

# GUILTY

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W. W. Scott — Editor

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# MAD DOG KILLER

He wasn't fit to live, and I wanted to blot out his life!

by NEAL NEITZEL

“**W**ITH or without a badge. I'm going looking for Floyd Wallace.” Mark Jordan spoke tersely, raw, naked hate bunching the muscles of his lean face. He shoved himself out of the chair and turned to leave the office.

“Sit down!” Captain Bill Richter's stern voice was a hoarse bellow. “Nobody said you could walk out of here.” The wiry, thin-lipped homicide officer glared at Mark. His eyes were narrow slits beneath his thick grey eyebrows.

“I mean it, Captain. There's a debt to be settled,” Mark growled, moving slowly back toward the desk.

The veteran officer nodded wearily. He flicked his hand down at the manila file folder open in front of him. “You went through this stuff a half-dozen times while you were in



the hospital, Mark. If you got any notion where Floyd Wallace might be holed up, spit it out! This isn't just your party; every man on the force thought a lot of Ed Kuenzi."

Mark's wounded left shoulder began to throb. He supposed he was a damn fool for ignoring the doctor's advice and getting up too soon. He awkwardly fished a cigarette from the pack in his shirt pocket. While he was fumbling around in search of a light, the older man leaned across the desk, snatching it before Mark could thumb the match book open.

"Be sensible, kid. Suppose you did get lucky and run across Wallace. With only one good arm, he'd polish you off, easy."

"It wouldn't be like it was on the train, Captain. Not this next time."

Mark's dark, rugged features wore a brooding anguished scowl. Every time he closed his eyes, he could still see the wolfish grin on Floyd Wallace's sensual lips. He could hear the harsh, taunting laugh and the explosive blasts of a .38 calibre police special.

"Quit blaming yourself for something that wasn't your fault," said Captain Richter, heatedly. "I lost one good man last month. I don't want to lose another one. Keep on like this, and you'll wind up in a sanitarium—or if you don't get over the notion of making this a personal thing with Floyd Wallace, you could wind up dead."

"He butchered Ed; deliberately shot low. Three slugs in the guts and one in the groin," Mark was shouting now, brown eyes almost wild. "With Ed's own gun! That dirty, sadistic bastard laughed while he did it! He stood over Ed and butchered him like it was the funniest thing in the world!"

"Jordan! Knock it off!" snapped Bill Richter, coming out of his chair. His small but powerful hands dug into Mark's uninjured right arm. "Blowing your stack isn't going to help Ed Kuenzi, or his family—or you, either! Now start talking some sense for a change. I asked you before if you had any ideas of where Wallace might be. You didn't give me an answer."

The big, still-trembling man

slowly raised his head, and stared at his superior. "Thanks. The first thing we learned at the academy was to forget about sentiments and personal feelings. Thanks for reminding me, Bill."

Quietly, then, Mark admitted that he had no idea of where the vicious, lantern-jawed killer might be hiding. Floyd Wallace had one of the worst, most brutal records ever accumulated, however there was nothing in any of the papers in the file to give any indication of his present whereabouts.

"It'll be another three, four weeks before that cast comes off your arm," said Captain Richter. He walked with Mark to the door. "I want you to take a vacation."

"Not until—"

"I mean it! Dammit, man! You're still taking orders. I can't wet-nurse you, and I won't try, but if you ever want to be of any use to the force, again, you'll ease off! Now get back to your apartment and get some rest—you look ready to keel over."

"There's only one thing wrong with me. I'm taking that

vacation, Captain. Just like you ordered." Mark strode down the corridor, while Bill Richter watched from the doorway. Both of them knew what sort of a vacation it would be. Bill Richter's stern face looked tired, and very old.

A month before, Floyd Wallace was being delivered to the state prison, to await execution for the brutal slaying of an elderly couple during a grocery store holdup. On the train, he'd grabbed detective sergeant Ed Kuenzi's revolver.

Mark leaped across the compartment. The first shot knocked him backwards, burning through his flesh inches from his throat. Bleeding, only semi-conscious, Mark witnessed the horrible butchery of his friend and fellow-officer.

There was nothing he could do then, as the killer made his escape, disappearing without leaving a trace. Somewhere, Floyd Wallace was having himself a time; laughing every time he read about the fruitless efforts of the law, or every time he looked at Ed Kuenzi's .38 revolver.

Mark hadn't known how fiercely bitter hate could be. Two weeks after the session in Bill Richter's office, the hate remained, strong as ever but now accompanied by bleak, leg-weary frustration.

None of the leads pointed to anything except blind alleys. None of the hungry-for-a-buck stoolies were of any help. Mark drove to the small town where Wallace had been born. He questioned relatives, friends of the family, and found all of them ashamed.

"My son?" Mrs. Wallace was a gaunt, poorly-dressed woman of 55, although she appeared much older. "I haven't any son," she said, tonelessly.

The small, drab house was little more than a shack. Mark glanced at the half-rotting porch posts and flooring. One of the planks creaked beneath his feet. It hadn't been much of a home to begin with. Now, it was only a matter of time before the sagging roof and decaying walls collapsed.

He asked Mrs. Wallace to re-examine her memory, to try to recall something—anything—that might be a clue to the brutal killer's whereabouts.

"Look, I know you've been asked these things before, but if there's anything you can remember that would help..."

"If there was, Mister Jordan, I'd tell you," she replied. She opened the screen door and walked out on the porch. Mark believed her quiet, simple statement. He caught a glimpse of the neat but painfully shabby interior of the house.

"I believe you, Ma'am."

"Last time Floyd came here, he killed Tippy," she said, staring out across the weed-covered, uncared-for yard. "Just because she liked to bark and play. She jumped up against his legs, just tryin' to be friendly. He kicked that poor little terrier of mine right off'n the porch, just about where you're standin' now, Mister. Then he shot her."

The thin, haggard woman's eyes were dry. All of her tears had been used, long ago, Mark thought. His impulse was to comfort her, but instead he awkwardly got a cigarette lit. He could have bought a lighter, instead of using book matches; with only one hand, it would have been much easier. The same stubborn streak

that kept him after Floyd Wallace prevented him from changing his habits.

"This isn't much of a place, Ma'am. No close neighbors, either. Why don't you move to town? There must be places you could stay."

"I've lived here for 35 years," Mrs. Wallace replied, quietly. "It's all the home I got, and I don't want no charity."

"One of these days, the roof is going to cave in—if it doesn't blow off, first."

"Folks around here are real nice to me. They give me sewin' jobs to do, and I've got a few dollars saved. Later this year, I'll have enough to pay for having some repairin' done. I won't take somethin' for nothin', Mister."

The drive back required nearly two hours. It had been another dead end, Mark thought. The only accomplishment was increased hatred toward the vicious killer he sought, and increased determination to dig away, under every rock, if need be, until the slimy hulk that passed for a human being was blotted out of existence.

Sleep was a long time coming, despite his tiredness. He found two pictures etched in his mind; the horrible one that had been there since Ed Kuenzi died, and now, the image of a gaunt, gallant woman who had nothing left except pride.

HE awakened slowly, by stages. Then, hearing the shrill, insistent ring of the phone in the next room, he flipped back the covers and hurried to answer.

"Jordan? I wanted to call you before you got any notions about chasing upstate," Captain Bill Richter said, tersely, bringing Mark to full alertness. "You'll hear it on the radio, later, but I'm telling you now because I don't want you in the way. Floyd Wallace came out of hiding last night. With a gun in his hand."

"Where?"

"He hit a loan company office, just outside of Milwaukee. One man dead—the manager. Another man and a woman were wounded. The woman might not make it."

"How can you be sure it was Wallace?"

"One of the other employees

made positive identification. The point is, I don't want to have you in our hair, Mark. We got roadblocks set up, and it's just a question of when. He's heading this way; he got gas at a station about 100 miles north, early this morning. All the main and secondary roads are covered, and he's in a circle."

"Where can I do some good, Captain? You know I'm not just going to sit here."

"Yeah, I know. Come on down. I'll give you plenty to do."

"Paperwork? No thanks, Captain."

"Jordan!"

"I won't get in the way. Goodbye, Bill." Mark could hear Bill Richter's angry sputtering as he hung up, walking swiftly back to the bedroom. Insubordination. That meant a suspension, or worse. Mark shrugged, momentarily forgetting the bulky plaster cast and sling on his left shoulder. He winced, cursing the cumbersome rigging as he hurriedly dressed.

There wouldn't be much time; he knew Bill Richter well enough to know that in a few

minutes, a husky pair of his fellow-officers would be there, to take him in protective custody. He buckled on his shoulder holster, slipped awkwardly into his suit coat, and started out of the apartment.

At the door, he paused, frowning. A dozen quick steps took him to the closet. He reached far back on the shelf, groping for the small leather case. Opened it. Took out the stubby .25 calibre automatic. It resembled a toy, compared to the heavier .38.

He hefted it, grinning. No self-respecting cop would want to be discovered toting such a baby, but then, all the self-respecting cops he knew had two good, usable arms.

Just as he dodged out through the rear of the apartment building, he heard the front door open, and the clump of purposeful footsteps mounting the stairs to the second floor. He slid into the sedan and got out of the neighborhood fast.

Twenty minutes later, he was through the suburbs, traveling west. A special bulletin interrupted the music, and Mark turned up the volume.

The announcer said, "Less than fifteen minutes ago, escaped murderer Floyd Wallace crashed through a police barricade on State Highway 79, about 60 miles northwest of the city. . . ."

The announcer's voice droned on, giving details, but Mark scarcely listened. He tromped hard on the accelerator, driving toward the small town where Mrs. Esther Wallace lived.

Her son had broken through, punched a hole in the net. If the demented killer's cunning ran the way Mark feared, Floyd Wallace would angle off the highway, taking side roads. It should have been the last place he'd try to reach; certainly no one would expect such an obvious move.

'And that's just why he'll make for his mother's house,' Mark thought, grimly. 'He knows it's the last place we'd look. He'll ditch that hot car and hole up, waiting for a chance to slip out of the state in a few days, when the roads are clear.'

A state patrol car was parked in front of the shabby, isolated structure when Mark

pulled up. Two uniformed men were leaving the house. They started toward him.

"Let's see some identification, Mister," one of them said, hand hovering above the holster on his belt.

Mark carefully dug for his wallet and gave it to the taller patrolman. "I know Mrs. Wallace," he said. "I was here yesterday. When I heard that her son got by the roadblock, I had an idea he might just be crazy enough to come here. Guess you fellows had the same notion."

"That's right," said the patrolman, returning Mark's billfold. "He ditched the sedan about 15 miles north of here. We figured he might just be crazy enough to do something smart—like hiding out here, right under our noses."

"We went over every inch of that old joint," said the other patrolman. "There's only four rooms. No cellar. No attic."

Mark nodded. "How is Mrs. Wallace? How's she taking this?"

"I don't know how good you know her," said the taller patrolman, "but she don't consid-



er him as her son. She dies a little bit, everytime he uses that gun of his."

"It beats me how two people can be so different and have the same blood in their veins," Mark said, slowly. "She sure deserves better than this. It's a bad enough life being stuck in a crummy old shack like this, without having a no-good bastard like him adding to her misery."

"Well, if you're gonna be around for awhile, Dave and me will probably see you, later. We've got an idea he could be hiding in the woods between here and the river," said the smaller, older patrolman. They climbed into their car and drove away while Mark moved toward the front porch.

**E**STHER Wallace looked anything but happy to see him. She pushed open the screen door, and he entered the gloomy, barren living room.

"I wish you hadn't come," she said, staring at him. He wasn't sure, but he thought he detected a note of fear.

"Would it be better if I sat in my car?"

"No." She walked toward

the windows and stared out across the lawn. "He won't come here. I pray to God he don't. He's not the kind who'll surrender, Mister Jordan." She turned partially, looking at Mark. "After you left, yesterday, I went through the newspapers. I found your picture, and I guess you got plenty reason to hate Floyd."

"Right now, I'm not thinking about him, Mrs. Wallace. I hope he stays away from here, too. For your sake."

Mark walked to the window. A light drizzle had started falling. From the window, he had a good view of the road and of the woods beyond. "That gun Floyd Wallace has belongs to the widow of one of the best men I ever knew. I hope that if there is any shooting, it isn't here where you have to watch. But one way or another, this thing has got to end."

"When it does, you won't be breathing!"

Mark and the gaunt woman stiffened, hearing the harsh laugh. Mark recognized the voice. Floyd Wallace had somehow managed to come in behind them.

"Raise that arm, copper! Both of you stay just like you are!" Floorboards creaked as the hulking fugitive crossed the room. Rough hands tore the .38 from Mark's shoulder holster, then savagely spun the detective around.

"You're crazy to have come here," Mark said, through clenched teeth.

"There wasn't no place else I could get to—what's your name again?" Floyd Wallace snapped his fingers, grinning wolfishly. "Oh, yeah—Jordan, ain't it? I always like to know how to spell the name of the creeps I bump. Sort of to keep things neat and business-like." He laughed, holding both weapons.

While he was pocketing the revolver in his left hand, Mrs. Wallace rushed wildly forward, clawing at his face. He clubbed her viciously across the forehead with the barrel of the other gun. She toppled soundlessly to the floor, blood pouring from the gash above her eyes.

"Freeze, cop!" One more step and you get it," snarled Floyd Wallace. His eyes were pinpoints, and his thick, sen-

sual lips were drawn back to reveal yellowed teeth. He looked at that moment like what he was. A brutal animal, crazed by the lust to kill.

Moving carefully, Mark stooped to examine the motionless, deathly pale woman. "She's still breathing. You could have killed her. Your own mother." Mark's hatred was a cold fury. He spoke calmly, almost in a whisper:

"Shut up, Jordan. Leave her be; we're gonna walk out to that car of yours. Now!"

Mark shook his head. He got up slowly, his eyes steady and unyielding on the killer's bearded face. "This is the end of the line for you. Right here. Right now."

Floyd Wallace laughed hysterically. "Funny, cop! Funny! How do you want it? In the guts like I gave it to that big-bellied bull on the train? Yeah. Yeah, I think that's how I'll do it, cop." Naked hate and blood lust flicked in his hooded eyes as the revolver in his hand came up, centering on Mark's middle.

"Splat!" the tiny .25 calibre automatic concealed in Mark's bandaged left arm spoke first.

The bullet bored through the narrow bridge of the killer's nose. Mark's second shot took Floyd Wallace in the throat. It wouldn't have been needed.

The .38 calibre police special slipped from lifeless fingers and landed on the carpet. Horrible, wide-eyed surprise was frozen on the slayer's brutal features as his hulking body crumpled.

Mark picked up the revolver. He stared at it for a long moment, then pocketed it

and turned to take care of the injured woman. The captive gun had been recovered and the debt had been paid. "I'm sorry it had to be this way," he said gently after Mrs. Wallace had revived.

She looked past him at the body of her son. "I'm sorry, too," she said quietly. She began weeping as Mark walked to the phone on the wall. And there was nothing he could do or say to comfort her.

THE END

