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# fast with a gun

*"I want to know, Marty," he said. "And after you tell me, maybe I won't kill you."*

BY  
WILLIAM SCHWARTZ

Meeghan stood about five feet in front of me and pointed the black hole of his forty-five on a straight line with my head.

"I want to know, Marty," he said. "And after you tell me, maybe I won't kill you."

He wasn't kidding. That was one thing you always knew about Meeghan, he didn't kid. Maybe he was a big man and maybe he hired a gun to take care of his light work, but when it was a personal matter, Meeghan took the job himself and never made jokes. A personal matter, to him, was something like this—twenty thousand in cash stolen from the safe in his home and lying in a satchel next to the bed I was sitting on.

"You know I always work alone," I said. "This was no different. It was me, just me did the job."

"Sorry, Marty, I won't buy

it." The forty-five was looking bigger now and a hell of a lot closer. "I haven't seen you since '54. So someone told you about that money. Who?"

This was going to be a rough one to get out of. I was caught. A neighbor had seen me leaving Meeghan's home and got enough of a look at me, for Meeghan to know who it was. If Meeghan had been two hours more getting to me, I'd have been gone. I had figured this to be the end of dingy furnished rooms and lousy food, but now it looked like it was the end of me. If I kept talking maybe he'd relax his guard. I didn't have any choice.

"It was nobody," I said. "I just heard some talk about the dough and decided to have a look. That's all."

"Once more. I'll ask you once more and then that's it.

Who set this up? Who told you about the money?"

I was sweating. "Like I said—"

"Okay. You're lying. And I'm going to give it to you."

"Meeghan! Hang on! I—I might tell—"

"I'll find out for myself. You get it."

He'd have killed me then if he hadn't heard the choked-off sob that came from the closet. He shot at the closet's partially opened door. He was ready to shoot anyway and he just flicked his wrist and shot twice at the closet, watching the door swing open and the body pitch out onto the floor.

I dove at him. It was my only chance, and I had to be

fast. I knocked him against the wall, smashed my fist into his face with all I had. He went down in a heap.

This wasn't going to be my murder; it was going to be his rap and he could talk his way out of it. Me, I was getting out of the country with twenty thousand and no more strings attached. It was one of those lucky breaks, I suppose. Meeghan was never so slow with a gun. Ordinarily, he could have killed me, too. But this time, he wasn't fast enough.

He didn't see me coming, because he was too busy trying to figure out why the dead body lying face up on the floor was his wife.

