

**DETECTIVE BOOK MAGAZINE'S
\$2.00 BOOKLENGTH NOVEL**

THE TRIPLE CROSS

by **JOE BARRY**

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HE came to in a hospital, recovering from a bullet-crease. He learned he was Rush Henry, a private dick—and a fast man with a gun, a buck or a gal. It was all a little hard to believe. But, when he walked out into the street and the guns began to bang and the fists went smack and the knives flickered, he saw it didn't make any difference what he thought. He was up to his neck in a bucket of blood and, if he wanted to go on being anybody, his only chance was to make like Rush Henry, a private dick—but fast!

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PORTRAIT OF A MURDERESS

By JOHN D. MacDONALD

DURING THE ROAR OF THE early Manhattan evening, the corpse in the suite in the mid-town hotel had been very still—as is to be expected of corpses. Long after the heart stopped, tiny cells continued to live, dying at last of oxygen starvation. When the last of the cells was dead, it was after midnight. The heels of the polished shoes were on the neutral colored rug. The hips, shoulders and back of the head rested on the hardwood floor, the head nearest the window. The room was dark, and through the night a high advertising sign two hundred feet from the window clicked on and off, casting a faint sporadic gleam on the face and the open eyes.



Tigress-like, she moved along the trail—silent, beautiful and deadly. None knew whom she hunted—least of all the victim, who marked her coming with kindling eyes. To him she only seemed the loveliest prey ever to take his lure!

All learning was gone, all memory, all of the intricate and half-understood mechanisms of the brain.

At four o'clock, when the city was most quiet, the body began to move.

For a long time it had been slack against the floor. The movement began in the fingers. It was not the fluid motion of life. Rather, it was slow and inevitable tightening that is a part of death.

At five o'clock the hands had become fists and had lifted partway toward the chest. The knees had lifted a little over three inches. The morning sounds of the city had begun.

In early death the face had no expression. Contrary to common superstition faces of recently dead have no expression. But, with the tightening of the body, the face also tightened, the corners of the mouth drawing down—and the ignorant would have said the face had assumed a look of terror.

There is no terror in death. Only an unending silence.

At twelve minutes after seven the raised arms and updrawn knees had overbalanced the body so that it rolled over onto one side. In that movement, air, trapped in the lungs, made a wet sigh in the dead throat. It was as though the body had curled up with a sleepy sigh. It was in a foetal position, the position in which it had first come into the world.

Left alone long enough, the body would have once more relaxed. But hotels have maids and rooms must be cleaned and the odds against the body remaining there undisturbed were impossible. No, the body would relax in some other place—a place where they would be curious about the dried foam at the corners of the mouth, the corrosive sublimate that had caused death.

JIM BRANDER

We do one hell of a breakfast business and for guys behind the counter like me, the faces are just a blur. They come and go. You'd think that we'd never get so we'd know a "regular", but we do.

It helps if the "regular" sits in about the same place every morning, and that's what this dolly did. Maybe she perched on the stool six seven times before I see that she's been coming around before.

Then is when I start to smile at her and say good morning to her because that is good business, and besides she is easy to smile at.

Those guys who stand on the corners and drum up business for the excursion buses never try to put the finger on a resident. Somehow they can always pick the strangers in town. You live in New York long enough and you get so you can tell without thinking.

And I knew she was from out of town.

After I took her order a couple of times, I knew she was from out of the country. It was a nice voice. Soft and deep in her throat and it had a little accent on it. My guess was Austrian or Czech or Slav. Something from eastern Europe.

Also, dollies from there have a special look—that is, when they're right. This one was right. Her face was wide across the eyes, and they were grey. But her chin was pointed and she had the sort of mouth that most gals try to make theirs look like by smearing the goo where their lips aren't.

The clothes I don't notice much. They are quiet clothes. But I do notice that there are deep hollows in her cheeks and

at her wrist the bones jut against the white skin and it reminds me of the time my sister got out of the hospital after three months in there.

The eyes, though I like them, have a look in them as if she was all set to duck should I lean across the counter and try to paste her one with the flat of my hand.

A rabbit look, I call it.

Once she was trying to attract my attention. She had to, because on purpose I gave her the wrong order. Finally I looked at her and pointed to the blue embroidery on the lapel of my white coat. It says, "Jim."

She smiled, and it was a shy smile. "Jeem," she said, "Thees is nod whad I ordair, blease. My name ees Ingra."

Just like that. Lots of folks think that anybody working behind a counter is not really human. Just sort of a creature halfway between a dog and a man. They are the type that is chilly with the help. Not Ingra. She wasn't what the limeys call 'matey', but she was pleasant and talked to me as though I were a person.

After that she took to coming in a little bit later when the rush wasn't so bad, and from that I guessed that she wasn't working. She tipped a dime regularly, which is better than the big shots who give you a quarter on Monday and a big smile on Tuesday and Wednesday—coasting on their reputation.

I wondered about Ingra quite a bit. She was weak. She lifted the coffee with two hands she teetered a little when she walked away. But as the weeks went by she seemed to be picking up. She'd always return my smile, but when I looked at her quickly, she had a brooding look on her pretty face.

The figure was fine, I noticed. A shade too thin, but that was gradually improving. Her hair wasn't brown and it wasn't blonde. Something in between, cut quite short with soft curls that looked natural. Maybe they were.

I never got a chance to find out. One day she didn't show up. And she hasn't since. I wonder about her sometimes, and when I go out I watch the crowds hoping that I'll see her. Seems silly, doesn't it?

When, after that trouble with Myra, the resident manager used it as an excuse to break my lease, I couldn't have been more upset. I offered the stupid little man five hundred in cash to forget the whole thing, but he became impertinent. He said a few unpleasant things about the character of men in their thirties who clip coupons for a living and make spectacles of themselves in the tabloids.

I would have struck him except that Gordon, my business manager, had warned me about any more police trouble. I had my things packed and put in storage and I moved into a hotel, telling Gordon that he *must* find me a place.

That was how I came to move into a completely horrid location on Ninety-seventh Street. I thought Gordon was out of his mind when I first saw the ground floor place he had rented and I'm afraid I was quite abusive.

I must admit that I was completely wrong. This is by far the finest place I have ever lived in. And it is miraculously cheap. Of course, the decorators charged a good deal for making the two apartments over into one, but here I have a privacy that I never had at the other places.

Also, it is enormously amusing. The upper floors are full of strange furtive little people who come and go at all hours. I find that my guests think the location is unique. Some of them are considering moving into the neighborhood, but I discourage them, as I think it would spoil the whole arrangement.

Since living here, I have found that in restricting my amatory interest to the women of my own class, I have been depriving myself of a very stimulating woman.

Now I am afraid that I find women like Myra, Beth Ellen and Constance, my ex-wives, creatures of tinsel and diamond dust. Quite brittle and altogether shallow.

Of course, it is rather easy to make mistakes when dealing with an unfamiliar type.

Netta was a mistake. A tall, buxom Italian girl who works in an office. She was great fun at first, and then she began to get quite proprietary, and of course I

can't stand possessive women. Poor Gordon had to handle the details of scaring her away.

One of the most interesting things I have discovered is that the male must sometimes confess failure even when delving into this rather improvident female stratum.

I noticed the second girl one day as I came in. She entered the building at the same time I did. I stood by my door and listened to hear her go up the stairs. She went up to the fourth floor, which is cheapest of all. There are only rooms up there and one kitchen for each floor where cooking is permitted. Until I had the exhaust fan installed in the hall, the cooking odors were sometimes frightful.

I was fancy free, as Gordon had gotten rid of Netta only a day or two previously, and the girl I saw gave me an odd sense of adventure.

Physically, she was not particularly attractive. Hair of no well-defined color. Too thin. A quite fragile look about her. I noticed that her heels were runover, and that her dark clothes had a cheap sheen about them. But I have noticed that I have always been stimulated by frail women. Something of the brute in me, I rather imagine.

Three days later I found out from the janitor, with the aid of a five dollar bill, that her name was Ingra Dvorek, and that she lived alone in room 414. That rather pleased me, as I had pessimistically thought of a husband or a lover.

I cancelled two cocktail parties which I had planned to attend in order to devote myself to a closer survey of the movements of Miss Ingra Dvorek. I soon found that I was not sufficiently adept at following anyone to be able to get away with it. And, of course, my tall and distinctive good looks were against me. Tailing should be done by neutral little men.

With a thrill of excitement, I talked Gordon into hiring an agency man to follow her for three or four days and turn in a detailed report.

WITH trembling hands I opened the report. It was disappointingly short. The man reported that she walked great distances each day, walked slowly

with her eyes on every face. She spent a great deal of time sitting in hotel lobbies, watching the people.

His conclusion was that she was looking for someone and he suspected that she might be a deserted wife who had come to New York in order to find her husband who had been seen by someone here.

Next I had Gordon get a man from one of the better shops. He reported back that the girl would probably wear a size twelve. The next day two suits and three dresses were delivered. I removed the tags and hung them in an empty closet.

Since she usually returned to her room at four thirty to rest for a time before going out again, I was waiting. When she came in, I smiled at her and said, "Miss?"

She stopped. "Yes" A very pleasing accent.

This is presumptuous of me. I realize. But you seem to be about the same size as . . . as a very dear friend of mine who has left me. There are clothes here that she wore hardly at all. New clothes. I was about to call up one of the charities to come and get them, and then I remembered seeing you and . . ."

She frowned. "You wish to give these clothes to me?"

"If you want them. Come in and I will show them to you."

She was hesitant, but I was confident in my knowledge that you can always buy the lower classes with gifts.

I took the clothes from the closet and brought them into the small study where she waited. She fingered the material. "These are very pretty. And they have not been worn. Yes, I would like to have them. You are very kind. I am certain they will fit."

There was no coyness about her. I will not try to duplicate her delicious accent. Close up her skin looked healthy and well-scrubbed. I can't abide unclean women.

Take them, then. I am grateful to get them off my hands," I said.

Her smile was shy and a little . . . frightened. "I can do nothing in return," she said softly.

"Oh, but you can, my dear," I said. "You can stay and have dinner with a

lonely man. That is, if you do not have other plans."

I had previously alerted Clarence, my cook.

She protested at first, and then agreed.

She refused to drink more than one cocktail, and as a result I grew a bit vague when I drank both her share and my own. It was rather a silly thing to do right in the beginning of such a clever campaign. I knew, of course, that it might be quite possible to obtain her favors in a blunter fashion, but I preferred the delicacy of my approach.

I was quite astonished when, after a very pleasant and intimate little dinner, she went over to my piano and played Prokofieff with quite amazing vigor. One meets the strangest individuals in this neighborhood.

To test her, I switched to my rather shaky French, and she answered me fluently, in fact so fluently that I lost some of the sense of her remarks. French idioms have always defeated me.

At nine she said that she had to leave and I allowed her to go without protest after extracting a promise that she would have dinner with me on the following Friday.

Friday night I tried to pump her for information about the past, but she was very deft about changing the subject. She wore one of the new dresses, and looked quite well in it.

After a long silence I said, "Ingra, my dear, whom are you searching for?"

She jumped up and her face was white as death. The wine made a red stain on the table cloth. Her lips looked positively bloodless and she asked, "What do you mean?"

I shrugged and tried to pass it off. "Oh, you struck me as a girl who was looking for someone, that's all."

She sat down slowly, her clenched hands at her breast. She looked at me and said, "No, you could not be one of them."

"One of whom?"

"Nothing. Do not question me, please. I have had enough of questions in my lifetime."

I gave her a cigarette, held the candle so she could light it. Her lips were

quivering so that the end of the cigarette shook.

She smiled, but her eyes didn't smile. "I will not be able to look much longer, Arnold. There will soon be no more money."

It seemed crude to talk of money. I did not show my disgust. I said, "I have a great deal of money, Ingra."

"What are you trying to say?"

I watched her eyes. She did not seem too angry. "Ingra, why don't you move in here with me?"

She butted the cigarette, stood up slowly, put her napkin on the edge of the table. "Goodnight, Mr. Donavan. You have been very kind to me."

She walked toward the door. I caught her at the door, took her quite roughly by the wrist and spun her around. Her eyes flashed.

"Wait," I said. "Apparently I have made a mistake. I am sorry." Then, to my surprise, I heard myself saying, "I know that this search of yours is important to you. I know that you will not come back here. I want to help you. I demand the right. It will make up for . . . my rude assumption."

She looked at me for a few moments. "If it were not so important to me, I would refuse. Yes, I will take any money you wish to give me. If I am ever able, I will return it. But there will be no strings attached. I am a game that you tried to play, Mr. Donavan. You did not happen to know the rules. It is not your fault."

I cannot understand why I felt ashamed. I went to my desk and wrote out a check for five hundred dollars. Without looking at the amount, she slipped it into her purse and said, "Thank you, Arnold."

After the door closed behind her, I sat down. When the man came in to clear the table I fairly snarled at him. Finally I had the answer to my inexplicable action. I had merely been playing a part. Also, it had been the graceful way out of a rather difficult situation.

Though I knew she had slammed her personal door in my face, I sat and began to plan how to recoup the ground I had lost.

The next day Gordon gave me the very devil for giving her a check, saying that it could be photostated and used against me. I assured him that she would do no such thing.

I planned for about a week without finding a scheme that seemed satisfactory. It was near the end of the week that I met Anita, and of course after that I forgot all about the odd little Dvorek woman.

ARTUR KARRIL

Some days it seems to me that never will I become accustomed to life in this entrancing and frightening country.

As it was a pleasant day last Thursday, and the thought of returning to my rather drab little room was unpleasant, I went from my eleven o'clock class over to one of the benches near the river and sat watching the tugs, the warm breeze pleasant on my face.

It was the sort of day when all women are beautiful.

I saw her walking slowly toward me, and there was something faintly familiar about her face. Just faintly. She did not look entirely well. As it would be rude to stare longer, I looked away.

To my astonishment she stopped by my bench. I looked up and her eyes were wide, her mouth trembling.

"Are you Artur Karril?" she asked, her voice hoarse. And she asked in the language of my homeland.

"Who are you?" I demanded. "I am Artur Karril."

She sat heavily on the bench, swaying, her eyes almost shut. I had to support her so that she would not topple off. When she could speak, she said, "I am . . . Ingra Dvorek."

I gasped with astonishment. It seemed beyond belief that here, in this great city, in this foreign country, I should meet one with whom I had played as a child.

Her home had been but two doors from mine, in the small community which was a satellite to the great university. Alas, it is no longer great. Her father and mine had taught at the university, Dr. Dvorek

had taught philosophy. My father had been a mathematician.

In 1938, when the threat of war put fear in the hearts of all the little people of Europe, Ingra had been thirteen or fourteen. I was sixteen. She had been a fat child, sun-browned, sturdy and laughing, giving but small promise of womanhood.

We had had the good years of childhood. The happy years. Those who were born in 1938 were not so fortunate, those that lived.

For a time we sat very still, my hand tight on her cold hand, looking out to where the busy tugs hooted in the river.

Between us there was the memory of the happy years, and the memory of the black years.

"I thought you were dead, Ingra," I said softly.

"And I thought the same of you, Artur," she said.

War had come into our childhood. The country had been conquered with pathetic quickness. But the war did not end there. You will do only these permitted things and you will say only those permitted things and you will think exactly as we tell you. We encourage you to betray each other.

"What of . . . your family?" she asked.

I had thought the tears were gone and that I had become a man. But they stung my eyes once more. There had been five of us. Two sisters. My sisters had not died easily. I was the only one left. We had been secure for seven months after the country had fallen. My father had thought he was working for the good of all men when he had joined the secret group established among the faculty called Friends of Democracy. I remembered that Ingra's father had been a member too. When the secret police obtained a copy of the membership list, our false security collapsed.

Each member was shot. The family of each member was sent to the great camp which brooded on the meadows where the cows had once grazed. For a short time Ingra and her mother had been in the same camp. Then I had been moved to a labor camp.

In weak and hesitant voices we began to talk of the black days—and the words which were not spoken meant more than the words we spoke. I could smell the stench of the tall chimneys that rose from the cremation ovens. I could hear the angry chatter in the night of the gun that smashed the bones and flesh of those who tried escape as a quick way to die.

At last she told me that she was legally in the United States, having been admitted under the quota. I explained about the courses I was taking at Columbia and about my efforts to become a citizen.

"We do best when we forget those times," I said.

Her eyes were suddenly cold. "There are some things you cannot forget," she said. She gave me an odd look, and laughed in an artificial way. I began to wonder if she were slightly mad. She said, "We will talk of the funny things of the old life. Whatever happened to Gustaf Lehar?"

I smiled. Gustaf had been funnier before the invader arrived than he had after they had elevated him to a high position in the university.

He had been a figure of fun. A pouty little man with a great voice and a habit of combing his hair down over his forehead in a way remotely like that animal who roared in Berlin.

Gustaf had a minor position in the physical geography department, and he had adopted all the tag words of geopolitics, which he roared at all occasions.

In the small faculty community, one of the favorite sports was to poke fun at Gustaf Lehar. Gustaf was eager for promotion, but the rules of the university required that all promotions had to be approved by a committee. Both Ingra's father and mine were on the promotion committee. They regularly denied the promotions, and it was well that they did, as men of the type of Gustaf Lehar can only bring ultimate discredit on reputable institutions of learning. As Ingra mentioned him, I remembered his great voice, his sparkling fanatical eyes, the fat clumsiness of his body and his expansive gestures.

During the quiet seven months Gustaf flourished as an ardent National Socialist, even wearing the uniforms of some ob-

scure branch of the civil service as set up by the invader. We heard much later that the purge of the members of the Friends of Democracy had so denuded the faculty that Gustaf rose with great rapidity.

He was no longer a figure of fun.

After the successful invasion of Europe, Gustaf Lehar began to make statements that must have been offensive to the ears in Berlin. But his timing was good. Germany fell before he could be punished.

When the Russians advanced, Lehar vacated his post as president of the university and fled to the U. S. zone of occupied Germany, and was received as a fighting liberal who had labored against the Nazi pack, thus once more becoming a funny spectacle to those who knew of his previous history. Of course, there were not many of those persons left.

I smiled with Ingra and said, "Yes, the Herr Doktor Lehar is now finally in New York."

Her smile was something that had been painted on a wooden face. Her eyes looked quite mad.

I talked quickly, not looking at her face. "Yes, he has anglicised his name, you know. He does quite a bit of lecturing. Rotary Clubs. That sort of thing. His new name August Lewis."

It was time for my twelve o'clock class. I explained that I had to go, and I gave her my address. She wrote it down. She had become a lovely woman, but there was something odd about her. Something . . . savage.

We agreed to meet that evening at the same bench. I hurried away. I looked back once and saw her sitting quietly on the bench, almost as though she planned to remain in that spot until I returned, sometime.

But when I went back there in the evening, she was not there. I waited for nearly three hours. I cursed myself for failing to get her address.

Every day I go to the same bench and wait for her, both at the time of day when I met her and the time of evening that we had set.

Somehow it has become the most important thing in the world to me that I see her again. Soon.

This personal journal is the focal point of the conflict within me. I recognize that to trust my innermost thoughts to the written page constitutes an incredible danger. Yet without this catharsis of self-expression, without this laying bare of my soul, not only will I fail to find peace, but I will also fail to leave with posterity any coherent record of my life as necessity has often forced me to act in apparent contradiction to my innermost motives.

I reaffirm here my shining belief that we live in an area where the strong man survives and the weak fall. The temporary victory of the decadent democracies in World War II, which they foolishly believe to be over, is but a momentary setback. The survival of ruthlessness is one of the few truisms on which we can depend.

Ruthlessness must often be secretive.

Yesterday a young woman called on me. Her face meant nothing, but her name brought back the stupid and childish fears which I have never been able to discard.

I fear that I am too soft, too sentimental. Many men have died bravely on the scaffold during these last two years. They caused thousands upon thousands of deaths. I caused but a few. They died without fear, died with their hand upraised, palm outward in salute to our fallen Leader.

Yet I cringe because of the death of a few miserable little academic minds, minds steeped in the traditional conservatism of those years prior to my assumption of control of the university in which they worked. No man should feel remorse at having taken life from their sneering souls, taken the breath from the mouths that laughed at me—Gustaf Lehar. I sometimes wonder if laughter was not their greatest sin—and their most effective weapon.

For a time I was afraid. I, Gustaf Lehar, afraid of a girl! For she bore the name of Dvorek. I had thought that none of that brood escaped.

I received her in my study, the desk drawer open a fraction of an inch, the dark gleam of the Luger close at hand. For one never knows the depths of violence possible to those shattered minds

which survived the barbed wire, the starvation, the cannibal hunger.

But, of course, I was wrong. It was stupid of me to assume that since my coup had gone undiscovered nine years ago when she was but a child, there had been any way for her to discover the truth.

After fear faded in the glow of her warm humility, after I had pushed the drawer shut, I saw that she was quite attractive, though much thinner than I would have liked to have had her.

Her eyes were enormous and quite luminous.

"A long time has passed, Herr Doktor Lehar," she said softly.

I advised her that my name had been changed to August Lewis and that I used the name Gustaf Lehar only for my lecture tours. I did not explain that I had thought the change of name advisable because of the remote possibility of any of my enemies escaping from that mad dog cauldron which is post-war Europe.

She sat and smiled at me and for a long time we talked quietly of the things that had happened before the great conflict. She told how she hated so badly to be sent to bed early when the faculty parties were held at her father's house.

I had attended those same parties, treated always with condescension and mild amusement. Would they have altered their attitude toward me had they known the future? Of course. All of them were shallow opportunists.

My native tongue fell pleasantly on my ears as spoken by her soft young lips. By mutual unspoken consent, we did not speak of the years that came later. They were good years for me, but bad for her.

She spoke to me as though I were one of her country's great patriot. Her admiration was flattering, and for a little time she had me wishing that I was in fact what she believed me to be.

She is utterly charming, and while I talked to her, I slowly made up my mind that here would be the final sweet for me at the end of the long meal of life. I have many years to go, and they will be pleasant if I provide them with the warm young flesh of a girl of my own country.

A dish which is entirely sweet would

grow tiresome. But I will not tire of her, because her beauty will be spiced with an old betrayal. I will have this woman, and she will never know that it was I, Gustaf Lehar, who added the name of her father and the names of the other stultified grey-beards to the list which fell into my hands the list of the foolish young instructors in the Friends of Democracy.

In adding those names I cleared the air of the great university, made vacancies which I was later able to fill with the names of strong young men of brave political faith.

It amused me to have her looking at me with such evident admiration, and I must confess that I enjoyed listening to her flattery.

Once she startled me by mentioning the name of a man who was once a friend. Then he became politically unreliable and was, of course, sent to a concentration camp. When I saw that I could not help him, I tried to have him killed instead, as he knew something of the false list. But I was unsuccessful.

When she mentioned his name, I asked her where she had seen him.

She said that she had held his hand as he died. I then asked her if this man had talked of his past life, of the days of freedom. She said that certain things had been done to his mouth and his brain that made it impossible for him to talk.

I tried not to show my relief.

One would think that after all these years, I would feel more confident of my ability to conceal my feelings.

I must continually keep in mind that I am one of those trusted few in whom the Leader confided. It was he who urged me to speak out against him, thus guaranteeing myself immunity from the reprisals of the victorious governments. To the Leader I owe this life in America, this chance to continue his work.

Yes, this Ingra Dvorek will resist me very little. It pleases me to think that I will own, utterly and completely, the child of one of those men who for so many years kept me in the darkness of obscurity.

She promised to return here tomorrow night at nine. There will be wine, music, memory . . . and love.

LT. WILLIAM C. O'DELL

Joe:

This is the informal report you wanted on the Lewis case. Since you can get most of the dope from the official reports, I'll keep this fairly short. I wouldn't want to put this sort of guff in an official report.

I worked with Sergeant Arnelli, the district man.

It was three days before we got a line on the Dvorek girl, and we were lucky to get that far. August Lewis had scribbled her name on a scratch pad on his desk, but he had used a pencil and we got the impression of the blank sheet.

Steve Arnelli and I found her mooning around in a room way uptown (address in official report) and we put the pressure on her.

In short she had heard from a fellow named Artur Karril that this August Lewis, real name Gustaf Lehar, was in town. Seems like this Lehar came from the same town as Karril and the girl. Lehar had taught at the university along with the fathers of both Karril and the girl.

We picked up Karril and he backed her up a hundred percent. We took her to the hotel and she was identified. She admitted going to see August Lewis-Lehar twice. The night he died was her second visit. She had an appointment at nine to "talk over old times."

The Dvorek woman claimed that Lewis-Lehar acted nervous and upset and jumpy. She said he kept glancing at his watch. He gave her wine out of the glasses we found on the table by the window. She said she left because he seemed so nervous.

I let Steve Arnelli work her over and you know how good he is at that game. He has such a soft way about him that they spill twice as fast.

Steve didn't break her down worth a damn. Then Steve went to work on Artur Karril, who is a clean-cut young guy and nobody's dummy. I guess by the time Steve got through with the two of them, he knew as much about that little town as if he'd lived here all his life. Both the Dvorek woman and Karril had a pretty rough time during the long years of the war before they were liberated.

Arnelli was working himself into the ground. You knew, didn't you, that his brother was OSS working with the partisans in North Italy during the war? His brother is buried up there.

Well, we weren't getting anywhere and then Steve found that diary you mentioned over the phone. It was in a trick compartment in Lewis-Lehar's desk. Steve found it late at night and spent the night reading it, with the help of a foreign language dictionary.

I guess it was tough work because when Steve brought the diary in to me the next morning he looked like hell. When he gave it to me he said that the last few pages of it were missing, and that he hadn't been able to find them.

As you read in the papers, Joe, that diary proved Lewis-Lehar to be one of the biggest Nazis of them all. The diary was turned over to the War Crimes Commission because it incriminates a lot of other characters.

That gave me the revenge motive. I figured that this Karril and Dvorek had been evening up an old score. But Steve told me that I was wrong as hell. After all, he had questioned them, and he was willing to state that the two of them had nothing but admiration for Lewis-Lehar—nothing but respect.

His theory was that Gustaf Lehar had committed suicide because of fear of the past catching up with him. And from the diary, he had plenty of reason to fear it. The diary starts after he was made president of the university.

There was no real reason to think of murder, any more than there was to think of suicide. Steve Arnelli suggested that the pages torn out and destroyed carried

some record of somebody about to catch up with him.

Anyway, we got together and made our suicide recommendation and it was accepted. Even that new smart punk from you-know-which office went along with the boss on it.

Now I come to the sixty-four dollar question you asked over the phone. And I guess I'll have to answer it by saying I don't know. I really don't know if there was any connection between the Lewis case and Steve Arnelli's resignation.

But I'm sure you did the right thing. Steve may be a little sensitive and he may get too wound up in all his cases, but he is one hell of a good cop. I would be a loss to the department.

I'm pretty certain that by the time the three months is over, Steve will be willing to come back on the cops. He'd be lost anywhere else.

By the way, he's looking better the last couple of weeks. He's gotten rid of that hollow-eyed look he had after he found that diary.

And you'll never guess where I saw the joker. At a wedding! Yep, old Stevie was right there. I had a hunch that Artur Karril and the Dvorek girl would get married, so I wasn't too surprised when Steve picked me up and took me over to the church.

But you could have knocked me over with a pinfeather when they lined up and Karril turned out to be best man. When they get back from the trip, I'll put the pressure on Ingra to get her husband to come back on the cops when his leave is up.

She's a pretty nice gal, Joe. I want you to meet her.