

# ONE STEP AHEAD

We've been trying desperately to keep up with the newsstand demand for *Manhunt*, but—we're happy to say—*Manhunt* readers have always been one step ahead of us.

We printed 600,000 copies of our first issue, and we boosted the printing to 800,000 for our second issue, but there remained a great many newsdealers who ran out and who were forced to disappoint their customers.

We don't want this to happen to you.

We've decided, therefore, to extend our original subscription offer to make certain you'll get each and every issue of *Manhunt* as soon as it leaves the presses. Just fill in the coupon on page 38, send it together with your check or money order for \$4.00, and the next twelve jam-packed issues will come direct to your door.

Mail your  
subscriptions to:  
MANHUNT  
545 Fifth Avenue  
New York, New York

VOL. 1, NO. 4

# MANHUNT

APRIL, 1953

## CONTENTS

### SERIAL

EVERYBODY'S WATCHING ME — Part IV

*By Mickey Spillane* . . . . . Page 120

### NOVELETTES

ONE LITTLE BULLET *by Henry Kane* . . . . . Page 1  
*A Peter Chambers story*

THE BLUE SWEETHEART *by David Goodis* . . . . Page 102

THE G-NOTES *by Robert Patrick Wilmot* . . . . Page 65

### SHORT STORIES

FAN CLUB *by Richard Ellington* . . . . . Page 48  
*A Steve Drake story*

MUGGER MURDER *by Richard Deming* . . . . . Page 85

KID KILL *by Evan Hunter* . . . . . Page 93

BE MY GUEST *by Robert Turner* . . . . . Page 39

BIG TALK *by Kris Neville* . . . . . Page 31

SHAKEDOWN *by Roy Carroll* . . . . . Page 57

### SPECIAL FEATURE

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT? *by Shepherd Kole* . . . Page 100

Editor—JOHN McCLOUD

Managing Editor — E. A. TULMAN

Art Director — CHAS. W. ADAMS

Business Manager — R. E. DECKER

MANHUNT • Volume 1, Number 4, April, 1953. Single copies 35 cents. Subscriptions, \$4.00 for one year in the United States and Possessions; elsewhere \$5.00 (in U. S. funds) for one year. Published monthly by Flying Eagle Publications, Inc. (an affiliate of St. John Publishing Company), 545 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, New York. Telephone MU 7-6623. Application for second class entry is pending at the Post Office, New York, New York. The entire contents of this issue are copyrighted 1953 by Flying Eagle Publications, Inc. (an affiliate of St. John Publishing Company), under the International Copyright Convention. All rights reserved under Inter-American Copyright Convention. Title registered U. S. Pat. Office. Reproduction or use, without express permission, of editorial or pictorial content in any manner is prohibited. Postage must accompany manuscripts and drawings if return is desired, but no responsibility will be assumed for unsolicited materials. Manuscripts and art work should be sent to Manhunt, 545 Fifth Avenue, New York 17, New York. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons and/or institutions appearing in this magazine and those of any living or dead person or institution is intended and any similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. Printed in the U. S. A.



## *A Novelette*

THICK sticky heat came gushing from the Indian Ocean, closed in on Ceylon, and it seemed to Clayton that he was the sole target. He sat at the bar of a joint called Kroner's on the Colombo waterfront, and tried vainly to cool himself with gin and ice. It was Saturday night and the place was mobbed, and most of them needed baths. Clayton told himself if he didn't get out soon, he'd suffocate. But he knew he couldn't walk out. If he walked out, he'd be killed.

It was a weird paradox. A man who feared violent death would never come near Kroner's, let alone sit at the bar with his back to the tables. The place was a hangout for agents who dealt in violence, a magnet for thugs and muggers and professional murderers. They'd tackle any job for money or its equivalent in opium, and because they had nothing to lose they were afraid of nothing. Except

# *The Blue Sweetheart*

BY DAVID GOODIS

*A glittering stone and a beautiful blonde — and Hugen wanted them both;  
wanted them badly enough to kill for them.*

one element. The element was Kroner.

And Kroner was Clayton's friend, the only friend he had. That was why he felt safe here. Two days ago he'd managed to sneak in from the interior of Ceylon, had told Kroner about the blue treasure, the huge sapphire he'd found in the earth. Kroner had smiled and said he already knew about it. This kind of news traveled fast in Colombo.

Kroner hadn't asked to see the sapphire. He wasn't interested in sapphires. He placed a premium on friendship, he always said, and his prime concern was the welfare of his friends. Built short and wide and completely bald, the fifty-year-old Dutchman was a quiet-spoken man whose sentimental nature was a soft veneer. Under it, there were rock-hard muscles and the ferocity of a water-buffalo.

He'd given Clayton a room upstairs, and promised to make arrangements for passage on the next available boat out of Colombo. Until that was accomplished, he emphasized, Clayton must stay here and not worry and not do anything foolish.

Clayton wondered if he could handle the latter item. In the course of his life he'd made countless impulsive moves, some of them absurdly foolish. Now, at twenty-nine, his appetite for danger was tempered with a grim hunger to stay alive.

He was a medium-sized man, built like a fast welterweight, the build

nicely balanced for power and agility. A long time back he'd boxed professionally, and his face showed it. But despite the marks, it was a face that women liked to look at. They didn't seem to mind the broken nose and the scar tissue above the eyes. And Alma used to put her lips against the scars, and when she did it, she purred. He was remembering the sound of it, the way she purred. His mouth hardened with bitter memory.

He leaned across the bar and told Kroner to sell him another drink. As Kroner poured the gin, a hand came down on Clayton's shoulder. It came down like a feather, settling gently. Clayton turned slowly on the bar stool and saw the shiny smiling face of the Englishman.

The Englishman's name was Dodsley and he was a greasy whiskered derelict of some forty-odd years. He was a crumpled slob who took opium but managed to control it enough so that he was coherent at intervals. Now his face showed his thoughts were in order and Clayton knew what was coming. Dodsley's profession was displayed in his glowing eyes. He was an agent for anyone who wished to obtain gems, whether it meant purchase, swindle or downright theft.

The Englishman went on smiling. It seemed he was carefully choosing his first words. He waited another moment, then said, "They say it's a very big stone. They tell me it's almost two hundred carats."

Clayton didn't say anything.

"May I see it?"

"No," Clayton said.

"I can't make an offer unless I see it."

"It isn't for sale," Clayton said. He turned to face the bar and focus on the gin.

He heard the Englishman breathing behind him, and then the voice saying, "You found the stone near Anuradhapura, at the Colonial mines. My client is part-owner of the mines. I think you know who my client is, and I'm sure you understand his business methods —"

"That's enough," Clayton cut in. Again he was facing the Englishman. "The stone is my property. I didn't find it in the mine area. I picked it up in the hills at least three miles away from their land holdings."

Dodsley shrugged. "There were witnesses."

"Of course there were witnesses. They flocked around like hungry hyenas. But they went away when I showed them the gun. It's a neat little gun. I always have it with me and I always keep it loaded."

"The gun is not important," Dodsley said. "This is a legal matter. They said you were working at the mines —"

Clayton was grinning and shaking his head. "I quit the mines two weeks before I found the stone. Got checking-out papers to prove it." The grin faded as he went on, "Just tell your client about the gun. Tell him I'm always ready to use it."

The Englishman looked up at the ceiling and sighed. It was a mixture of sad prophecy and ruthless pronouncement. It caused Clayton to stiffen, and he was thinking of Dodsley's client.

He was thinking of a man named Rudy Hagen. It was Hagen who'd booted him out of Colombo more than a year ago. And it was Hagen who'd taken Alma from him. The memory of it seared his brain.

Now it came back, cutting hard and deep. He was in Hagen's private office again in the warehouse on the waterfront. He was broken and bleeding at Hagen's feet. And Alma was in Hagen's arms, looking down at him as though he were mud. As they dragged him to the door to throw him out, he heard the laughter. He didn't feel the rough hands of Hagen's men. He felt only the ripping pain of hearing the laughter. It was like acid, and it came burning into him from Alma's lips.

He could hear it again in his brain. He quivered with rage. He was telling himself to leap off the stool and run out of here and race along the docks to Hagen's place, and let it happen any way it was going to happen. Just then he heard the soft whistle.

He moved his head and saw the warning gesture. It was Kroner's finger going from side to side. And Kroner's eyes were saying, "Don't do it, be sensible."

Clayton took a deep breath. He turned to Dodsley. His voice was

calm and level. "Tell Hagen to leave me alone and I'll leave him alone. I'm willing to forget what he did to me. All he did was take some little stones and a woman. As far as I'm concerned, *everything* he took was junk."

He shoved Dodsley and the Englishman bumped into a table where a bearded Hindu gave him another shove. It became a succession of shoves that sent Dodsley all the way to the door. Kroner was there at the door, waiting for him, smacking the back of his head to make the exit emphatic. Clayton tossed off the remainder of the gin and went up to his room.

The knocking was a parade of glimmering blue spheres bouncing in blackness. He opened his eyes and the spheres were gone but the blackness stayed there. Then he heard the knuckles rapping against the door.

The gun was under the mattress and he reached for it, found it, released the safety catch and quickly hauled himself out of bed.

Outside the room a voice said, "It's me, Kroner."

He switched on the light and opened the door. Kroner saw the gun in his hand and nodded approvingly.

Clayton yawned. "What time is it?"

"Past three. She's downstairs."

He stared at the Dutchman. He said, "Send her up." He said it automatically, without thinking.

Kroner sighed. He didn't say any-

thing. He waited there in the doorway. His eyes told Clayton it would be a serious mistake to let her enter this room.

Clayton's mouth hardened. He could feel the challenge of her presence on the floor below. He spoke louder. "You heard what I said. Send her up."

"Now?"

"Right now."

"Don't you want time to shave? Look at you. You aren't even dressed."

"The hell with that. She'll see me the way I am."

Kroner sighed again, backed out of the room, and closed the door. Clayton lit a cigarette and stood staring at himself in the wall mirror. His hair was a black storm on his head and he had a two-day growth on his face and all he wore was a pair of shorts. But then, still focusing on the mirror, he wasn't seeing his unkempt appearance. He was seeing something beyond the mirror. Again his brain made the tortuous journey along the paths of bitter memory.

It was three years ago and he was meeting her for the first time. They had a few drinks and then she told him to let it ride and forget about her. She said it was just a matter of cold cash and he didn't have it and that put him out of the picture.

But he knew she wasn't a professional, and he begged her to explain. So then she told him about it, the husband who'd been killed in the

Okinawa campaign, a series of hard knocks, one or two crackups and finally the decision to put money ahead of anything else.

And even though her eyes were saying it wasn't money now, he made up his mind to get the money. Then came two years of trying to get it, digging for sapphire in the hills, coming back with empty hands. But his arms were never empty. Alma was always there to meet him. They never talked about money.

Then, a year ago, he'd come back from the hills with some stones of fairly decent size. It wasn't a fortune. but it meant enough money so he could ask her to marry him. On the night of his arrival in Colombo, she wasn't in the bus depot to meet him. He waited an hour, two hours and she didn't show. He called her apartment and she wasn't there and his eyes had hardened as he thought of Rudy Hagen.

Hagen had always been in the picture, flitting in and out of it like the shadow of a vulture. And now Hagen was saving him the trouble of walking to the waterfront and moving in for a showdown.

A Rolls Royce arrived at the depot and a few men got out and told him he was wanted in Hagen's office and they'd be glad to drive him there. He took one look at their faces and realized that the news of his sapphires had preceded him to Colombo. He took another look and knew there was no use. He shrugged and climbed into the Rolls Royce.

Hagen made it brief and blunt. The gems were Hagen's property. The stones had been found on land holdings of which Hagen was part owner. Clayton wasn't listening. He was looking at Alma. She had her hand on Hagen's shoulder, and Hagen's arm was around her waist.

When he lunged at Hagen, it had nothing to do with the sapphires. And later, when he was tossed out of the office, a sack of bleeding meat, he didn't hear the clinking sound of the stones in Hagen's hand. All he heard was a woman's laughter, a disdainful laugh that told him he'd been played for a sucker.

Now, a year later, he stood before the mirror and saw his lips moving and heard himself saying, "God damn her."

But when the door opened, his body seemed to melt and the fire came into his eyes. It was the fire that always leaped up at the sight of her.

She was dazzling. She had the kind of face that couldn't be captured with camera or paint-brush. Only the living flesh could show the perfection of eyes and nose and lips. Her hair was platinum, and her skin had the softness of camellia petals. The slender elegance of her body was sheathed in pale green satin, cut low in front to display the cleavage of her breasts. She had exquisite breasts. Everything about her was perfect, her shoulders and her belly and her hips and her thighs.

He was making an effort to steady

himself. He tried not to look at her. He said, "You here on business?"

"Strictly."

"If that's a business outfit you're wearing, I got a few dollars ain't busy."

She didn't even flinch. She was like a clever boxer neatly slipping a right-hand smash to the jaw. "I'll do the buying," she said very softly. She helped herself to one of his cigarettes, lit it and took a long drag and let it go way down. As it came up and out of her lips, she was smiling at him. "May I see the stone?"

"No." Then he looked at her. "I didn't show it to Dodsley and I won't show it to you. And tell Hagen to stop sending representatives. If he wants to know what it looks like, I'll let him see it. But he'll have to phone for an appointment."

She was quiet for some moments. When she spoke, her voice was calm and level. "Let's leave Hagen out of this. The only buyer I'm representing is myself."

"You?" He was caught off balance. But then his eyes narrowed and he said, "Where's your money?"

She was carrying a small kidskin handbag. Her fingers tapped the side of it. "In here," she murmured. "I think it's enough for a down payment."

Then she opened the bag and took out a roll of bills. They were thousand-dollar bills and as she leafed through the roll, he counted twenty of them.

His eyes remained narrow and he

said, "The full price is three hundred thousand."

She smiled dimly. "Rather expensive." Then the smile went away and she said, "I'll have the balance here tomorrow."

The roll of bills was extended toward him but he made no move to take it. He was watching her eyes. Finally he shook his head slowly and said, "No sale."

"Why not?"

He laughed at her. "You think I'm stupid or something? You give me the twenty, I give you the stone, and then you hand it over to Hagen. That's as far as it would go." The laugh became sour and jagged. "Tell Hagen to think of a better scheme."

"This isn't a scheme, and Hagen knows nothing about it." She took a deep breath. "I'll show you Hagen's scheme. Here's the method he wants me to use."

She reached into the handbag and took out a small automatic revolver.

Clayton tensed himself.

But the gun wasn't pointed at him. She held it loosely, did nothing more than display it, then let it fall into the handbag. She inserted the roll of bills in the bag, closed the bag and tossed it onto the bed. In almost the same gesture she pointed toward the window, indicating that Clayton should take a look outside.

He hurried across the room and peered through the blinds. Outside a man was waiting in the street below. He saw the greasy face and sloppy white suit of Dodsley.

He turned and looked at her.

Her voice was low. "It would have been so easy," she said. "The gun would have forced you to give me the stone. But Hagen's plan went further than that. He wanted me to shoot you dead, then go to the window and throw the stone to Dodsley. I'd be waiting here when the police arrived. My dress would be torn and I'd tell them I did it only to protect myself. And of course I'd know nothing about a sapphire."

Clayton was quiet for some moments. Finally, he said, "An old idea, but a good one. And I'm sure it would have worked. Why didn't you use it?"

Her eyes tried to penetrate the stoniness of his face. "Can't you answer that?"

"There's more than one answer. You're a shrewd operator."

"At times," she admitted. "At other times I'm a woman."

She was moving toward him. His brain reeled with the thought *I want her, I want her*. And then the ice-cold thought, *I don't trust her*. And finally the snarling decision, *Damn her, I can play this just as cheap as she can*.

The platinum hair came nearer. He stood there waiting, watching the parted lips, watching her tongue moisten them. He felt the mild caress of her breath against his face, and suddenly he found her in his arms, and her lips crushed against his mouth. His hands followed the smooth curve of her back, and he breathed

deeply of her hair, drugged with the nearness of her. He didn't see the clock that said *Now* and the bed that said *Here*. He was aware only of her closed eyes, the swell of her breasts against his chest, the warmth of her. He was swept outward and away from the boundaries of reality and yet somehow he knew this wasn't a dream, it was something he had waited for and hungered for and it was happening . . .

The warmth left him too soon. He felt the steely grin forming on his lips again. He watched her adjust her skirt, smoothing it over her hips, watched the long flash of thigh as she got to her feet.

"Before you go downstairs, you better fix your mouth," he said. "You need new lipstick."

It wasn't the words. It was the look on his face. She stared at him incredulously. "Is . . . is that all you can say? After . . . after . . . haven't I proved . . . ?" She stopped, choking on the words.

Clayton said, "You've proved you're a filthy tramp. Now get out."

"Clayton —" She sobbed it.

He had turned away. "Go on, get the hell out of here."

He was facing a wall. He heard her moving toward the door, and the door opening and closing. Minutes passed, and he stood there gazing vacantly at the wall. Gradually he began to think about taking a bath. He felt dirty and he told himself he really needed a bath.



Showered and shaved and wearing clean linen and a freshly pressed suit, he stood at the bar and watched Kroner tilting the bottle. Kroner poured with a seemingly clumsy motion but the gin came up to the edge of the glass and stopped right there. Clayton reached for the glass, lifted it, spilled some of the gin, and shot the rest down his throat. He extended the empty glass and mumbled, "Another."

"You can't hold another."

"I said give me another."

Kroner poured it. They were alone in the place except for two drunken natives who had fallen asleep and were stretched out on the floor like a couple of dead men. A dirty-faced clock above the bar indicated twenty minutes past four. The small window behind the bar showed that it was still dark outside.

"Almost morning," Kroner commented. He watched Clayton. "You want me to help you upstairs?"

"I'm not going upstairs." Clayton emptied the glass. He looked at the Dutchman. "How much have I had?"

"Plenty," Kroner said. "It's a wonder your legs can hold you up."

"Let me buy you one."

"My dear Clayton, you know I never touch liquor."

"You mean liquor never touches you. Nothing ever touches you."

Kroner looked hurt. "Friendship touches me. It means more than jewels to me. I'm thinking only of your welfare and I beg you to take

my advice. Go up to your room and stay there. And tomorrow, if I can manage it, you'll be on a boat."

Clayton wasn't listening. He was reaching toward the wide pocket of his jacket and feeling the bulk of the revolver. His fingers went up along the short barrel, onto the chamber and past the trigger-guard and finally grasped the thick butt. Then he let go of the revolver and took his hand from the pocket. He looked to see if his hand was shaking. He saw that his fingers were steady. He said, "The eyes always tell the truth." And then, slowly and softly, "I'm going out for a walk. I want to take a look at something."

He moved away from the bar, heading toward the door leading to the street. When he arrived at the door, Kroner was there to block his path. The Dutchman was a wide thick wall of beef, the arms spread out, the fat face glimmering with sweat.

"My friend —" Kroner pleaded.

Clayton smiled wearily. "You're in my way."

"My very dear friend," Kroner said. "Please try to be logical. If you walk out of here, you'll be playing into Hagen's hands. His men are posted all along the waterfront, waiting for you —"

Clayton went on smiling, his eyes aiming past the Dutchman and focused on the door.

"Please," Kroner said thickly. "The important thing is to stay alive."

Then they were looking at each other and Clayton was saying, "I don't have time to write out a will. But if I don't come back, the sapphire belongs to you. You'll find it in a cardboard box stuffed in the head-side of the mattress."

He took a step toward the door. Kroner did not budge. Kroner said, "I'm very sorry, but I cannot allow you to leave."

Clayton shrugged. And he sighed. Then rather gently he pushed at Kroner's chest with his left hand, chopped short and hard with his right and caught the Dutchman on the jaw. Kroner sagged and went to the floor, stretched out prone and motionless.

Clayton opened the door and walked out. He was met with a flood of very hot and syrupy air coming in from the Indian Ocean.

Lights blinked against the oily black surface of the Colombo harbor. On the waterfront it was quiet except for the steady lapping of little waves coming in to caress the docks. Clayton moved close to the piers, his head working like something in a socket, his eyes studying the darkness that seemed to revolve around him.

Then he was in a narrow alley between a splintered pier and the thick concrete walls of a British cotton warehouse. He came out of the alley and started a turn that would take him toward Hagen's private office. There was a light in the window,

and the light seemed to beckon and he hurried forward. He'd taken only a few footsteps when he heard the sound behind him.

He pivoted and stared and saw them. Two of them. They were coming in fast, and as they came closer he saw the mashed noses and thick lips of dock ruffians who made their living with their muscles and their twisted brains. One of them had a knife and the other carried a short club. Clayton took the gun out of his pocket, released the safety catch and aimed the gun and then decided to try it without bullets. The bullets would make too much noise. It would bring Hagen and his men out of the office, and that would ruin it. He told himself he hadn't come here to fight or kill, but just to learn something, to prove something to himself.

The thugs hadn't seen the gun, they were concentrating on their own target. As they lunged, Clayton sidestepped and brought the gun-butt crashing against the skull of the man nearest him. The man went down like a toppled statue. The other man let out a curse and forgot Hagen's orders not to use the knife for killing, and slashed the blade toward Clayton's throat. Clayton stepped back, wielding the gun so that the butt hit the man's wrist. There was the cracking sound of splintered bone. The man opened his mouth to yell, and Clayton rushed in and used the gun like a hammer on the man's mouth. The

man went to his knees, spitting blood and teeth and choking on more blood. Clayton gave him a rap on the temple that knocked him flat and put him to sleep.

The sign above the lit window read *Rudolph Hagen Co., Ltd.* Under the printed words there was a painted symbol of a jeweler's eye-piece, framed in the curving lines of elephant-tusks. This meant that Rudy Hagen was a dealer in gems and ivory and any kind of treasure he could get his hands on. Hagen had extremely large hands and Clayton was looking at them now.

He was crouched at the wall and looking through the window and focusing on Hagen's hands resting on a teakwood table. The thick fingers were stretched, showing the two rings, a large cat's eye and a larger opal. Clayton studied the hands for some moments, and then his gaze went up to the face.

Hagen had brutish good looks, the heavy features well-shaped and balanced, the light brown hair thick and neatly brushed. He was a tall stoutish man in his early forties, in splendid physical condition except for the red complexion that told of too much drinking. He was drinking now. He was taking sips from a high-ball glass as he smiled at Alma. She sat facing him and seemed to be looking past him. The drink in front of her was untouched.

The window was open at the bottom but Clayton didn't hear any sound coming from the room. It was

an extremely ornate room. A Ker-man rug covered the entire floor, and the walls were decorated with silk-screen paintings. On the far side of the room, placed there like a weapon pointing at the world, was Hagen's strongvault, a block of polished black iron with a silver combination-dial and handle. Clayton thought of the countless men who'd been cheated and robbed and sometimes slaughtered to feed the maw of the strongvault. His eyes were dull with hate and for a moment he wanted to leap through the window and use the gun.

He pulled brakes on the impulse, and as he did it, he heard Hagen saying, "What's the matter with your drink?"

"Nothing," Alma said. "I just don't feel like drinking."

"That's unusual," Hagen remarked. He took a long gulp from the high-ball glass.

Then they were quiet again but Clayton saw the way Hagen was smiling at her and the way she tried to keep her eyes off Hagen's face. Some moments passed, and then Dodsley entered the room. The Englishman placed a fresh drink on the table in front of Hagen, and in that instant the two of them traded a glance. Clayton saw that and then he switched his stare to Alma. She had stiffened just a little. As Dodsley walked out of the room, Hagen went on smiling at her. She took a very deep breath, as though her lungs were straining for air.

Hagen stood up and began pacing the floor between the teakwood table and the strongvault. He walked very slowly, his head lowered contemplatively, like a man rehearsing a speech. He stopped at the table, folded his arms and looked down at Alma and now he wasn't smiling.

He gestured toward the high-ball glass she hadn't touched. "Drink it," he said. "You're always better company after a few drinks."

She didn't look at him. She stared straight ahead. "I told you I'm not drinking."

"It's a pity to waste the whiskey," he murmured. "A thirty-year-old Scotch. Besides, it's bad luck to fill a glass and then not even taste it." His mouth tightened. "Take one sip. Just one."

"No." She looked at him. "And stop coaxing me."

"I'm not coaxing you, my dear. I'm telling you." Hagen took hold of the high-ball glass and lifted it toward her lips. She drew her head back and pushed the glass aside and some of the contents spilled on the table.

Outside the window, Clayton watched. His hands had a tight grip on the lower edge of the window-frame.

He saw the angry flush on Hagen's face. He saw Alma getting up and he heard her saying, "It's very late, and I need sleep. I'm going back to my apartment."

She started past Hagen, but he grabbed her wrist and held her there

and said, "I didn't tell you to go. You'll wait until I tell you."

"Let go, Rudy." She made a move to pull away.

Hagen smiled at her and put more pressure on her wrist.

"Let go," She said it very quietly. "Let go, damn you."

"That's more like it," Hagen said, and he released her wrist. "At least, when you're angry, I can talk to you."

Alma went back to the table and stood looking down at the high-ball glass. Almost half of the whiskey had been spilled but the remainder was a liquid magnet that pulled her hand toward the glass. She took hold of the glass as though it contained some bitter medicine that wasn't easy to take. And then, with one long convulsive gulp, she drained the glass.

"Want another?" Hagen asked.

She shook her head. She was staring down at the polished surface of the teakwood table. The glimmering wood was like a mirror and she was seeing herself in it and hating what she saw.

She had her back turned to Hagen and he came toward her and put his hand on her shoulders. She squirmed away. Hagen's face darkened again and he muttered, "What's wrong with you?"

"I want to be left alone. I told you I was tired."

"Look at me." Hagen's tone was a mixture of seething anger and frantic pleading.

She still kept her back to him.

"You can't even look at me." Hagen spoke through his teeth. His lips trembled. Then, with an effort, he controlled himself and said more calmly, "I'm trying to reason with you, Alma. I'm hoping you'll change your attitude and let me talk to you."

"All right," she said. "I'm listening."

But Hagen, standing behind her, couldn't see what Clayton saw. She had her eyes closed and her throat muscles contracted and she was trying to steady herself.

Then she turned slowly to face Hagen and he was quiet for some moments and finally he said, "I don't like the way things are going between us. Day after day it's like a stalemate. It's as if we're sitting playing chess. It's just a game, and I'm tired of it."

"What do you want, Rudy?"

"You. All of you."

"That wasn't in the contract."

"The hell with the contract." He said it loudly. "I've loved you ever since we first met."

"What do you know about love?" she asked.

"I'm flesh and blood," he shouted. "I need something more than a pretty toy to play with. I need real affection. And warmth. And happiness."

She was looking at the heavy safe in the corner. "There's your happiness."

"Is that a complaint?" He stabbed

it at her. "You're a fine one to complain. You can't even play it straight with the man who pays your bills."

She stood rigid, not saying anything.

Hagen's voice was a blade going in deeper. "You think I'm blind or something? You think I believed one word of what you told me about Clayton? You said he took the gun out of your hand. I say you're a rotten liar."

She started to turn away. Hagen grabbed her arms and held her and forced her to look at him.

"Liar," Hagen said. "You've been giving me a lie from the very beginning. You've been cheating me and playing me for a fool. And every time I held you in my arms and you closed your eyes, you were seeing another man. You were seeing Clayton."

She was trying to twist away. Hagen tightened his grip on her arms.

"Now you'll tell me the truth," he shouted. "You'll admit it's been Clayton all along. Let me hear you say it. You'll say it if I have to choke it from your mouth —"

His hands went up to her throat. She let out a strangled cry. Hagen went on squeezing as she sagged to her knees. His teeth showed in a crazy grimace and he didn't know or care that he was forcing the life from her body.

And then the window went all the way up and Clayton leaped into the room. As he rushed at Hagen, his

thoughts had nothing to do with strategy or tactics or remembering the gun in his pocket. He lunged like a wild animal and Hagen heard him coming, looked up and gaped at him and let go of Alma. She fell to the floor, gasping for breath. Hagen instinctively raised the big hands and clenched them and braced himself to meet the attack.

Clayton came in like a maddened bull. He threw both fists at Hagen's face, stepped back as Hagen ducked low and tried to hold, then used his right hand like a cleaver and sliced a line of red running harsh and wide and wet above Hagen's left eye.

Hagen groaned and made another attempt to hold on, and Clayton stepped to the side, speared the eye again, threw an uppercut that exploded on Hagen's chin. The big man went crashing into the teakwood table, sailing over it as it toppled to the floor. Clayton circled the table and moved in for the finish.

But Hagen had something left and got up fast and grabbed him as he lunged. Hagen held his arms, lifted him, and butted him in the stomach. Then he was hurled to the floor and kicked hard in the ribs. He tried to rise and Hagen kicked him again. He made a grab for Hagen's ankle, found it and yanked with all his might and Hagen went down. He threw himself at Hagen and landed on top. He hauled off to collect all the power in his arm for the final smash. But he didn't have time to send it in.

A door opened and four men came rushing into the room. As they closed in on Clayton, he remembered the gun in his pocket, reached for it, then realized it was a little late in the evening for the gun. The men had him flat on his face with one arm pulled high up between his shoulder blades. A heavy shoe crashed against his jaw and as he fell into a red-streaked fog he wryly told himself it was Hagen's night.

The fog didn't last long. Within a few minutes he was able to get his eyes in focus, and from the floor he obtained a clear view of what was taking place in the room. He saw Hagen seated at the table and dabbing a handkerchief against the bloodied brow. Dodsley was applying a strip of gauze-and-adhesive to the side of Hagen's mouth. The other four men were sitting around with cigarettes and glasses and waiting for further orders. Alma stood rigidly against the wall, staring at the teakwood table. The gun was on the table. Hagen's hand moved idly toward it and picked it up and gestured with it.

The gesture told Clayton to get up from the floor and sit at the table. He got up, and the gun pointed at his chest.

Hagen said, "I think maybe I'll do it."

"If you do," he said, "you'll have to travel."

Hagen smiled. "I don't think so. I'm a respected man in this community. As far as the police are con-

cerned, I'm the owner of a legitimate enterprise. I have the privilege of shooting any thief who tries to ransack my office."

Clayton copied the big man's smile. "Why would I want to do that? I'm a rich man in my own right. Everybody knows about the stone. They know how big it is and how much it's worth."

Hagen frowned thoughtfully. "True," he murmured. "Quite true." Then he was smiling again. "Let's talk about that. Let's talk sapphire." "No deal."

"It's got to be a deal," Hagen said. "Name your price." And then he glanced at Alma and said, "It doesn't have to be money. Besides, you're in no position to bargain."

Clayton looked at her. He saw the stiffening of her body. He said to her, "Are you willing?"

She didn't reply. Her face was expressionless.

Every fibre of him strained toward her, and he spoke thickly, saying, "It's you in exchange for the sapphire."

Hagen was laughing softly. "Let the lady make up her own mind. After all, it's her decision."

She parted her lips to make the reply. Clayton felt the pounding of his heart and he couldn't breathe as he waited to hear the sound of her voice. He saw the glow in her eyes and he almost leaped up, knowing that now he could take her in his arms and have what he wanted more than anything. But all at once the

glow went out of her eyes, and she wasn't even looking at him. His veins froze as he saw her moving toward Hagen.

She stood beside Hagen and there was a thin smile on her lips as she put her hand on the big man's shoulder. Her fingers played with the expensive fabric of his suit. "It's a nice suit," she murmured. "It's silk, isn't it?" She aimed the smile at Clayton. "I like silk. I like the feel of it. I wouldn't settle for anything less."

"Smart girl," Hagen murmured. He took her hand and kissed her fingers. She fondled him, slowly curving her body to sit in his lap.

Clayton lowered his head and felt the pain lacing through him. On the level of sanity he called himself a moon-maddened idiot, craving something that was worthless. And yet he was torn with yearning, and the core of the wound was a horrible sense of futility and loss.

And all that remained was a shred of consoling thought as he remembered the sapphire. It lifted him just a little to know that Hagen would never get the stone.

He heard the sound of a door, and then a voice. It was the voice of Kroner. He blinked a few times and told himself he was hearing things, he was letting himself go crazy. He looked up and his widened eyes saw the Dutchman.

He stared at the cardboard box in Kroner's fat hands. He saw Kroner moving toward the table, placing the box on the table and grinning at

Hagen and saying, "Open it. You'll see the biggest and the finest."

Hagen's face was wet with perspiration as he opened the box. His fingers went in like hungry fangs, and came out clutching the huge chunk of dull blue stone. He let out a gasp and for a moment it almost seemed he wanted to cram the gem into his mouth and make it a part of his insides.

"Look at this thing," Hagen cried. "Just look at it." He held it up to the light. He spoke to it, saying, "Oh you sweetheart. You great big blue sweetheart."

"Like it?" Kroner murmured.

"It's my baby," Hagen exulted.

"Good," Kroner said. "Now let's talk business."

Clayton glared at the Dutchman. "You talk as if it's your stone."

"It is." Kroner was grinning. "Didn't you will it to me? I knew you wouldn't come out of here alive."

Then it was hate coming from Clayton's eyes as he shouted, "You double-crossing bastard."

"Please," Kroner murmured. "I beg you, do not misunderstand my intentions."

Clayton studied the Dutchman's face. And suddenly he realized the truth of it, the absolute truth, that Kroner's purpose was founded on pure honor and integrity. He knew that Kroner had come here in a desperate effort to save him from death. The Dutchman was gambling on Hagen's mad craving for the big blue stone, and hoping that a finan-

cial transaction would settle the matter and prevent a killing.

Kroner was looking at Hagen and saying, "Make me an offer."

Hagen didn't seem to hear. He was fully occupied with feasting his eyes on the stone. He seemed to have forgotten the gun in his other hand. And he paid no attention to Alma, who still sat in his lap, her arm around his shoulder and her fingers caressing the side of his face. He seemed to feel nothing, see nothing, know nothing but the big blue gem that glittered in his palm.

"It's flawless," Hagen said ecstatically. "I don't need an eye-piece to tell me that. It's flawless and it's absolutely priceless. There isn't another like it in the world." There was fever in his eyes and mania in his voice as he cried, "Now I own the biggest and the best."

"You don't own it yet," Kroner said quietly. "I'm still waiting to hear your offer."

"My offer?" Hagen blinked a few times. He seemed to be coming out of a blue mist, a vapor that drifted up from the sapphire. His eyes narrowed, a hard smile curved his lips, and he said, "You're a fool, Kroner. Can't you see the stone in my hand? You've delivered the merchandise and now it's mine."

Kroner's face stiffened. "You imply that I'm not to be paid?"

Hagen laughed lightly. "You'll be paid," he said. "I'll even give you a pen to sign the receipt. It's a special kind of pen. It writes under water."



The Dutchman winced. He gazed helplessly at Clayton. Then he shook his head sadly and said, "It was too much to hope for. But at least I can tell myself that I tried."

"You tried hard." Clayton's throat was thick with feeling. "You're a real friend."

"I'm an imbecile," the Dutchman said. "I made the mistake of thinking that Mr. Hagen was a human being. My stupidity in that matter cannot be measured." He shrugged and then he smiled dimly at Clayton, and his eyes said, *Let's see if we can take it without flinching.*

Clayton returned the smile. An instant later he saw Hagen making a gesture that told his four men to get busy. He saw them reaching into their pockets and taking out the knives. In his mind he could see the process that would soon take place, the quick and efficient slaughtering, the blades slicing his flesh and Kroner's flesh. And after that, the weights attached to the ankles and the two corpses hurled into the harbor where the water was forty or seventy or ninety feet deep, anyway deep enough to hide all traces of a wet burial.

Without words he was saying good-bye to Kroner. And then, for some unaccountable reason, he decided on a silent farewell to Alma. He looked at her and he saw her sitting there in Hagen's lap.

His lips curled just a little to show his defiance and contempt. But then he saw the look in her eyes, the look

that told him to keep his gaze focused on her face, to wait for a signal. He couldn't be wrong this time.

A moment later she gave him the signal. It was a wink. In almost the same moment she made a grab for the gun in Hagen's hand. Clayton lunged across the table, seeing the gun pointed to the ceiling as Alma twisted Hagen's wrist.

In a fraction of a second, Hagen's finger pulled the trigger, and the bullet went straight up, and Clayton grabbed for the gun but couldn't get it because Hagen freed his wrist from Alma's grasp and the motion caused the gun to fall out of his hand and off the table. The four men were lunging with their knives and Clayton dived to the floor, and made another grab for the gun.

But now Dodsley was there to kick the gun aside. Dodsley reached down to pick up the gun and received a hammer blow in the stomach from Kroner's fist. Then Kroner made a try for the gun and Hagen came leaping in to give the Dutchman a shoulder in the ribs that sent him to his knees.

Hagen kept on going, getting closer to the gun, getting very close and then reaching the gun, grabbing it, aiming it at Clayton's face. Clayton's arm went out like a piston, his hand closed on the barrel, jerked it up as Hagen yanked on the trigger. Another bullet went into the ceiling. A third bullet went into a wall.

They were still grappling for the gun when a fourth bullet plowed into the floor. Then Clayton had the gun and the fifth bullet went into Hagen's heart.

Clayton showed the gun to Dodsley and the four men. They didn't need to be told to drop their knives. Kroner was standing motionless and taking deep breaths.

And Alma was at the phone, calling the police.

It was an hour later and the police had departed with a corpse and five handcuffed men. Kroner went along with them to tell the full story. Clayton stood on the pier and watched the police-car moving away.

The first grey ribbons of dawn were sliding across the sky as he turned slowly and moved toward the woman who had her back to him and was looking out at the dark water which was reflected in his eyes.

As he came up to her, she faced him, and he saw the sadness in her eyes.

She made no attempt to hide her feelings. She just stood there silently.

He said quietly, "It's a complicated game, isn't it?"

She nodded slowly. "We make it complicated," she managed to say in a quiet tone.

"Sometimes we're forced to," he said. "For example, a certain woman I know. She sat on the lap of a man she hated. And all she was thinking

about was the gun in his hand. A gun that could get me."

She nodded again. And then she was trying to control her emotions, trying to speak calmly and objectively, as she said,

"A year ago I stood with my arm around Hagen and I laughed at you. If I hadn't laughed, if I'd let him know what I really felt, he would have killed you. Tonight it was the same routine. I was doing the only thing I could to keep you alive."

He was quiet for some moments. Then he said, "A few hours ago we were in my room. Why didn't you tell me then? What stopped you from telling me?"

"I didn't think it would get across. The only time it gets across is when it's all there, and there's nothing else, no doubts and no contradictions." Her eyes were clear and steady.

"You're right about that," he murmured. "I wouldn't have believed you. I was too angry, too bitter, too much of a damn fool."

"No," she said. "You were right in thinking that I came to get the sapphire. The gun, of course, was Hagen's plan. My plan was my money, every cent I have, twenty thousand dollars. But it wasn't quite enough."

Clayton smiled dimly. "That was just the down payment. You said you could bring the balance."

She copied the smile. "The strong-vault in Hagen's office. I know the combination."

She said slowly, "I meant it when I promised to bring the rest of the money."

"And you'd have kept your promise. And then Hagen would have found out. Chances are, he'd have killed you. Did you figure that one out?"

She didn't reply. But he already knew the answer.

He said, "You were willing to die for me."

Her head was lowered and she said,

"You make it sound very noble." Then she looked up. "Remember, I'm just a blonde tramp with a weakness for rich men."

He reached into his pocket and took out the sapphire. "Look at this." He was grinning. "It'll bring a lot of money."

"Yes, I know. She was drifting into his arms, ignoring the gleam of the big blue gem. "And please don't show me the money. All I want is the man."



# MUGGED AND PRINTED

In this issue, MICKEY SPILLANE concludes his four-part serial, *Everybody's Watching Me*, and a well-worth-waiting-for windup it is. At

the same time, Spillane's book sales continue to skyrocket, with *Time* reporting close to six and a half million copies of his books sold in 1952. His latest thriller, *Kiss Me Deadly*, has held a spot on the best-seller list for the past month, and Spillane's

agent has concluded a \$250,000 movie deal which will bring Mike Hammer to the screen in the near future. Crime pays, it would seem.



DAVID GOODIS hit the big time with his novel, "*Dark Passage*" which was made into a movie starring the Bogart-Bacall team. Goodis wrote his first novel when he was twenty-one and prophetically called it, "*The Ignited*" . . . later threw it into the furnace. Since then he's written hundreds of stories, wrote for radio in New York and is now working in Hollywood. Outstanding novels

include *Dark Passage*, *Nightfall* and *Behold This Woman*. Philosophy? . . . Goodis: ". . . work hard . . . but don't ever worry about a thing."



ROBERT PATRICK WILMOT (*The G-Notes*) was born in Butte, Montana and ran away at sixteen to Mexico. He took a fling at Hollywood and did stints in Minneapolis and Chicago as a reporter. For some years he was the reluctant proprietor of a traveling carnival which he inherited from his father. When the depression and hostile sheriffs put the carnival out of business, he became a publicity man and eventually editor of a large newspaper in the Pacific Northwest. With the publication of his first novel, *Blood In Your Eye*, Wilmot emerged as a really major writer in the mystery genre.

RICHARD DEMING has been everything from a door-to-door gold buyer (a lucrative racket during the depression, he says) to executive director of a Red Cross Chapter. His two longest jobs have been with the Army and the American Red Cross, after which he jumped into full-time writing. He is usually preoccupied with Manville Moon, the private eye featured in *The Gallows In My Garden* and the forthcoming *Tweak The Devil's Nose*. But *Mugger Murder* is a completely different type of story, and exhibits Deming's versatility. It also provides some damn fine reading for us all.

RICHARD ELLINGTON is conspicuously noted for his success in three very different fields of crime writing. As a novelist (*Shoot*

*The Works*, *It's A Crime*, *Stone Cold Dead*, *Exit For A Dame*), he is the creator of Steve Drake who romps through *Fan Club*. Also a radio script writer, he has done some of the most popular shows for *Top Guy* and *The Fat Man*. And as a television writer, he has

been a steady contributor to *Man Against Crime* and other high calibre programs. Lives in St. John, Virgin Islands on a piece of land called Gallow's Point. It seems rather appropriate.

*Esquire's* editorial devoted to HENRY KANE, tabbed him as: "author, bon vivant, stoic, student, tramp, lawyer, philosopher . . . the lad who works off a hangover conceived in a Hoboken dive by swooshing down large orders of Eggs Benedict at the Waldorf on the morning after. . . the man who can use polysyllables on Third Avenue and certain ancient monosyllables on Park Avenue."

If you've read Kane's *Halo For Nobody*, *Hang By The Neck*, or *Until You Are Dead*, you'll certainly enjoy the latest exploits of Peter Chambers. If you haven't, enjoy the story anyway.



## SHOWDOWN

"I'm Vetter! Me . . . Vetter. The one everyone wonders about, even the cops. Vetter the puzzle. Vetter the one who's there but isn't there. Remember the note, Renzo. You're big and strong . . . you're a killer!" Renzo tried to scream, stumpled and fell. He was reaching for something in the desk drawer knowing all the time he wasn't going to make it . . . Here's Vetter in the final payoff installment of Mickey Spillane's *Everybody's Watching Me*. Twenty-five thrill-packed pages that wind up the serial and set the pace for this big, big April issue.

## SLAUGHTER

Robert Patrick Wilmot is here with a powerful yarn titled *The G-Notes*, an ironic, fast-paced story of money and murder. And there's a Richard Ellington yarn titled *Fan Club*, featuring his well-known private eye, Steve Drake, up to his ears in a Carribean crime crusade.

## SUSPENSE

For pure adventure, strongly seasoned with homicide, David Goodis' *The Blue Sweetheart* mixes sapphires, blondes, and revenge with a Ceylon background. And Robert Turner is represented with an edge-of-the-seat tale titled *Be My Guest*, about a punch-drunk boxer and a sex-starved killer.

## SHOCK

Don't miss *Mugger Murder* by Richard Deming and *Kid Kill* by Evan Hunter, both of which are the most unusual stories *Manhunt* has ever run. And the comments on each will make you sit up and start thinking hard.

## SPICE

And for devil-may-care fun, and high-spirited detection, there's *One Little Bullet* by Henry Kane, a hell-raising fiction feast featuring Peter Chambers, the Manhattan private richard with a flair for trouble. There's more too — and it all adds up to a pleasure-loaded issue for April!