

DETECTIVE TALES

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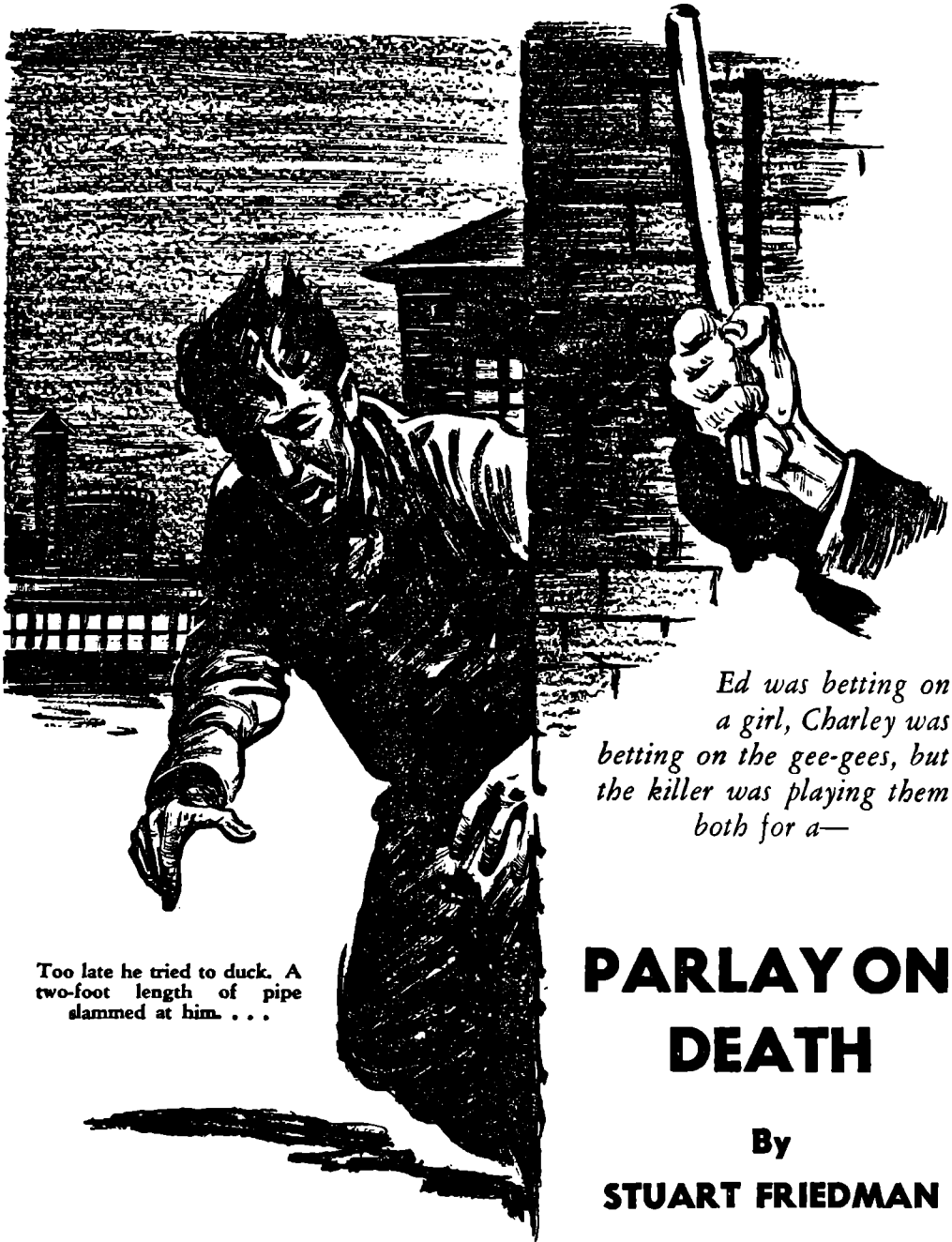
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Too late he tried to duck. A two-foot length of pipe slammed at him. . . .

Ed was betting on a girl, Charley was betting on the gee-gees, but the killer was playing them both for a—

PARLAY ON DEATH

By
STUART FRIEDMAN

IT WAS a biting cold Monday morning, still dark outside when Ed Tulane rang in at 6:12. It was nearly as dark inside. A single bulb shone and that from the front of the big machine shop over the tool crib door. Even for Ed it was early but it was an important day and he needed time alone. He crossed to his bench unlocked the drawer and

set his lunchbox inside, then fished a cigarette out of his fresh-laundered jumper. Ed moved toward the front of the shop, scratching a match aflame on a milling machine, his thoughts on Leah. He had no way of knowing two people were watching him, and that one of them was a murderer.

He shot the burnt match at the sawdust-

filled spittoon by number 2 lathe, let the smoke out in a long sigh. Ed Tulane had resolved not to think of his shortcomings, because he'd done too much of that in the past. While it was true he was no longer young, he still wasn't bad looking. He was a skilled millwright, 24 years with Con-Am Steel & Malleable, one of the few upon whom the huge plant had to depend to keep operating. The shop gang wasn't a production unit which made it a target of efficiency "experts" and others with chart-minds. But when machines or equipment went haywire, it was the brains and ability of the men in his bunch that got things functioning. And Ed was proud of his part. Yet, he couldn't suppress certain qualms. Mainly, he couldn't be sure Leah was not still in love with Charley Bole.

Ed stepped over a pair of channel irons by the acetylene outfit, shrugged out of his overcoat. He passed the light over the toolcrib door, reached the handle of his locker. His body stiffened suddenly as a voice sounded in the dimness back of him.

"That you Ed?"

Ed's jaw tightened. Charley Bole!

He heard Charley's footsteps. Quickly he slipped the precious white velvet jeweler's box from his coat to overall pockets.

"Got something here in m'locker t' show you."

Charley's straight, colorless lips showed a wry grin as he passed under the light.

"I got some work," Ed said coolly, moved past him.

BACK at his bench Ed Tulane snapped on the cone light, lay the cigarette on his vice. He scrubbed his hands scrupulously clean on his fresh denims, cast a resentful look over one shoulder to make sure Charley Bole was still at the other end of the shop. Then he opened the box. It was a beautiful square diamond, elaborately mounted in platinum, set off by ruby chips. It had cost a lot. But he loved her a lot and marriage to Charley Bole had put her through years of hell that Ed wanted to make up to her.

Leah had been married to Charley Bole several years before. Charley had hit a pool ticket, thrown up his job in the shop, and snatched her from Ed all in one day. Slow, dumb, cautious, that's what he'd been, Ed thought angrily. Of course he'd had his mother to support, but afterward he realized there'd have been plenty for all of them. If he'd had it to do over he'd not have stuck to those old-fashioned ideas about having a solid bank account, and everything waiting on a platter for the "little woman." Maybe most people did spend their lives in debt—but anyhow they were getting something out of life. Much as he liked his work, and nice as the

folks were where he'd boarded since his mother's death, it wasn't like really belonging to anybody, or working for any special purpose. Now there was the war, of course, which made his job vital. But afterward he wanted a home. A real one. He wanted Leah to have nice things around her, and a feeling of security. Kids, too. Some guys thought he was a sap, but Ed didn't hold it against a woman for divorcing, and second fiddle or no she was the one he wanted.

"Whatcha got there?" Charlie had sneaked up, looked at the ring now, grinning. "You ain't gone romantic on some woman, have y' Ed?"

Ed snapped the box shut, looked at Charley bleakly without speaking.

"Maybe then this'll move y' tongue."

Ed Tulane didn't need to look closely at the elaborately scrolled document Charley Bole unfolded. Numb fingers reached toward the burning cigarette on the vise, knocked it off onto the heavy planking of the worn bench.

"So she married you again," Ed said. He swept the cigarette to the floor, stood looking down as he ground it against the cement. "She likes standing in front of a sorting table tearing her hands to pieces on iron casting so you can keep the bookies and craphooters eating."

"Women's rights, Eddie," Charlie said. "Hell, are they reactionary! 'Sides I reformed—"

Ed Tulane's head snapped up. "You're a liar. You been placing bets with old Tabby Harkness that runs the front elevator over in Steel. Tabby says you play every day."

"Leah's in the plant. Why not take a walk over t' hr department 'n' tell her 'bout me," Charley said derisively. "Don't forget I punch for cigarettes on the candy man's board too. But maybe better not tell that on me. Alec tells me you just fling away a nickel every day on that punchboard too. Alec even reserves that tab for you. I know, cause I asked for it. Just ain't fair of you, Eddie, reservin' that one. Perty name, too. Leah. . . ."

"Get away from me," Ed said tightly. "Get on away from me and shut your mouth. I don't want to listen to you. I don't want to look at you. I'm warning you—"

"Easy, Eddie. On m' way," Charley said. He sauntered toward the door. He stood in the opening to the alley leading across to the rolling mills, called back. Ed, I notice here recent y' getting cranky. Know what? Think y' need a woman, that's what. . . ."

Ed Tulane stood rigidly, his fists clenched. The door slammed, but in an instant opened again.

Charley yelled raucously. "Me and Leah come in early so's to go see Tabby Harkness. If y' followed the sport o' kings y'd see a nag down at Tropical paid a hunnerd ' four. I

had thirty riding, which means Tabby'll have t'ree grand an' a hundred an' twenty for me. How's that stack with y' Saturday and Sunday overtime dough?"

Charley Bole laughed, then was gone. Ed switched off his light, suddenly very tired. He heeled his hands on the edge, hoisted himself up and back onto the bench, reclined limply on a board slanted against the wall. He'd been keened and buoyant. Now he was leaden, with an overwhelming sense of hopelessness. He dreaded seven o'clock with the teeming, shrilling, the clank and drone and smashing overtones and staccatos, the dirt and sweat. He let his eyes close, wishing he could leave and go off somewhere that he could sleep and sleep and never have to think or to feel or to look at anyone. But instantly his eyes were open. Three quick, distinct sounds came from the darkness up front—and it was very dark, because the toolcrib bulb was out. The sounds had been: tinkling, a thumping against a bench, and the unmistakable sound of a small piece of iron striking the concrete floor.

ED TULANE sat forward rigidly. He grasped the switch of his own bench light, turned it on, angled the shade out. The faintest edge of light illuminated to the door up front, which opened onto an alley. For only a split second Ed saw a hand drawing the door closed from the outside. Ed's feet hit the floor resoundingly, raced to the alley door. He ran along the outside of the shop. Far ahead, at the head of the alley formed by the machine shop building and carpenter shop there was illumination from the windows of the foundry off to the right. Ed caught an indistinct view of the running figure. Then it disappeared around the corner of the carpentry building, headed for the foundry.

Ed increased his pace. Someone had thrown a small pellet of iron at that light, and he wanted to know why. Way he figured it must have been thrown from inside the shop—by the lockers. Otherwise it wouldn't have deflected to the bench, then the floor. If the thrower had aimed from the door to the alley, the iron would have probably struck the tool crib door glass. But it wouldn't have hit the bench after striking the light. Ed reached the corner, ran along the front of the carpentry building. Whoever it was had apparently got to the foundry, for he saw no one.

Too late he tried to break pace and duck. A two-foot length of pipe slammed at him as he reached the corner of the building. The iron smashed into his upper chest, sent the pain blazing through him. His hands clawed at the pipe, found a half grip, lost it. Instinctively he shielded his head. The next blow nearly broke his forearms. Ed swore sharply,

dove toward the shadowy figure wielding the pipe. Then the pipe slashed down, landed crushing on his skull.

* * *

It was bright daylight when he awoke, and he recognized the plant's small emergency dormitory. His hand went to the top of his head, not because it hurt but because it felt like it wasn't there. Ed could see the little group in the dispensary which occupied the front of the medical building. In a moment someone saw him stirring, and pointed. One of the company nurses came in. Ed scarcely noticed her, for at her heels was Leah.

She wore overalls and short-sleeved white blouse, and her hair, except for a small black crescent on her forehead, was bound by red-check gingham tied in a pert bow. Her eyes were dark and her skin pale so that her brightly painted, pouty lips were doubly exciting. His own lips became dry. As she came closer Ed saw she'd been crying. It set his heart pounding, and he fairly squirmed for the nurse to be gone. When she left, Ed said:

"Aw, don't cry, Leah. If my dome was soft as that heart of yours it'd cost you forty cents extra—"

"Ed Tulane!" she cried. It was as though he'd hit her. "You can lay joking about a death benefit charge! *You*, Ed. I thought you was the grandest fella I ever met, and I told the police even that Ed Tulane wouldn't kill a fly."

Ed lay staring at her, his mouth bitter. Of course she hadn't been crying over him!

"What about the police?" he said tonelessly.

"Charley's been murdered. Oh, Ed!"

She turned away, crying aloud. Ed watched her helplessly, trying to digest the information. Then, in irritation, he noted a little audience gawking through the glass of the dispensary door. Old Tabby Harkness, freight elevator operator and sidetime bookie; Alec Freel, who ran the pushcart candy and tobacco route through the plant, a benefit society concession; and a scowling kewpie of a man in pearl gray suit and Homburg whom Ed had never seen.

"Leah," Ed said slowly. "The police think I killed Charley—account of you?"

She turned back, wiping her eyes. She nodded solemnly.

"I didn't," Ed said. "You can believe that. And I'm very sorry he's dead—I—well, I really am. When I found you'd married him again—but forget that. Leah, did he get the bet money from Tabby Harkness?"

"Was he betting?" Leah said. "I didn't know."

"Well, he said you and he were going to collect a big bet. Something like three thou-

sand," Ed said earnestly. "When was he killed?"

"They think about seven," Leah said. "I saw him last when we got to the plant—about six. The body was discovered around noon—it's nearly four now, Ed."

"Where? Where was he killed? How?"

"The—the back of his head was crushed," Leah said, shuddering slightly. "With a pipe or something. They found him in the penthouse of Tabby's elevator, Ed. And you say Tabby Harkness owed Charley—"

"Charley said. He might have been getting my goat," Ed said. He shifted from his position on one elbow to full sitting position. He sat looking at his shoes which seemed to swim around the floor for several seconds.

"You can go now lady. Stick around outside."

It was the fretful, round-faced man in gray. Ed looked up, drawing in a deep breath. He felt steadier.

"I'm Lieutenant Flitch of the police, Mr. Tulane. What happened to you?"

ED told the whole thing from the moment he'd punched his card at 6:12. Flitch sat across from him on a cot, nodding approval the whole while as though he'd never before listened to words quite so true. As Ed finished Flitch peered absorbedly at the points of his breast handkerchief.

"Three thousand and one hundred and twenty dollars," Flitch said, poked a round finger here and there along his handkerchief's edges, then looked up with an air of finality. "Quite a goodly sum for anyone but—heh heh—a defense worker. Reminds me of the ones they tell at the station about this guy who went to the electric chair for murder. Fella really hadn't done the murder. But he confessed account he was dying for a steak and only way he could get it was to be a condemned man where he could have whatever he wanted. Kinda funny. Say Ed, you read much?"

"Some," Ed answered. He felt hollow inside. Cops didn't go around with a line of travelling salesman chatter. This funny little guy was taking a purposely long road so Ed wouldn't know what he was getting at, he guessed.

"Detective stories," Flitch asked amiably. "Read them?"

"Yes."

"Don't it gripe you how the hero's always getting conked on the head?" Flitch laughed. "Say maybe the hero's all ready to end the case—when konk! Heh heh. But some I got to admire, like when a character gets shot at or maybe conked—then it turns out this character conked himself—and by gosh turns out to be the villain."

"I was hit. Knocked out," Ed said quickly.

"There's nothing funny about it, either. And let me tell you something. I don't like being made a fool of this way. . . ."

"Ed. Ed. I know you don't like being made a fool of," Flitch said. "What man does? Has his heart set on a girl. If he's a real man he gets plenty sore."

"I was sore. I admit that. I said it before," Ed cried. "Dammit, I didn't kill that man."

"Two best motives in the world are: Women—" Flitch said, paused. He stared at Ed, one eyebrow lifted. "Women and Money. You knew you'd be suspect *one*. You knew nobody else had cause to club Charles Bole viciously to death. The minute the red fury left you—after you'd spent that murderous fury mashing a man's skull—you saw your situation was hopeless—"

Flitch was on his feet now, face deep red, his chubby fists knotted till the knuckles were white.

"Hopeless! You were going to *burn*. You couldn't think. You never were smart, and now you couldn't think at all. You needed time. You hit yourself over the head, came out of it after awhile—though you pretended not to—and lay in this bed cooking up another good motive for the murder you committed over a woman—"

Flitch broke off, strode to the door of the dispensary.

"You—elevator man. You—candy man. Come in here. Also, Mrs. Bole, please—"

ED'S breath was coming fast. Flitch's assault had shaken him badly. He felt in his jumper for cigarettes. Then he saw his bill-fold, ring case and a badly wadded pack on the white steel table by the head of the bed. The cigarettes were torn and mangled.

"Alec," Ed said as the candy vendor entered back of Leah. "I need a fresh pack. You're not locked up yet are you?"

Alec Freel looked to the gray-clothed police lieutenant for approval. Lt. Flitch nodded, turned abruptly to big, gaunt Tabby Harkness. Tabby's long, seamed face was sickly. He scratched his neck, then dug his bony fingers into the iron-gray hair of his temple, ended by fiddling with the laces of the leather apron he wore over sleazy old overalls. He wasn't a very bright old man, Ed reflected. Always overloading his elevator and jerking his stops and starts which not only blew the fuses but weakened the support cables. He beetled his brows at Ed as an alternative to facing Flitch squarely.

"At me," Flitch said coldly. "Look at me, Tabby Harkness. I'll give you five seconds to get your story changed to the truth. Otherwise I'm sending you up on a perjury charge, withholding evidence, and suspicion of murder."

Tabby's eyes shifted first to Leah who was staring fixedly at Flicht. At last he looked at the lieutenant.

"No change. No sir, lieutenant. Me an' Charley Bole and Alec Freer w-w-was only chewin' around. Along toward six-thirty. Talkin' about th-th' war. Them damn Nazis—"

"You don't book bets on the horses, that your story?" Flicht shot at him.

"Horses?" Tabby cried. "A book?"

Ed said disgustedly. "A hundred people will vouch that you take horse bets!"

"Well—yeah. See, lieutenant I live in a downtown hotel near a bookie, so now and then I take a bet in for some of the fellas here—them that's workin' hard for the war effort—"

"Where's the dough? The three thousand one hundred and twenty dollars Charles Bole was to have collected from you?" Flicht said.

Alec Freel reentered the dormitory, stepped around back of Harkness, nodded to Leah and moved quietly to Ed. He ripped open the cigarettes, then struck a match as Ed got a cigarette to his lips.

"Good," Ed said, inhaling. He looked at his fingers, saw that they trembled. "Thanks Alec. Ticket me for it—or maybe you owe me another nine packs. I win the carton today?"

Alec shook his head, drew a slip from his white jacket pocket. He studied the paper, the while stroking his mustache with his lower lip.

"Guy in the Annealing Room won it. Leah was—" Alec cut off, "Cripes, Ed. I forgot you—name Leah won."

"Tea later, boys," Flicht snapped. "Listen, Freel, what were you and Charley Bole and this man talking about at six-thirty this morning?"

"About Charley's marriage to Leah on Saturday. Of course Charley was doing the most talking." Alec said. "I couldn't stay long. . . . frankly I got the impression the pair of them had something private to discuss. So I came on up, got my trays loaded for the first run—"

"Private?" Flicht said softly, one eyebrow lifting. He nipped the center point of his breast handkerchief, watched Tabby Harkness from lowered lids. "Well?"

"You just thought it, Alec!" Harkness said, his voice strained. "All right—all right! Charley did bet and I paid that dough. I was scared to say. Only me knew about the dough and it wasn't found so I thought you'd think I took it—"

Leah moved over to the cot opposite Ed.

"Cigarette," she whispered.

"You knew your groom had won a big bet, didn't you, Mrs. Bole?" Flicht challenged.

"Yes," Leah said. She shook out the match-flame with which she'd been lighting.

Ed Tulane's eyes narrowed. "You told me

you didn't know," he said softly.

"How could I make you understand I'd married him again when I knew he'd never reformed?"

"If you loved him that much it wasn't necessary to make me understand anything." Ed said evenly.

"Ed, you were laying there wounded and helpless, and I could tell in your eyes I'd already hurt you enough," she said desperately. "Ed—look at me. Can't you see that I could have loved Charley but that you were—and are very important to me. Can't you see?"

Ed got unsteadily to his feet. "I see. Like a brother. Lieutenant, can I talk to you alone?"

ONCE on his feet Ed could move pretty well. Flicht preceded him into one corner of the dispensary. "Still think I'm guilty?"

"What do you want?" Flicht parried.

"You ever consider there mightn't have been any money?"

"Now a mechanic is teaching me my job," Flicht said. "I think of everything. Harkness maybe didn't turn in the thirty dollar bet, and when the longshot won there was no money to pay off with. That your notion?"

"Yes," Ed said. Flicht's glance moved past his shoulder. Ed turned, saw Alec come through the door.

"Can I go, Lieutenant?" Alec asked. "I've got some bookwork. Tomorrow's the first and my accounts have to be straight. The Society meets, and—"

"How the ponies treating you, Freel?"

"All right. I play very little. Why?" Alec Freel answered easily.

"Why?" the lieutenant barked. "Why do you think? It's a fact, isn't it, that you bet at the same joint Tabby Harkness works for? And it's a fact you were there Saturday evening, and knew Tabby collected for some client at the shop. And it's a fact you been playing with the funds from that candy route, and today's your last chance to make up the shortage?"

"I place bets at Angelo's, yes. I was there Saturday evening. I seem, even, to recall seeing Tabby," Alec snapped, rubbed his mustache nervously. "But I lose no more than I can afford. My accounts here are in order."

"Pair of you get back in that dorm," Flicht ordered.

Flicht was gone for more than two hours. During that time a plainclothesman had been stationed there, so the Lieutenant apparently considered he had his suspects rounded up. One of them was the killer. Ed tried to get some rest, and to make sense of the attack on him. The purpose seemed to avoid identifica-

tion, which would explain breaking the light as well. But why had the person been hiding around the lockers? Had he known Charley would have money? Had he imagined Charley had already collected that money, and it could be found in his locker?

Lieutenant Flitch was battered and dejected when he re-entered the dormitory. There were smudges on his clothes. The Homburg's perfect crests had been crumpled, smoothed again.

"You're all free," he said. He wiped his neck and forehead, wadded the handkerchief into the breast pocket, sighed. "Cherchez la femme. Only we were thinking about the wrong one. Seems Bole had another kitten on the string—kitten with claws. Sought him out. . . . first demanded a showdown in the machine shop before Ed Tulane's arrival. Then tricked him into a rendezvous in the penthouse over Tabby's elevator."

Ed hung back as the other left the building.

"You're having us trailed. You didn't catch any murderer. You just hope to. How about the money?"

"O. K., wise guy. How about it? Where is it?" Flitch said.

"I can guess," Ed said. "But if I guess right—"

"Come on. Come on. You're no longer suspect. Leah Bole is. But what do you care—?"

Ed opened his lips, shut them without speaking.

Ten minutes later they stepped from the concrete penthouse containing Steel buildings rear elevator machinery. From the roof they could see the rows of foundry buildings to the north, their bright heat seeming remote in the early night. Ed was weak, and his head throbbed after the climb up the steel ladder from the fourth floor. But the wind was sharp and he kept pace with Flitch. The square structure of Tabby Harkness's elevator penthouse loomed ahead as they hurried over gravelled tar. It had seemed advisable to avoid a direct approach to the scene of the murder. Flitch's theory was that the killer would attempt to retrieve the hidden money. If Ed Tulane's guess at the hiding place, was right the three of them might meet.

The last half dozen paces were on tiptoe. Flitch bared his head, pressed his ear to the door for several seconds.

"Stand back," he said. "There's a whining in there—motors, that you can't hear in the wind."

The lieutenant drew a gun from an armpit holster. The door handle was on the right, so Flitch had to hold the weapon in his left. Ed stood a few feet behind as Flitch yanked the door wide. For a paralyzing instant he

stood framed in the light, then stepped over the ledge to the interior. Ed joined him quickly, glanced at the moving drum from which the steel-strand support cable unthreaded steadily. He mounted the raised cement platform in the center of the penthouse on which the big drum was mounted. Ed peered down through the slit.

The freight elevator, its floor occupied by a score of casting-filled steel barrels, was descending. But no one was on it.

"The elevator was started down from the controls here," Ed told Flitch excitedly. "He just left—"

Flitch was already thrusting one leg through the ladder opening cut out of one corner of the floor. Ed let the car run, his eyes avidly following the feeder guide's motion back and forth the length of the drum as steel cable unwound from the great spool. He saw that the car was at the first floor ceiling now. If his theory was right—Ed's breath caught. He saw the edge of what looked like oilcloth appear suddenly as another width of cable left the drum. The car had reached the first floor.

By the time it reached the sub-basement circuit breaker the folded oilcloth lay fully exposed, and wired lightly to the bottom layer of cables. Ed didn't touch it. That was Flitch's job. But there was no doubt in his mind that the protective packet contained the money. There'd be finger prints. He turned toward the ladder opening. And there he froze. Somehow, he'd known it would be like this.

ALEC FREEL'S upper torso was already above floor level. Ed tried to reach him, but Alec made the last three rungs swiftly. He stood straddled, one foot on the ladder, the other on the floor, pointed the gun at Ed's middle.

"Get over to one side, Tulane. I'm taking that dough."

Numbly, Ed moved out of the man's way. He realized Alec had been waiting for Flitch, maybe pulled him off the ladder, got the gun.

"Help yourself," Ed said. "Nothing out of my pocket."

"Get around other side of the drum where I can watch you," Alec snapped, motioning with the gun.

Ed went slowly to the other side, watched Alec begin to unwire the packet with one hand. The candy man kept touching his underlip to his mustache nervously, and his eyes darted from his work to Ed every other half second.

"Short with the Society, Alec? That why?" Ed asked, scarcely aware of what he was saying. Alec was shaky. Scared and dangerous.

"Yes. What the hell you suppose," he said. "Now leave me alone. I'd have made it up.

Only a thousand or so. So now I got me a real stake. I can disappear, change my name, get another job. Hell, easy. I ain't licked."

"You mean just for a little dough like that you committed murder—"

"Shut up, I said. I don't want to talk about it," Alec cried. His eyes were feverish, and his fingers clumsy as he worked with the wires. "I never intended to kill the b-----. I was nuts for dough. So I hit him—knocked him out, grabbed the dough. Then, my God, I look around and he's comin' up that ladder. If he only hadn't come to—if he' only hadn't of known it was me robbed him—"

Ed's eyes narrowed. Alec was babbling, hysterical. The gun waved in excitement. Ed Tulane lunged, both hands grabbing for the gun. Alec sprawled over the round of the drum, losing his balance. He yanked the gun away. Ed's throat clamped, and his heart raced in frenzy. The gun swung down, got Ed's body in line. Ed rolled frantically to one side.

The roar of the first shot was deafening in that enclosure. Ed scrambled on hands and knees, trying to crouch out of range. A second shot. A third. Ed didn't know how many and he didn't know if he was hit or not. He thought he must be. There was no pain at all. Then he saw a drop of blood splash to the floor, absorb instantly. He glanced up shakily.

In terror he saw the gun snout, smoking now and acrid. It was swinging for another try. Alec was leaning over the top of the drum, bracing himself against it with his free hand. Ed Tulane leaped to his feet. In a flash he sent one hand streaking at the control box

mechanism. Unerringly, his finger flipped the "Up" handle. There was a clacking noise as magnetos slapped into contact, and the whine of motors. And, before the other could grasp what was happening, the drum began to revolve.

Alec Freel screamed with pain. Ed Tulane stopped the motors as the pistol thudded to the concrete. Alec lay over the drum in a faint. Dispassionately, Ed looked at the hand pinioned under a single strand of cable. The tons of pressure across that half-inch strip had crushed bone and flesh alike. Ed walked to the ladder, descended. He saw that his own wounded forearm was furrowed less than a quarter inch, when he rolled his sleeve. A scratch, really.

Lt. Fritch was half-reclined at the edge of a steel rack, a few paces from the ladder. With relief Ed heard him groan. Finally he sat up. Ed told him quickly as possible what the situation was, got to the stairs. But he was too weak to go down. He sat on the top step, leaned against the railing, looked out at the dim shapes of racked steel along the deserted floor. It was pleasant thinking how Leah had said how much he meant to her. . . .but not enough. Oddly, he didn't care. Charley Bole was gone, and there didn't seem any reason Ed couldn't have her. Maybe that was the answer. He'd been sort of obsessed because he couldn't have her.

Really, it was a sort of relief. He hadn't been able to appreciate other girls because of that bull-headedness. But no more! And when he found one he wanted she was going to know it. And fast! Ed could give Charley Bole credit, at least, for a couple of damn good lessons.