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*Investigator Ed Roche
Barges into a Fiendish
Sabotage Plot and Finds
Death Offering Him a
Grim Alternative!*

Roche shot the Jap in the shoulder

THE CORPSE FROM G-2

By G. T. FLEMING-ROBERTS

Author of "The Killer With Claws," "Next Time I Die," etc.

THE dark wrinkles between Roche's eyes formed a "W" that stood for worry as he went up the dark flight of steps to McCray's flat. He didn't know just why he was worried. Some sixth sense which had developed when he had been associated with the Intelli-

gence Service was at work, telling him something was wrong.

Major McCray, the man from G-2 and Roche's former superior, had a sixth sense, too. Several times lately when he and Roche had met for dinner, he had said:

"Something in the wind out at the

Arnson plant and I don't like the smell of it."

McCray's apartment was not sumptuous. Washington had impressed upon him that in his present assignment he must keep his official connection with G-2 quiet. Inasmuch as McCray was posing as an assembly line foreman at the Arnson Engineering Company, he had chosen an apartment which befitted a man with a line foreman's income. McCray's real job was to watch out for saboteurs; for Arnson was turning out the world's finest aircraft engines, not only for Uncle Sam's bombers, but for foreign democracies as well.

Roche knocked at the unimpressive door. An echo played gently along the corridor, but there was no other answer. Again that sixth sense troubled him. He stooped, looked into the keyhole. The door was locked, but the key was gone. Beyond, he could see that the room was lighted.

ED ROCHE'S capable fingers searched his pockets and produced a set of flat keys, a piece of spring wire, a stub of candle. Articles which had served him well when he, too, had been a man from G-2 also served him now that he was a private investigator. He lighted the candle, smudged the flat blade of one key evenly in the flame.

He thrust the key into the lock, turned it gently so that the location of the tumblers of the lock were marked on the thin carbon layer on the key. Using this as a guide, he bent his piece of wire until he could use it to pick the lock. He was all of five minutes entering the room.

The small square living room looked as though a tornado had struck it. Chairs were overturned, their cushions ripped open with a knife. The small, old-fashioned writing desk was open and the papers its pigeon-holes had contained were scattered out over the writing surface. Beside the desk a wicker waste-paper basket had been emptied of its contents on the floor.

All this Ed Roche saw in a single photographic glance of his dark eyes. Then his long legs carried him across

the living room. His pulse beat like lead hammers at his temples.

In the bedroom he found the body of Major McCray. It was on the floor. The heavy-featured face was marred by the signs of a fierce struggle. The powerfully built body had taken on that hopelessly crumpled attitude of the newly dead. Blood had flowed profusely from a knife wound in the chest. The dead eyes stared blankly at the ceiling from beneath the tousled awning of gray hair.

Here in the bedroom the searcher had also done his work. The blood-smear rug was peeled back at the corners, revealing floor boards. Bedding was shredded, the mattress ripped open. Bureau drawers stood wide, the clothing within was heaped. And in the center of the bureau was a large bottle of aspirin. Roche noticed the aspirin as soon as he looked away from the corpse. And then he noticed it again a little later when it occurred to him that he had never known McCray to have a headache or use aspirin.

Ed Roche dropped to his knees beside the body of his old friend. His fingers combed back the gray hair. His thin lips scarcely moved as he whispered:

"It was always a great game, Major. Even when we lost, it was still a great game."

Only the silence of death made answer.

Roche stood up, took slow steps back into the living room. He knew what had got Major McCray—the game the two of them had always called great had finally killed him. Roche looked dazedly about the living room. The smoke of the major's strong pipe tobacco lay heavy in the air.

Roche blinked a little. Then he shook a cigarette from his battered aluminum case, put it into his mouth, flamed it while going over to the upset waste basket.

For a moment he knelt beside the scattered contents of the basket. Here were advertising circulars and letters written in ink on blue note paper—letters from the major's wife in Washington. Ed Roche didn't see

what he expected to find, but he picked up the nearest thing to it. It was the last sheet of paper from a short note from Mrs. McCray. It contained just two sentences at its top:

I am too tired to write more tonight.
I will try to do better tomorrow.
Love from Edith.

ROCHE turned the paper over. On the reverse side, right at the corner of the sheet, was a portion of a rubber heel print. Perhaps the paper had been stepped on in the scuffle between McCray and his assailant. Roche took the paper into where the dead man lay. One glance told him that the major was wearing leather-heeled house slippers.

Roche grimly folded the paper and put it into his pocket. Then he went over to the bureau and opened the bottle marked aspirin. He shook out one of the white tablets and touched his tongue to it. Aspirin, all right. Then he went back to the living room, sat down at the writing desk, poked around the wreckage the killer had wrought.

A glass of water had been standing on the writing surface and had been knocked over in the fight. Some of the water had soaked into the blotter; some of it still pooled on the varnished surface. Roche touched his finger to the liquid and conveyed a drop of it to his mouth. It tasted sour.

The slightest of sounds behind him, and Ed Roche's body became tense. He stood up, quite as though he hadn't heard the sound, except that the fingers of his right hand were hooked for a quick gun draw. Then he turned slowly.

There was a girl in the living room with him—a small, frightened brunette girl who was trying to watch Roche and at the same time get something out of her pocketbook. When she saw Roche was looking at her, she fumbled with her fingers and a small automatic fell to the floor at her feet. Her breath came in an audible gasp.

"Put up your hands," she said.

Roche looked at her and then down at her gun. "You'd better pick that up first," he said gently. When she didn't pick it up, he saw that he could; he walked over to her and retrieved the gun. He didn't return it to her just then.

"What are you doing here, Miss?" he inquired. Then he took off his gray felt hat and passed his left hand over his tightly brushed black hair.

"I came to see Major McCray. Where is he?" Her gray-green eyes flicked across Roche's hard lean face and then sought the floor.

"In there," he said, nodding at the bedroom. She took two steps toward the bedroom door and stopped.

"Well?" Roche said. "He's dead. Or did you know?"

Her breast rose and fell sharply. She twisted around. Her eyes met Roche's squarely.

"Who are you?" she breathed.

"Ed Roche."

"Then—then—" she began as she twisted the handle of her purse with nervous fingers. "I'm Margaret Bannister. He said—Major McCray said, that if ever anything like this happened, I was to get in touch with you. You're working out of G-Two, also?"

Roche shook his head. "I used to. Was McCray lone-wolfing it? Aren't there any other agents in town?"

She shook her head. "Only me. And I'm not an agent. I have been working at Arnson with Major McCray. I check the visitors' cards and give them passes when they identify themselves properly. Then I unlock the doors and that sort of thing. I'm simply in the reception room. I don't know much about what the major was doing. Only I was in his pay. I came here tonight because I found a cake of soap in the lavatory at the plant. It—it's got me worried."

THE "W" formed between Roche's eyes. "Soap?"

She nodded. "I found it this afternoon. There isn't even a night shift at the plant on Sunday. Don't you see?"

Roche didn't see. He watched the little brunette as she opened her

purse again. She took from it a flat wafer of soap and handed it to him. In the water-softened surface was the impression of a key.

"The key to the assembly room," she explained. "I had it lying in the top drawer of my desk. Someone must have made that impression. A duplicate key could have been made. Someone could have gone into the assembly room Sunday night. And those men from London will be here tonight to look at the new motors. They want to buy some for the British bombers to be used at the Singapore air base. Hasn't Major McCray told you?"

Roche shook his head. He went to the desk and unearthed the French phone from the litter there. "I'm calling the police, Miss Bannister. You'd better go. I'll meet you at the Briar Gate Restaurant around the corner in half an hour, as soon as I've settled with the cops."

She nodded, turned, went out the door. As he waited for his connection with the homicide office to be put through, Roche's thoughts dashed back over some of the things that Major McCray had let fall in their dinner conversations—scanty bits of information indeed, for the man from G-2 had always been even more reticent than most of the Intelligence people.

It wasn't the Japs to be feared, the major had said. The little yellow men couldn't very well do much spying or sabotage. They were too easily marked. It was the vast number of exiled Russians, White Russians, who were to be feared.

Since Japan was the traditional enemy of the Soviets, the White Russians gladly picked up a living in the service of Tokio. McCray had thought that some of the men with American names and apparent American nationality at work for Arnsen were actually White Russians.

And Roche knew that Britain's power would try to checkmate Japan if Japan pressed farther south in Asia. Britain was interested in the superb Arnsen motors. It all dovetailed in his trained mind into a deadly pattern that illustrated dis-

aster that McCray had tried to check. And so McCray had died.

Roche reported briefly to the police, promised he'd stay on the scene of the crime until the homicide boys arrived. Then he sat down and waited impatiently for the scream of sirens. The old thrill of excitement which he had always felt at the first hint of intrigue pulsed through him. Here in the United States he found himself once more embroiled in the same dangerous game he had played in Vienna, Moscow, Shanghai.

As soon as the homicide squad took over, Roche explained briefly how he had happened to find the body, answered a few questions, and then left the apartment. It was as he was going down the stairs that he noticed the short man in the long topcoat. The man crossed the entry way of the apartment building, looked up the steps, a furtive, ducking glance, and then hurried across the street.

ROCHE saw nothing of his face except a rounded brown cheek. Half-way down the stairs, Roche stopped, took out the sheet of paper which had formed the last page of a letter from McCray's wife, folded it into a tight little square. Then he stooped over and tucked the square into the top of his sock.

When Roche came out of the entry way, the little man in the long gray topcoat was across the street, looking in the window of a drug store. As soon as the little man saw which way Roche was going, he started off in the same direction, walking faster than Roche so that he got a little way ahead of him. The little man knew all about shadowing. He was walking ahead of Roche and on the other side of the street, but he heard Roche's footsteps and watched Roche's reflection in a mirror or something which must have been hidden in the palm of the hand he kept raising to his face.

The little man, Roche decided, was a Japanese.

When he turned into the Briar Gate Restaurant at the corner, Roche was peeling paper from a piece of chewing gum. He put the gum in his mouth, was vigorously chewing the

sugar out of it as he approached the table where Margaret Bannister waited for him. Over her initial fright, her color heightened by excitement; Margaret was a decidedly attractive girl. He couldn't help smiling at her as he sat down at her table.

"I've had dinner," she told him. "Just a cup of coffee for me."

So Roche ordered two cups of coffee and a large plate of assorted sandwiches for himself. When the waiter had left them alone, he leaned across the table.

"Margaret, would you mind repairing some imaginary flaws in your perfect makeup? I know it isn't being done at dinner tables, but I can't possibly see through the front door from here without making a spectacle of myself."

The girl's gray-green eyes widened. She took out a large vanity. "What do you expect me to see?"

"A little man in a gray topcoat that's too long for him. He has on a snap-brim hat which he wears with the brim turned up all around with the characteristic inability of the Oriental to ape our Occidental fashions."

A little experimenting with her mirror and Margaret caught the reflection. She gasped. "He's out in front. He's at the front window, watching the steam from the waffle irons."

"And watching us."

Roche's sandwiches came, together with two cups of coffee. Roche took the wad of gum from his mouth and stuck it under the table. He began eating slowly and methodically. Across from him, Margaret applied lipstick, closed her vanity with a snap before the job was complete, jerked a quick breath. Roche could see the top of the front door, and it was opening. In another moment, the little man in the long, gray topcoat had entered and was coming straight toward their table.

He was Japanese. An apologetic smile wreathed his round face. His dark eyes behind horn-rimmed glasses glistened brightly. Without hesitation, he pulled out one of the empty chairs

at their table and sat down. He took off his hat.

"A thousand pardons," he said, "if I intrude." His English was perfect, his voice cultured. "But haven't we met before?" His left hand in a closed fist rested at the edge of the table. His right was hidden beneath the cloth. He was sitting beside Margaret.

"We haven't met before," Roche said. He switched his sandwich to his left hand. His right hand dropped down beneath the edge of the table.

THE Japanese leaned forward. He was still smiling. Words hissed from between his glistening teeth. "You will make no effort, understand, but will quietly withdraw with me? I would greatly regret putting a bullet through the charming lady. You will both come with me. I have a car outside. I will not detain you long, I promise you."

Roche's right hand darted to the top of his sock. He fingered out the hard square of notepaper and as he stood up he pressed the paper against the wad of gum clinging to the underside of the table. Margaret, a little pale, but otherwise exhibiting no sign of fear, watched Roche closely.

"We'd appreciate the lift, certainly," Roche answered pleasantly.

Margaret and the Japanese stood up. They followed Roche closely to the cashier, left the restaurant right behind him. There was a small car standing out in front of the restaurant. A white man was at the wheel. The Japanese courteously ushered them into the car, got in beside Roche. Roche could now feel the man's gun pressing against him.

"Highly regrettable," the Japanese said softly, and lapsed into silence until the car pulled up in front of the Courtney Apartment Hotel.

With the same exaggerated courtesy, the Japanese took them into the hotel, into the elevator, and thence into a suite of rooms on the sixth floor. The building was new and sound-proof, the floors thickly padded with carpets. The white man who had driven the car followed them into the suite. He was tall, wooden-

faced, blond, gray-eyed—a White Russian, Roche guessed.

The Japanese indicated a door. "You will so kindly step into the bedroom, sir. It is imperative that I search you. It was my misfortune to see both you and the young lady leave Major McCray's apartment, you understand."

Roche stepped into the bedroom under the watchful eye of the Japanese gentleman's automatic. Then with characteristic efficiency, the search began. Roche's gun was removed first of all and then the contents of his pockets. All received careful examination.

The Japanese bowed apologetically. "You will be so kind as to disrobe, sir."

Roche obeyed. Every inch of clothing received the same careful search. Even Roche's lean body, his plastered black hair, got its share of attention.

Roche laughed. "Are you going to do this to everyone who leaves McCray's apartment? I think the Homicide Squad may not be as docile as I am. Just what are you looking for?"

"My agent," the Japanese said, "was unable to find the major's reports. It is imperative that they be found and destroyed. You are a close friend of the major. I have seen you together at dinner." Then he picked up Roche's clothes and handed them to him, assisted him to dress. "I deeply regret this inconvenience, sir," he said finally, as he handed back Roche's gun, after he had removed its shells. He then ushered Roche out into the living room with deprecatory gestures.

"And now," the Japanese said, smiling, "the young lady. It is to be doubly regretted that I must perform my duty." He bowed toward the bedroom. "So distasteful, I realize. Please step in. With every respect, Miss—"

MMARGARET BANNISTER colored, sent a swift, stabbing glance at Roche.

"I wouldn't do that, yellow boy," Roche said. The muscles of his jaw stood out beneath his tanned flesh. "Up to now our acquaintance has been

pleasant enough. Touch the girl and I start to make a noise."

"Regrettable," murmured the Japanese, "but highly necessary."

He reached out a small, shapely hand to grasp Margaret's arm. Roche stepped in close for a left hook he didn't have time to complete. The Japanese sent a swift, slicing, flat-handed blow toward Roche's throat. Roche had half-expected that. He didn't know why most Occidentals forget that a flat-handed blow from a half-pint Jap can be more deadly than a fist from the Brown Bomber.

In ducking, he lowered his head, butted the Japanese in the middle, knocked the wind out of him. He pulled his empty gun, twisted around, let the Russian have the barrel of it across the temple.

He moved swiftly to cover Margaret with his body as the Japanese twisted around on the floor and pulled his own gun. Roche felt Margaret's arm slide in under his. Her hand held the tiny gun she had drawn when Roche first met her. The girl had hold of her nerves now; there was no disputing the fact that she would shoot. But she didn't know the Japanese—the little brown men whose courage was almost fanatical.

So Roche snatched the gun from Margaret's hand and shot the Jap through the right shoulder without the slightest hesitation. The little man's gun dropped from widespread fingers. Roche sprang across the room and kicked the gun across the floor. Then, covering the wounded Japanese, he backed up against the girl, forced her backward toward the door.

Roche's teeth gleamed. "So sorry. Deeply regrettable," he mocked.

On the floor, the wounded Japanese smiled weakly. "Apologies accepted, sir. I am miserable failure."

Roche took the key out of the lock of the door. Outside the room, he locked the door and then grasped Margaret's arm and hurried her from the hotel.

They picked up a cab at the door. Roche gave orders to return to the Briar Gate. "And maybe," he told Margaret, "this is all a wild goose

chase. But I didn't work with McCray all these years for nothing. Whenever he wanted to leave me a message, he would just write it, crumple up the paper, and throw it in the waste basket."

"But wouldn't his murderer have found it?" the girl asked.

"Not the way he would write it. There was a bottle of aspirin on his bureau. And he never had a headache. I may be wrong, but we'll soon find out."

OUTSIDE the restaurant, Roche told the cab driver to wait. Then he ran in and to the table he and Margaret occupied before the intervention of the Japanese. The table was occupied, but with a brief apology, Roche reached under the table cloth, retrieved the square of paper he had stuck there with the chewing gum. Without pausing to open it, he hurried back to the car. This time he told the driver to take them to his detective office.

"What did you mean about Major McCray and the aspirin?" Margaret asked him. "And him not having headaches."

"A solution of aspirin was in a glass on his writing desk. It might have just been to gargle with. Only I never heard of McCray having a sore throat. You see, I knew just how well I knew him. No one else would have been apt to notice the aspirin except me. It means something. You'll just have to wait and see."

The cab stopped outside the building where Roche had his office. Roche helped Margaret out and into the building. In his fourth floor office, he went to a steel cabinet which he unlocked. From it he removed what appeared to be a photographer's printing cabinet. He plugged the wire leading from the cabinet into the electric light circuit and then spread the sheet of letter paper over the opening at the top of the device.

Margaret looked on. "Why, that's a part of a letter from Mrs. McCray!"

"Part of a letter," he said. "I was looking for a blank piece of paper in the waste basket and this is the closest thing I could find to it. If Mc-

Cray used a solution of aspirin as invisible ink on this paper, his writing ought to show up under ultra-violet light. We'll try it."

He pressed a switch on the side of the cabinet, and immediately the major's well known scrawl became visible across the bottom half of the notepaper.

Roche: if you get this, you will have all I was able to get at the Arnson plant. I believe that sabotage is being planned. This Arnson motor is too good a thing to escape the notice of International agents. I especially fear the boys from Tokio—White Russians, probably, in the emperor's service.

I became particularly suspicious of two men I found whispering on the assembly line last week. All that I could clearly catch of their conversation was "XL 25784." They might have passed this along in perfect innocence. All I could do was wait a little while. If they were saboteurs, the logical time to strike would be at that test block demonstration for the British war office officials who will be here in a day or so. Later investigation proved—

And there was nothing else on the paper. Evidently the major had interrupted his report to admit someone to his room—someone who had eventually murdered him, but who had failed to find the report.

Margaret Bannister clutched Roche's shoulder. "That demonstration is tonight, Ed!"

He nodded, switched off the ultra-violet, crammed the paper into his pocket. He turned, pulled open a drawer in his desk, grabbed a handful of shells and refilled his gun that had been emptied by the Japanese.

"You can get me in at the Arnson plant?"

"Yes. But we'll have to hurry!"

Roche seized the girl's arm and rushed her from the office and down the stairs. He thrust her into the cab and followed. "Arnson Motors," he snapped to the driver. "Make it in nothing flat."

"We're there now, friend!"

THE cab rocketed from the curb, slid around the corner onto Michigan Street, and nosed east. Roche leaned forward in the seat, watching ahead, taking quick glances through the rear window. There was a car back there, braving a traffic fine by

keeping up with the cab. Roche knew they were being followed.

"Down low," he said to Margaret. "If that's our Jap friend, he'll return the shot I gave him."

The girl hunched down, but got a cigarette from her handbag, lighted it from a paper of matches. The car behind made no effort to overhaul them, but clung doggedly to their tail. The cab struck north a few blocks to Sixteenth and then east again. Margaret flipped her cigarette out of the window, crouched low. Roche pulled his gun. But at the next jog in the street, Roche looked back to see that the car was no longer following. Queer. Damned queer.

The cab sped out to the edge of town, pulled up in front of the cyclone wire fence that guarded the flat-roofed building of the Arnson works. Roche paid the driver. Then he turned to Margaret. "Now where?"

She led the way to a side gate where a watchman stood. She showed her pass, and the gate was immediately opened for them. Instead of heading toward the main building, she led Roche toward a smaller one of brick labeled "Parts Division."

"We'll have to go over here first and get an okay from the stock man," she said.

As they neared the parts building, Roche could hear the clang of metal and voices calling out numbers as though inventory was being taken:

"Cam shaft XL six-o-five, XL four-two-three-nine," sang out the voice.

Margaret stopped the shouting from within by sounding the call bell outside the locked door. The door was immediately opened by a tall, pale-haired man whose face was scarcely discernible in the dim light.

"Jim," the girl said, hanging back from the door, "this is Ed Roche, a friend of McCray's. Treat him right."

Ed Roche swung around, seized Margaret's arm, jerked her toward the door. Inside, the pale-haired man sensed something was wrong, tried to get out of the door, but Roche had his gun out and the glint of it threatened both the girl and the man called

Jim. Roche spoke in a cold, level voice: "Get in there, both of you. If I have to shoot, I'll shoot to kill!"

"Ed!" the girl cried. "Are you crazy?"

Roche forced her back into the parts building. "No," he said coolly, "but you are if you thought you could get by with that cigarette dodge. Up to that point you were swell—sticking by me in the Jap's apartment, pretending to cover my escape when the Jap would have let me go anyway as soon as he found I didn't have the information on me.

"But that cigarette you tossed out the window—there was a note inside it, wasn't there? The lads in the car that was following were looking for that cigarette. A glowing cigarette is mighty easy to follow in the dark. And the car that was following us, stopped, picked up your cigarette. The note you had inside—this is just a guess—suggested this little reception here at the parts building."

ROCHE'S gaze shifted to the man called Jim. The big blond had a long steel wrench in his right hand. Roche smiled a little. "I was to have that on the head, wasn't I? Well, suppose you drop it."

The wrench dropped. Roche looked around the small entry way of the building. Beyond was a door leading directly into the parts storage room. It was fitted with a Yale lock. Roche said to the man called Jim: "You lock that door."

"There are men in there working," Jim protested.

"Lock the door," Roche repeated. And as Jim crossed to the door, Roche looked down at the floor. Oil on Jim's rubber heel left a clear impression of the heel tread on the concrete floor. It was the same kind of mark that had appeared on the sheet of notepaper Roche had picked up in McCray's living room. This, ten to one, was the murderer of his friend.

"Now," Roche told the man, "you and I will go over to where they're running this motor test. We'll lock the little lady right here. She wasn't working with McCray. McCray never liked to work with a woman. She had

a position in the office, no doubt, found a chance to make impressions of the keys, handed the impressions over to you boys so you could get in Sunday nights and do your dirty work. When you couldn't find McCray's reports, your Jap boss sent Margaret to see if she could find them. She found me instead, played up to me. And I almost fell."

The man called Jim silently did as Roche told him, locking the outer door on Margaret Bannister. Roche nudged the man with his gun. "No funny stuff."

"I wouldn't think of trying anything," Jim said almost amiably. "Listen, we can fix this up some way. The Japs are nothing to me except bread and butter, you know."

"We can't fix this up any way," Roche said. "You'll talk about your Japanese boss later on. You'll give out his name and the whole works. Right now, you'll take me to the test room."

THE man called Jim stopped in his tracks. "No," he said sharply. "I can't go in there. It—it's—well, I just can't."

"You can't because the whole place is scheduled to blow to hell," Roche said sternly. Then, playing a hunch, he repeated the number which had been written in the major's secret note—XL 25784. And the man's face paled.

"Listen," he pleaded, "that's a cam shaft, see? It's hollow. All the Arnson shafts are hollow to make the motor light and to provide a channel for lubrication. That cam shaft is loaded with explosives. When they give that motor a test run, there will be enough heat generated to blow the explosives. That motor will be like an enormous bomb. This whole plant won't be anything but a hole in the ground."

Roche jabbed the gun barrel brutally into the man's belly.

"Get going. You've got one chance to live through a murder trial. Stop that motor before the blow-up comes!"

The fellow hesitated only a moment, then started off hurriedly

along the fence, moving toward the front of the main building. He hadn't gone a dozen yards before a shot cracked out from the other side of the fence and he dropped in his tracks.

Roche twisted around, threw lead at the short figure of a man moving swiftly along the gravel path outside the fence. The Jap! Then he saw the little man stop in his tracks, hit by his return fire, and then fire once before he tumbled forward on his face.

Pain gouged cold fingers into Roche's side. He staggered forward, dropped to his knees beside the spy he knew only as Jim. He grabbed the man by the back of the neck, shook him. "Name that motor, damn you! Which one? Which one blows up!" he worked out between clenched teeth. Jim didn't say anything. He would never say anything again. There was a bullet hole in his temple.

Roche wobbled to his feet. His left hand kneaded into his side. His shirt and coat were saturated with blood. For a moment, his brain seemed a roaring whirlpool. And then the pain became more intense, seemed to clear his thoughts. Somewhere in that building was a test room where a throbbing engine beat out the allotted minutes of life to unsuspecting and innocent men. Roche staggered toward the front door of the building.

And the front door was locked. Roche leaned against the signal button. His right hand sagged with the weight of his gun. He pulled the gun trigger, kept on pulling it until the roar of the shots was as continuous as a peal of thunder. The door behind him opened. Roche fell backward to the floor. He couldn't see the face of the man bending over him.

"XL two-five-seven-eight-four," he choked out. "Stop the motor with that cam shaft in it. Stop all the motors. Explosives in the cam! Sabotage! Stop the motors—orders from McCray, the man from G-2. McCray murdered—friend. . . ."

Roche fainted.

He came to in the Arnson plant hospital. The way bandages swathed his body, he felt like a mummy. But the silence of the place was truly

golden silence. All about his bed were grave-eyed men who wanted to shake his hand. He didn't feel like shaking hands, but he did it, anyway.

"I'm Arnson," one of the hand-shakers said. "The mechanics have spent the last two hours tearing down the V-24 motor. The cam was charged, all right. Oil couldn't have gotten through. The heat generated because of the lack of oil would have set the charge off, would have blown the factory to bits, would have killed us all. And we found the wounded

Japanese outside the fence. Jim Plastrich is dead. He was our best man in the parts shop."

"He was," Roche said, "the best of the Jap lad's hired spies. And the Bannister girl?"

"McCray warned us to watch her," Arnson said. "She seemed okay, and I didn't think she could do any damage in the office even if she wasn't on the level. McCray thought she was an exiled Russian."

Roche smiled. "McCray was right. He always was."

