



Hours nearer  
the time when  
Eddie was to  
be led into the  
death chamber

# A Pawn for the Chair

By JOE ARCHIBALD

*Sometimes a strong position is gained by losing a pawn—and  
that goes when the pawn is your own good reputation!*

IT WAS late when Patrolman Tom McBride passed Innis Bold's pawnshop on the avenue two blocks from the river. McBride paused when he heard the dull muffled sound come from within the establishment. He opened the door quickly and stepped inside. The store was deserted and McBride went to the counter and leaned on it, raising his hefty body on the heels of his hands.

A door hinge creaked, and McBride

swung his head quickly. A little man with stooped shoulders peered at him through thick-lensed glasses. Innis Bold was not more than ten years older than McBride, but his hair was gray and his face was etched with deep lines. In a year's time, Bold's hair had turned that way.

"What do you want?" Bold snapped. "I asked you policemen to stay out of here—stay away from me."

McBride had left the door open. A man

stood just outside, studying the conglomeration of goods in the window.

"I heard a noise," McBride said. "I didn't like the way it sounded."

"I was fixing a clock, Mr. Cop," Bold said, more edge to his voice. "You get out of here."

"Sure," McBride said. "Now I've found out you are all right, Innis. It's my job. You have got to stop hating cops."

"I never will, McBride!"

"I've been hearing things, Innis," McBride said. "I hear there's a place on this avenue where small-time crooks can get rid of stolen stuff. If you think you should go against the law, because your son—"

"Get out!" Bold shouted. "You got no proof I'm breaking the law. No proof except that you think my Eddie killed the policeman."

"Okay," McBride said, and he turned and walked out.

The man outside grinned.

"He sure hates cops," he said.

"Yeah."

McBride kept on along his beat.

For almost a year now, the people who lived in the neighborhood had talked of Innis Bold's hatred for the law. Before Eddie Bold had gone to Sing Sing for killing the policeman, Innis had been a retiring, almost timid man. Everybody loved Innis Bold for he had watched over the people on the avenue as if they had been part of his own family. He always saw to it that the needy had food and a roof over their heads. That was before Eddie Bold had gone to the death house.

When McBride's footsteps had died out up the street, Innis Bold locked his pawnshop and turned out the lights. He went into the back room and took off his glasses so that he could wipe the moisture out of his eyes. He sat there in the dark, thinking of Eddie.

Eddie Bold had been a nice kid, but he

had got mixed up with the wrong crowd. Innis knew that Eddie was not altogether to blame, for in doing for others, Innis had neglected to watch his own flesh and blood as much as he should have. Eddie had been getting in late at night, a long time after Innis had gone to bed. Eddie used to tell his father that he had been to the movies or at other boys' houses, and Innis had believed his son for he was sure that a son of his would not lie to him.

THEN came the dreadful night when Innis Bold was informed that his son had been shot in the leg while helping in the hold-up of an all-night restaurant. They had taken Eddie to the hospital under police guard, and later Eddie was put on trial in the great building near the bridge and found guilty of murder in the first degree.

Innis Bold had gone to see Eddie and had talked with him alone. Eddie Bold swore that he had not fired the shot.

"Somebody did, son," Innis had said to his son, his heart squeezed right out of him. "You admitted you were in the gang that tried to rob that place."

"I won't tell you who it was," Eddie Bold had said stubbornly, trying to mask his terror. "I ain't a squealer. The guy who shot the cop tossed the gun to me and said to ditch it, while he went out to bring the car around. But the cops come and—"

"You don't want to be a squealer," Innis had told Eddie. "You wish to live by some crazy rules that crooks write down? You think of yourself, Eddie. Tell me who fired the shot."

Eddie Bold had refused to break the criminal code, and Innis had walked away from him, his hair starting to turn white. They were going to electrocute Eddie.

Innis Bold had gone up to Albany to see the governor and had talked to the big man for two hours with the tears streaming down his cheeks. Once he had got on his knees.

The governor had reprieved Eddie Bold. Twice he had reprieved him, but that was all over. All hope was gone. Eddie Bold was going to die. In just seven weeks now, Innis Bold was going to have to sit in the dark and count the seconds on a certain night.

A few days after Eddie had been convicted, five of his friends had come to see Innis Bold. Bold remembered having seen three of them at different times, passing by with Eddie, stopping in with Eddie to look over the goods in the shop. Their names were Frankie Paul, Chick Dewin and Howie Alkon.

Frankie told Innis how sorry they were. None of them had been in the hold-up, and they said they had no idea that Eddie had been mixed up with crooks. Innis remembered that the two who had gone into the restaurant had worn handkerchiefs over the lower parts of their faces. The three friends of Eddie's wanted to know if there was anything they could do.

"Yes," Innis had said angrily. "You can keep away from me, you and the cops!"

Sitting there, Bold went through all the tortures again. After the cop had been killed, another one had whipped a long shot at Eddie and had got him in the leg. The other four had made their escape and Eddie was going to take their names into eternity with him, just to get even with the law.

Innis Bold's torment was a lingering doubt that Eddie had lied to him, that he had killed the policeman. But it was only a doubt. Eddie would not kill. Eddie would not harm anyone. He was innocent and they were going to snuff his life out. He kept hearing Eddie's voice.

"I didn't know any of us had a gun," Eddie said, "not a loaded one. The one we showed the guy in the restaurant was an old piece of junk we found in a dump near the river. But I won't squeal. It wouldn't help me, anyway, because I had the gun in my hand when they got me. We swore an oath."

**A**N OATH. To whom? The Devil, Innis Bold thought. The only chance to save Eddie was for himself to hire out to Lucifer and discover what the cops could never find out. Innis had prayed and prayed, but he guessed he would have to try some other way to save Eddie. Perhaps he was being punished for not watching his son close enough. The boy had lost his mother when he was still in swaddling clothes.

Innis Bold watched Frankie and Chick and Howie during the weeks that followed Eddie's incarceration in the death house. Frankie passed by the shop one evening, and Innis said to him:

"I do not see you around much lately, Frankie."

"No, Mr. Bold," Frankie had said. "I'm going to a trade school at night. I got a job in a tailor shop during the day."

Innis thought Frankie had acted a little afraid, like a person who holds a terrible secret.

Howie Alkon and Chick Dewin, Bold found out, had also become industrious and were keeping respectable hours. Their parents told Mr. Bold that they were in every night before ten-thirty.

The word got around to the most remote corners of the neighborhood that Innis Bold's hatred for the law had become an obsession and several citizens of ill repute made mental note of the fact and weighed the possibility of profiting therefrom. Indigent residents of the neighborhood no longer appealed to Innis Bold for help for he had become a bitter, brooding man. The old adage that has to do with giving a dog a bad name was applied to Innis, and the story was circulated that Bold's pawnshop might have been the dumping ground for the spoils taken by Eddie Bold and his gang of hoodlums.

It was Tom McBride who had hinted that Innis had cleaned out his shop the day after they had captured his son.

"A bad dog," McBride had said openly,

“generally has the characteristics of the canine that was responsible for its conception.”

Eddie Bold had spent over a year in the death house when Arnie Pietro came into Innis Bold’s pawnshop by the back way one night after one o’clock. Arnie dumped four gold watches, some solid silverware and three bracelets on the table near Innis.

“We want a hundred bucks for the stuff,” Arnie said. “It’s all solid metal. You know what old gold brings. We need the hundred.”

“It isn’t worth fifty,” Innis Bold said. “It is what you should call hot, Arnie.”

“We get a hundred,” Arnie said.

He was about twenty-five. He had a bad pair of eyes and the way he kept moving his hands put fear into the heart of Innis Bold. A muscle in Arnie’s face kept twitching.

“It is a hold-up,” Innis Bold said.

“Call it any thin’ you like, see?” Arnie said. “We are goin’ after bigger stuff, anyway. This penny-ante stuff don’t get us nowhere. Maybe we won’t need you no more, Bold.”

“All right,” Bold said. “I give you a hundred.”

**P**IETRO went out into the darkened shop while Innis Bold got the money, and Arnie’s cat’s eyes were accustomed to the lack of light. There was a grin on his face when he came back to get the money.

“You should not do that,” Innis Bold said. “If a policeman happened to go by—”

“Nuts!” Arnie said. “I was lookin’ at some goods. Maybe we need you after all. Say, they’re goin’ to burn Eddie pretty soon, ain’t they?”

Innis Bold clenched his fists and fought to keep himself from screaming at Arnie and tearing the man’s face with his fingernails.

“Yes,” Innis said under his breath. “Soon it shall happen. Now you go out of here.”

He sat in the dark again and thought and thought. Kids like Eddie and Frankie and the

others had not been old enough to think things out for themselves. There must have been an older man who had told them about the “easy way” and the importance of the incredibly devilish criminal code.

That man would not dare to be seen with Eddie’s friends anymore, not after the cop was killed. He would be a man who would kill kids like Frankie and Chick and Howie, if they dared talk to a cop. A vicious criminal like that, Innis Bold knew, would keep climbing in his profession, keep going after bigger stakes until he became known as a big shot. Innis remembered the stuff they had taught him in P.S. 67 about Fagin and Oliver Twist.

You couldn’t see the guns that Innis Bold had in the shop unless you knew just where to look. It was becoming almost impossible for crooks to get guns. Every man who openly purchased a firearm had to have a license, and the number of the gun was immediately registered with the police, together with its ballistic characteristics.

McBride came in early the next afternoon. Innis Bold looked at him coldly and sat rigid on the stool back of the counter.

“Let me see your watches, Bold,” McBride said. “All of them. They have numbers in the works of watches.”

“All of them are here,” Bold said, taking down a board from which a dozen watches hung and placing it on the counter. “There are some more in the window, policeman,” he said, and met McBride’s stony glance without blinking.

McBride examined the watches. It took him almost a half hour.

“Guess they’re not here, Innis,” he said finally. “Not where I can get hold of them.”

“You get out of here,” Innis said. “You coming here gives me a bad reputation, McBride. Isn’t it enough my boy is going to be killed? Do you have to hound his father?”

“I got a job to do, Innis,” the cop said. “To keep some more Eddie Bolds out of the

chair if I can. Get them quick and you can do a lot with them. Eddie was allowed to go too far, Innis. We're all sorry, everybody's sorry."

"It's a lie, policeman. Everywhere I hear Eddie deserves getting in the chair," Innis shouted.

McBRIDE walked out and had to push this way through a group of people who had been wondering what the elder Bold had been up to. Innis Bold came out and drove them away, a big brass-knobbed cane in his hands.

Night came again—another terrible night, hours nearer the time when Eddie was going to be led out of his cell and into the death chamber. Innis Bold was about to close his shop when a stranger came in. He was a beefy man with reddish eyebrows and square bluish jaws.

"Got any radios, Mister?" the visitor asked.

"Yes. Lots of them," Bold said. "Portable, maybe?"

"Yeah. Not more'n five bucks."

The man moved away from the counter and ran his eyes over the stuff that practically filled every inch of space. He suddenly said:

"Say, how much are these pistols, Mister? I run a big garage across town and some nights we have plenty of dough there. Been a lot of hold-ups lately. I'd like to get one for the night man, I mean one of these guns. But you got to know the mayor personal to get a permit for one. So—"

"I don't know," Innis Bold said. "I got to be careful about selling them. Maybe if you leave your name and address, though—"

"Sure," the customer said. "Let me have that one there, Mister. How much?"

"Fifty dollars," Innis Bold said.

"Huh? That's a hold-up."

"All right. I would rather not sell them, anyway," Innis Bold said. "Now this portable radio you asked about—"

"Keep it. I can't buy both." The beefy man grinned. "Here's the dough."

"You leave your name and address," Innis Bold said, as he wrapped up the pistol. "Don't tell nobody where you bought this, will you?"

"Okay, Mister."

He scribbled a name and address on a piece of paper, handed it to Bold and then walked out:

Next morning the headlines read:

### COP KILLER TO DIE!

Innis Bold read the print under the headlines, his blood becoming stagnant in his veins. The paper said that Eddie's lawyer had given up, that the man had tried every conceivable legal device to save his client from the chair. Eddie would be the youngest killer ever to be strapped into the chair up at Sing Sing.

Seventy-four hours before the execution, a fur robbery took place on Third Avenue and a watchman was shot to death. The policeman on the beat got the license of the light delivery truck that got away with twenty-five-thousand-dollars worth of furs from the storage loft. He told his pal, Tom McBride, that he pumped three bullets into the truck before it got around the corner. He was sure he had winged a man who had swung aboard the truck.

Every doctor in the city was notified to report the treatment of a bullet wound, or a burn that could result from a slug grazing the flesh. At ten o'clock the next morning, a doctor on Eighty-Ninth Street near Lexington, called the nearest precinct station. Police got there in time to arrest the patient.

It was Arnie Pietro. Arnie swore that he had been cleaning a pistol when it had suddenly gone off.

McBRIDE stared at him. "What were you doin' with a pistol, Arnie?" the cop asked.

"Lots of guys own guns," said Arnie.

"Yeah. We've got the bullet out of yours, I think," McBride said. "Took it from the body of the watchman. You've been in the racket a long time, Arnie. You never knew Eddie Bold, did you?"

"Never," Arnie said. "You can't prove nothin' on me, copper. You find the gun if you can."

"Okay, Arnie. Now you're bandaged up, let's go down and call on Innis Bold."

Arnie's mouth dropped open.

"Him!" he sneered when he got hold of himself. "So he's been squawkin' about some stuff I turned over to him, has he? Okay, I've done some small jobs, but you don't hang no murder on me."

Innis Bold smiled bleakly at Arnie when the cops brought the wounded crook into his shop.

"You have got the bullet out of the watchman, Tommy?" Bold asked eagerly. "Let me have it."

"Tommy you call the cop, hah?" Arnie sneered. "You kissed and made up, maybe?"

McBride shoved Arnie into the back room. There, Innis Bold took a sheet of oilcloth off a small tub similar to those that butter comes in. It was half filled with some kind of wax and there were holes in the wax. Innis Bold poked at one of the holes with an icepick and produced a bullet, then pried two more out of the wax in the tub.

"All of these bullets came out of the three guns you loaned me, Tommy," Innis Bold smiled. "The guns that were once used by killers, the numbers filed off the pistols. You check the three bullets and see if one of them don't match up with the one you took

out of the watchman, Tommy. And you take this piece of paper here I have in an envelope. It has the name and address of a man on it. They are fakes, Tommy, I am sure, but a man can't fake a fingerprint can he? Not a big man with red eyebrows."

Arnie Pietro's face was white and drawn, but not from the pain of the bullet burn on his arm.

"We took a long chance, Innis," Tom McBride said. "But I think we might have the man who killed the cop that time, the one who tossed the gun to Eddie."

"You're nuts!" Arnie gasped.

"We'll make sure in the laboratory at Headquarters," McBride said. "Those kids had a leader, a yellow rat like you, Arnie. A guy who saw to it that they would take the rap if things went wrong. When they grabbed Eddie, you figured to stop messing around with small fry and go to bigger stuff. Killing a man gives a guy like you a Capone complex. Who was the guy who gave you the gun for the last hold-up, Arnie?"

"You ain't framin' me," Arnie yelled.

"A crook generally sticks to one section of the city because he knows it like a book, Arnie," McBride said. "It saves a lot of time casing jobs, huh? You should've changed your fields, Arnie. Let's go downtown."

"I'll be waiting here, Tommy," Innis Bold said. "I'll be praying all the time."

THE width, the depth and pitch of the grooves, the ridges in the grooves and other peculiarities due to defective material, wear and tear, individualize the barrel of a gun and render possible the identification of the bullet which has passed through it. The bullet they took out of the body of the watchman in the loft matched one of the bullets that Innis Bold had fired into the wax. The bullet came out of the gun that Eddie Bold had been holding the night the cop was killed outside an all-night restaurant.

"We've got everything, Arnie," McBride

said to Arnie during the questioning at Headquarters. "The gun was purchased from Innis Bold by Big Al Betz who has already served two terms for armed robbery in Pennsylvania. His fingerprint tripped him. We've got the net out for him, Arnie. Big Al was the leader this time, and you took the orders. You know where he got the gun, don't you? It was Exhibit A during Eddie Bold's trial. Guns have been hard to get, so we furnished Innis with three of them. You see the D.A. had a hunch all along that Eddie Bold was not the type of kid who would kill a man. He had to do his job and prosecute Eddie, because the evidence was piled against him. With Eddie convicted and in the death house, the D.A. agreed to take a long chance with us and gave me the gun, Arnie. It's a nice gun, and Innis Bold was sure that a crook would pick that one instead of the other two which were of smaller caliber."

"You won't burn me!" Arnie shrieked. "You still can't prove nothin'."

"When we get Big Al Betz," McBride said, "we'll get everything. He'll come out of his hole when he hears he is wanted for murder. And when we accuse Betz of killing the watchman last night, Betz is going to start saving his own skin. So it does not matter what you did with the gun, Arnie. The bullets and Innis Bold will be enough to convict you. Maybe you handed the gun back to Betz?"

That was just what Arnie had done, and he suddenly broke down and became a whimpering hoodlum. Just as a cop opened the door and told McBride that Betz was being brought in, Arnie told them everything, how he had tossed the gun to Eddie Bold that night. Arnie knew they had him for the second killing, anyway.

"That's that," McBride said to a sergeant of detectives. "Thanks for letting me work close with you on this. I had a big interest in

the case. I want to get down and tell Innis Bold myself. You know, he didn't really hate cops, Arnie. And Arnie—I knew all the time that you were handing your take to Innis. He's been saving the stuff for me. You were too provincial like a lot of big city folks, Arnie. You should have picked out a different stamping ground to take post-graduate work in crime."

Arnie Pietro was too full of fear to find an answer for McBride.

Innis Bold was in the back room of his shop when Tom McBride walked in.

"It's all right, Innis," McBride said. "Arnie Pietro has confessed everything. I imagine they'll let Eddie go in a couple of days. I don't think they'll want to do anything more to him. A year in the death house is all the punishment he'll ever need."

Innis Bold shook Tom McBride's hand and clung to the big cop. Innis cried like a baby for several minutes, and McBride had a big lump in his throat that he had to keep swallowing.

"Look," McBride said. "There's a family going to be dispossessed about four blocks down the avenue, Innis. Tomorrow morning. You better get your hat and coat on and go down there and see what you can do for them; they're colored, Innis."

"What does it matter what they are, Tommy? No matter what their color or creed, Tommy," Innis said and wiped his eyes. "I'll go down there with you. Let us have a little wine, Tommy. We will drink to Eddie. He didn't lie to his father, you hear? Eddie didn't lie. Sometimes I think lying is worse than murder, Tommy. It was very bad all these last few months, working with the Devil. But we licked him, Tommy."

"Yeah," McBride said, and realized that he had never tasted better wine.