy who got popped," I told him. I added what the deaf old bird down stairs had told me about a plainclothes man.

McCarny shook his head and pointed to a broken window leading out onto a fire-escape. "That's the way that he went out. But the old Gee described him when we rush in, and there ain't no such guy on the Force."

**T**HE rest of it was routine. While the Tech Squad and a bored young deputy coroner went to work, Cooper loaded everyone in the house into the wagon he had sent for and gave them a ride to the station. None of them complained. It was that kind of a place.

I sat in Captain Feeny's office and worked on a pint of rye until I began to feel human. Both Cooper and Feeny had accepted my explanation of why I had gone to see Clarence. It was the truth.

"All that I wanted from him," I told them, "was the name of the dame or the lad to whom he had sold the lot."

"It's an angle," Cooper admitted. "We'll work it. But this lad Wolkowysk stumps me. So he's dead and buried, so what's all the fuss?"

I told him if we knew that, we might know why Clarence Freeman had been murdered.

I wanted to know more about Clarence so I walked out to the squad room. The tenants of 4821 W. Division sat like so many warts on a hog. There was little that they could or would tell me. The blonde with the propositioning eyes said she thought that Clarence had been a numbers collector since he had lost his cemetery job, but professed to know little about him.

I called my office from the desk sergeant's phone.

Sue informed me, "Mr. Hartley of Inter-Ocean has been burning up the phone."

"Yair?" I asked.

"Yair," she said too sweetly. "And he said for me to tell you to phone him as soon as I could contact you. He says that it's to your advantage."

I doubted that but told her I'd buzz Inter-Ocean.

"Where are you now?" she asked coldly. "Drunk in some bar somewhere?"

"I'm in jail right now," I told her.

She gasped and broke the connection at her end before I remembered that I had promised to take her to the best night club in town the day that we had our first client.

Hartley was waiting for my call. He sounded nervous.

"Look, Tom," he blurted without any preface. "When can I see you?"

I told him not for a hell of a long time, providing I saw him first. He told me not to be that way.

"So I was wrong. I should have held your job," he admitted. "But I'm willing to make it up. It's this way," he tried to sell me his bill of shoddy. "There's a case just come into the office that no one but you can handle. And it's up twenty a week if you'll come back."

I told him where he could put the twenty.

"But it's a lulu of a case," he persisted. "What's more, there's a bonus arrangement."

I told him to put the bonus with the twenty.

"Thirty a week more," he offered. "And Inter-Ocean will pay all expenses including transportation."

"Transportation to where?" I demanded.

"That's what I've been trying to tell you," he explained. "This is a S.A. job that just came in. And you are the only operator I know who speaks passable Spanish whom I can trust."

"Whereabouts in S.A.?" I asked him.

"In Rio," he told me.

I winked at the desk sergeant, told Hartley to add Rio to the bonus and the twenty if he still had room, and started to hang up.

"Damn you, Doyle," he bellowed. "Don't you dare to hang up on me. If you do, you'll never work another day in this man's town. I'll have your license revoked. I'll—"

I hung up and asked the sergeant for a light.

Captain Feeny came out of his office. "That was Bruce Hartley that you were just talking to?" he asked me.

I said, "It was."

Feeny studied the tip of his cigar. "Now that you've got the stink of Inter-Ocean off you, Tom," he said, "if I were you, I'd stay away from Bruce Hartley. He cuts his corners too close and, well, things have happened since you've been away."

He wouldn't say more than that. It was sufficient. It was money in the bank.

I went back to the bull-pen where the ques-

tioning was still going on. The little blonde, staring a clinic in the face, had changed her tune and began to sing.

A squat, blond, Polish looking lad had been one of Freeman's most frequent visitors. A right fella, she said. Several times after calling Clarence, he had stopped to talk to her.

I described John Wolkowysk.

"That's the man," she admitted.

Sergeant Cooper massaged his seven o'clock shadow with one palm. "We'll get some pix and have her look at them," he told me. "But that sounds like Johnny Martin who drives for Dennis Corbin."

It was all shaping to one end. I gave him the license number of Wolkowysk's car, adding, "While you're checking up on that, I think I'll drop down and see Corbin."

I told them about being curbed right after I had talked to John Wolkowysk and thinking that I had recognized Corbin's voice. "More," I tried to clinch it in my own mind, "the big yellow-toothed lad who threw his weight around answers the old man's description of the phony copper with whom I played paddy-cake in Freeman's room."

McCarny said, "You're nuts. Dennis Corbin is a big shot. He runs all of the gambling and half of the crime in the city. Why should he give a damn about this Stan Wolkowysk being dug up?"

"That's what I want to find out," I told him.

**T**HE temperature had dropped ten degrees with the sun. By the time I had driven two blocks I was cold. I realized that I hadn't had any supper and pulled up in front of a diner and ordered a T bone steak.

"You'll tak' hamburg an' like it," the Greek told me. He started to slap the chopped meat on the griddle, stopped at the high whine of a racing car and peered out of the frosted window. "Look out!" he bellowed. "Is coming!"

There was a scream of hard-braked tires and a Tommy-gun raked the building, cutting the coffee urn in two and sending a stream of boiling liquid cascading all over the Greek.

I got up from the floor and kicked the door open as the car roared on. There was only a tail light to shoot at. I didn't even come close.

Inside the ruined diner, the Greek stopped swearing to splutter, "Someone, she don't like you!"

The Greek was still bellowing about who was going to pay for the damage and where the hell did I think he was going to buy a new coffee urn when I got back into my car.

I wanted to see Corbin—bad. If I was going to be offered as a red-point sacrifice, I at least wanted to know the score.

Two hard-faced flunkies holding down the pavement in front of his Randolph Street place closed in before I was well parked at the curb. Both of them had their hands in their pockets.

"Corbin ain't here," one of them told me.

I brushed them aside and went in to look for myself. The joint was empty.

Moe Harp, the house manager, said. "If you want to see him real bad, you can find him over at Findy's having supper with State Representative Green."

I had expected that one. "And he's been there for hours and hours and hours."

"Yair," Moe said flatly.

I left my car parked where it would block the entrance to the joint and walked a block down the street to the restaurant.

The place was crowded with the town's hoods, lugs, pollys, as well as some paying customers. Myrtle, a red head with a classy chassis, and more dough than I'll ever have, put my skimmer on the rack and helped me out of my overcoat.

"Long time no see, Doyle," she cracked. "How was dying for your country?"

"I'd rather buy bonds," I told her.

I took a peep in the mirror to straighten my tie. The lad who stared back wasn't human. The lump on my jaw had turned mauve. I had a purple bruise under one eye. The other was almost swollen shut. My hair is prematurely gray and in spots my skull hadn't been quite thick enough to keep the blood from oozing through.

Myrtle told me frankly, "You look like hell."

"You should know how I feel," I told her.

The more I thought about the set-up, the madder I got. Corbin was sitting in a booth with Green. Neither of them looked up. I squeezed in and sat down beside Green without waiting to be invited.

"I'll take the same," I told the waiter, pointing at the steak on Corbin's platter. Medium rare. And put it on Mr. Corbin's check."

Corbin stopped a forkful enroute to his mouth and turned his fish eyes on me. "What's the idea?" he growled.

I said, "I think that's only fair. If your boys ruin my hamburger, I don't see why you shouldn't buy me a steak."

The fork continued to his mouth. "I don't know what you are talking about."

I appealed to Green. "Don't you think so, Senator? If someone blew a hamburger off your plate with a Tommy-gun, wouldn't you feel entitled—"

Green mumbled an excuse, crowded by me, and left.

I sat looking at Corbin. A big, good looking, black Irishman, he was the exception to



the rule that most crooks are dumb. He had brains and he knew how to use them. He had been fifth in his class at Yale and headed for big business before some quirk in his mental make-up had side-tracked him into crime.

"Okay. Let's have it," I demanded. "I'm tired of being shot at and I want the answer to some questions.

He grinned. "And why should I answer your questions?"

Both of my hands were under the table. "Because I've got a gun in your belly," I told him. "And unless I find out what I want to know, I'm going to splatter your guts all over the back of this booth.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### Twenty Bucks Buys Murder

**T**HE grin faded from his face. He continued to eat but his hands were shaking slightly. He'd seen me kill men before.

"Sure. Some of your boys will get me," I continued. "But I have nothing to lose. They're out to get me now. And spreading me on a slab won't do you a bit of good if you're lying right beside me."

The waiter brought my shrimp cocktail. I

ate it with my left hand, and watched Corbin.

"So," Corbin conceded the presence of the gun, "what is it that you want to know?"

"Why I've suddenly turned into a clay pigeon," I barked. "I know that John Wolkowysk, alias Johnny Martin, is one of your drivers. And I had just been talking to Johnny about digging up his brother Stan a few minutes before all this hell broke loose. So give. What is it that you want? Do you want this Stan Wolkowysk to stay planted in a grave he doesn't belong in?"

He shook his head. "I never even heard of this lad Wolkowysk." He braced both palms on the table. "And if that's a cause for murder, go ahead and shoot."

I gave him credit for guts and tried another tack. "And I don't suppose you ever heard of a lad named Freeman?"

He thought a moment, asked, "Would Clarence be his first name?"

I said that it would be.

"Then I know him," he admitted. "He collects a numbers route for me out on Division Street."

"*Did* collect," I corrected "He's dead. What's more, I figure he was killed to keep him from naming the party to whom he sold the grave in which Stan Wolkowysk is planted."

"Is that so?" Corbin asked, interested.

He was growing more certain of himself. He knew that I could take him. But the place was filled with his boys, and he knew that unless Mrs. Doyle had raised a feeble minded son name Tom, I wasn't over-eager to committ suicide.

"Well, well. Poor Clarence," he continued. "He wasn't a bad sort of a lad even if he did shade off toward lavender."

"Why did you have him killed?"

Corbin turned ugly. His face was mottled with anger. "He must have made a mistake," he said coldly. "Just the kind of a mistake that you're making if you're figuring for a shake-down. I never paid a dime to any private shamus in my life." He pushed his plate to one side and called my bluff. "Now either pull the trigger of that pop-gun or get out!"

I stood up and dropped my gun in my side pocket. I had pushed him as far as I could. The talk of a shake-down was a stall. Both of us knew that. My number had been posted. Either I got him, or he got me. And I still didn't know the score.

"Okay, Killer Kane," I needed. "If that's the way it's got to be, okay."

He pounded on the table with one fist. "You're damn right that's the way it has to be. I've taken all I intend to take off you or any other private shamus like—"

"Bruce Hartley?" I filled in the pause.

He realized that he had said too much. "G'wan. Scram. Beat it. Get out of here," he wound up our love fest in a lower tone.

I walked back to the cloak room with my hand in my pocket, complaining loudly to Findy, "What sort of a place are you running? That man threatened my life."

He ducked back in through the kitchen door like a frightened rabbit.

I figured it for insurance. At least forty people had heard me. Half that number had heard what Corbin had said. And if my corpse was found in a dark alley, it might tend to put him on a spot.

Myrtle handed me my skimmer. "Enjoy your meal?" she asked brightly.

"I loved it," I assured her.

Her eyes fluttered, frightened, to the booth where Corbin sat glowering at us. "Don't be a mule, Tom," she warned me, not moving her lips. "You don't know what you've gotten into. Step out of it while you can."

I TOSSED a half buck tip in the basket, threw my coat over my left arm, and stalked out thinking that things had come to a pretty pass when a cloak room dame knew more about the town's set-up than I did. Something had happened while I was away.

My hand still on the gun in my pocket, I cut across town toward the News-Tribune to talk

to Tad Hill. I wanted to know the answer to a lot of things, and if there were answers, he'd know them.

"Poiper? Poiper, Mister?"

I pushed the lad aside and walked. He clung to my elbow, whispering, "Je'es. Don't you know me, Doyle? Be a good guy and give me a break? I can sell you what you want to know for fifty bucks."

I stopped in the mouth of the alley and looked at the lad again. It was small-wonder I hadn't known him. In the eighteen months I'd been away, his daily 'bang' had got him. His name was Billy Matson. He had been a wheel man for Corbin. When I had seen him last, he had been fat and sleek and prosperous. Dope had taken him for a ride. His hair was a dank dirty gray. His cheeks had sunken in. His eyes were swimming with junk. The suit that he wore was in rags.

"I need a bang," he whimpered.

"I wouldn't have known you, Billy," I admitted. "You can sell me what for fifty bucks?"

He looked around him nervously with a typical hop-head twitch and beckoned me onto the alley.

I shook my head. "Nix. We'll talk right here. What is it that you can tell me?"

"Who the dead lad is," he whispered.

I made him come all the way. "What dead lad?" I demanded.

He wet his lips and whimpered, "Stan Wolkowsk. But they'll kill me if they find out that I've told."

"Okay. Who was he?" I asked.

He bargained, "It should be worth fifty bucks."

I gave him twenty. I kissed even that goodbye. All the good tips that I've got from junkies, I could put in a sand gnat's eye. Most of them dream up their info.

"He's Jo Jo McGurn," he told me.

I waited for a bell to ring. It didn't. I'd never heard the name before. "And who the hell's he?" I demanded.

The dope screwed up his face in a knot. "Who's Jo Jo McGurn? Why he's the guy who—"

My back was half turned to the curb. Matson saw the car first—and screamed.

I dove for the alley pavement. My insurance hadn't been enough. Corbin wanted me out of the way so bad that he didn't give a damn who knew that he had ordered me rubbed out.

It sounded like Guadalcanal the day we rushed the beach. Lead plastered the alley and the dark brick wall. But Billy Matson took some of the lead. He was riddled and dead by the time the car roared on.

I rolled to the mouth of the alley and emptied a clip at the gas tank. I didn't miss

this time. The right front tire blew out like a field-piece. The car swerved, knocked over a fire-plug, vaulted the curb, and dove into a store front. As it hit, the gas tank exploded.

Before I could thumb in another clip, three men fought clear of the flames and raced east on Huron Street.

I ran shouting toward the car, bellowing for some one to stop them.

An old Gee took me by the shoulder and shook me.

"We must keep calm. By all means we must keep calm," he tremoloed. "We've been warned that we might be bombed."

I shook loose and stared at the flaming wreckage. The outline of the car looked familiar. Then I took a look at the plates and groaned. It was my own boat that I had left parked in front of Corbin's.

"Damn it to hell!" I swore.

The old Gee shook me again and repeated his admonition to keep calm as he stared worriedly at the sky, waiting for the next bomb to fall.

"I can't keep calm," I told him. "I'm just burning with excitement!"

I debated waiting for the cops, decided not to. I could beat my gums with them later. Right now, I wanted facts and the News-Tribune building was only a block away.

I faded into the crowd.

Tad Hill was sitting on the City Desk when I stormed in. He was trying to talk into three phones at once.

I hung up the receivers. "I'm the guy you want to see," I told him. "That's my car burning out there and I'm the mark at which all that lead was popping." I bargained, "I'm trading an exclusive for info."

"Anything we know," Tad promised.

**I** GAVE him the whole thing from the start including Mrs. Clancey, my calling on Mrs. Wolkowyzk, and the yellow-toothed killer with whom I had swapped lead in the dead pansy's room.

Hoke jotted down notes as I talked. He might have been tabulating the events at Mrs. McCloskey's strawberry festival. When I had finished, he looked up speculatively. "We can tie in the Hartley-Corbin angle. Begin to beat the drum for an exhumation order. 'In the interest of the public weal, the News-Tribune demands that District Attorney Beemer, etc., et al, blah.'"

"Now you tell me," I told Tad, "what this Hartley-Corbin angle is, and who is Jo Jo McGurn and why he is so important."

The story he told wasn't pretty. I had been in the Solomons when it happened.

At two o'clock in the afternoon on June 15th a gang of alleged out-of-town hoodlums, led by Jo Jo McGurn, a recently mushroomed

big-shot, had taken the First National Bank, with whom Inter-Ocean had a yearly contract to furnish bank guards and protection, for a half million dollars in bills of both small and large denominations. Two guards, a teller, and a deaf old lady who hadn't heard the command to raise her hands had been killed.

The police, the F.B.I., and Inter-Ocean, had trailed the gang to a split-up point in the suburbs, but from there on it had been cold turkey. Jo Jo McGurn had never been seen again. Not one dime of the money had ever been recovered.

"I think I get the McGurn angle," I said. "He stopped lead during the stick-up and died. The gang bought a cheap lot from Freeman and planted him under his real name in the hope that the heat would die down. But where does the Hartley-Corbin angle figure?"

Tad shook his head. "You've been away too long, Tom. Bruce Hartley has been pushed for cash on a little matter of back income tax that he forgot to pay. And there are those who say that Inter-Ocean furnished the guards and Dennis Corbin furnished the gang with a two-way split in prospect. And there's only one thing wrong with your Jo Jo angle. Not one guard fired one damn shot!"

A lot of things were suddenly clear.

*Bruce Hartley hadn't dared to keep my old job open. He had known I would find out too much.*

John Wolkowysk, alias Johnny Martin, was one of Corbin's drivers. Stan Wolkowysk, alias Jo Jo McGurn, had been Johnny's brother. He had been planted and forgotten. If Tad Hill's summation was correct, and Hartley and Corbin were involved, then they had been sitting tight waiting for the heat to cool. Then along had come Mrs. Clancey demanding her own grave and over had gone their apple cart.

Once Jo Jo McGurn had been dug up and identified, Corbin was on a spot. Freeman had been killed to shut his mouth. I was the next on the list. And then—

"What reward has the bank posted?"

He told me, "The usual five percent of all money recovered, plus two grand apiece for each convicted member of the mob."

That would run into money. We had a drink together and I walked back to my car. There were two uniformed boys watching the wreckage but the Headquarter's Squad had gone. I called Lieutenant Nobby from the drug store on the corner.

"I was just about to send out a wanted," he told me. "What the hell have you gotten into?"

I told him everything that I'd told Tad and promised that I'd be in his office inside of an hour. He told me he'd get in touch with the D.A.

"There's only one way to check your story," he said flatly, "and that is to dig up the stiff. Either he's Jo Jo or he's not."

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Double Snatch

THE Avonshire wasn't the sort of a place at which Mrs. Clancey should have stopped. Just over the river on the near south side it's patronized mainly by show-people, night-club entertainers, and out and out fly-by-nights. There is a small bar off the lobby and as I came in through the front door, Bruce Hartley staggered from the bar door.

He didn't seem pleased to see me.

He swore at me under his breath, then not so softly: "My pal," he lushed. "Why, you lousy no good two-bit window-peeper. You had to be a hero and go off to war, leaving me with a headache, and now you're howling to high heaven because I didn't hold your job." He got a better grip on the door jamb. "I'm gonna make it so hot for you that there isn't a respect—respec—" He backed off and took another run at it, "isn't a respectable agency from coash to coash that will give you a job."

"That's just fine with me," I told him. "Or maybe you hadn't heard. I've opened an agency of my own. And from now on, to you, the name is *Mr. Doyle*."

He stood swaying, staring at me drunk-enly. He was as big a man as Dennis Corbin, and as smart, except when he was in his cups. I knew. I'd worked for him eleven years. After his fashion, he had been honest.

"Go on," he dared me. "Shay whash on your mind."

I did, leaving out the bank affair. I'd been saving the other for years.

Hartley seemed to enjoy it. "Now I'll tell you what I think of you." He leaned forward and whispered in my ear, "Your father was unmarried and your mother was a tart."

Those weren't the exact words but they'll do. As he spoke, his right hand streaked for his right hip pocket. I might have fallen for the gag if I hadn't know that he was left handed, and his left hand was in his coat pocket.

Instead of going for my gun I kept both of my hands in plain sight and smiled, "Well, if that's the way that you feel about it—"

He said, "I do." The sweat stood out on his forehead in beads. He wasn't as drunk as he pretended. The thing that was ailing him was that he knew that I knew. He also knew that the only way that he could stop me was to kill me. He called me a coward and repeated the words that he had whispered out loud.

I said, "You're drunk," and attempted to push past him.

He drew his left hand from his pocket to stop me. It was all that I had been waiting for. I clipped him. He crash-landed against the opposite wall so hard that he ground looped.

The desk clerk squeaked, "You've killed him!"

"I hope so," I admitted, and went on upstairs to Mrs. Clancey's room.

Her face looked strained and flabby instead of plump. Her breath was strong with the smell of gin.

"I could use a drink, too," I suggested.

She poured a water tumbler half full of gin. "I'm afraid that I've made a mistake," she told me flatly.

I asked, "In hiring me?"

"N-no." She brushed a lock of hair out of her eye. "Not that a'tall, me boy." She took a deep breath, continued, "But maybe it would be best to leave the dead sleep where they are. I could get me another grave near by."

"Hartley's been up here to see you," I accused.

"There was a man here," she admitted.

"And he's tried to frighten you into calling off this thing."

She dabbed at her eyes with an ~~apple~~ white handkerchief. "I don't want to die," she sniveled. "I'm just a well meaning old lady who wanted her own grave."

"And you're going to get it," I assured her. "Scaring you off won't do Hartley a bit of good. Lieutenant Nobby of Homicide is pounding on the D.A.'s desk right now and demanding an exhumation order."

It was hard to tell how she took that. She said, "But I'm afraid. I'm so all alone."

I offered her a police guard. She refused it. "But maybe," she suggested, "if I had some other woman to stay with me. Perhaps even that chit of a child in your office—"

I gave the girl at the switchboard Sue's number. Sue wasn't overpleased to hear from me, but she answered so quickly that she must have been sitting at the phone waiting for it to ring.

I told her that I was sorry as hell about our date but things had been happening too fast for me to even phone her and asked her to come to Room 810 of the Avonshire Hotel as fast as she could make it.

She said, "Hmm!"

I told her that it wasn't that kind of a party, that all I wanted her to do was to hold old Mrs. Clancey's hand. She wasn't pleased by the prospect but she said that she would come. I killed the rest of the gin while I was waiting and went down to the bar for another bottle. Old Mrs. Clancey changed



her dress and repaired her hair and make-up. Both of them needed it badly. The old lady looked as if the mice had been nibbling at her.

I stayed on until Sue knocked on the door.

She started to give me hell, got a good look at my face and began to cry. "Oh, Tom. Somebody's hurt you!"

"They tried to," I admitted.

**T**HE tips of her fingers explored my bruises. I kissed her fingers and took her in my arms. Her lips were half an inch from mine when the old lady coughed.

Mrs. Clancey . . . Sue Vincent," I introduced them. "I believe that you've met before."

They stared at each other in the way women do, then Mrs. Clancey pulled Sue to her impulsively and kissed her on the cheek. "I'm so glad that you could come, my dear."

Sue wasn't so enthusiastic. Something about the old lady seemed to puzzle her.

I made certain that the clip of my gun was filled and gave it to her. "What I want you to do is to lock and bolt the door after me when I leave. Don't open it for anyone. And I mean *anyone*. If anyone tries to break in, empty the gun through the door, pick up the phone and scream for the police. You understand?"

Still looking at Mrs. Clancey, Sue said that she did.

"I should be back inside of two hours," I told them. "Meanwhile you two can chin."

Sue sat down in an easy chair, the gun resting in her lap. "This is a hell of a night club," she confessed.

As I closed the door, she was still staring at Mrs. Clancey.

It was snowing when I hit the street. I went directly from the hotel to the office, picked up my spare gun, and continued on to Homicide. Lieutenant Nobby was waiting for me with a still-wet News-Tribune Extra spread out on his desk.

"Cast-iron Doyle," he grunted. "How much of this is true?"

I skimmed over the front page. Hoke Meyers hadn't missed a bet. There were even some things I hadn't known. One of them was the fact that F.B.I. had grilled both

Corbin and Hartley re: the First National job.

I tapped the item, asked, "The Department feels how about this?"

"We'd like to nail them both," Nobby admitted. "And if that stiff out at Maplewood should turn out to be Jo Jo McGurn and we can tie him into Dennis Corbin through this lad Johnny Martin, we'll have a damn sight more to work on than we've ever had before."

Two G's walked into the office without knocking. I knew Tommy Convers well.

He introduced his partner as Mark Gold and we sat beating our gums about old times as Nobby got on the wire with the D.A. to ask about the exhumation order.

"It's waiting," he told us when he hung up. "The D.A. got Judge Arnson to sign it." He yelled into the squad room for two of his own boys, added, "Beemer said that he'd meet us out at the Division Street Station and we can all go on together from there."

We started out of the office and the phone rang.

Lieutenant Nobby handed it to me. "It's your boy friend on the News-Tribune. He says that he's been trying to locate you all over town."

Tad sound excited. He was. "Look. What kind of bull are you handing out, Doyle?" he demanded. "I've had fifteen phone calls since our extra hit the street with that damn sob story about poor Mrs. Patrick A. Clancey wanting her own grave."

I still didn't understand and said so.

"Why you idiot," he yelled, "Mrs. Patrick A. Clancey is dead! She died two years ago in Lakeland, Florida and I've had fifteen phone calls to prove it."

I hung up and stared at the phone. I was remembering something that Cook had told me out at the cemetery—

*"We were informed that Mrs. Patrick Clancey had died two years ago down in Lakeland, Florida."*

I didn't have all the picture but I had enough.

"Bad news?" Convers asked.

"They've got Sue," I told him quietly. "They're going to use her as a club to try and make us lay off."

Lieutenant Nobby exploded: "But that

doesn't make sense. This old Mrs. Clancey is the dame who stirred up all this mess. If she hadn't come to you wanting her grave, we wouldn't ever have thought of looking for McGurn in a grave in Maplewood."

There was only one way to check. We made the Avonshire Hotel in four and a half minutes flat with the siren wailing wide open and to hell with the red lights.

The same clerk was on the desk.

"Yes," he admitted. "Mrs. Clancey phoned for a taxi-cab and left here almost ten minutes ago."

I pounded on the desk. "Alone?"

He seemed surprised. "Why no," he told us. "She was accompanied by the young lady who called on her just before you left."

Room 810 was a mess. The chair in which Sue had been sitting had been overturned on the floor. There was a bullet hole in the ceiling. Both of the floor lamps had been smashed. A small portable radio was spilling its entrails in the bathtub.

**T**HE rooms on either side of 810 were vacant.

A drunk in the room across the hall thought he had heard a shot but hadn't investigated or informed the desk. He had heard a radio blaring. He hadn't complained about that either. In the first place he liked music, he informed us. In the second place, the Avonshire was a very good place for a man to mind his own business.

Nobby sent for a finger-print man while I talked to the elevator boy. He had noticed that Sue seemed frightened. Mrs. Clancey had kept both of her hands in her muff. There had been a man with them.

I asked him to describe the man. He had been a big man about six-feet four. The only thing else that the boy had noticed was that the big man had yellow teeth, he looked like he'd been in a fight, and he walked with a noticeable limp.

I thought that one over. That could put an entirely different complexion on the whole affair.

When I got back upstairs, Nobby reminded me that Beemer was waiting out at the Division Street Station and was probably raising hell.

I said to hell with the D.A.

Convers talked me out of that. "If the stiff is McGurn," he pointed out, "we'll have a pry bar to use on Corbin. And if Corbin is the lad who's snatched the girl—"

The room phone cut him short. It was the girl at the switchboard down stairs. "There's a gentleman on the line," she said, "who wants to speak to a Mr. Doyle."

Lieutenant Nobby told her to trace the call on another line and handed the phone to me.

"This is Tom Doyle," I admitted.

The voice was muffled. It sounded far away, as if the lad was talking into a wine glass or through a wadded-up handkerchief.

"Get this," he said, "and get it straight. You leave Stan Wolkowysk stay buried or the old lady and the dame go out the hard way."

I stalled to give the girl time to trace the call. I told him that the D.A. was already on his way to Maplewood with an exhumation order.

"Then stall him," my caller ordered.

"And if I can't—"

"That's Sue's tough luck," he told me and hung up.

"The call came from a dial phone," the switchboard girl informed me. "I can give you the exchange but I have no way of finding out the phone number or the street address."

I told her to skip it and hung up.

None of us talked much on our way to the Division Street Station, but Captain Feeney tried to sympathize with me by pointing out that we had no way of knowing that whoever had snatched Sue would release her unharmed if we refrained from opening the grave.

There were twelve cars in our cavalcade, half of them newspaper men. It was snowing harder now. Someone had gotten Cook, the Graveyard Association man, on the phone. He was waiting at the gates and led the way to the grave in his own car.

We parked. The snow had covered up the tracks that I had made that afternoon. We all had flashlights but we didn't need them. The searchlights on the posts in the motor park made that section of the cemetery plenty light.

The sentry saw us coming, stopped, and brought his rifle to a port. Before he could challenge, I called, "It's all right, soldier. We're stopping this side of the line."

Cook walked over to the tracks and talked to him.

The lad debated a moment as though he was thinking of yelling for the Corporal of the guard, then put his rifle back on his shoulder and resumed his tour.

"He's seen me before," Cook told us. He flashed his light on the hunk of granite, read, "Patrick A. Clancey," then turned his torch on the smaller head stone. "This is it, right here."

The pic-boys began snapping pictures. The muscle boys shoveled eight inches of hard packed snow from the grave, then got busy with their picks. The ground was frozen solid and all of us had spelled them by the time that they reached the soft stuff.

I kept thinking of Sue and how much she meant to me and how I wished that I had told her, instead of treating her like a kid because

my hair was gray and I was a few years older than she was.

A circle of pic-men snapped Beemer pointing to Wolkowysk's picture under the glass slide on the stone.

"Is it or isn't it?" Convers asked him.

The D.A. shrugged. "Off the record, I'll be damned if I can tell. All Slavs have a certain resemblance."

One of the shovels struck concrete and after the rubble had been cleared out, Cook's professional grave diggers took over. They ran a frame-like affair out over the hole, attached slings to the top of the concrete box, hoisted it out and then made the slings fast to the coffin.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Coffin Dust

THE pic-boys snapped more pictures of Beemer grinning like a ghoul. The coffin itself was a modest cheap metal affair. It had been sealed with some sort of cement and Cook worked on the unhinged side of the cover with a dull chisel and a maul.

I kept thinking of Sue. Something wet kept getting in my eyes. Maybe it was the snow.

Beemer posed for more pictures. If the hunch I was riding was correct, I had nailed down his job for life. The body of Jo Jo McGurn and the loot from the First National job would earn him a lot of votes.

Cook tossed the maul and the chisel on a tarp. "That should do it," he said. He caught at the edge of the coffin lid and raised it while a dozen flash lights stabbed at the quilted satin.

Tommy Convers was the first to speak. He said, "Well, I'll be damned."

Whoever the lad in the coffin was, he wasn't Jo Jo McGurn. He had been dead too long, about ten years I should judge.

The D.A. glowered at me. "And the money?" he asked sarcastically.

Convers and I felt the satin. We even lifted the skeleton out and laid it on the tarp while we cut through the quilting with our knives. The dead Gee who wasn't McGurn, was all that there had been in it.

One of the leg men from an anti-administration paper quipped: "Oh dear. And I had my heart so set on being re-elected."

There was a general laugh.

The D.A. ignored it. "Okay. Put him back, seal up the coffin, and replant him," he ordered coldly.

The newspaper boys began to straggle off, wise cracking with each other. Beemer turned on me with a few choice remarks concerning private agency men who were willing to make damn fools of their friends for a little cheap

publicity, and stalked off stiff-legged through the snow.

Cook seemed anxious for us to leave. "A sweet mess that you've got me into," he sneered. "Why didn't you make certain of your facts before you started all this?"

Lieutenant Nobby blew on his hands to warm them. "Well, let's get started," he suggested. "I'll put out a pick-up on both Sue and Mrs. Clancey. We know that they have been snatched. We know that you were shot at. We know that Freeman is dead. But I'll be damned if I can figure what the hell this is all about. Why should Dennis Corbin give a hoot if we dug up this mummified Gee?"

I stood watching Cook's back as he plied a shovel. Then I took off one glove and ran a finger around the C of Clancey carved on the stone. It had taken a long time for the lightning to strike. But I had it. The edge of the carved C was sharp and my finger came away gritty with dust.

"I don't think that he did," I told Nobby. "Okay. It looks like we've made a mistake. Let's go."

It was two o'clock in the morning when the light in the house that I was watching blinked out and a man opened the window noisily as if preparing to jump into bed.

I started the motor of the drive-it-yourself car I had rented, but left my lights turned off. I'd know how right or wrong I was inside of the next five minutes.

I had been right. The rear door of the house opened. A man stepped out on the porch, looked around him cautiously, then leaning against the wind made his way to the garage on the rear of the lot.

He drove from the garage without turning on his lights. I followed a block behind him. It was a quiet residential section. So far as I could tell there were only three cars on the street. My car, the car I was tailing, and the car that was tailing me. Three blocks from the house the car ahead snapped on its lights. I dropped back another block, still driving blind.

At River Road, the car ahead turned west. There was other traffic here. I let two cars get in between us, then I turned on my lights.

We drove for ten or fifteen minutes, bunched up the way cars will. Then the lead car turned off of River Road onto a side lane.

By the time I made the turn, the car was gone. I crept up the lane without lights for a quarter of a mile, then drove off to one side and parked in a clump of evergreen. From where I was parked I could see the lighted windows of a pseudo English manor set well back from the road.

I left the car and waded toward it through the snow. The shades of the house were drawn but I could hear voices.

I tried the basement windows, found one that was open and slipped through. I knew this house as well as I knew my own. I had been in it a hundred times.

When my hands were warm, I used my flash to locate the stairs, kicked off my shoes, and crept up stairs silently.

The voices were much plainer here. Dennis Corbin made a crack about the D.A. being up a well known creek and Bruce Hartley laughed heartily.

**I** TURNED the knob of the door and tried it. It was unlocked. I opened it carefully and closed it as carefully behind me. Then I reached for my gun, froze as a gun barrel dug into my spine and the big yellow-toothed lad who had curbed me said:

"That will do just fine, Doyle. What took you so long?"

Feet clattered on the basement stairs and Johnny Martin banged open the door. "He took so long sneaking in," he complained, "I almost froze."

Corbin called from the other room: "He wasn't followed?"

"Naw," Martin called. "I tailed him all the way from the house. This prowler is strictly on his own."

Corbin gave Wolf-tooth a name. "Bring him in when you're sure that he's clean, Scaffidi."

The big lad slipped my gun from my holster, frisked me for a hide-out, then pushed me on ahead of him into the living room.

Bruce Hartley was sitting on a sofa with the grave yard man, Cook. Both of them had drinks in their hands.

Hartley grinned, "I hear that you and the D.A. were disappointed tonight, Tom." He spat into the open fireplace, the smile fading from his lips. "And to think I gave you credit for so much brains that I was willing to risk a murder rap to put you out of the way."

Corbin, looking very well pleased with himself, was sitting in back of an open desk, fingering several thick packets of bills. "Still want me to pay for your steak?" he asked me.

I told him, "I'd rather know how you knew that I had got wise to Cook."

The dapper little cemetery man had become a big-shot hotshot over night. I almost felt sorry for him when I thought of the let-down to which he was building.

"Why you damn fool," he sneered at me. "Don't you think I saw you run your finger over that stone? Don't you think that I knew you were parked outside my house since shortly before midnight?"

I lighted a cigarette. "So, it seems I made a mistake," I admitted. I looked at Hartley. "It's your house. Why not offer me a drink?"

He made no effort to pour me one. He did admit, "You have guts. I always admired that in you, Tom. It's a shame you have to die."

Cook was keeping too fast company for him. He giggled, "Leaving the affair of Jo Jo McGun and the stick-up of the First National Bank an unsolved mystery."

I asked him, "What makes you think that they're going to let you live?"

Scaffidi looked at Martin and raised his eyebrows.

Cook crowed: "You're crazy." He pointed to the bills on the desk. "I'm here to collect right now."

"Sure. In lead," I told him. "You sap. The only reason that you're alive now is because they needed you to decoy duck me in here."

Cook appealed to Hartley. "That's not so, is it, Bruce?"

Hartley patted him on the shoulder, smiling thinly. "Of course it isn't, Cooky."

Cook beamed, satisfied. Hartley took a gun from his pocket and amused himself by thumbing the safety on and off. Almost as an afterthought, and without seeming premeditation, he shoved the gun in his hand into Cook's face and fired.

Martin and Scaffidi laughed.

Cook clawed at his shattered face, mewed piteously a moment, then fell face forward into the fire. Martin dragged him back and beat out the wisps of flames.

"Don't drag him too far," Hartley warned. "Let him bleed it out on the fire brick."

Corbin divided the bills on the desk into two piles and put one of the piles in his pocket. "That being that, I'll be going." He added, "You're certain that you don't want my boys to take care of Doyle and the dames?"

Hartley said, "It won't be necessary. What I do with the women is my affair. I suggested that we snatch them. But if there are any lingering doubts in your mind that I'm double crossing you, I'll take care of Doyle right now."

He leveled his gun on me and the knuckle of his trigger finger whitened as he took up the slack.

**I** TOLD him. "Go ahead and shoot. But you're committing suicide. You see I wrote Corbin a nice long letter to be delivered in case of my death, telling him just how you tried to double cross him."

Hartley licked his lips. "You're nuts."

Corbin pushed in between us. "What the hell is he talking about?"

"A double-cross that didn't work," I told him. "Get Sue and Mrs. Clancey down here and I'll tell you all about it."

"I'll take care of Mrs. Clancey," Hartley sneered.



"You mean you'll split with *him*," I said. Corbin said, "Him?" He dipped his hand into his pocket. It came out with a gun. "Get those dames down here," he ordered Martin.

Hartley opened his mouth to say something, changed his mind and closed it. "It beats me," he said finally, and sat back on the sofa.

Sue had been crying. Her eyes were puffed and red-rimmed. When she saw me she tried to talk and almost choked. Both of her hands were tied behind her and a wide strip of adhesive tape slapped across her mouth.

"You don't need to tell me," I told her. "The F.B.I. checked the prints in the room and dear old Mrs. Clancey turns out to be none other than Moonface Charlie, one of Pink Kid Waller's old partners."

The phoney Mrs. Clancey shook a fat fist at me. "Don't you call me a confidence man, young man." She glowered at Corbin and Hartley. "And you let me out of here. I have nothing to do with your gangs. All that I wanted was me own grave."

Corbin ordered Scaffidi, "See if it's wearing a wig."

Scaffidi reached out a hand. Moonface Charlie slapped it away with one hand and drew a gun with the other. The move put Corbin and his boys between two fires.

Hartley jeered from the sofa, "So you're wise. So what? I win out after all. Now I collect all of the money."

Moonface tore off his wig and tossed it in a chair. His head was as bald as an egg and sweating. "I'm glad to get rid of that," he admitted.

Corbin's face had turned an apoplectic purple. "What the hell is this?" he demanded.

"Just what you thought it was this afternoon," I told him. "But first, let's get this straight. The loot from the bank job and Jo Jo McGurn are buried in the same coffin?"

"They are," he admitted.

"Under the name of Stan Wolkowsyk."

"Correct."

"And you and Hartley were partners in the stick-up. He furnished the guards. You furnished the gang."

"That's right."

"Rave on," Hartley grinned from the sofa. "I'm having a swell time."

I ignored him to ask Johnny Martin, "Who killed your brother?"

"No one," he admitted, glowering. "He died of a bust appendix right after the bank job. I didn't want him dropped by the road for Maw's sake, so Mr. Corbin and Mr. Hartley figured out how I should buy a lot and plant him under his own name."

"Incidentally stashing the loot at the same time. As I see it," I told them, "it was a temporary stash. You figured that you could dig it up any time that you pleased. But you couldn't. The Army moved in just across the tracks and established a motor pool. There was always a sentry on tour. You couldn't dig up the money some dark night because what with the motor pool lights there weren't any dark nights any more. You were hooked 'till the war was over. And that was okay with Corbin. But it wasn't okay with you, Bruce. You needed your cut. You needed it bad. That's why you tried a double cross."

Corbin flashed a quick look at Hartley.

Hartley warned him, "You're a dead duck if you go for your gun!"

"He's a dead duck if he doesn't," I pointed out. "You can't afford not to kill us all. And in my book, you've over-played your hand. You're going to have one hell of a sweet time disposing of six corpses."

Hartley scowled. "I'll manage. A man can do a lot of things for half a million dollars."

"Nix." I shook my head. "He can't beat

a murder rap. And he can't run far enough to get away from a lad like Corbin."

I paused for breath and Corbin said, "Go on."

"He damn near made it," I told him. "He played it smart in sending Charlie to me. He knew that I work fast. He also knew that I'd bust my neck to earn my fee if I thought that I was putting one over on Inter-Ocean. He knew that I hated his guts so bad that I'd never even stop to question whether Mrs. Clancey was the McCoy after I knew that he'd turned her down."

Corbin repeated, "Go on."

"And then up popped the devil. I stopped to talk to Mrs. Wolkowysk and happened to bump into Johnny. He phoned you and wised you to what was going on. Only you had no way of knowing whether it was a scheme of Hartley's, or whether the supposed Mrs. Clancey was free lancing. That's why you had Freeman knocked off. That's why you tried to rub me out. You knew that as soon as Jo Jo was dug up both of your geese were cooked. But Hartley, when he saw things had gone wrong, tried to save his face with you by disclaiming all knowledge of Mrs. Clancey. More, he suggested that you snatch Sue and the old lady, saying that he'd dispose of them."

Corbin nodded, his eyes on Hartley.

"ONLY Mrs. Clancey's body never would have been found. Charlie was eager to be kidnapped. He was getting desperate. He wanted to rip off the skirts and the wig and disappear. Sue was just additional protection. So was that phoney phone call. Both of you knew all hell couldn't block an exhumation order once it had been issued. Right?" I snapped at Hartley.

The whites of his eyes had turned red as he whipped himself up to the kill. "Yes. That's right," he admitted.

I looked down at the man on the floor. He'd bled all over his clothes. He wasn't dapper any more. "Meanwhile, Cook had put two and two together and he came to you with a proposition that you jumped at. For so much money he could make Stan Wolkowysk's body disappear and make suckers out of me and the District Attorney."

Hartley got up from the couch. I could tell by his eyes he was ready. His lips were twitching. "So what?" he demanded. "Let's get this over with." He leveled his gun on me.

"Just one last question," I stopped him. "Did the storm blow out your lights tonight? Did you have to send for an electrician before they'd come on again?"

He stared at me stupidly through his blood fog. "They did and I did. So what?"

"So before you sit right down in the chair," I told him, "if I were you, I'd reach up in

those drapes behind me and rip out that dictograph."

He looked at me a moment, then pulled the drapes back with his left hand. It was there where I'd told Convers to put it five minutes after we had left Maplewood.

"Leading to where?" he demanded.

"One outside wire and one to the basement," I told him. "Hell. You admitted I was smart. You should have known better than to think that I'd walk into this wolves' nest alone."

"But you weren't followed," Johnny Martin swore.

"Of course I wasn't," I told him. "No one tailed me but you. They didn't need to. There were two F.B.I. men and all of the Homicide Squad stashed in the basement and around the grounds half an hour before I got here." I lifted my voice. "It's okay, Johnny. Come in. We have all we need for a conviction."

Convers, with Gold right behind him, opened the basement door and said, "Surprise."

"The hell you say," Hartley bellowed. He whipped a fast shot at me and dove for cover.

I felt the slug nick my ear as I yelled for Sue to hit the floor. Her mouth was taped but her ears were okay. She dropped like a bottle of Christmas Night and spread almost as flat on the floor. Moonface Charlie tried to grab her for a shield and she spiked him in the shin with a heel.

He sat down on the floor and bellowed, "I surrender," to everyone that looked at him with homicidal intent.

Both Scaffidi and Martin raised their hands.

Corbin was damned if he would. He poured a third of a clip at Nobby coming in through the window from the porch, a third of a clip at Convers and Gold, and all that was left at me.

One of them nicked me slightly, then I got him by the ankles and heaved. He went over backwards and lit on his head on the fire brick with the squash of a rotten melon.

That left only Hartley crouched back of a sofa. He'd sprayed the whole room with lead but hadn't even won a cigar. I walked over and knocked the gun out of his hand, pulled him to his feet and knocked him down again.

Sue was making mewling noises. That was all that stopped me. I picked her up and eased the tape off her mouth.

"They didn't hurt you, honey?" I demanded.

She still couldn't talk but she shook her head.

Certain the shooting was over, Beemer came in from the stash to which one of the wires had led, and into which Nobby had practically shanghaied him.

"I had you all wrong, Doyle," he admitted. "But tell me this. Why didn't we find that

money when we dug up Stan Wolkowysk?"

"Because we didn't dig him up," I told him. "We dug up a perfect stranger. That was where Cook came in. He led us to the wrong grave."

The D.A. protested: "You're crazy. One of those monuments read Patrick A. Clancey. The other read Stan Wolkowysk. I checked them both myself."

"Sure you did," I agreed. "Cook couldn't dig up the body and make an exchange. So he pulled a much simpler trick. Both of those monuments are standard pieces. All Cook had to do was to have the proper names cut on two blanks with an electric drill and set them up over a grave in approximately the same spot as the real one. The snow covered all trace of the work. And while the sentry across the way might have gotten suspicious if he had seen them digging in an old grave, he didn't think a damn thing of seeing two new monuments set up. Guys die every day in the year."

Beemer demanded: "You figured this out, how?"

"I rubbed my finger over the C in Clancey," I told him. "And the cutting was so fresh that the edge was razor sharp and there was even some granite dust in the letter."

Convers looked at Hartley. "Coffin dust,"

he corrected. "Just plain old coffin dust."

I realized that I was holding Sue and kissed her.

Did she kiss me back? She did not. She retouched her lips and smiled at Convers. "Is he like this all the time?" she asked him. "When he dates up a girl for a party, does he always bring a gang of corpses and feminine impersonators?"

"Almost always," he assured her soberly.

"But he makes good money at his trade?"

Convers computed five percent of two hundred and fifty grand and whistled.

"That's enough, mister," Sue stopped him. She pulled my head down to hers and kissed me. "I guess I'll have to marry the big lug after all."

I stiffened slightly. "Because of the money?"

She nodded, but her eyes were shining. "Of course. Can you think of any other reason why I would want to marry you?"

Then she was crying and laughing in my arms, touching the spots where I was bleeding with her fingers and trying to tell me how she felt and how she'd worried.

Hell. She didn't need to tell me. That kiss had been the tip-off. I wasn't an old man after all. I was just a young buck back from the wars. And this was it.

**THE END**