



*"You're going to sleep now,
mister!"*

Vice Cross Vice

By SYLVESTER FRENCH

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Here's the way the Vice Squad works—and they tried to frame Fascinat'n' Fanny plenty—but sometimes Vice crosses Vice.

HARRY BOWDEN steered into the driveway, up the incline, and into the "graveyard."

The "graveyard" was fenced in, and had no roof. An overhead arch, right at the entrance, carried in big black letters the name of the pro-

prietor—"Tony Parenti, Used Cars." There were some swell looking buses in Tony's graveyard; these were roped off, in a corner, removed from the junk that cluttered up the other sections.

"Puttin' 'er under the hammer, Harry?" It was Tony Parenti ad-

dressing Bowden, with a significant nod at Bowden's green, flashy sportster. But the smile on Tony's face proved that he knew a lot better than that!

"Yeah," said Bowden—"under the hammer, front and back, for two minutes; or maybe it's a screw-driver."

"Huh?" Tony didn't understand.

"Take a scrimmage in the junk pile," Bowden explained, "and tackle a pair of foreign license plates. Connecticut, Rhode Island—or any state outside o' New York."

Tony called to a helper and gave instructions, while Bowden climbed out of the car.

"How's da biz?" asked Bowden, as the two entered Tony's garage through the rear, which opened on the graveyard.

"Not so bad," answered Tony. "Reg'lar business, I mean. Fact is, Harry, it's gettin' good 'nuff for me to quit takin' chances."

"Oh, yeah?" sneered Bowden, glancing at a freshly painted blue and orange, rumble-seated job. He nodded to it. "I s'pose you painted this 'un over 'cause business was so good it might o' sold too quick with the factory colors. Eh? And the heaps downstairs; they come from Santa Claus, huh? Chuck the Wall Street line, Tony; it don't register on Harry Bowden. You're just Tony Parenti, the Fence, to me."

"To you—an' that's all, Harry; no more, nobody else," objected Tony. "You're the only guy I'm fencin' for, an' when you're through, I'm through. I mean it—honest!"

Bowden laughed.

"How'd you always work it?" he asked. "Change parts, or what did you do on those phoney heaps; an' where'd they disappear too, Tony?"

"We had system," said Tony, speaking as though all his fencing operations were matters of past

tense—excepting for favors to Harry Bowden. "You left your buggy here, I put a moll behind the wheel, an' she'd have it out o' New York before the bulls knew the case. Once one o' your outfit came with a nifty Renault. Remember? Well, before the guy broke loose an' reported to the cops, I had that heap 'way up in Windsor, Ontario. That's service!"

They walked back to Bowden's flashy green. A mechanic was walking away. A pair of Wisconsin license plates had been put on the heap. Bowden smiled.

"Get 'em in from that far, Tony?" he asked.

"Sure. These came in a long time ago," answered Tony Parenti. "I used to get 'em from as far as Oklahoma. Good ones, only. Yuh gotta have system, take it from me! Mine was good 'nuff t' keep me clean this long; an' now I'm quittin', Harry, honest. I ain't had a phoney here in six weeks that didn't come from your gang; an' I'm not takin' 'em any more from anyone else."

"Suits me," chirped Bowden. "The less chances you take, the safer I am with my purities. Well, so long, Tony." Bowden drove away, having first made sure that his own license plates were in the car. The sun was setting as he turned off 123rd Street and made his way down Morning-side Drive.

He lazied along Madison Avenue, Fifth Avenue, and finally turned up Fifty-fourth Street. At the corner of Eighth, he saw somebody he knew, and waved to him. The man returned the greeting. He was Jim Storey, a dick.

"Any luck, Bowden?" called Storey.

"No, not yet." Bowden drew up along the curb and stopped. "Just startin', Storey," he said. "Just managed to get these plates a little while

ago. I'm going to try every night, now, till I hit it. I know who it is I want, too. It's that Fanny Jane. 'Fascinatin' Fanny,' they call her. Like I told you, I'm goin' to put you wise to somethin' first-rate in the line of a racket! Watch an' see!"

"Good luck," said Jim Storey, and walked away.

HARRY BOWDEN drove around, a while. He knew just what he wanted. It was nine o'clock when he turned up Seventh Avenue where it cut into Broadway, at Forty-third Street. He drove past the Palace. Past Roxy's; and past the Manger. He was crossing Fifty-fifth when he jerked erect in his seat.

A coupe, ahead of him, had edged over towards the curb. Its driver honked his horn at a young woman who was walking alone. The girl seemed to take only a fleeting glance at the coupe, and she walked on, paying no attention to the repeated honkings of the driver, who followed her slowly for half a block. Bowden came to a stop at the curb, near the corner. When the disappointed driver ahead realized that the girl wouldn't give him a tumble, and drove away, Bowden slipped into first, then second gear, and settled down to business. As the girl reached the corner of Fifty-sixth, she hesitated. She turned her head towards the Park Central, as though undecided whether to turn in that direction.

It was then that Harry Bowden made his bid. He did not honk his horn. He merely drove up, right near her, and stopped. He did not toot his musical horn. He merely coughed an "Ahem!" The girl turned her head. Again she seemed to take only a fleeting glance at a car—this time, Harry Bowden's car. And this time she did not turn abruptly away. She took a glance into the car. Bow-

den leaned forward and removed his hat, by way of gallant greeting.

"Good evening," he said, in a gentle tone. "May I offer you a ride?" He looked at the girl, engagingly.

She returned the look; hers was equally engaging. She smiled, and Harry Bowden felt his pulse quicken in spite of himself. He saw a row of pearly teeth, blonde hair, a beautifully rounded chin with a slight cleft to adorn it; and her finely chiselled features—they were a revelation to a lonely man in search of comely companionship of an evening. The eyes were brown, soft, long-lashed. Her figure—trim, somewhat taller than the average woman's height, was a blend of alluring contours that insinuated themselves warmly to the gaze of an expectant male.

"What a Jane!" thought Harry Bowden. "I sure hope she struts her stuff for me, or I'll fall like a college boy. How'd they ever pick her? She's one fine little sweetie, all right. Fascinatin' Fanny! No wonder they call 'er Fascinatin'. She'd make the nightguard of a Sultan's harem go down 'emselves in anguish. I never saw 'er this close up."

And Bowden put his hand on the door-knob, prepared to open the door at the slightest indication of acceptance. He held the hand slightly arched, displaying a ring; reflected light played on the jewel, which sent up a dazzle of white fire cut into many facets. He saw that the girl did not fail to notice the jewel.

"I'm afraid not," answered the girl, without moving. Her voice was rich, luscious as velvet, and warm.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," continued Bowden, putting on his most charming smile. "I may be a stranger in town, but from what I've heard about New York, strangers are safer for the girls than the native products are. Won't you come in? If you like, we'll just

park the car and make an evening of it. It's too late for a show—but we can eat, and dance." He pushed the door open.

The girl looked at the door, looked up at him, and parted her mouth in a luscious laugh, with a slight shrug of narrow shoulders and a tantalizing tilt of the head.

"I don't make a practice of this sort of thing," she said, in her silken-velvet tone. "But you *do* seem nice—and, I guess—well—I'll trust you!"

Bowden made a gesture of assisting her into the car, by placing his hand at her elbow. The girl was light as a feather.

"She sure is a Broadway dream!" declared Harry Bowden, to himself. "An' here's hopin' that she struts all 'er stuff for Harry Bowden, the gent she trusts!"

They drove away. She said her name was Ruth Crowell. He said his was Howard Baxter. His initials were on the door of the car, and he'd had a name ready for her, beginning with H and B. And Harry Bowden, who knew women inside out, began to feel that Fascinatin' Fanny was one woman too much for him. But at the same time he made up his mind that he'd get her if it was the last thing he ever did.

They ate a little, and danced a little. Whatever Fascinatin' Fanny did, it was only a little. She was like a feather. After an hour, she had succeeded in drawing hardly half a glass of lemonade through a straw. Her conversation was never dull. Even at the smallest of small talk, she sounded luscious and sometimes even brilliant. She was quick, and had an answer at the end of her tongue for everything said to her. But brains were not the secret of her success. It was beauty, and with it, personality. Fascinatin' Fanny was not really brilliant. She only

sounded that way—her beauty and rich personality gave her words a brilliance that they did not possess. Harry Bowden was quick to see that!

"Beautiful—but dumb!" he said, to himself. "She seems smart, but she isn't. If she was, she wouldn't be doing what she is. A jane like her is worth enough as a reg'lar to a sweet papa, or as a show girl, to keep out o' this racket. But she can't hold 'er own. Some 'un showed 'er the easy dough, an' taught 'er the A. B. C's, and she's playing the game like it was taught to 'er."

But Fascinatin' Fanny also knew a few tricks of her own. Nobody had to teach her how to make a man's blood race. She had a way of running her hand along her thigh; and of leaning forward just far enough to disclose the suggestion of rounded fullness at the bosom. She knew how to pout with a puckering of lips that seemed of their own accord to say, "Come, kiss us; we're waiting for you." And her eyes seemed to have double thoughts, the second of which might have had considerable to do with love-making.

"How'd you like a little something that would warm your insides?" asked Bowden.

"Ooh—no!" she said, leaning forward, and laughing.

"It's the real stuff," argued Bowden. He knew very well that Ruth Crowell, Fascinatin' Fanny, would accept; that she was waiting only to be coaxed a little.

"Where is it?" she asked, guilelessly.

"In my apartment," he answered.

"Ooh—no! I can't!" she puckered.

"Aw, c'mon," coaxed Bowden.

"Let's make a jolly good time of it. You aren't afraid of me, are you?"

"N-n-no, but——" she shrugged her shoulders, "but—well, it isn't nice!"

FIVE MINUTES later they were on their way to Harry Bowden's apartment. Maybe it wasn't nice for a nice young woman to go up to a man's apartment; but Harry Bowden knew his onions. Not that Fascinatin' Fanny was an onion; she wasn't; she smelled faintly of Ashes of Roses; but what she smelled like, and what she acted like, were different odors.

Harry Bowden parked his car for the night at a garage, "For a little while," he said to the girl, with a smile, and led Fascinatin' Fanny by the arm up Fifty-second Street. She cuddled close to him. Like a feather.

He led her into a small doorway, two steps down from the sidewalk, then up two flights of stairs. It was an old house, renovated. Bowden's apartment was ornately furnished, high-ceiled, huge windows heavily curtained. He led Fascinatin' Fanny to a large, overstuffed chair, and stepped into a side room. When he reappeared, it was with a tray and liquor, which he set down on an end-table beside the stuffed chair. Bowden drew a tapestried footstool beside Fascinatin' Fanny, and sat down on it. He noted the smooth silk of stocking at Fascinatin' Fanny's knees. She made a pretense of lowering her skirt over the knees; but immediately as she leaned back, the skirt-bottom pulled up high.

They talked of nothing in particular, for a half hour. Time passed. Harry Bowden was fascinated. He came near forgetting the real purpose behind his approaching Fascinatin' Fanny. Then she coughed a bit, and rose. She went to her handbag, to get a handkerchief, she said. Bowden followed her part of the way, putting an arm around her shoulders. She eluded him, and he remained standing in the middle of the room.

Fascinatin' Fanny opened her bag at a desk, her back toward Bowden. Bowden sensed that her breath was coming hard. His, also, was coming hard. Fascinatin' Fanny took a kerchief out of the bag, ran it across her mouth, and reached again into the bag. This time, she withdrew her hand quickly and whirled around. In her left hand was her bag; in her right hand was a Colt. "H'ist 'em," hissed Fascinatin' Fanny. "C'mon, high an' han'some, Don Ju-an!"

Her brown eyes had narrowed into two slits of fire. Her pretty mouth was no longer pretty. A hardness that had been lurking all evening at its corners, now came out in full force, as the corners of her lips drooped.

Harry Bowden raised his arms slowly.

"Turn 'round!" was the next command.

Bowden obeyed.

"Walk over t' that radiator, an' lay down on the floor!" ordered Fascinatin' Fanny. "With your hands under the pipe!" she continued.

HARRY BOWDEN obeyed. In another moment, Fascinatin' was leaning over him, slipping a pair of handcuffs half way around the elbow of pipe leading from the floor into the radiator. Then she fastened the bracelets on Bowden's wrists.

Harry Bowden, his hands tightly bracketed to the curvature of radiator pipe, was utterly helpless. Not till then did Fascinatin' Fanny put her cannon back in her bag. She ran her hands through his pockets, extracting Bowden's wallet and key-ring. She took the brilliant jewel off his finger. Then she ransacked the rooms. She did her job noiselessly, as a cat. Light as a feather, she was, flitting about the floors in a way that proved her experience.

Everywhere she opened drawers, ransacked with a deft touch, went through the wardrobe and into pockets. A cigarette lighter on the end-table pleased her fancy, and she put it into her handbag.

Fascinatin' Fanny took a small bottle out of her bag, and spilled some of its contents into her kerchief. Then she stepped beside Bowden.

"You're goin' to sleep now, mister—*alone!*" she added, with a smirk. She clapped the kerchief over Harry Bowden's mouth and nostrils.

"An' I was *nice t' you!*" Harry Bowden managed to say, with some struggling. He hadn't believed it possible for the girl's slender arms and wrists to hold that much power, for her hands did not slip an inch under his squirming.

"Yeah?" she sneered. "Why, huh? 'Cause yuh thought I was soft pickin's, huh? Well, I ain't. Mister Baxter. It's *you* that's soft pickin's, see?" She laughed. But now there was more metal than velvet in her laugh. Her voice was hard as steel; the luscious quality had disappeared as by magic. Bowden was looking at her from the corner of an eye. She noticed his look.

"Sweet dreams, Mister," said Fascinatin' Fanny. "Aw, yuh was nice t' me, wasn't yuh!" She smiled.

Bowden's eyelids drooped. With effort, they raised themselves once more, as heavy curtains, dragging themselves. Then they closed. Harry Bowden breathed heavily. He sank into a heavy sleep, the sound of bells in his ears, the pitch rising higher, and higher, and higher. He knew no more.

TEN DAYS later, Harry Bowden again drove up Fifty-fourth Street. He met Jim Storey, as he had been meeting him every evening, for nine evenings. As usual,

they ate together, at a one-arm-lunch. As usual, during these last nine nights, they entered a flashily painted, red little coupe. The coupe had Indiana license plates.

"We're wasting time," argued Jim Storey. "Maybe you're right on that racket business, but I can't be wasting all my time finding out that maybe you're wrong. We gotta be lucky tonight, Bowden, or we'll have to work things different after this; you'll have to go out and find the jane yourself, then ring me up. See?"

"I'm absolutely right about it," declared Bowden. "It's a racket, I'm tellin' you. Fascinatin' Fanny is goin' to take a swift glim o' this buggy; watch an' see! If it's wearin' native licenses, she won't give it a tumble. Her heaps have to be wearin' foreign license plates. Soon as she sees this buggy's got Indiana plates, she'll stop to lamp you. Then you'll know she's only waitin' to be coaxed. For all I know, maybe she hasn't been workin' this week. But I think she'll be startin' mighty soon. All she got from me was a wallet with twelve bucks in it an' a fake ring. The rock wasn't worth two bucks. She took a lighter that was worth ten bucks. An' she took the keys to my car. But I'd had that all fixed up already—they didn't let 'er take the heap out o' the garage."

Bowden drove around. Storey was impatient.

"Somethin' tells me we're playin' lucky tonight," said Bowden. "I've got that little feelin'. A hunch."

At a few minutes past nine, Harry Bowden proved his hunch. He was driving along Broadway, going south. Just past the Strand, he saw a vision in brown.

"There she is!" whispered Bowden, excitedly. "I told you we were goin' to play in luck tonight, didn't

I? That's Fascinat' Fanny, in person. Allright I'm goin' out. . . . You go ahead an' strut your stuff, Storey—an' get her to strut hers. I'll attend to my end. Here's good luck!"

Harry Bowden jumped out of the car and disappeared. Jim Storey took the wheel. He drove slowly. Fascinat' Fanny was walking near the curb. Storey drew alongside and honked. The girl paid no attention. Storey honked twice, again.

Fascinatin' Fanny turned her head and flashed a glance at the car. Then she looked into the car, and stopped walking. Storey spoke a few words to her, but Fanny stalled. She was waiting to be coaxed. Storey wasn't much of a ladies' man, and swore under his breath. Then something happened that helped him. A traffic cop walked over and waved him to move on—he was delaying the traffic. As a final gesture, Storey threw open the door of the coupe and jerked his head inward. Fascinat' Fanny took the hint. She acted quickly. She was inside the coupe in another moment, and the car started to move before she had closed the door behind her.

The evening was pretty much a repetition of Harry Bowden's experience, except that Jim Storey could not dance, and for that reason the couple were ready to go up to the apartment earlier.

"Aw, be a sport," urged Storey. "C'mon up to my apartment. We'll have a good time."

FASCINATIN' FANNY recognized that Storey was no heavy with the women, and acted accordingly. She did not wait to be coaxed. She consented at once.

Storey parked the coupe along the curb, on Fifty-second Street. Fanny's forehead knitted. It knit still more, when Storey walked her

directly to the building where Bowden had taken her ten nights ago.

"You live here?" asked Fascinat' Fanny, stopping before the door, as though she hesitated to enter a man's apartment at the last moment.

"Yes, sure," answered Storey.

"I—I don't want to go in——" said Fascinat' Fanny, her voice faltering.

"Aw, c'mon. You said you would," argued Storey. "What's the matter now, huh?"

"I don't like this place—it——"

But Storey had edged behind her, and had already begun to urge her with more than words. Fanny walked on, with minced steps; her hesitation became more pronounced as Storey turned the first flight and led her up the second. Jim Storey had managed to keep behind the girl all the time. Deftly, he steered her directly toward the same door, to the same apartment, where Harry Bowden had led her ten nights ago.

"Say—what you call this?" asked Fascinat' Fanny.

"My apartment," replied Storey.

Fascinatin' Fanny coughed. She coughed twice. She opened her handbag—to reach for her handkerchief. Storey's eyes, keen as a gray eagle's, were boring over her shoulder and into that handbag. Fanny fumbled underneath the kerchief for an instant. Suddenly she whirled away, to get beyond the range of Storey's sight. But Jim Storey knew what that meant. He seized her right wrist and held it firmly.

"Oh, no you don't!" he said, shaking his head. "You're comin' right into my apartment, Fascinat', an' maybe you're fascinatin' me. Chuck the gat. I got yuh proved behind. Now, if yuh want lots of advertisin', just make a nice, big noise. Maybe yuh don't know it, Fascinat', but I'm doin' yuh a real favor tonight.

All you got to do is be nice an' don't get tongue-tied. Here, gimme this." Jim Storey leaned over and grasped the handbag away from Fanny. She had brains enough not to argue the point.

Storey unlocked the door and shoved Fanny inside. He switched on the lights, and told her to sit down. Fanny did exactly as she was told. There was nobody else in the room—just Fanny and Storey.

"Now you're talkin', Fascinatin'," said the detective. "You know enough about this game to know that I can make you talk, if you don't want to. Now, how'd you prefer to talk—nice an' private, or with a big gang around an' maybe after a li'l padding. Eh?"

"What yuh want t' know!" shot back Fascinatin' Fanny. It wasn't a question. It sounded like a curse.

"Not much—just *everything*," answered Storey. "I'll give you a tip. I know you're not battin' on a lonely. I know you're just one o' several molls workin' a reg'lar racket an' poolin' the mazuma, with a pair o' pants holdin' down the czar's throne. Who is he—an' who are they?"

"You're nuts." Fanny thought she could get away with it, but Storey dealt his deck anew.

"Bowden!" he called, turning toward a side door. "C'mon—an' the rest o' you boys, too."

The door opened. In came Harry Bowden, with three more men, plainclothesmen.

"This is somebody you might know, maybe," said Storey, jerking his head toward Fanny, "do you know her, Bowden? Think hard."

Bowden laughed.

"Fascinatin' Fanny," declared Bowden. "That's the dame, herself. All she got from me was an old wallet, twelve bucks, an' a phoney ring. An' a lighter. She tried to

get my car, but they didn't let 'er take it; I had already given orders to the garage not to let anybody but me take it out."

"What else do you know about her?" asked Storey.

"She's operatin' with four or five other janes," continued Bowden. "A man runs the outfit. They work a reg'lar racket. Sometimes the man goes out an' meets strangers comin' into town—salesmen, merchandise buyers, an' so forth. He meets 'em at hotels an' depots, an' shows 'em what a reg'lar fellow he is by offerin' to fix 'em up with dates with some girl friend. They fall. The guy sends one of his janes up, she works the racket, an' that's the last the poor stiff sees or hears o' the jane or the Big Shot. Sometimes the molls go out on the streets an' pick up fellows. They pick out cars from out o' town, wearin' license plates from other states; it 'ud be too dangerous pickin' up New York licenses. Once the moll gets up in the poor stiff's room, an' pokes cannon, what's the stiff goin' to do? Rather than make a holler an' gettin' in the papers, an' havin' the wife or some 'un back home find out he got in the red with a jane, he takes his medicine an' most o' the time he never lodges a complaint with the cops."

Storey kept his eyes on Bowden during the recital.

"What about the automobiles?" asked Storey.

"The moll takes the stiff's keys," explained Bowden, "an' goes down an' tries to take the car."

"Go on—then what?" urged Storey, still looking at Bowden. Storey hadn't taken a glance at Fanny.

"Well, that's about all I knew," declared Bowden. "If she gets away with the machine, she maybe hands it over to the Big Shot, an' he

prob'ly turns it over to some fence. The car is maybe the chief reason why the molls go out to pick up out o' towners with nice lookin' machines. The racket prob'ly gets more out o' stolen cars than out o' the rest o' the game."

FASCINATIN' FANNY had her back against the wall. She was wise enough to understand that she couldn't hold out on Jim Storey. She confessed. She gave names and addresses. Harry Bowden's face beamed. He glared at Fanny.

"I swore I'd get you to strut your stuff for me," he said to her, "an' I swore I'd get *you*. I did! Now, Fascinatin', who's the easy pickin's, huh?" he laughed.

"What you want t' git me for, huh?" asked Fascinatin' Fanny, a little more than merely curious.

"Well, to get even for a friend o' mine," replied Bowden. "Not mentionin' names. An out o' townner. . . . Your gang got his car. I'm not mentionin' names!"

"Why not?" Fascinatin' Fanny wanted to ask some questions of her own. But Storey stopped her.

"Never mind what for," said Storey. "If you want to book Bowden, you'll have plenty chance!"

Bowden laughed. Jim Storey sure had a sense of humor!

"Just now," continued Storey, "Bowden is comin' along with us an' booking you. We're makin' charges against you, first, Fascinatin', seein' as how conditions are as they are." The detective laughed.

Bowden laughed, too. The party fled out of the room. It was a happy night for Harry Bowden. Things were breaking right for him. At the station he made his charges against Fascinatin' Fanny.

But Fascinatin' seemed to be taking very little interest in her own

case. She was looking at Harry Bowden and studying him, hard.

"That bozo ain't prosecutin' me for no reason at all," declared Fascinatin' Fanny, at last. She glared at Bowden and screwed up her forehead. "I'm takin' back what you call my confession. He framed me, that's what he did, an' I just let 'im go on an' played into his mitts, just to see what he wanted!"

Bowden laughed again.

"No brains, Fascinatin'," he said. "Yuh think slow, like molasses. It's too late. I sized yuh up that way—I knew yuh were beautiful and dumb!"

"Oh, yeah?" asked Fascinatin', with a sneer. "Well, Mister Baxter-Bowden, I got it all over *you*, then, 'cause you ain't beautiful and dumb. You're just dumb. Yuh don't even know how to play a good hand when you're holdin' one. Yuh just bung it up. Mebbe it takes me a little while to collect my wits after I'm all excited about a pinch. But I got 'em to collect. You haven't! You didn't have anything to get het-up about, an' still you cooked yourself. I got your number, Bowden, an' I'm goin' to show your hand mighty soon. You're a scummy crook—one o' the low-down kind. Lemme ask yuh somethin'. How did yuh know my name was Fascinatin' Fanny, huh? It might be that yuh could find out a lot o' things in Sunday School, but yuh didn't learn *my* name there. An' some o' the other things yuh told the dick. What company have *you* been mixin' in, mister, huh? I know! I see the brand on yuh, now that I got my mind on yuh. You're wearin' the brand all over your map; yeah, an' a dame that worked for one, knows one when she sees one! Yeah, I'm admittin' things about myself, now, just 'cause I'm out to get you, an' I'll get you, yuh low-life, snoopin' mangle! I ain't

threatenin' your life, understand, 'cause yuh ain't worth the honor o' bein' croaked by me; I'm just promisin' that I'm goin' to sweat yuh to a show-down an' a stretch in the Big House!"

"Oh——"

But whatever retort Harry Bowden might have intended to make, was silenced by the intervention of Jim Storey.

"Take your inning later," advised Storey, in a friendly manner. "They all start snarlin' like that, Bowden." And the detective steered Harry Bowden outwards.

"How smart are you, Fanny?" Storey asked the prisoner, after Bowden was gone.

"Not awful smart," was the girl's candid reply, "or I wouldn't be here, would I? I never had a chance, honest, I didn't——"

"Cut that line o' chatter, Fascinat-in'," declared the detective. "It gives me a belly-ache, and it doesn't get you anywhere. A jane with your good looks certainly had plenty o' chances to get out o' this racket, after once getting in. How'd you like to get out of it now—right after your first nab?"

"How *would* I?" repeated Fascinatin' Fanny. "Say—do you mean—but *how* can I get out of it?"

"You've got to be smart, that's all," was the answer. "And I think you are. I think you've got this Harry Bowden bird tagged right. What's more, I think it would do the world a whole lot more good to get this Bowden bird right where you are now—even if we had to let you go, to do it. Get me?"

"Mmm-mm, yeah, I get you!" Fascinatin' Fanny shook her head wisely. "You ain't so dumb yourself, I can see that, too. You know that when a bozo comes to the cops with as much info as Bowden gave you, the bozo ain't doin' it for noth-

in'; an' what's more, he can't know as much as this Bowden guy knows, an' be a Sunday-school teacher."

"Exactly," agreed Storey. "Keep that up, Fanny, an' we'll get somewhere. That's the way I figured this Bowden from the beginning, an' so I had him shadowed. He behaved himself in a perfect manner these last few weeks, so I couldn't get anything on him. But he needed a pair of license plates from out o' New York, to get you, an' one o' my men told me where Bowden got 'em. That's your cue, Fanny. Get me? If you're *real* smart, you're fallin' in line with me right now. What I want to know, is the name o' your automobile fence. If he happens to be the same guy that Bowden deals with, you an' I can start work on Bowden right now."

Fascinatin' Fanny held her ground.

"You tell me the name o' Bowden's friend," she suggested.

"He's up in the hundred and twenties, on the west side," said Storey, looking shrewdly at the prisoner.

Fascinatin' Fanny was sitting with her hands clasped. When Storey gave his information, Fascinatin' clasped her hands together with a sudden tightness, the fingers whitening under the pressure. Storey noticed it.

"Come on," he said—"your fence is Tony Parenti! Right?"

Fascinatin' Fanny's head drooped, in answer. But in another moment her face jerked upwards with the enthusiasm of an idea.

"If Bowden deals with Tony Parenti," she declared, "then I'm bettin' their deals ain't honest. Bowden must've wanted to get me, because gettin' me would do Bowden some good. What good, I don't know, but I do know that he's got to be a low-down bozo to get a girl in a fix like this when she never did

anything to hurt him. He was out to get me when he first picked me up in his car, and the reason he let me get away the first time was because he wanted to plant a complete charge against me, airtight. I want to pay 'im back in his own coin, I do—an' I got an idea, Mr. Storey."

"I'm listenin'," smiled the detective.

"I can get Tony Parenti to think in' that Bowden is tryin' to double-cross 'im," offered Fascinatin' Fanny. "An' if Tony gets to believe it, Tony will tell you what you want to know about Bowden. See?"

"Sure I see!" And Jim Storey listened some more.

HARRY BOWDEN was the perfect gentleman, in his behavior, for quite a while. No preacher's son kept better hours, or better company. Nobody could suspect anything wrong in the make-up of Harry Bowden.

That was why Harry Bowden was going around with an air of supreme confidence. And that was why he did not for a moment suspect that he had anything or anybody to fear. For this reason, it was, that Harry Bowden stopped his car before his Fifty-second Street address in a nonchalant manner one night, unmindful that for the better part of a mile another and bigger car had been trailing him.

He was whistling as this bigger car, a closed sedan, drove up from behind. Just as the sedan was about to pass alongside the Bowden coupe, Harry Bowden reached for a small package lying just below his rear window. His eyes happened to glance through that rear window for a fraction of a second. In that fraction he saw something that set his mind working instantaneously with electric speed and precision. He

saw the big, dark sedan as it passed through the glare of a street light at the opposite sidewalk. The light came on a direct line from the globe, through the interior of the rear of the sedan, illuminating it fully for just enough time to show Harry Bowden something that meant murder.

There was a chauffeur at the wheel of the sedan. He didn't count for much. But inside the big car were two other men, and Bowden recognized them both. One was Stag Drukker, whose services as a killer came at the comparatively low cost of two hundred and fifty bucks per slug. The other passenger was Tony Parenti. And the wheels of the big sedan could not turn a complete revolution in the short length of time that it took Harry Bowden to put two and two together. Tony and Stag together in a powerful, closed car that was edging over towards the Bowden coupe? Murder! Tony and Stag Drukker were putting Harry Bowden on the spot! Somebody must have got to Tony with a frame-up on Bowden. It must have been the cops! But this was no time to cerebrate.

Bowden threw himself flat on the floor of his coupe and in the same split second yanked his automatic from his left armpit. His body was pressed tight against the wall of the car, his knees curling around the driving seat. And hardly had he raised his gun to the lower edge of his side-window, when a shot crackled from the passing sedan, and another, the bullets crashing through the window and zipping through Bowden's coat-tail, which lay stretched out beside him. Bowden did not raise his head to look. He had his gun against the lower rim of the glass, and held his wrist crooked, to level out the muzzle. He fired without seeing, pouring out

four slugs of lead from his automatic with no more aim than just timing the position of the sedan as it was passing. Two more shots entered the coupe, harmless shots, for Bowden was well protected.

And then came the sound of a scraping, as the rear of the sedan bumped into the front of the coupe. Bowden felt his car being dragged along a few yards. Suddenly there came the noise of a crash, and an instant later the coupe twisted around and was whirled into the curb, clear and free of the sedan. Another moment, and another crash, accompanied by a loud and prolonged scraping of metal against concrete.

Now there were shots from the corner, half a block away. No bullets plowed into the coupe. There were answering shots from nearer at hand, but again nothing struck the coupe. Bowden raised his head to the level of his side window.

Stag Drukker was leaping across the street. He was in the middle of the street, now, firing at two bluecoats who had appeared on the run, at the corner. Harry Bowden looked on, while Stag disappeared in an alleyway leading to the rear of a building, one cop plunging after him, while the other ducked into the arch leading backward in the next building. Now another cop came on the run from the same corner. And, turning his eyes toward the other end of the block, Bowden saw two new bluecoats tearing toward the scene.

The front bumper on Bowden's coupe was ripped off on one side, and the mud guard bashed in against the hood. The sedan was lying flat on its side, on the sidewalk, a fire hydrant poking through the glass and into the interior of the car. Now a policeman reached the sedan and dragged a limp form out of the

rear, through the upturned door. It was the form of Tony Parenti. Tony's jaw was cut. He blinked, stared, and swayed on his feet, leaning against the cop for support. His glance caught Harry Bowden for a moment, and without holding him in his gaze, Tony seemed suddenly to recollect what had happened and to lean still more heavily for support. Bowden smiled. Tony was pretending to be hurt worse than he was—till he could gather his thoughts.

Another cop came on the run and attended to the chauffeur, who was bleeding profusely from a bullet wound in the shoulder. Bowden, in one of his four timed shots, without seeing, had caught the driver of the sedan in the shoulder. Now there was the noise of guns roaring to the rear of the buildings across the street.

An hour later there was a crowd at the station. Harry Bowden was there, Jim Storey was there, Fascinatin' Fanny was there, and Tony Parenti was being led in.

"Let me get to Tony," whispered Fascinatin' Fanny to Storey. The detective waved her ahead.

"Say, Tony," whispered the girl, breathlessly, "did you shoot off your mouth yet?"

"Naw, I didn't say a word," was the reply.

"An' the bozo who drove for yuh—did he talk?"

"Of course not!"

"Then listen!" And Fascinatin' Fanny leaned forward and whispered a few words hastily into Tony Parenti's ear. Fascinatin' made it short and sweet.

Tony's eyes and face lit up in glee—but in another moment his visage darkened.

"Say, that 'ud be swell," he said, "but we can't get away with it. Stag

Drukker 'll spill the dope. They haven't got him yet."

"The devil yuh say!" answered Fascinatin', with a smile. "Didn't they tell yuh? Stag's deader'n a mummy from Egypt. They rained six slugs in his heart behind the buildings, right across the street from where you were!"

Tony Parenti's features widened into a broad grin.

"Say, you're a sweetheart!" he said. "We've got this Bowden double-crosser goin' an' comin'! You sure think fast, Fascinatin'. I was wonderin' what to say!"

"Sure," declared Fascinatin' Fanny, "an' he hasn't got any proof on his side. All we gotta do, is get to the bozo who drove for yuh, an' that'll be easy. I'm out on bail. I'll send one of our girls up; she'll say she's his sweetie an' came to the hospital to see him. They'll stick around while she talks to him. An' believe me, she'll know how to put the story across to him—sayin' it's too bad that they got him by mistake an' all that sort o' thing!"

HARRY BOWDEN was looking at Tony and the girl, wondering what might be satisfying them so much. He wanted to talk to Tony, to tell him that Fascinatin' had lied to him, if she'd said that Bowden had tried to double-cross his own fence, Tony Parenti. A shadow came across Harry Bowden's features. Could it be possible that Tony Parenti had also been the fence for Fascinatin' Fanny's outfit? As Fascinatin' turned to leave Tony, Bowden started to walk up toward the fence. Storey's outstretched arm stopped him.

"If I know how to read signs right," said Bowden to the detective, "that jane is almin' to frame me, with Tony Parenti."

"She's dumb," said Storey, smil-

ing. "You said so yourself. She couldn't frame a picture." And Jim Storey turned away.

Harry Bowden looked after the detective, whose back was turned. A new light was dawning on the hazy mind of Harry Bowden. Storey must have got wise to something, and now he was taking sides with Fascinatin' Fanny. Harry Bowden thought hard, and quick. He looked at the exit. He started to edge over to it. But he got no farther than half a dozen steps, when he noticed that two cops had their eyes rivetted on him. One walked up to him.

"Get wise," advised the cop. "You're *pinched*, Bowden—don't you know that yet?"

"Who — me? What d' yuh mean——"

The cop laughed and took Bowden by the arm.

"The trouble with you," offered the cop, "is you take everybody else for dumb. You're learnin' different soon, Bowden; you're gettin' an ed-dication tonight, free."

Now Tony Parenti's voice sounded.

"The first thing I knew," Tony was saying, "the shootin' began. The whole block was pretty dark. I was alone in the rear o' the machine. The chauffeur was drivin' slow. I saw Bowden's car at the curb. I never thought anybody was in the coupe, because I was expectin' Bowden to be up in his room, waitin' for me. When a guy invites you up to his apartment, you're not expectin' him to be outside in his car, waitin' for you with a rod. We were just goin' to turn in an' park along the curb, just ahead o' Bowden's coupe, when they opened fire on us. We——"

"Hey——" the shout came from Bowden, who was a livid red above the collar. "What's he lyin' about—I never invited him, an' I wasn't

expectin' him! He an' Stag Drukker were trailin' me——"

"Quiet!" came a stentorian voice, as a gavel pounded down hard, on wood. "Go on, Parenti!"

"Stag was a paid killer," continued Tony Parenti. "The street was so dark, he mustn't have seen me in the rear. Anyhow, I most often drive myself, an' Bowden an' Stag were not expectin' to see me show up with somebody else drivin' the car. The guy drivin' for me wasn't wearin' a chauffeur's hat, either, so Stag musta mistaken him for me, not noticin' that there was anybody in the rear o' the car. An' he shot—before Bowden could stop him, I s'pose. He got the driver right in the shoulder; that's why my car made a sudden turn in, and kumped the coupe, then hit the curb, slid to the hydrant, and keeled over. Just before my car turned over, I saw Stag jump out o' Bowden's car, an' run. Then I got smacked by the hydrant, an' passed out. The next I knew, a cop was hauling me out o' the wreck."

"He's a liar! He's framin' me!" shouted Bowden. "I never invited him!" But a heavy heel ground down on Harry Bowden's toes, to force silence till he was called on.

"He invited me by telephone," declared Tony, simply. "I didn't know what he wanted, but I thought it was important, so I came. Fanny can tell yuh!"

"What do you know about this?" Fascinatin' Fanny was asked.

"Nothin' except what Tony told me," declared Fascinatin', innocently. "I had a date with him for tonight, but all of a sudden Tony calls me up an' says he's sorry he can't keep the date, 'cause Harry Bowden phoned him an' told him to be sure an' come up to his apartment tonight on somethin' very important. We thought that Bowden didn't

know yet that Tony was wise to him, how he tried to frame Tony, an' so we called off our date, thinkin' maybe Tony would find out somethin' important from Bowden. That's all I know about it." Fascinatin' Fanny spoke simply, with a shrug of the shoulders at the end, as though she had nothing to do with the whole affair and didn't want to be mixed up in it. Nobody could ever guess that this whole story was her own invention, whispered hastily into Tony Parenti's ear.

THERE had been some noise behind the girl, while she was speaking. Somebody had entered the room from the side. Fascinatin' turned her head to see who it was. She paled. Handcuffed, Stag Drukker had been brought in, fully as alive as anybody in the room. So! The cops had lied to her! Now the whole game would be up!

"What have you got to say?" Drukker was asked.

Drukker remained silent for a moment. He looked from Fascinatin' Fanny to Tony Parenti. Both were pale. He looked up at Bowden. Bowden wore a triumphant sneer. Stag Drukker wondered, for a few moments. He had heard some of Fascinatin' Fanny's yarn, but not all of it. Why was she so scared at sight of him? And Tony, too, while Bowden seemed glad to see him."

"Oh, wait a minute—I forgot to tell you something else," spoke up Fascinatin', excitedly facing the desk.

"What?" asked the presiding officer.

"Tony told me over the phone that he knew Bowden had been an old friend, or somethin', of Drukker's, an' that Drukker was back in town an' it wouldn't be surprisin' if Bowden got together with Drukker

pretty soon an' tried to pull some dirty work, if he found out that Tony had already spied to the cops about Bowden. But Tony didn't think they'd gotten together already, or he'd have told me, an' I'd o' said for him to better not go up to Bowden's tonight."

Drukker listened carefully. An old friend of Bowden's? Fascinatin' must've pulled a fast one just now, to tip him off. . . . He, Drukker, get together with Bowden?—Ah! Stag Drukker got the idea! But he decided to play the game safely.

"Come on, Drukker, what do you know?" The gavel sounded again, to silence Bowden, who had attempted to talk.

Drukker looked down at his feet, and shuffled them on the floor.

"Waal," he declared, "nothin' happened, so I'll come clean. He offered me two hunnerd an' fifty to git 'im. That's a lot o' dough, these days. I took 'im. An' that's all I know. I don't know why he wanted 'im spotted."

"Who offered you the money, to get whom?" asked the desk.

Drukker's brows knit, as though very much astonished by this question. But he was wise to the game, now. It would mean an extra wad of kale to him, if he stuck to Tony Parenti and laid the blame thick on Bowden. Tony would sure come across with a nice little "present!"

"Bowden offered me the dough, to git Tony," declared Drukker, innocently.

"That's a dirty lie!" Bowden sprang to his feet.

"Sit down, Bowden," came from the desk. There were several moments of hubbub.

"Funny, how everybody lies—but you, Bowden," cracked Jim Storey, with a wide grin.

Then there was silence, and when

order was restored, Jim Storey told what he knew.

"I wondered why Bowden came to me with the depe on Fascinatin' Fanny and her bunch," he said. "It never looked to me like Bowden was on the level—even though his information on Fanny was right. I got together with Fascinatin' Fanny on the problem. What we did, was all her idea. We let her out easy, on low bail, so's she could get to Tony and tell him that Bowden had framed her and was also framing him. She told Tony that Bowden wanted to catch him red-handed with a car fenced for her, and that Bowden knew Tony would keep quiet about fencin' for him, too. Because that would only mean two counts against Tony, instead of one, and Tony wouldn't be willing to take a longer stretch just for the pleasure of gettin' Bowden. And she played square with us all through. Then I went down and told Tony I knew he was fencin' for Bowden, and that we'd go light on prosecutin' Tony Parenti if he'd spiel on Bowden. Tony fell for it—and that's how we got the goods on Harry Bowden!"

TONY PARENTI'S underjaw fell away in astonishment. So! He looked at Fascinatin' Fanny angrily. She looked back at him with a reassuring smile, a nod of the head, and a wink. Tony understood. Fascinatin' was out to get Harry Bowden, any way she could—and that was all. And now she was going to stick with Tony and see him through. Tony breathed deeply, in relief. Fascinatin' Fanny would stand behind the yarn that Drukker had been paid as a killer by Harry Bowden. The double-crossing Bowden was going to get it in the neck—and plenty! Which was entirely satisfactory to Tony Parenti. Tony

would get off light, Fascinatin' Fanny would get off light—and Harry Bowden would get stuck stiff! Stag Drukker would be snagged hard, too; but it would be just as hard whether he'd gone out gunnin' for the other side. What the devil could a paid croak artist expect, anyway? This time it would be only a tough sock, and a couple of centuries as a "present," when he came out. That made it just exactly two centuries better than if Stag had gone up for helping the Parenti side. . . . Drukker was fast on the think-wagon—there was that much to be said in his favor!

"What did you find out about Bowden?" Storey was asked, from the desk.

Storey smiled.

"Bowden ran a gang of girls who were doing just exactly the same thing that Fascinatin' Fanny and her outfit were doing. But Fascinatin' Fanny and her gang were giving Bowden too much competition, and so he wanted the whole field of operation for himself. That's why he came to the cops with the information he gave me—just to get Fascinatin' Fanny and her bunch out of the way. He did get them out of the way, all right—but she turned around and put him out, too. And she did her job in a straighter way. That's why I'm recommending leniency for her—and the limit for Bowden. A man who plays his kind of game, and then turns like a snake on a girl who never meant to do him any harm, deserves the limit!"

NEXT MONTH

SATAN'S SISTER

By STUART PALMER

A NEW NOVEL

AND WE RECOMMEND IT

ACTION—THRILLS—MOLLS—RACKETEERS