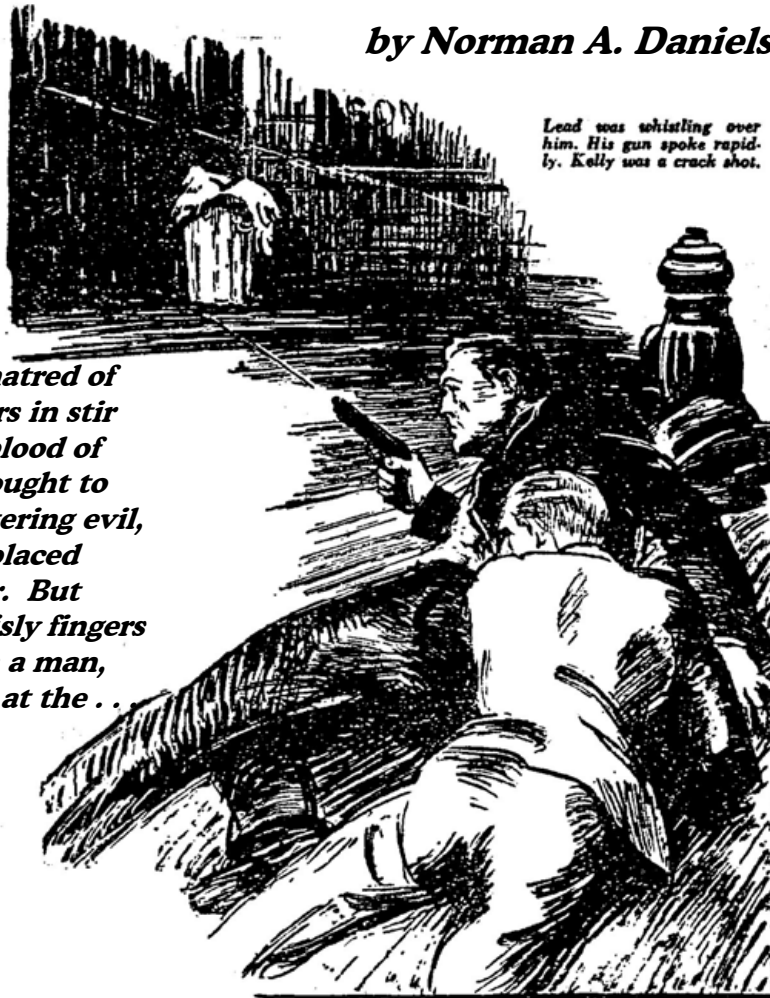


Clues in the Dark

by Norman A. Daniels



All the pent-up hatred of seven unjust years in stir pounded in the blood of Terry Lane, He fought to conquer that festering evil, for a friend had placed him on his honor. But when Death's grisly fingers plucked life from a man, Terry shuddered at the . . .

CAPTAIN GEORGE KELLY rose and cleared his throat as the big steel door clanged shut. Kelly had felt embarrassed in his twenty-odd years of police life, but never more so than at this moment.

He looked queerly at the well-built man who stood outside the big door now. Kelly strode forward, right hand outstretched.

"Sergeant Kelly," the young man looked up with a pair of clear blue eyes. "God, it's good to see you. I've never forgotten the kindness you showed me on my trip up here."

"Nerts," Kelly reddened. "That was nothing. I'm damned glad it's me who's bringing you back, lad. I brought you to this place and I'm taking you back—and I want you to know I've believed in you every minute."

"If it were not for you, sergeant," the young man wrung the out-stretched hand, "I'd have given up hope long ago. I'm going to repay you if I can, but as for the others—"

A hard look that Kelly had never seen in those smiling eyes before grew quickly. The

grip on Kelly's hand tightened unbelievably. Seven years of prison life hadn't softened this man. Rather, it had hardened him physically. Kelly wondered if the same thing were true with his mind. Had the seven years behind those gray walls made of his brain a concrete thing set only on thoughts of revenge? It seemed so, and Terry Lane's next words proved it.

"I've spent seven years in hell, sergeant, because of the thick-headedness of certain cops. There are a lot of others mixed up in this thing, too, and every one of 'em is going to pay. Right through the nose."

Kelly didn't want to hear that and he promptly changed the subject. "You're still technically under arrest, Terry," he said. "I've come after you and you'll have to be my prisoner until the court says you're free. Now will you be a good lad—or shall I handcuff you?"

Terry grinned. "Oh, no," he said, "nothing like that. Any thoughts I have for revenge, I'll not carry out until this is all over. You didn't cuff me when you brought me here, sergeant. Do you think I'll make a break now—on the verge of freedom?"

"Of course not," Kelly laughed. "Well, unless you like this dump, we'll move. Say, you don't look so bad for being seven years in this joint. They treat you good?"

A certain grimness came over Terry's mouth. He looked up at Kelly. "At first they didn't. Somebody on the outside—some of the rats that sent me here—put in the works for me. I spent two years in solitary before the warden changed. I got a break then. That's just one of the few things that happened to me because I knew too much."

"Forget it, Terry," Kelly said. "Let's get going."

The train carried them swiftly toward the great city. Terry sat as one in a new world. Seven years of monotony hadn't broken him,

but it did make him appreciate the things he had missed. His first train ride in seven years. His first glimpse of humanity not worried by the care and strife of prison life.

"I'm supposed to lock you up, Terry," Kelly told him as the train began shaking to a halt. "I'm not gonna do it though. Not on your life! You and I are going to my hotel. I've got a nice room next to mine reserved for you. There'll be better clothes there, too. The stuff you had when you were sent up is no good any more. I looked it up and say—it looks like the stuff men wore when women had bustles. It's just a little walk to the hotel. Want a ride?"

"No, sir," Terry shook his head vigorously. "If you've got the time, let's walk—slow. There's ten million things I want to see and then I want the story of how you worked me out of the pen. I don't know very much. They tell you just a little up there."

"Okay, we'll talk as we walk. You can act like a rube at the same time. There's lots of big new buildings here since you—ah—left."

"And now I'm back. You took me to the pen and you came after me. If it hadn't been for you, sergeant, I'd have rotted there for all any one cared. I'll never forget it."

"Aw hell," Kelly replied, "I never did think you bumped those two dames. A lad like you couldn't have done that job even though everything pointed toward you. One of the dames was related to you, wasn't she?"

"Cousin," Terry answered flatly. "A nice kid gone wrong with a lot of big shots. They framed me nice. There was the motive—the other dame, Kitty, hated me, and I didn't like her. She was the one that led the kid into the whole mess. Sure I had threatened to kill her, I felt like it, too. Then I had to wake up in that room with the two of 'em strangled to death beside me—and me drunk as a loon. My fingerprints all over their throats. It was a pipe! Lucky I didn't get the chair."

"Yeah," Kelly snapped off the end of a cigar. "They tried that, but it wouldn't work. Circumstantial evidence sent you away, but they couldn't fry you on that. What was back of it, lad?"

"Plenty. Crooked politicians, crooked police and lawyers. People I knew things about, and who hated me. Why, even the bosses of the paper I was on wouldn't stand behind me. They were that scared of their own lily-white hides. But hell's going to pop, sergeant—and damned soon!"

THEY were walking slowly, Terry breathing in the unclean air of the great city as though it was the purest country ozone. He was thinking hard.

"What's on your mind, lad?" Kelly read his face.

"It's that place up there—the one I just left, Kelly. Seven years in there didn't do my disposition any good, and I've made a lot of friends. I said friends—get me?"

"You mean, Terry, you're going to fall in with that bunch of lousy crooks? You can't do it, lad. I'll smash you myself if you do. They're a bunch of rats, lad. Have nothin' to do with 'em."

"I can't help it, sergeant. I can't, I tell you. They talked it to me every parade, every recess. It's like it was born in me now. Who's going to pay for those seven centuries I spent there?"

"Tut, lad. They told me they'd give you plenty of dough for the stretch you did. Pay you for every day you were there. That'll help, and anything I can do, I'll gladly help you with."

"It's awful, Kelly, awful I tell you. They talked it into me up there. Night after night I listened to them. I know all the tricks of the trade. I can blow a safe, feel the tumblers, do a good stick-up—everything. I want to do them. Society owes me something! But then I think

of those poor fools up there who boast about what they did. And look at 'em. Every mother's son of 'em there for years. I tell you, sergeant—"

"We'll talk about that in the mornin'," Kelly cut in and then he made a correction that had been on his lips for hours. "I guess maybe you don't know. I'm a captain now. On the homicide squad."

"Good," Terry was elated and then something clicked in his mind. "You're a captain—then you're Captain Kelly. You sent Swipes McGrath up last month?"

"Sure I did—why?"

"God—get in toward the buildings. You're on the spot, ser—I mean—captain. I heard 'em sending word down the grapevine that you were going to be blasted. I—"

Kelly didn't know at first what had happened. His mind was absorbing Terry's words when he felt two husky arms about him and he was dragged downward toward the pavement as a football player dives for the mud. His hand instinctively sought his gun but he had no chance to draw then.

"What the—" he began, but Terry only reached out a long arm and shoved his nose to the sidewalk. Kelly saw red, but it quickly vanished. He raised himself a trifle and then flattened his face on the dirty walk again. Lead was whistling over him and the chatter of an automatic rifle came to him. His eyes saw the spot where the jet of flame originated. His gun spoke rapidly. Kelly was a crack shot. He ducked again, but his head fell where he could watch his prisoner.

Terry was slowly rising now, his eyes were squinted. Kelly licked his lips, but no further shooting came. Police whistles were screaming and an excited roar of voices came to him. Terry had risen and was already entering the dark alley from which the shots had come. Kelly followed, first beckoning to a patrolman who was racing toward him.

IN the alley Kelly couldn't see a thing. The tall buildings, towering on both sides, permitted no light to enter. It was like a cavern of walls. He stumbled over ash cans and swore.

But Terry walked with sure steps, making no more noise than a cat. He stopped before a spot a little darker than the atmosphere and bent down. Instantly Kelly was at his side.

The patrolman was hurrying into the alley now, his flashlight coming toward them in sweeping gestures. The uniformed man grasped the situation quickly and centered the spot of brilliancy on the supine form.

Kelly rolled the man over and grunted. A pain-contorted face looked up at him. The gunman was dead. His body contained four wounds, though Kelly could see only one now. The police captain looked at Terry, and the doubt had suddenly gone out of his eyes.

A clock, not far away, began to slowly count the hour of six.

"I'm due at headquarters to make a report of this thing," Kelly said almost an hour later. "Come on along. Well go to our rooms after."

"I'll come," Terry answered slowly. "But I don't want to see any of those rats that framed me."

"Okay." Kelly subsided into a stony silence wherein his thoughts raced. As they hove into view of the twin green lights, he expressed himself audibly.

"You know, Terry, anything I can do for you, just ask. You saved my life tonight. If you hadn't knocked me to the sidewalk, that killer would have plugged me surer than hell."

"Don't thank me," Terry countered soberly. "I've too many thanks owing you. I'd have to save your life a dozen times to even begin repayment. It was only a matter of luck that I overheard a plot to kill you. And I spotted that killer in the alley, too."

"Oh." Kelly didn't know what else to say. He led Terry into his office at headquarters

and dropped behind his desk. He excused himself a moment and talked quickly into a dictaphone, his words making history of the gunman's death. When he finished, he leaned back in his chair.

"As I said a minute ago, if there is anything I can do, just name it. I'm under an obligation to you, Terry, that I can never wholly repay."

"It is nothing, captain. I only want to do right. Sometimes I have to fight myself, but when my mind gets working I see the flame of hate. I can't convince you that the urge within me is to do evil—to hurt—to kill. Let me work with you sometimes—on the side of the law. That will help more than anything."

"Well, I can't make you a dick. I haven't got the power. And if I went to those that have it, they'd laugh at me. Nobody could stop my friend Terry Lane from going around with me though. Could they now?"

"I see your point, captain, and it seems the only way. Shall we let it go at that?"

The grip of their hands was broken by the peal of the telephone bell. Kelly picked up the receiver, grunted a hello, and then he tensed. Terry felt the tension and his two lean hands gripped the arms of his chair closely. Kelly hung up and reached for his hat.

"I don't know whether I can horn you in on this party or not, Terry," he said, talking fast. "That was the police commissioner calling. He wants me at his house right away. Says his life's been threatened and he's worried,"

"I promise I won't be in the way," Terry said simply and in a pleading voice. "I may be of some help."

"Well," Kelly hesitated. But the urgency of the case warranted no time for argument. If the commissioner kicked him out, okay. Kelly would have nothing to do with that.

"Never mind the lights and use departmental privileges, Murphy," Kelly

ordered the driver of the police car. And then Terry had one of the wildest rides of his life. Kelly glanced at him and smiled. Terry's eyes were glittering in excitement; there was a rapt expression on his face.

THE car slid to a halt behind two other big cars parked before the commissioner's house. Kelly cursed as he saw them.

"So we won't be alone," he muttered, and then aloud, "If you get thrown out of here, Terry, don't blame me. I'll get you in, but I can't keep you there. Inspector Johnson is in there and so is the mayor and Doc Cudding, our departmental surgeon. He's a rat, that guy."

"The doctor, you mean," Terry commented, "or Johnson? He was in charge of the case against me. We're not exactly friends." He was matching Kelly's steps, and there was a look of childish elation on his face.

"I mean the doc. He's got a political plum in that job. Ten grand a year for doing nothing and believe me that's all he does, too. He'll probably have you heaved out on your ear."

They were evidently expected. A uniformed sergeant opened the door and Terry saw that the hallway was manned by patrolmen. The sergeant looked at the lithe young man inquisitively, but passed him at Kelly's nod. They were promptly escorted to a big room that served as the commissioner's study.

There were no introductions, and those in the room paid him scant attention. Terry withdrew and sat down, unobtrusively, in a corner. His eyes were taking in those before him.

He recognized Commissioner Maloney and Mayor Todd from newspaper pictures he had seen. Then there was a short, stout man whose eyes were piglike, Terry decided this

was Doctor Cudding, the departmental surgeon. He registered instant dislike for the man. Inspector Johnson was a huge, fair-haired hulk of a man whose face was lined with worry. Terry knew that face.

"I've called you here, Captain Kelly," the commissioner was saying, "to enlist your aid. I've had anonymous tips that I'm going to be killed—in fact, that I'm on the spot now. This may be all hooey, but I'm cautious enough to want to make sure that nothing will happen to me. There are several things I've got to do before I pass out, and I'm doing some of them tonight."

"Yes, sir," Kelly nodded.

"Graft and treachery have been rife in the police department. That isn't generally known, gentlemen, but the fact that there is remains. I've been conducting a secret investigation into the bank accounts of certain prominent members of the force and I'm going to make a few predictions and maybe a couple of changes in the department tonight. I'm rather sure that those implicated know of my investigation—that's why I lay so much emphasis on the fact that those tips I've been receiving are possibly correct. I'm placing a guard around my home and I'm not going to stir until this whole affair is settled. I'll start it tonight—you gentlemen can finish it."

"And I'm waiting with interest, Mr. Commissioner," the Mayor spoke. "If you will proceed—"

"Certainly," the commissioner twiddled his thumbs nervously. He was seated in a swivel chair. With the exception of Terry, the others were standing in tense attention in front of the desk. The commissioner began to talk again:

"As I said, certain members of the force are going to pay the penalty for their ways. I've evidence enough hidden in a secure place to send certain persons to prison for long terms. I'm going to use that evidence."

"You are the only person who knows where it is hidden?" Mayor Todd inquired.

"I am. Of course, I'm going to tell those whom I am sure of where it is concealed. But enough of that. I'm going to make a direct accusation. You—"

As five taut men waited with bated breaths, the lights failed. Instantly a roar of voices arose from within the room and from without. It was evident that not a light was operating in the whole house.

Hardly a sound came then in the instant when breaths were held.

"The commissioner!" It was Kelly's voice that rose above the cries. "Guard him!"

"I'm doing that—you fool."

Terry didn't know whose voice that was.

"He's okay," the same voice continued.

"Somebody look at the switchboard," Johnson's voice roared. "Step on it!"

"We've sent down cellar all ready, sir," another voice answered from outside the room. Then as if in acknowledgment of his statements, the lights flashed on.

KELLY stood directly beside the commissioner. Inspector Johnson stood a little to the left. The mayor was wiping a glistening forehead fully five feet away, and the doctor, mouth agape, was standing behind the commissioner.

"Well, for the lovamike," Kelly muttered as he bent over the figure of the commissioner, "he's passed out."

Doctor Cudding quickly moved to the side of the commissioner. The man was bent over his desk, head resting in his arms. He was quite still—very still.

The doctor raised his head and cried aloud in terror. He let go and the head fell back inertly to the desk.

"He—he's dead!" the doctor finally managed.

"My God!" Mayor Todd cried. "Who—

how?"

"Wait a minute," Inspector Johnson assumed command and his voice was hard. "Take a better look, doc, and be sure. Then see what killed him—if he is dead."

"It must be his heart," Cudding muttered as he went to work. "He told me the other day it wasn't so good."

"Funny that it should stop just when he was going to spill something important," Kelly remarked.

"Shut up, Kelly!" Johnson cried. He swung about, eyes blazing, and they fell on Terry, who had resumed his chair.

"Who the hell are you?" he demanded.

"Terry Lane, inspector," Terry half rose and bowed a little. "I came here of my own accord. Shall I go?"

"Like hell you'll go," Johnson rasped. "Not now anyway—and when you do, there'll be bracelets on your wrists. I've seen your mug somewhere before."

Terry shrugged.

Doctor Cudding was working fast. There was a look of amazement on his face. He bent close to the dead man's face and sniffed.

"Kelly," he cried, "take a smell of his mouth. If that isn't cyanic acid gas, I'd like to know what!"

Kelly sniffed and wrinkled his forehead. He nodded in assent.

"What'd he do, swallow some?" Johnson asked.

"I don't think so," Doctor Cudding answered slowly. "It has an intense action on the membranes of the mouth, and I don't see a sign of it. Unless he killed himself, I don't see how that stuff could have been administered. There wasn't time, and well—of course, if he was murdered, some one in this room did it. How, I haven't the slightest idea."

"Pardon me," Terry rose and walked swiftly to the side of the dead man. Before any one had a chance to stop him, he lifted the

dead man's head and looked searchingly at the face. Then he turned to the doctor.

"Hydrocyanic gas is very quick, is it not, doctor?"

Certainly. Much faster and more thorough than the salt of the acid."

"It could kill quickly by simply being breathed into the lungs?"

"Why—yes, of course. You mean—"

Cudding pushed him aside and made a swift examination.

"You're right," he exclaimed. "Somehow that gas was forced into his lungs—through his nose. But how?"

"And by whom?" Mayor Todd cried. "We've got to clean this mess up—and quickly. If we only knew who Maloney meant to accuse, our work would be easier."

"We'll find him," Kelly muttered grimly. He went down on his hands and knees and began to search the floor. Doctor Cudding smirked.

"Looking for footprints, captain?" he inquired sarcastically. Terry recalled that Kelly hated this doctor and he saw the attitude was reciprocated.

"I'm looking for something the murderer carried that gas in," Kelly said. "He didn't hold the gas in his hand, did he?"

"It is my suggestion that every one in this room be searched," Mayor Todd said. "We can call in a lieutenant from outside to do the searching."

"Exactly," Cudding declared smugly. "Just what I was going to suggest."

INSPECTOR JOHNSON explained quickly to the uniformed lieutenant what was desired, and the man went to work. His methods were thorough. Every man disrobed, in turn. His clothes were searched, turned inside out. His body was closely examined. It took almost an hour. Outside the clamor of reporters could be heard, but they

were kept at a safe distance.

The lieutenant spread his hands in a hopeless gesture. "Nothing doing."

"All right," Johnson said tartly. "Scram."

When the door closed, Johnson sat down on the top of the flat desk. His eyes were narrowed in suspicion. They fell on Terry, who had maintained a stony silence.

"You're a con," he said slowly, "a guy I still think committed two murders. How'd you get in and what's your business?"

"I saw this door open, knew there would be some excitement, so I walked in," Terry said glibly.

"He's lying, inspector," Kelly said wearily. "I brought him in. I got him at the Big House this afternoon. He did me a good turn a little while ago. He asked me if he could tag along, so I didn't stop him. I didn't say he could though," he finished pugnaciously.

Johnson nodded his head slowly. "Just like that, huh? This is a secret meeting and you drag a convict in here. Well, he ain't going to leave as easy as he got in. You're under arrest, Lane."

"Sure," Terry agreed with a smile, "and I am delighted to be under arrest. Especially with such dignified personalities as are in this room."

"What do you mean?" Mayor Todd cried. He walked close to the man, half-raised his fist and then dropped it. There was a certain fascination in those clear eyes. Todd couldn't fathom it. They seemed to look through him. He shuddered and stopped back..

"I mean," Terry answered quietly, "that every one else in this room is no less under suspicion than myself. If I am under arrest, why, I presume every one here is, also."

"Ah-h," Johnson said with a wrinkle of his nose. "Sit down."

Doctor Cudding was still examining the dead man. He raised his head and spoke professionally.

"Commissioner Maloney was murdered all right. Somebody forced something into his right nostril and discharged a quantity of lethal gas. What the instrument that was used is, I cannot determine—can't even hazard a guess. But it must be in this room."

"Sure it's in this room," Johnson responded. "And what's more, it's going to be found. Nobody leaves until it is—not even you, Mr. Mayor."

"If I wished to leave, inspector," Todd said coldly, "I'd go. My position as mayor of this city places me above any orders from any police official. But, of course, I'll stay here. I'd be foolish to expose myself to suspicion by leaving. But I'd thank you to keep a civil tongue in your head."

There was no answer to that. Johnson shoved a hand under his coat and dragged out a big cigar. He bit off the end viciously and spat the stub on the floor. He lit a match and puffed furiously on the weed. Then he cast a venomous glance in Terry's direction, but he met only a warm smile.

Kelly walked to the side of his friend then and whispered to him.

"Got any idea who did it, Terry?"

Terry grinned. "Perhaps I have," he said enigmatically.

KELLY sighed in satisfaction. Somehow he had developed a lot of faith in this man. Inspector Johnson was clearing his throat for words.

"So what?" he asked, his gaze full on Terry.

"It just came to me, inspector," Terry replied, "that the instrument used in administering this gas must be small. Infinitesimally small. It would be too bad for our murderer if he swallowed the thing, wouldn't it?"

Terry looked about quickly. Faces paled. Only Kelly's florid Irish countenance

remained unchanged.

"There would be enough of the poison clinging to the instrument to insure the death of our murderer if he did swallow it—or in some other manner cause it to be taken in by the blood stream. The commissioner only had to inhale it—"

Johnson swore and heaved his cigar into a receptacle on the floor. He stepped closer to Terry.

"Okay, smart guy," he rasped. "You know so much, who did the job then? I suppose you know that too?"

"Oh yes," Terry answered lightly. "I've known that for some time. In fact, right after the murder."

"What?" four voices chorused. The men stepped closer to him, their faces lined with anxiety.

"Who was it, Terry?" Kelly asked. He knew this man wouldn't fail.

"Why didn't you tell us before?" Doctor Cudding cried.

"Because I had no evidence," Terry replied. "My accusation would have sounded foolish. There was some one in this room that was going to be hit hard by the commissioner's statements tonight. He had to prevent that. There was only one way—murder. He came fully prepared for his little act."

"You've got to back up those statements with evidence," Inspector Johnson roared. "You got that evidence?"

"No." Terry backed away a little. His lithe body was straight as an arrow. His eyes gleamed in a radiance of cold fury. Satan was showing himself through those eyes now. All the accumulated hate of seven years in hell.

"You dropped that evidence a moment ago, inspector," he continued.

The two-hundred-pound body of Johnson seemed to lift from the floor. He flew at Terry and the two men went down like logs. Johnson

quickly had his victim beneath him and his thumbs were pressing against Terry's windpipe. Terry lay strangely quiet. The pressure increased.

Suddenly the blue eyes opened and stared directly into Johnson's soul. The inspector trembled violently.

Two long white hands came up like a flash and fastened themselves under Johnson's thick throat. There was a gentle motion of the hands, and Johnson fell flat upon his victim. Kelly came to life first. He quickly hauled the inspector up and dropped him in a ludicrous position on the floor. Terry rose, felt of his throat tenderly, and glared murder at Johnson.

"I almost killed him, captain," he said in a low voice. "God help me, I still want to."

"Take it easy, lad," Kelly soothed. "Now what was this evidence you were talking about?"

"It's in that spittoon, Kelly. Johnson came here tonight with a small rubber balloon. He had it filled with extremely concentrated hydrocyanic acid gas. It must have been almost liquid. Some one in his pay doused the lights and he just yanked the commissioner's head backward, shoved the tip of the balloon into his nose, and let him have it. Then he rolled the balloon into a ball and put it in that cigar he was smoking. That's why it wasn't found in the search.

"I imagine we'll find that the cigar was hollowed out. Johnson was just getting ready to burn up the only evidence there was to this crime. But when I remarked how dangerous the stuff was, he became afraid to smoke the cigar and inhale the fumes from the rubber. I doubt if it would have harmed him, but he couldn't take it."

"And is he—dead?" The mayor asked.

Doctor Cudding straightened up from beside Johnson. "No," he said, "but knocked out completely. You know your anatomy, Lane. I saw that trick you used."

"An old one, but an efficient one, doctor," Terry answered. "Now that this is over, perhaps we can go. I have business to talk over with my friend, Captain Kelly."

Kelly opened the door then, gave short orders to the men without, and in a moment the still unconscious inspector was carried out. His wrists were securely cuffed with his own handcuffs. Kelly liked the irony of that

Mayor Todd cleared his throat. "Of course, Inspector Johnson will be discharged. There's a vacancy, Kelly, and you're acting inspector for the present. I'll get the council to make it permanent at the next meeting. And to you, Terry, many thanks on my own and the city's behalf. God knows what Johnson would have done if he had been allowed to get away with this. God knows—"

"The devil, you mean," Terry corrected, and there wasn't a sign of a smile on his thin face.

"Ah—yes—of course," and the mayor went out. He didn't like those eyes. Doctor Cudding left to make arrangements for an autopsy of the murdered man. Kelly and Terry Lane were alone in the room—alone with the dead.

Kelly's hand was outstretched, and Terry grasped it.

"I'm an inspector, lad. Did you hear what the mayor said? That gives me plenty of rights. After you're legally freed, I'm making you a dick. In fact—"

He fumbled in his pocket, grew excited, and then swore.

"If you are looking for your badge, inspector," Terry grinned, "I've had it for the last half hour."

He flashed the gold badge in the palm of his hand.

"I'm sorry I had to lift it from your pocket. You wouldn't understand, inspector. You see I knew who the murderer was. The evil bred in me up there cried aloud for my mouth to

remain closed—for me to help the murderer perpetrate more evil. But with that piece of metal in my hand, I could laugh aloud.”

“Okay,” Kelly was chagrined, but amused also, “keep it. It’ll help you if you stick your nose in any more things like this. But one thing, Terry—how did you know it was Johnson?”

“I heard him do it,” Terry answered. “But who would have believed me? Truthfully, you cannot say you would have. Not a jury in the land would have taken my testimony. Only a prosecutor who was a fool would have even placed me on the witness stand.”

Kelly silently agreed, but there was still a question in his mind. He voiced it. “I was in the room, too, Terry. I didn’t hear anything.

That room was as quiet as an empty church.”

“Or the dark dismalness of solitary imprisonment. Do not forget that I spent two years there. It was pitch dark in that cell and I got so I could see a little in the darkness. But most of all it was quiet. Only the footsteps of the guards or new men sentenced to the torture. I got so I could tell who walked by my cell door by the sound of their shoes. Every one’s have a different sound. Some are hard—some just squeak. Johnson’s squeaked like hell. I noticed that when I came into the room. When the lights went out, his were the only shoes I heard move. So it really was easy, eh, inspector?”

“For some people—er—Detective—Terry Lane.”