

WEIRD TALES *The Unique Magazine*

EDWIN BAIRD, *Editor*

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*In All the World There Was No
Man Quite Like This One*

The Man the Law Forgot

By WALTER NOBLE BURNS

THE JAIL was silent. Boisterous incoherencies that in the day made the vast gloomy pile of stone and iron a bedlam—talk, curses, laughter—were stilled.

The prisoners were asleep in their cells. Dusty electric bulbs at sparse intervals made a dusky twilight in the long, hushed corridors. Moonlight, shimmering through the tall, narrow windows, laid barred, luminous lozenges on the stone floors.

From the death cell in "Murderers' Row," the voice of Guisseppi rose in the still night watches in the *Miserere*. Its first mellow notes broke the slumberous silence with dulcet crashes like the breaking of ice crystals beneath a silver hammer. Vibrating through the cavernous spaces of the sleeping prison, the clear boyish voice lifting the burden of the solemn hymn was by turns a tender caress, a flight of white wings up into sunny skies, a silver whisper stealing through the glimmering aisles, a swift stream of plashing melody, a flaming rush of music.

"A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." The prayer in its draperies of melody filled the cells like a shining presence and laid its blessing of hope upon hopeless hearts. From the shadow of the gallows, Guisseppi poured forth his soul in music that was benediction and farewell.

Bitter memories, like sneering ghosts that elbow one another, crowd the road to Gallows Hill. In swift retrospect, Guisseppi reviewed his life's last tragic phase. Young, with healthy blood dancing gay dances through his veins, sunny-spirited, spilling over with the happiness and hopefulness of irresponsibility, he had not despaired when the death sentence was pronounced.

The court's denial of his lawyer's motion for a new trial left him with undiminished optimism. Yet a while longer hope sustained him when his old father and mother kissed him good-by through the bars and set off for the state capital to intercede with the governor.

Bowed with years and broken with sorrow, they had pleaded in tears and

on their knees. The venerable father, lost for words, helplessly inarticulate, the mother with her black shawl over her head, white-faced, hysterical, both praying for the life of their only son, were a picture to melt a heart of stone.

The pathos of it stirred the governor to the depths, but could not make him forget that for the moment he stood as the incarnation of the law and the inexorable justice that is the theory of the law. With heavy heart and misty eyes, he turned away.

So hope at last had died. And between the death of hope and the death that awaited him, Guisseppi brooded in the death-cell, bitterly counting his numbered days as they slipped one by one into the past, each day bringing him that much nearer to certain annihilation. Round and round the dial, the hands of the clock on the prison wall went in a never-ending funeral march; the *tick-tock, tick-tock* of the pendulum, measuring off the fateful seconds, echoed in his heart like a death knell.

Times without number he repeated to himself that he was not afraid to die. Nevertheless the inevitability of death tortured him. At times, in sheer terror, he seized the rigid bars of his cell, pounded his fists against the iron walls, till the blood spurted from his knuckles. He was like a sparrow charmed by a serpent, fluttering vainly to escape, but drawing ever nearer to certain death. Black walls of death kept closing in upon him inexorably, like a mediaeval torture chamber.

Some men, the experts say, are born criminals; other are made criminals by some fortuity or crisis of circumstances. Guisseppi had been a happy, healthy, careless boy. His father was a small shopkeeper of the Italian quarter who had achieved a certain prosperity. His mother was a typical Italian mother, meek, long-suffering, tender, her whole life wrapped up in her boy, her husband and her home.

Guisseppi had received a good common school education. He had been a choir boy in Santa Michaela Church, and the range and beauty of his voice had won

him fame even beyond the borders of the colony; musicians for whom he had sung had grown enthusiastic over his promise and had encouraged him to study for the operatic stage.

The exuberance of youth, and love of gayety and adventure, had been responsible for his first misstep. His companions of the streets had enticed him into Cardello's pool room. Cardello, known to the police as "The Devil," had noted with a crafty eye the lively youth's possibilities as a useful member of his gang. His approaches were subtle—genial patronage, the pretense of goodfellowship, an intimate glass across a table. The descent to Avernus was facile.

Almost before he knew it, Guisseppi was a sworn member of Cardello's gang of reckless young daredevils and a participant in their thrilling nightly adventures. Home lessons were forgotten. His mother lost her influence over the boy. Even Rosina Stefano, the little beauty of the quarter, who had claimed all his boyish devotion since school days, had no power to turn him from his downward course.

He had been taken by the police after a robbery in which a citizen had been killed. He was condemned to death.

"I forgive everybody," Guisseppi told his death-watch. "Everybody but 'Devil' Cardello. If it had not been for him, I would be free and happy today. He made me a thief. That is his business—teaching young fools to rob for him. He did the planning; we did the jobs. We took the chances, he took the money. I was in the hold-up when the gang committed murder, but I myself killed no man.

"And now the gallows is waiting for me, while Cardello sits in his pool room, immune, prosperous, still planning crimes for other young fools. If I could sink my fingers in his throat and choke his life out, I could die happy. One thing I promise him—if my ghost can come back, I will haunt him to his dying day."

Morning dawned. Father and mother arrived for a final embrace. Rosina gave him a last kiss. A priest administered

consolation. The sheriff came and read the death warrant.

Light, flooding through the barred windows from the newly-risen sun, filled the jail with golden radiance as, through the iron corridors, feet shuffling drearily, the death march moved in solemn silence toward the gallows. . . .

DOCTORS with stethoscopes watched the final pulsations of ebbing life. They pronounced him dead.

The body was wheeled off on a tumbrel into the jail morgue and turned over to assistants of an undertaker employed by the family. Placing it on a stretcher and covering it with a mantle, these hurried it to a motor ambulance waiting in the alley. They slid the stretcher into the vehicle and slammed the doors. The machine got quickly under way, gathered speed, began to fly through the streets.

No sooner had the doors of the ambulance slammed shut than strange things began to happen inside. A physician and a nurse who had been secreted in the car, fell upon the body with feverish haste, stripped it of clothing, dashed alcohol over it from head to foot, began to massage the still warm flesh, chafing the wrists, slapping limbs and torso with smart, stinging thumps.

Then, to conserve what little heat remained, they bundled the body in heavy blankets kept warm in a fireless contrivance. And all the while the ambulance, its gong clanging madly, was plunging at wild speed across the city, swaying from side to side, turning corners on two wheels.

It drew up at last in front of a small undertaking shop on a back street, and the body was hurried inside. Laid upon a table, it looked as if carved from ivory. The coal-black hair curled about the white brow in glossy abandon. The long black lashes of the nearly-shut eyes left deep shadows on the cold pallor of the cheeks. No tint of blood, no sign of life appeared.

Quickly a pulmotor was applied. Oxygen was pumped into the lungs while the body was again vigorously rubbed with alcohol. Guisseppi's father and mother and close relatives stood about in an excited group, eyes wide with feverish interest, their hearts in their mouths. Doctors and nurses worked with dynamic energy.

No sign of rekindled life rewarded them. Their drastic efforts seemed lost labor. The boy's soul, apparently, had journeyed far into the dark places beyond life's pale and was not to be lured back to its fleshy habitation.

Still they persisted, hoping against hope.

"*Per dio!*" suddenly exclaimed a physician. "Do you see that?"

A faint flush appeared in Guisseppi's cheek.

"He lives again!" burst in a tense whisper from the bloodless lips of the father.

The tiny stain spread, tinging the marble flesh.

"My boy, my darling boy!" cried the mother, wringing her hands in delirious joy.

Guisseppi's chest began to rise and fall slowly, with an almost imperceptible movement of respiration. The suspicion of a smile hovered for a moment at the corners of his mouth.

He opened his eyes. *He lived!*

II.

"**D**EVIL" CARDELLO sat at his desk in a corner of his pool room. The morning was young; no customers had yet arrived to play pool or billiards. Basco, the porter, pail and mop in hand, stood for a moment gossiping.

"They say he died game," remarked Basco.

"They all do," sneered Cardello.

"And kept his mouth shut."

"No; he spilled everything. But the police didn't believe him. That's all that saved me."

"I heard he said his ghost would come back to haunt you."

"Ho! That's a good one," laughed Cardello. "The devil has got him on a spit over the fire and will keep him turning. I should worry about the little fool's ghost!"

A whisper of sound from the direction of the billiard tables caused both men to glance up.

There stood Guisseppi a few paces away, surveying them in silence, a blue-steel revolver in his hand!

"Mother of God!" screamed Basco, dropping his pail and mop, and dashing into the street.

Cardello's eyes bulged from their sockets. His face went as white as paper. Panic, terror, pulled his lips back in a ghastly grin from his chattering teeth. He rose heavily to his feet and stood swaying.

"Guisseppi!" he breathed scarcely above a whisper. "*Guisseppi!*"

Guisseppi's lips curled.

"Yes," he replied. "The boy you ruined, betrayed, sent to death on the gallows."

"No, no, Guisseppi. The *police* got you. I was your friend."

"Liar! But for you, I would be happy; my father and mother would not bear the black disgrace of a son hanged on the gallows."

"Why have you come back from the dead, Guisseppi? Why should you haunt your old pal?"

"I have a score to settle with you."

"In the name of God the Father, go back to the grave! Leave me in peace." Guisseppi raised his weapon.

"I have come to kill you," he said.

Cardello fell upon his knees.

"Spare me, Guisseppi!" he screamed, stretching out imploring arms. "Mercy, Guisseppi, mercy! Don't—"

There was a crash—a leap of fire.

A wisp of blue smoke drifted above a billiard table.

III.

THE POLICE DRAGNET for the slayer of Cardello was far flung, and zest was added to the man hunt by the offer of \$1,000 reward. Throughout the Italian quarter, Basco spread the story of Guisseppi's recrudescence and his ghostly revenge.

The superstitious residents accepted the weird tale with simple faith. Fear of the phantom became rife. Children remained indoors after dark. Pedestrians quickened their pace when passing lonely spots at night. Turning a corner suddenly, they half-expected to come face to face with Guisseppi's ghost, wry-necked from the hangman's noose.

Policeman Rafferty, traveling beat in the neighborhood of Death Corners, was told time and again that Guisseppi's ghost had murdered Cardello. Yes, it was true. Basco had seen the phantom. Others in the colony had seen it slipping like a shadow through some deserted street at night. There was no doubt that Guisseppi had come back from the dead.

Policeman Rafferty laughed. When had ghosts started in bumping off live folks? That was what he would like to know. How could the poor simpletons believe such stuff? Funny lot of jobbies, these dagoes!

But when Policeman Rafferty had heard the story of Guisseppi's ghost for the thousandth time, he scratched his head and did a little thinking, not forgetting the \$1,000 reward. Guisseppi was dead. Of course. He had been hanged, and the newspapers had been full of the stories of his execution. So Guisseppi couldn't have killed Cardello. That was out of the question. But could it be possible that dead Guisseppi had a living double? Hah!

Policeman Rafferty got in touch with his favorite stool-pigeon without delay.

Shortly thereafter, that worthy laid before him a piece of information which Policeman Rafferty was welcome to for just what it was worth and no more. Guisseppi's ghost had been seen oftenest in the immediate neighborhood of Guisseppi's father's residence. If the fool copper thought he could put a pinch over on a ghost, he might do well to search Guisseppi's old home.

So Policeman Rafferty eased himself one day through a narrow passageway, burst in suddenly at the kitchen door and started to search the premises.

He found Guisseppi whiffing a cigaret in a front room.

"YES, I killed Cardello," said Guisseppi quietly. "I'll go with you."

"But who are you?" asked the policeman. "You can't be Guisseppi. They topped that boy on the gallows."

"I'm Guisseppi, all right. They brought me back to life with a pulmotor."

Policeman Rafferty's jaw dropped.

"Back to life?"

"Yes. I was as dead as stone. I was gone absolutely for an hour."

"Gone? Gone where?"

"I don't know. Somewhere. I remember standing on the trap. Then it seemed I was falling for a long time, falling—from a star—or a high mountain top—through miles of emptiness into midnight blackness. There wasn't any pain. I seemed to land on a deep soft cushion of feathers. I could feel the darkness. It seemed to whirl and billow round me. I couldn't see myself—or feel myself. But I knew, somehow, I was there in the heart of the darkness. I suddenly found myself on a broad road stretching away into night."

"Must ha' been the road to hell," remarked Policeman Rafferty.

"Maybe so. Along this road, I glided with the swiftness of a bird on the wing. I didn't know where I was going—"

"You were bound for hell," said Rafferty.

"I heard music away off in the dark; wonderful orchestra music, violins, cellos, wind pipes. It grew louder. I never heard such beautiful music. Through the solid blackness ahead, I saw a great mountain peak standing up, red and shining, against the sky.

"Around me came a glare of bright lights. I was blinded by streaks and splashes of color, darting, rolling, weaving into each other, changing all the time. Reds, purples, greens, blues, rolled over me in great, flashing waves. Flaring colors swirled around me in blazing whirlwinds. I was drowned in gorgeousness. It was as if a cyclone

had wrecked a thousand rainbows and buried me beneath their ruins."

"What were these lights?"

"Search me. I don't know. I heard a loud, clear call out of the distance. I pushed through the storm of colors. Across a dark plain, I reached the shining, red mountain. I climbed up until I stood on the peak. I felt fine. Something struck me as a joke. I began laughing. Then, bending close above me, I saw the faces of my mother and father and the doctors."

"Well, Guisseppi," said Policeman Rafferty, "gettin' hung once would ha' been an elegant sufficiency for most men. They'd be leery about takin' a second chance. You must be stuck on dropping through a trap—eh?"

"Yes, they'll hang me again, all right. That's a cinch. You might think me a fool for walking with my eyes open right into this second scrape—"

"A hog," corrected Rafferty.

"I don't know. I came back from the dead to kill Cardello. And I killed him. I hated that fellow. I'd like to have tortured the life out of him, killed him by inches. His cries of agony would have been wine to me. It's hell to be hanged. I ought to know. But I can go back to the gallows now with a light heart. I got Cardello, and I'm ready to take my medicine."

Policeman Rafferty bit a generous chew from his plug of tobacco.

"You Eye-talians," he remarked reflectively, "are a nutty bunch."

IV.

THE COURT ROOM was crowded. Guisseppi's strange story had been spread to the four winds by the newspapers, and everybody was eager to see this man who had passed through the mystic portals of death.

"My client will plead guilty to the Cardello murder," said Guisseppi's lawyer. "I take it your honor will agree with me that having paid the penalty of the law for his former crime, he can not again be hanged for that old offense."

"I do agree with you," replied the judge. "The sentence was that on a certain day at a certain hour, he be hanged by the neck until dead. This sentence was carried out. He was hanged. He was officially pronounced dead. It is not for me to say whether death was absolute. Perhaps a spark of life remained which was fanned back to full flame. Possibly his soul actually left the body and was recalled by some cryptic means we do not fully understand.

"But, whatever the truth, his return to life creates a unique situation. I know of no precedent of which the law ever has taken cognizance. So far as I know, this case is the first of its kind in history. Since the sentence pronounced upon this man has been carried out legally in every detail, it is my decision that he can not again be hanged for the crime for which he already has paid the penalty."

"There is one other point which your honor failed to consider," said Guisseppi's lawyer. "It is an axiom of law that a man can not, for the same crime, be placed in jeopardy twice. A man can be placed in no greater jeopardy than when, with a hangman's noose around his neck, he is dropped through the trapdoor of a gallows. So, whether Guisseppi was actually dead or whether a faint flicker of life remained, he is forever immune from further punishment for the crime for which he was placed in this great jeopardy."

"Your point may be well taken," replied the judge.

"Now, your honor, we come to the Cardello murder charge. It is at the prisoner's own desire and against my better judgment that I enter a plea of guilty and throw him upon the mercy of the court. There are perhaps some extenuating circumstances. But he is willing to take whatever punishment the court may see fit to inflict. In view of all the circumstances of this extraordinary case, I make a special plea for mercy."

"I will answer your plea," returned the judge, "by ordering the case stricken from the docket and the prisoner discharged from custody."

A murmur of amazement broke the tense hush of the crowded chamber. Guisseppi's lawyer gasped.

"Am I to understand, your honor—"

"This is not mercy but law," the judge continued. "This man is legally dead. He is without the pale of all law. A dead man can commit no crime. No provision in the whole range of jurisprudence recognizes the possibility of a dead man's committing a crime. No man, in the purview of the law, can return from the dead. If we assume that this man was dead, he will remain dead forever in the eyes of the law. If by a miracle he has returned to life and committed murder, there is no punishment within the scope of the statutes that can be decreed against him.

"He is the super-outlaw of all history. Forever beyond the reach of law, the statutes are powerless to deal with him or punish him in any way. If he should shoot down every member of the jury

that convicted him, if he should walk into court and kill the judge before whom his case was tried, the law could do nothing to him. He could spend his days as a bandit, robbing, plundering, murdering, and the law could not touch him. Legally he is a ghost, a shadow, an apparition, with no more reality than the beings in a dream. So far as the law is concerned, he does not exist. He can no more be imprisoned, hanged, punished or restricted in his actions than a phantom that exists only in the imagination."

"A most wonderful construction of the law," declared Guisseppi's attorney in happy bewilderment at the turn of events.

"It is less a construction of law as it exists than an admission there is no law applicable to a man legally dead yet actually alive, a man who under the law does not exist. This boy, physically alive but legally dead, has murdered a man with deliberate purpose and malice aforethought. There is no doubt about that. If the law recognized his existence, he should be hanged. Justice demands that he be executed. But he is in some fourth-dimensional legal state beyond the reach of justice. The law is powerless to deal with him. As the administrator of the law, my hands are tied. There is nothing left for me but to set him at liberty."

Despite the decision of the court that under the law he had no existence, Guisseppi left the chamber smiling and happy, acutely conscious of joyous life in every fibre of his being.

POLICEMAN RAFFERTY was filled with righteous anger when he learned that he could not collect the \$1,000 reward. In answer to his indignant questions, he was told the reward was offered for the arrest of "the person or persons guilty of the murder of Cardello," and since Guisseppi was neither a person or anything else that the law recognized as existing, he was not guilty of the crime.

Moreover, it was hinted to him that in capturing Guisseppi, he had arrested nobody. In the end, Policeman Rafferty had to laugh in spite of himself.

"The money's mine, all right," he said philosophically. "Only I don't get it."

V.

ROSINA STEFANO sat alone in the little parlor of her home in one of the quaint side-streets of the Italian quarters, picturesque with its jumble of weather-stained frame dwellings and exotic little shops.

It was a chill, dreary night outside. A piping wind made fantastic noises about eaves and gables, and shook the windows as with ghostly hands. A lamp, burning under a blue shade, filled the chamber with eerie shadows. A coal fire was dying to embers in the open grate. There was a knock at the door.

"*Entre!*"

Guisseppi threw open the door and stood upon the threshold smiling.

"Rosina!"

The girl rose from her chair and stared fixedly at him out of frightened eyes. With a quick gesture, as if for protection against some supernatural menace, she made the sign of the cross.

"I have come back to you, Rosina." Guisseppi took a step toward her and threw open his arms.

Rosina shrank back.

"Do you not still love me?"

Her lips framed a "No" for answer in a terror-stricken whisper.

"Come, my little sweetheart, embrace me."

"No, no, Guisseppi!" Her voice was a tremulous cry. "You are dead!"

"Dead? Certainly I am not dead. I am alive and well, and I love you just as I always loved you."

"You are only a ghost."

"Don't be foolish, little one. Do I look like a ghost? Me? Come into my arms and see how strong they are. Lay your head on my breast and feel the beating of my heart. And every beat of my heart is for you."

Rosina stood motionless. There flashed through her mind old grewsome stories of vampires that lured their victims into their power with love traps and sucked their blood. Momentary horror froze her blood.

"O Guisseppi," she exclaimed, "why have you risen from the dead? Why do you come back to haunt me?"

"Poor girl, do not talk like that. I tell you I am alive—tingling to my finger tips with life and love for you. If I were dead, I should still love you. Death could not kill my love for you. Have you forgotten everything? I thought you loved me. You have often told me so. I believed you would always love me, be true to me forever. Now I find you changed and cold."

"I did love you, Guisseppi. To the depths of my being I loved you." Her words came in a passionate torrent in her liquid native tongue. "You were my earth and heaven, my life, my soul's salvation. All day my thoughts were of you. I dreamed of you at night. There was nothing I would not have done for you. There was nothing I would not have given you. I could have lived for

you always. I could have died for you. Did I not come to see you every day in jail? Did I not bring you constantly dishes I had cooked myself with utmost care? Was not I close beside you in the court room every day of the long trial?

"I did everything to soothe and comfort you through all those terrible days. Was it nothing that I remained constant when you were locked in a cell condemned to death? I was true to the very trap-door of the hangman. What greater proof could a woman give of her love than to remain true to a man sentenced as a felon to the eternal disgrace of the gallows?"

She paused for a moment, erect, motionless, her face aflame, seemingly transfigured like the wonder woman of a vision.

"Ah, yes," she went on; "then there was no one like my Guisseppi; no eyes so bright, no lips so tender, no face so dear. You were my god. Can I ever forget the songs you used to sing to me in the happy days before 'Devil' Cardello crossed your life. Your voice was divine. Every note thrilled me. I loved it. To me it was the music of the stars. Nothing in all the world was so beautiful as your voice. But now your voice has changed. There is no longer any music in it. As you speak to me, it seems a voice from the sepulchre."

Guisseppi raised an arresting hand. He threw back his head. He smiled again.

"My voice has changed? Listen, *cara mia*."

Slowly he began to sing an old Italian serenade. The ballad told of a knight of old who had bade a lily-white maid farewell and gone off to the wars and who, wounded and left for dead on the battlefield, was nursed back to life and returned to find his lady unchanged in her devotion against rivals and temptations.

Soft in the opening cadences, Guisseppi's voice grew in volume and power. It brought out in shades and nuances of wonderful beauty all the charm and romance of the ancient tale—the sadness of farewell, the clash of battle, the wounded soldier's dreams of his sweetheart as life seemed ebbing, the gladness of his homecoming, his happiness in reunited love.

Into the music, Guisseppi threw all the ardor and passion of his own love. There were notes like tears in his voice when, in minor strain, he sang the sorrows and dreams of the soldier; and the final crescendo passage, vivid with renewed love, was a burst of joyous melody straight from his heart.

"And you loved me still the same!" The words rose like incense from an altar. They fluttered about Rosina's ears like a shower of rose leaves.

The girl listened, spellbound. Never in happier days had she heard Guisseppi sing with such compelling sweetness. There seemed a new and wonderful quality in his voice. With his magical music, he was like a conjurer bending her spirit to his subtle enchantments.

On a golden cloud, she was transported to the sunny shores of Italy. A cavalier sang the serenade in the moonlight to his mandolin and, leaning from her latticed balcony, she dropped a rose to him. The bay of Naples spread its crinkled azure before her. Against the dark, star-spangled crystal of the night, sculptured Vesuvius upheld its canopy of smoke.

As the music steeped her senses, she fancied she could feel its golden filaments being drawn about her, binding her more and more closely in a fairy chain. As if under the charm of melodious hypnotism, her old love returned. All the tenderness and passion of her heart went out again to Guisseppi. The siren influence of his voice was transforming her. Her strength of will was crumbling. She stood swaying, helpless, her eyes glowing with rekindled love.

Suddenly the song ended. The spell was broken. Rosina passed a languid hand over her eyes as if to brush away a film of sleep. She seemed to wake from a trance. Guisseppi stood before her radiant, smiling.

"Now will you believe I am alive? Could a dead man sing like that?"

A look of awe overspread Rosina's face.

"You never sang like that before."

"This is the first time my life and happiness were ever at stake on a song."

"The Guisseppi I used to know could not sing like that. You are not Guisseppi. You are a spirit. Some demon has taught you how to sing so beautifully. You have come back with this new devil's voice of yours to lure my soul to hell."

"Ah, Rosina, how can you delude yourself with such foolish fancies. Do you not see me here solid in flesh and blood?"

"I see you, but I know you are only a shadow from the grave."

"If your eyes deceive you, your ears can not. You have heard me sing."

"That was some devil's necromancy."

Guisseppi fell on his knees before her and stretched out his arms in supplication.

"I love you, Rosina. That is all I can say. The hangman's noose was not

able to strangle my love for you. Your love is more to me now than it ever was before. The world has turned cold to me. You are my only hope, my refuge. I need you. I want you with all my soul."

The girl shook her head sorrowfully. Her eyes rested upon him with sadness that was touched with renunciation.

"It can never be," she said firmly. "How you are here, I do not know. You are dead; of that I am sure. My love for you was buried in the grave that was dug for you. You are not the boy I once loved. You are something strange and different. I am afraid of you. It is only with horror that I could fancy the kisses of a dead man on my lips. The thought of a ghost's endearments fills me with loathing. Go back to the dead. I can love and reverence those who are gone, but there is no love anywhere in all the world for the dead returned from the grave."

She turned away and stood with her head bowed in her hands.

Slowly Guisseppi struggled to his feet. He staggered weakly against the wall and buried his face in his arms.

"And you, Rosina!" he sobbed.

This was the final, crushing blow. He felt now that he was indeed dead—dead at the grave of his lost love.

VI.

A TAXICAB stood in the narrow street near Rosina's home, its driver ready at the wheel, its engine purring. Behind the drawn blinds, sat Guisseppi, aflame with excitement, peering eagerly through the curtains from time to time.

Guisseppi was desperate. There was no place for the dead among the living. He had learned that clearly. As a "living dead man," all his experiences had been tragic. He regretted his resuscitation. He longed for the peace of the grave.

His old friends had fallen away from him. Many believed him a spirit damned, who, by some strange dispensation, was spared to life for yet a little while to make more exquisite the final agony reserved for him. Others were intelligent enough to know the truth, but even these were repelled by a certain unwholesomeness, a savor of the sepulchre, that seemed to cling about him.

The girls he had known in his old, gay days would have nothing to do with him. As handsome as ever, as romantic, with a voice as musical and appealing, he was in their imagination enveloped in an atmosphere of the charnel-house, and the curse of hell was branded on his brow.

His relatives held aloof. Between him and even his mother and father he was conscious that a thin shadow had gradually crept, and the tenderness of their love had been cooled by a ghostly fear of this eerie son who had been down among the dead and read with dead eyes the mysteries beyond the tomb.

He had been unable to find employment. It was as if every business house had up a sign, "No dead men need apply."

In despair and desperation, he fell into his old ways of banditry. He soon had placed to his record a long series of bold robberies. For several of his first lawless exploits, the police arrested him. But invariably the judges before whom he was arraigned set him at liberty.

So after a while the police refused to arrest him. What was the use? This ghost-man would only be set free again.

While Guisseppi sat hidden from view behind the curtains of his taxicab, ruminating upon the bitterness of his fate, Rosina emerged from her home. Trim and dainty with pink cheeks and sparkling eyes, the young beauty was subtly suggestive of flowers and fragrance as she tripped along the street in the warm sunshine.

As she came abreast of the taxicab, Guisseppi stepped out, caught her in his arms, and swung her into the car. The girl's wild screams shrilled through the slumberous stillness of the quarter and filled the streets with excited throngs as the cab plunged madly forward, dashed around a corner and was soon lost to sight. In a distant part of the city, the car halted before a weather-stained building. Within the dingy doorway Guisseppi disappeared, bearing the kidnapped maiden in his arms.

A little later, Guisseppi appeared before the marriage license clerk in the city hall.

"I'm sorry," said the clerk, "but I can not give you a marriage license."

"Why not?"

"You are dead. You can not marry."

"But I'm going to marry!" shouted Guisseppi defiantly.

"Impossible. If I went through the formality of filling out a license for you, no minister or priest would perform the wedding service. The marriage altar, orange blossoms, the happiness of domestic love are not for the dead."

"But I'm alive! I am only legally dead."

The clerk smiled tolerantly. With a pencil he drew a circle on a sheet of paper.

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THE MAN THE LAW FORGOT

(Continued from page 85)

"Here," said he, "is a cipher. It is the symbol of nothing, but, as a circular pencil mark, it is still something."

He erased every trace of the pencil and exhibited the blank piece of paper.

"This," he explained, "illustrates your status. In human affairs, you are a cipher with the rim rubbed out. A man legally dead is less than nothing."

VII.

LUIGI ROMANO, who had succeeded Guisseppi in Rosina's affections, was among the first to hear of the abduction.

Blazing with passion, he laid his plans with quick decision and took the trail. Without great difficulty, he traced the route of the taxicab, block by block, to its destination.

Depressed by his fruitless mission in search of a marriage license, Guisseppi was hurrying toward the building in which Rosina was imprisoned. His eyes were bent upon the ground in deep thought. His face was white and drawn.

Luigi stepped from the shelter of a doorway with a sawed-off shotgun in his hands. . . .

WHEN the police arrived, a little crowd of Italians had gathered.

They shrugged their shoulders and spread their palms. Nobody had seen anything; nobody had heard anything; nobody knew anything. But one thing was plain—the dead man, sprawled on the sidewalk, was dead this time to stay dead.

"O yes," said Attorney Malato, who had looked after Luigi's case, "they arrested Luigi all right. But they turned him loose. Why not? This boy Guisseppi could not be punished by the law, but neither could he claim in the slightest degree the protection of the law. Since he had no legal life, it was no crime to kill him. He was a legal problem, and Luigi solved it in about the only way it could be solved—with a sawed-off shotgun."
