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*There wasn't anything else I could do. I'm just like you, I got feelings, even if I am a professional*

# Killer

BY WILLIAM LOGAN

IT WAS a cool night, that first night a couple of months ago. I was walking home from a movie and I turned the corner onto my block. I saw him walking down the block toward me, and even from far away I knew who he was. He was big and solid, and careful, so that every step he took looked heavy but he didn't make a sound as his feet came down on the pavement.

When he got close to me I could see he was thinking. He didn't even see me, but I waited until we were only a couple of feet apart and said, "Hi, Charlie."

He stopped and blinked, bringing his eyes back into focus. Then he said, "Hi Tommy." "Nice night."

"Cool," I said. "What are you doing around here?"

He waited a second without saying anything, and then he told me: "Come out to see you, Tommy. Mr. Rose says to tell you he'll phone soon. Where you been?"

"Went up to a movie," I said. "Wife had some work to do or something, so I figured I go see a movie by myself."

"Sure," he said.

"What's Mr. Rose want?" I asked.

He didn't answer that. I didn't expect him to. "Well, listen, I got to be going. Got a date I'm gonna be late for."

"I better get on home myself," I said. "I'll see you."

"Sure," Charlie said. He started walking and by the time he was past

me he was thinking again. He wasn't even looking at me when he went by. I walked on another block to my apartment house and got in the elevator and unlocked my door. There wasn't anybody around that I could see. I called: "Sue."

"Tommy?"

"Sure," I said.

"I'm in here," she said. "In the kitchen."

I went in and she was at the sink, washing up some dishes and a couple of glasses.

"You finish up your work?" I asked.

"Sure," she said. "I just fixed myself something to eat. I didn't expect you back so soon."

"I didn't stay for the whole show. The movies were pretty bad."

I went up to her and put my arms around her from behind. I bent down and kissed the top of her head.

"I'm busy," she said.

"The dishes can wait."

I was looking at the glasses she was washing. She looked up and smiled.

"Charlie was here looking for you. We chatted a few minutes."

"I know," I said, "I saw him."

"What did he want?"

"Nothing." I turned her into my arms and she kissed me, pressing her whole body against me. The silverware she had been holding in her hand dropped with a clatter into the sink.

After we broke it up I held onto her hand. "Come on," I told her.

"I'm busy."

"They can wait," I said. "Those movies. You know they give a guy ideas."

She looked at me for a minute. Then she said: "Honest, Tommy. I'm tired. I had a lot of work to do and it's hot in this kitchen. I just don't feel —"

"Baby," I cut in, "I love you."

"I love you too," she said, "but I'M hot and tired. Please, Tommy?"

I pulled her towards me. She didn't resist. I kissed her again. "Okay, baby," I said. "Come on. Come On."

After a minute she came with me. We went into the bedroom and she turned off the light. I reached out and my hand caught her bare arm.

"Here, baby," I whispered. "Come over here . . ."

Next morning we were just lying around in bed at noon, taking things easy, when the phone rang. Sue picked up the receiver.

"That's right," she said. "Sure. Yes, he's here. Just a minute." She put the receiver down on the dresser across the room. It's Charlie Franks," she said.

"I'm not home," I said.

"He says it's important."

I got out of bed slowly and went to the phone. I knew what it was. Charlie's scratchy voice said: "Tommy?"

"That's right."

"Charlie Franks. Come over here right away. Mr. Rose wants to see

you. It's urgent." He hung up. I knew from the way he was talking he was calling from Mr. Rose's place. I put the phone down and started to get dressed. Sue didn't ask where I was going. Just like being a doctor's wife, she was used to calls like that sometimes.

Mr. Rose has a house way over on the East Side in the Fifties. That's a fancy district, up there, and there aren't many private houses left, so his house sticks out like a lighthouse on a dark night. I figure that isn't very smart, but I never said anything; what the hell, that's his business. I'm just a hired hand and I'm happier that way.

I rang the bell and Charlie came to the door. I could see into the living room and there wasn't anybody there but Mr. Rose. Most times, when I get called over, there's a big meeting. I wondered what was up now.

"Hi, Tommy," Charlie said.

"What's up this time?" I asked him.

"The city's hot," he said. "It's pretty damn hot."

"I know that," I said. "If that's all, I might as well have stayed home."

"It's getting hotter. Listen, Tommy, this is pretty important . . ."

I hadn't even known that Mr. Rose was standing next to me until Charlie stopped and looked up. Then

I turned and saw him, the stocky little guy with white hair. "That's right the city's hot," Mr. Rose said, right off. "This new mayor. He thinks he's a big deal; well, it will all swing back the other way. But until it does, we got problems."

"I know," I said.

"We got to be very good boys till the heat is off," he said.

"I'm always a good boy, Mr. Rose," I said. "I do what you tell me and that's all."

"I know that," he said. "But there's something more important." He stopped and looked around, not nervously. It was as if he was trying to make himself proud of what he owned. "There's a leak somewhere in the organization."

"You want me to take care of it, Mr. Rose?" I asked.

"That's right, boy."

"Just tell me who it is and I'll do the rest."

"You're going to find the leak, boy," Mr. Rose said, quietly.

"Wait a minute," I said. "Mr. Rose, I'm hired for one job. I don't go finding people. I take care of them after they've been found. I couldn't know how to begin finding anybody, Mr. Rose."

"You'll take Franks with you."

"Why me?"

Mr. Rose looked straight at me. "The leak is among either your's or Franks contacts," he said.

"I don't talk to anybody, Mr. Rose," I said.

"Either you or Franks did some

talking," he said. "It's got to be one of you. I don't even tell my wife what goes on here."

"And I don't tell mine. You know that, Mr. Rose."

He nodded.

"It could be somebody else," I said. "Big Dave or Bryce."

"No," he said. "Remember the Voss deal?"

"Sure I remember it. Charlie fingered him for me and I took care of him. A very simple deal."

"Well, boy," Mr. Rose said, "nobody but you and Charlie knew about that job. The police dug out the bullet — it landed in the wall behind him, but it was so crushed they can't even tell the calibre of the gun. Only two people know that gun was a .32, boy. You know it and Franks knows it," he paused. "And I hear talk around about Voss being shot. I hear the calibre mentioned."

"That doesn't mean anything," I said. "Suppose somebody knows the calibre of the gun?"

"Of course, boy. It's unimportant. But there have been other leaks. That one pins it down. The leak has to be in your contacts or Franks."

There was nothing else I could do. I said, "Okay."

Mr. Rose looked away from me to Charlie, then back to me.

"I want you to find that leak, boy," Mr. Rose said. "After we find it, we'll decide how to get rid of it."

"Yes, Mr. Rose," I said.

When I walked out of Mr. Rose's

house arm in arm with Charlie, starting out on the job, I felt something. It was gnawing at me even then, but I didn't see it.

It was a job that didn't look too tough, and Charlie was working with me again, and it could mean another grand or so socked away in my account. Just like any other workman starting out, I felt pretty good.

As soon as we were outside Charlie said, "Well, how are we going to work it?"

"You're the boss." We were walking down the street, straight west to Lexington Avenue and the subway. Charlie would go on uptown, and I'd take the downtown train back into Brooklyn.

"Suppose you take my contacts and I take yours," Charlie said. We were on Third Avenue by now. "That way we won't get all messed up with personal stuff. You don't know a lot of my friends and I don't know many of yours. Okay?"

"Fine," I said.

"We'll have to write out lists. Listen, I'll come down to your place tomorrow. I can drive down in my car. I'll do the list tonight sometime, and you do yours. Then we can exchange them tomorrow and talk around a little."

"Okay," I said. "Charlie, I don't know a thing about this finding somebody or whatever it is."

"Leave it to me," he said, "I'll tell you about it tomorrow."

The next morning we were up early. I didn't know what time Charlie would be coming over, and even though we didn't have a hell of a lot to do beforehand I didn't want Sue walking around in a negligee. I mean, I could see Charlie in my shorts — what the hell, we go to Turkish Baths together once in a while, and what's the difference anyhow? But I don't like my wife walking around in a negligee or a nightgown in front of company.

We were all done with breakfast and the dishes, though, and I was listening to the radio with one ear and trying to read a science-fiction book with the other half of my attention, when the doorbell rang. I went and opened the door and Charlie said, "Hi."

"You got your list?" I asked.

"Sure." "You?"

I'd wrote one up after breakfast and told him so. He said, "Your wife around?"

"Sure, she is." Then I got it. "Hey, wait a minute. You don't mean that you think Sue could be—"

"You told me I was the boss, I'd teach you," Charlie said. "Okay, here's the first thing you learn. In a deal like this you don't trust anybody. I don't trust you, you don't trust me."

I went in and told Sue to go to a movie or go up to Mrs. Tomas' place for a while, and to come back in a couple of hours. She looked at me, and she gave Charlie a long stare, but she went.

Charlie and I went into the living room and sat down on the couch. I gave him my list and he looked it over while I ran my eye down his. Most of the names on Charlie's list were women. Well that figured. Charlie is a big, handsome guy, and he's the careful type, so he's saved up a lot of money and the only thing he spends it on is his women. He's not married, like me, and of course he don't know what he's missing, but maybe it would take some girl like Sue to show him. That's what I was thinking as I looked at the list.

"Now," I said, "what the hell do I do from here?" "I just can't call these people up and ask them if they're spilling to the cops."

"That's the difference between your work and mine," Charlie said. He told me what to do.

"I'll start it off tomorrow," I said.

Charlie shook his head. "What's wrong with today?" "Right now? I can take this list of yours and get going; you start off right away and we'll get it cleaned up fast."

So that afternoon I called two of the women on Charlie's list and made dates for that night and the next one. I took them out, but they were both stupid blonde types. Charlie went a lot for the showgirl type, if you know what I mean. I couldn't figure Charlie talking to them, and they didn't look like they'd remember anything you told them anyhow, so I crossed them off my list.

Next day I called the next one,

and the day after that another one. After it had been going on for a while like that I called up this Latin type of babe. Chiquita. I took her out to a club and she looked a little sharper than the other ones; she was a dark-haired babe, a little bouncy spitfire type. And when I started talking about the crime wave and so on she began to look interested, so I pushed it a little farther.

"You take this Voss thing for instance," I said. "A guy shot dead in his own apartment and the cop's can't find a thing."

"It was a terrible thing," she said. "Terrible."

"You know, they even found the bullet and they can't track the killer down from that."

"They ought to be able to do something."

"Sure," I said, "but they're not doing a thing. Here they got this bullet, and they're just stuck with it, can't find the gun or anything."

"It's terrible," she said. "There just can't be — well, I don't know much about this kind of thing, but there just can't be that many .32 guns around."

"Sure," I said. I had it. I talked to her for awhile but I was too excited. I'd known all along it had to be one of Charlie's contacts. I faked some kind of a deal and put her in a cab back to her place and told her I'd call her later. Hell, I told myself, I'd call her later, all right. *Last* call.

I flagged another cab for myself. I deserved a little celebration.

I gave the cabbie the address and he swung around and headed for the bridge back into Brooklyn.

I got out right in front of my apartment house, and I took the elevator upstairs and unlocked my door. There wasn't any light and I couldn't hear a thing. I called; "Sue."

Nobody answered. I closed the door quietly and walked softly into the apartment, figuring she was in bed asleep. I turned the hall light on and walked quietly up to the bedroom door. I pushed it open.

She was in bed, all right. But she wasn't asleep and she wasn't alone. There was a man with her, and the two of them were a tangle of arms and legs and bodies that suddenly stilled when I snapped the bedroom light on.

Sue's face was perfectly blank and calm. The man's face was quiet and sure and I looked at it for a long time. The man was Charlie.

Nobody said anything as I moved into the room.

"Get up, Charlie," I said. The gun was burning my hand.

Very slowly he got out of bed and stood there facing me. Sue didn't move. She didn't do a thing.

I said, "You know what I'm going to do?"

Charlie said, "You can't." But his face went white.

"Both of you." I said. I looked at Sue. She didn't even bother to

hold the sheet up to cover herself.

My finger was tightening on the trigger, when it hit me that doing it here in my own home wasn't very smart.

Mr. Rose had other gunnies.  
I held the gun on them and dialed

Mr. Rose's number, in the Fifties.

When Mr. Rose says to find a leak, you find it. All the same, I miss those sounds coming from the kitchen. I don't like it so quiet around the house, wonder if the Latin babe can cook?

