



Kenna's two shots were deliberate, well-placed

Death Scoops A Columnist

By JOE ARCHIBALD

Police Detective Pat Kenna barges into a baffling kidnapping case that puts wheels within wheels of mystery in motion!

IF THERE was anything Pat Kenna hated worse than being thumped roundly on the back it was to have Ray Darcy do it.

Thousands of people in the big town would have been flattered by the Darcy familiarity, for the big fellow with the crisp, curly hair wrote a syndicated gossip column for the *News-Record*. He broadcasted three times a week over the radio and once he

wrote a book called "By Keyhole to Success."

Pat Kenna coughed, spun around and glared at the columnist. He wiped some beer from his coat.

"Some day, you boudoir Brummel," he said, "I'm going to plaster you so hard you won't be able to put curlers in your hair for a week!"

Darcy grinned. "You caught the geezer

who bumped off Little Eddie Anselmi? Let's see—it was nearly six months ago, Kenna. The grass is a foot high over his grave. If you cops would be nicer to me maybe you wouldn't have to mark down so many flops. Your public don't like it, Kenna."

The detective disliked Ray Darcy from away back. Darcy had been a police reporter until he was caught taking gravy from the dishonest element. After that, Darcy made a precarious living for five years, until the *News-Record* blossomed out in the city's Fourth Estate and the publisher happened to be an agnostic, an iconoclast and a misguided crusader rolled into one. Darcy was his breed of cats, so Darcy had been given a job.

"You don't like me, do you, copper?" Darcy grinned, and ordered another Martini.

"Why, in my book you are a hundred per cent, Darcy," Pat Kenna said. "Fifteen per cent ability, thirty-five per cent gall and fifty per cent bluff. A bunch of morons have built you up to a big shot who sees and hears and knows all. To me you will always be the biggest false alarm in the business. You hire a dozen punks to snoop around town for dirt while you sit around and conduct your side line."

"Which is?"

"I wish I could think of a nicer name for it, Darcy," Kenna said. "But it is blackmail."

DARCY drained his glass and set it down gently. The muscles around his jaws were oyster-white.

"Some day you're going to be plenty sorry for the things you say to me, Kenna," he said, without looking at the detective.

"Yeah?" Kenna said. "Better make your threat good fast, pal. I have heard that you sort of helped a certain gee into a hot seat. His name was Lefke. I have also heard that Lefke had friends of a kind."

"Somebody had to get rid of the rat if the cops are that dumb they never even got a lead on him," Darcy said. "You should read my column more and maybe between the lines you would find a tip or two."

"I still prefer the comic books," Kenna said.

He walked out of the hotel bar and headed for the nearest subway kiosk, but he was not smiling. This Ray Darcy was not funny, but he had to admit the punk had plenty of nerve at times. Too often he had made the cops look silly, and even some of the better newspapers had posed a question to the Commissioner he could not answer.

Why could a gossip monger get information regarding certain crimes and crooks when the Police Department could not? No, Darcy was not to be laughed at.

It was almost a week later that the cops got something far ahead of the columnists. The D.A. called Kenna and four other plainclothes men into his office and introduced them to a perturbed elderly gentleman named Henry Comstock. He explained that Comstock was in the employ of Berton J. Stendahl, owner of a chain of grocery stores.

"Mr. Comstock has brought me a letter," the D.A. said. "It is a ransom note. It is plain that Stendahl's daughter, Marcia, has been kidnaped. Her father, for obvious reasons, could not come himself."

"Marcia Stendahl?" a detective said quickly. "The one they call Miss Commando around the night spots?"

The D.A. frowned. "This is a serious matter, McLane. This letter demands that Stendahl turn over the Koonah diamond before he sees his daughter all in one piece again. The diamond is worth about a hundred thousand dollars."

Pat Kenna pursed his lips. "That's a new angle, D.A. We're dealing with some smart boys who know how easy it is to trace currency by the serial numbers. You can get

a diamond cutter to make a hundred sparklers out of that Koonah and they never could be traced.”

The D.A. agreed. Comstock removed his pince-nez and wiped his ruddy face with a big handkerchief.

Kenna asked for the ransom note. He saw that it had been typed on a machine that had been kept in such good condition that not one letter was smudged, and all were plainly defined. He guessed that the cops could spend five years trying to tie the note up with the typewriter. He looked up.

“How long has Marcia Stendahl been missing, Mr. Comstock?”

“Almost a week,” the little man said. “But her parents did not think too much about it at first. Marcia, as you—er—may have heard, is rather impulsive. She has a habit of leaving home without telling anyone where she is going. Then her mother gets a phone call in a day or two.”

Kenna stifled the urge to snicker. Impulsive, the man said. It was a mild word for Marcia. Not so long ago “Miss Commando” had hung a little fist on a waiter’s eye in the El Charro. There was the night she caught a doll with someone she figured was her property for the moment, and she nearly yanked the coiffure right off the trespasser’s head.

While being evicted from the bistro she had put all her pretty front teeth into a waiter’s tender wrist. It looked as if the kidnapers had to be pretty tough.

Comstock went on, prompted by the D.A.

“Finally,” he said, “the maid went to Marcia’s room and checked the luggage. Not a single piece was missing. And then the maid got to remembering having seen Marcia go out, but could not swear to the clothes she wore.”

“Stendahl going to pay off?” Kenna asked.

Comstock nodded. “What else can the

boss do? The ransom note is plain enough. It says Stendahl won’t ever see his daughter again if he does not come through inside of seven days, and that it will not be nice for Marcia if anyone consults the police before the diamond is delivered.”

“When is the pay-off to be?” Kenna asked.

“Tomorrow night,” Comstock said. “But I have to have your assurance that you will not interfere until after the diamond is delivered.”

“All right, Comstock,” the D.A. said. “Give Stendahl our word. But I think it is safe enough for me to keep tabs on every crooked fence in this town in the meantime.”

PAT KENNA got up, rammed a cigar between his teeth.

“Comstock,” he said, “see that nothing is disturbed in Marcia Stendahl’s room. Call the Stendahl apartment and give those instructions right away.”

“Right.” Comstock reached for his hat.

When he was gone, the D.A. said:

“There are some things we can do right away. Keep a close watch on the bus terminals for faces that are familiar to the cops. Airports and railroad stations, just after Stendahl has paid off.”

Kenna nodded. “The dame’s in a hot spot this time, Chief. Those mugs know they will get the chair for kidnaping, if they’re caught. They can’t get any worse by bumping Miss Commando, can they? So if the doll knows who they are, they’ll do it.”

“Yeah,” the D.A. growled. “Let’s have a good laugh, Pat. How do you always keep so cheerful?”

An hour after Stendahl had notified the police that he had delivered the diamond, Pat Kenna made a fast trip to the Stendahl duplex apartments on East Seventieth Street. When he was admitted into a big modernistic living room, he saw Stendahl

walking up and down, a cloud of cigar smoke swirling around his head. There was a bottle of whisky on the coffee table and by the smell in the place Kenna knew Stendahl had not just been nipping at it.

"You're a cop?" Stendahl roared.

"Yeah," Kenna said.

Stendahl was fighting nerves. "You look a little brighter than I figured. What am I goin' to do? She isn't here yet? You think they'll keep their word?"

"Take it easy," Pat Kenna said. "Where's the maid? Marcia's maid?"

"She's upstairs with my wife," Stendahl said, and picked up the bottle again. "How many cops are on the job?"

"All of them, Mr. Stendahl," Pat said.

He asked how to get up to the next floor. The big man told him and Kenna ran up the stairs, came to another foyer, and rang a bell. The maid let him in.

"I'm Detective Kenna," he said. "I want to see Miss Stendahl's room."

The maid was scared. There were tears in her eyes, so at first Kenna could do nothing with her. When she calmed down he looked at the letters on Marcia Stendahl's desk, and picked up the ones that had been opened and which were dated over a week ago.

One of them seemed worth prying into. It was a receipted bill from a costume company. It read:

1 platinum blonde wig—\$32.00.

"You know anything about this thing?" Kenna said to the maid, and shoved the bill in her hands. "She went to a costume ball or something?"

The maid shook her head. "Not as I remember."

"We'll look around for that wig," Pat Kenna said. "You check on her clothes and see what's missing. And jewelry. What kind of jewelry she wear? Like rings or ear-rings.

Don't just stand there, sister. Your mistress is in a spot, or didn't you know?"

Pat Kenna and the maid ransacked the girl's closets and all the dresser drawers. The maid finally came to the end of this process of elimination and was sure that Marcia had worn her short sable coat, purplish tweed suit and a little hat with black and green feathers in it. She was positive that Marcia had worn her diamond ear-rings. They were little gold rosettes with perfect stones set in their centers. Anyway, they were missing from her jewelry box.

"Well, we got something to go on," Kenna said. "Let me use that phone."

He called Headquarters and gave them a description of Marcia Stendahl's ensemble as of the day she disappeared, then quickly hung up when the maid called to him.

"Here is that wig, Mr. Kenna! Now what would she want with it?"

"I ask the questions," Kenna snapped. "You tell me."

"And how could I?" the maid said, her eyes flashing. "We weren't palsy-walsies, me and Marcia Stendahl. I guess you never knew that girl very well."

"No, I never owned a night-club," the detective said.

He kept looking at the wig, finally tossed it back into the hat-box, and hurried out of the room. Downstairs he asked Stendahl if he had the remotest idea regarding the identities of the men who took over the diamond.

"Comstock delivered it," Stendahl told him. "He got into a car at the corner of Main and Twelfth at six o'clock and a gun was jammed into his stomach and somebody told him to close his eyes. Then they put a blindfold on him and drove him downtown, he feels sure, for another thirty blocks. He could smell the market district. Then when the car stopped, a man opened the car door and said, 'Let's have it, mister.' A few minutes later they pushed Comstock

out of the car and he found himself a block from the waterfront.”

“All those instructions were not in the ransom note,” Kenna pointed out.

“I received another note,” Stendahl said. “I couldn’t take the chance of showing it to the police. You know that.”

KENNA took a long, deep breath and sat down.

“Right now, I don’t seem to know anything, Mr. Stendahl,” he said. “Your daughter, despite the precautions, is not back. Look—I don’t wish to pry into her private affairs, but I happen to be a cop and I got to know everything that might have a bearing on this case. She mixed with all kinds of crowds. Some of them weren’t so sweet, Mr. Stendahl.”

“Revenge?” Stendahl looked at his watch, took another drink, one of the neatest Pat Kenna had ever seen. “Some man she might have led to believe she liked?” He shook his head. “Only time Marcia was ever serious was with it soldier she met a couple of months ago. He came from somewhere out West and didn’t have a dime. She said she was going to marry him, and I said if she did she could support him. I did not intend to. She claimed she was madly in love with him. She brought him here and I gave it to him straight. Her beauty parlor bill every month was three times what the Army paid him. He left and I haven’t heard a thing about it since.”

“He might have been a nice boy, Stendahl,” Pat Kenna said. “He might have been good for Marcia, saved her from a lot of this rotten world she’s been traipsin’ through. Maybe because of that soldier, she would have seen life different.”

“I’ll be the judge of that, Kenna,” Stendahl said angrily. “Confine your investigation to police business!”

“Okay, okay,” Kenna said. “This fellow had a nice face maybe? Something like

Gary Cooper’s? If he did, she still carries his picture in her locket, Mr. Stendahl. I’ll be getting along. If any local fences are interested in that diamond, we’ll know about it. They’re all covered like a blanket.”

“Get my daughter back!” Stendahl roared, his voice breaking badly. “The devil with the diamond!”

Pat Kenna went over to where the bright lights of the big city were clustered and some of the war, he noticed, had been crowded off the front pages of all the papers. The tabloids carried big photographs of Marcia Stendahl, and the *News-Record* had the biggest of them all.

Everywhere there was talk of the kidnaping. The value of the Koonah diamond, as tongues wagged, stepped up to half a million dollars.

Kenna wanted to see Ray Darcy and study the expression on the columnist’s face. He finally caught up with the man in a small club on East Fiftieth Street. Darcy liked to hang around that particular bistro. A beautiful redhead sang there, and Darcy’s weakness was redheads.

“Well, I got to get my gestapo out to run down these snatch artists,” Darcy was saying when Kenna entered. “The cops are just about jumping on the merry-go-round for the usual ride. Imagine it, snaggin’ that babe. Look, I got to run along and look over my files.”

“Mind if I string along?” Pat Kenna said, and banged Darcy between the angel bones with the flat of his hand. “Maybe I’ll start readin’ your stuff, Darcy. If I find it’s as interesting as you seem to think it is.”

“Beat it, Kenna,” Darcy said.

“Okay, if you want to act that way.”

He watched Ray Darcy get his hat and coat at the concession, watched him talk for a couple of minutes with the redhead there. Darcy looked happy, like a cat with feathers on its mouth in front of a warm fire. He seemed to know something and when he

headed for the door he looked back at Pat Kenna with a don't-you-wish-you-knew-too expression in his eyes.

"Smart lad," Kenna sneered, and ordered a drink.

"Yeah," the redhead said. "He makes more in a day than you make in a month, copper."

"And some days he makes more than Uncle Sam knows about, sister. Somebody will catch up with him yet. . . ."

Twenty-four hours later, Pat Kenna was a better prophet than he realized. He stood looking down at Ray Darcy who was sitting against the side of a brick building only a block from the *News-Record* offices. Darcy was dead and there were three bullets in him. There was a string around his neck and a card that dangled from it said:

To the cops with the compliments of
friends of the late George Lefke.

"He had three friends at least, that Lefke," Pat Kenna said. "How long has Darcy been dead?"

"About an hour," the medical examiner said. "No more." He snapped his black bag shut.

AT THE morgue, they looked the dead columnist over carefully. It was Pat Kenna who found the little diamond earring inside Darcy's suede glove, nestling against the palm. Kenna had to sit down. So Darcy had had a lead. He had been in the joint where Marcia Stendahl was held prisoner. He'd had to be. It looked as if Ray Darcy had tried to cut in on a piece of the Koonah and his price had been too high. Otherwise, the columnist would have called the cops.

But why the diamond ear-ring? Even though he had never liked any part of Darcy, Kenna knew he wouldn't snitch a single ear-ring that was not worth more than two hundred bucks.

Later, when three bullets had been taken out of Darcy and examined by the experts in ballistics they proved to have been shot from the same gun. Pat Kenna reasoned that one man had killed Ray Darcy, had fired three shots into him to make the cops think three of Lefke's old friends had each had the satisfaction of avenging their old pal.

He remembered what Darcy had said not so long ago— "You should read my column, Kenna. You cops would maybe get some tips between the lines."

Well, there were times when a cop has to try anything. Pat Kenna hurried over to the *News-Record* offices, walked into the city room, and called to the night city editor. Typewriters were going crazy all around him and Kenna had to yell.

"Where's Darcy's office, Charley? I got to look it over!"

The editor cussed out the detective and pointed to the far corner of the room. "Don't bother me, copper! A kidnaping, an' then Darcy is bumped off on top of that. Besides we got a war to report. You'll find two of Darcy's agents in there mourning their loss. I'll be hanged if I will."

Kenna barged into Darcy's famous cubicle and nearly fell over the outstretched legs of one of the mourners.

"Snap out of it," he yipped. "One of you mugs will fall heir to his stint, such as it is. Darcy had a lead on that Stendahl kidnapin' and I'm goin' to find out what it was if I have to tear down this dump."

"Yeah?" a little man said. "Darcy was checkin' over some of the columns of the last two weeks. Just after the news of that abduction broke. They're in that big wire basket there."

Kenna sat down and grabbed at the bunch of gossip columns and began to read. Most of it was tripe and not a la mode. He almost gagged on the dehydrated corn. It was the usual swill about glamour dolls approaching motherhood, of marriages

ready to hit the reefs of incompatibility. It was drivel about chronic night spot addicts.

Then Kenna came to a column, one paragraph of which was bracketed by blue pencil. He leaned forward and devoured the fine print avidly:

It does not appear to your jaded correspondent that a ten-grand bite and almost two years in the Bastille has dampened the spirits or dimmed the eye of Barney the "Big" Sava. Although it is quite apparent to all that the Big is as flat at the moment as a 1919 tire, Barney seemed to have the moola with which to regale a stunning platinum blonde at one of the smaller palaces of wine, women and song in the early Fifties.

Barney the Big escorted the gorgeous creature to a fashionable pueblo uptown, but we have it on good authority that the luscious lady left the Big's cab at least three blocks from her latch key.

Kenna looked over at the late Ray Darcy's legman.

"Know anything about this?" he said, and pushed the clipping at the more intelligent-looking one.

"Yeah, I remember," the gossip monger's errand boy explained. "Darcy was sore I didn't get the babe's name. I asked Barney and he pushed me into the gutter. I tried to make the doorman at that joint tell me but no soap."

"Describe that apartment house!" Kenna yelled at the man. "Was it on East Seventieth? Did it have boxwood on each side of the entrance? Was it called the Richelieu Apartments?"

"That's right. Now I remember. It was rainy that night and the doorman told me he did not know the doll, and wouldn't tell me her name if he did. He said she must have been a visitor there."

Pat Kenna began clearing up the muddle inside his head. It was plain now that Marcia Stendahl, for some reason of her own, had gone to an out-of-the-way bistro to talk to Barney the Big. Not that he was not good to look at, for he was handsome in a sinister sort of way. Dames had helped

send Barney away, especially those two that had helped peddle his nylons.

THERE was no doubt in Kenna's mind that Ray Darcy had been figuring in high gear too. The columnist would have had quite a file on Miss Commando inside his noggin, for she had been perfect grist for his type-mill. Darcy would have been figuring that as beautiful a platinum blonde as his agents described could not simply disappear like a straw in the wind, so when Marcia Stendahl had disappeared, Darcy's cunning mind had started churning. No doubt he had made the rounds of the theatrical costume houses, and turned up something about that wig.

The diamond ear-ring bothered Kenna. He was sure Darcy had been in the place where Marcia was detained and had managed to sneak the bit of jewelry into his glove. Why? There was only one answer that seemed plausible. Ray Darcy had known he was to get the works and that the killers were going to throw the blame on certain pals of the late George Lefke.

Darcy had arranged it so the cops would know he had been erased by the kidnapers of Marcia Stendahl. Darcy had walked into the hide-out, had tried to make a deal, and had been taken care of for keeps.

Pat Kenna grinned and got up.

"Be seein' you boys," he said, and hurried out.

He knew where to find Barney the Big. When a fellow has to report to a parole board he has to list his address with the cops. Barney lived at a second-rate hotel called the Avon.

Before Pat went down there, he phoned Dave McCue, a husky detective who was handy to have around when the chips were down. McCue was quite a man, and often went around to the stage door canteen to help entertain the soldiers with his imitations of Jimmy Durante, Groucho

Marx and many others. McCue was getting ready for bed when Kenna contacted him.

"Heck, Pat," he said. "It can wait until mornin'."

"Not this brother," Kenna said. "This has to do with a kidnaping. I need you in more ways than one, Mac. Meet me in front of the Avon on Seventh in half an hour."

McCue showed on time and he growled at Pat Kenna.

"We're going up to see Barney the Big and try to pin the kidnaping of Marcia Stendahl on him, Mac," Kenna said.

"You're crazy, Pat!"

"Maybe," Kenna said. "You will hold a gun on the geezer while I frisk him. I should have told you to bring a pair of pajamas and a toothbrush, pal, because we might stay here for a while."

They went into the Avon and the clerk said Barney Sava had not come in yet, so Pat led McCue into the bar and treated him to a couple of beers and stood at the bar where he could watch a good slice of the lobby. McCue had just finished his second beer when Pat Kenna got him by the arm.

"Come on, Mac."

Barney the Big was stepping into the elevator when Pat Kenna and McCue bade him a pleasant good evening. Barney whirled quickly and his long hard mouth twitched a little when he saw police.

"We just want to ask you a question or two, Barney," Pat said. "The D.A. don't feel too satisfied about your occupation, and you know you have to prove a legitimate one when you are on parole."

Sava laughed. "Yeah? Let's go in the bar."

"It's closin' up," Pat said. "Anyway this is private and we don't want to embarrass you, Barney. We'll go up to your room."

The Big eyed the cops for a few seconds, then shrugged.

"Up," he said to the operator.

Barney the Big shed his nice camel hair

coat, removed his gray plaid double-breasted and sat down on the bed. In his shirt-sleeves, Barney Sava was a powerful-looking customer. He had a froggy voice and a pair of eyes that mirrored little soul.

"Okay, let's have the quiz program, coppers."

"Where is Marcia Stendahl?" Pat asked.

Barney the Big's right eye jumped and then both of them narrowed swiftly.

"Come again, Kenna. Am I hearin' things?"

"Cover him, Dave!"

McCue flashed his police positive and the Big started to get up from the bed.

"Sit tight, Barney!" McCue said.

Pat Kenna began to look around the Big's room. He finally picked up the plaid coat and went through the pockets. He took his big hand out of one and looked at what he held in the palm. He walked toward the Big and showed him a diamond ear-ring. Barney Sava's face blanched. He uttered a hoarse croak and reached quickly for the piece of jewelry.

"Where'd that come from?"

The Big's brain had always had a hair-trigger. He was up and crashing into McCue, and the detective tried for a crack at Sava's head with the gun and missed. The blow glanced off Sava's shoulder and then McCue was driven half across the room with a savage blow to the stomach.

PAT KENNA wanted no shooting here and he wanted to keep the noise of the disturbance from reaching too far beyond the hotel room. He drove in at the Big just as Sava tore McCue's gun loose from his fingers, and hit the Big solid just under the left ear.

Sava reeled, but there was a lot of trouble left in him. He hurled himself at the detective and hit Kenna a glancing blow on the side of the head that put bird songs in the Law's ears. Kenna forced a laugh and

mixed it with the Big and finally got the crook with a Judo trick that nearly broke Sava's neck. Before Barney could get the fog out of his head, Kenna put the cuffs on him.

"I don't get it, Pat," McCue said, rubbing his stomach.

"You will, Dave," Kenna said, and took some clothes-line from his pocket. "That punk can hit, huh? Well, you've heard him talk, Dave. Think you can stooge for him? He knows where the Stendahl girl is. He recognized that ear-ring we took off Ray Darcy."

"Darcy?" the Big choked out. "This is a frame, coppers!"

"Maybe," Kenna said. "Dave, we've got to tie this bird up and toss him into the closet. We also have to gag him, since he is making so much noise. Come on, let's take care of that."

In a few minutes, the Big was stored away and rendered silent. Kenna wiped the sweat from his face and rubbed a shin that the Big had kicked.

"I'm taking a chance this mug has not closed the deal on that big diamond yet, Dave," he said. "I figure he should get some telephone calls within the next few hours and you will be Barney the Big answering them. Before I picked you up I tipped off the night supervisor over at the exchange to trace any calls that come to him."

"Okay, Pat," McCue said, using the Big's froggy voice.

Kenna beamed. "Perfect, kid. Just perfect. Now you sit tight and wait. Let the parties on the other end do the talking first. You got to be cagey."

"Bring any black coffee, Pat?"

"You'll stay awake," Kenna said, "if I have to keep sticking pins in you."

They waited for two hours. Then the phone near the Big's bed jangled. McCue took it off the cradle and used the Big's

voice.

"Yeah—yeah?"

"This is Whitey, Barney," a voice answered, and Kenna put his head close to McCue's.

"You got to come over here. That dame is actin' up. She's wise she's bein' crossed and makin' trouble."

McCue laughed the Big's laugh. "I'll be right over, Whitey. Keep her quiet anyway you please. . . Huh, Gracie? All right, put her on."

McCue waited.

"Barney," a girl's voice said then, "things don't seem right. I got a hunch the cops ain't fooled. You get here and fast."

McCue was excited. "Easy, babe," he said. "Don't talk so much."

He caught his breath, and Kenna swore. McCue had stepped out of character.

"Babe?" the woman on the other end said. "Listen, who . . . Whitey, something's up! We've got to get out!" There was a loud click in McCue's ears.

"I slipped there, Pat," he said. "Quick! Get where that call came from!"

"Yeah, you fathead!" Kenna said. "They'll whisk that doll out of there."

He quickly called for the supervisor and found that she had been on the alert. She gave Kenna the name listed under a certain number. The address was twenty blocks further downtown.

Kenna and McCue hurried downstairs, out of the Avon, and ran to a cab that was parked out in front of an all-night lunch room. McCue saw that it was empty, so ran into the place and dragged the driver away from a plate of scrambled eggs.

"It's the cops, and shut up!" McCue said.

In the cab speeding downtown, McCue said suddenly:

"Gracie—Gracie. That sound familiar, Kenna?"

"Gracie?" Pat said. "Sure. She's out on

parole too. She used to sell nylons for the Big. She has a job in a beauty parlor. . . . Can't you drive this hack faster, pal?"

"There's a war on and this is a four year old jalopy. I got my foot right through the floorboards!"

They finally pulled up in front of an old brownstone house and Kenna and McCue were not surprised to see a car already at the curb. There was a man beside it. He fired once at the cab, then started running.

ON THE top step of the rooming house, three figures were limned against the dark. They crowded back inside and slammed the door behind them. A light flashed on in the basement.

"Blow your whistle, Dave," Kenna said, as he got out of the cab. "Get to the nearest police box and call the boys. I'm moving in as close as I can get until you get back!"

McCue's whistle split the quiet of the street apart, then he started running. Kenna bent low, got to the basement steps, then a bullet pinged against the stone at his feet and sent fragments flying.

"Whitey," he said to himself. "If he's who I think he is, he'll go to the limit!"

He flattened against the basement door and it suddenly was pulled open and he half fell inside.

"What is going on here?" a frightened voice said. "Who are you?"

"The cops, lady," Kenna said, and pushed by her. "Lay low and you won't get hurt. You've got kidnapers in your house."

He went through a little living room and came to the stairs leading to the upper hall. He went up there and through a door, and hugged the wall.

A shot came from the next landing and the bullet dug into the carpet. Somebody screamed. Doors opened and then there were more startled cries.

"Come on, copper!" a voice cut through all other sounds. "Make a try!"

"We'll get you, Whitey!" shouted Kenna.

A bullet ripped down the stairs, then there was the sound of hurried steps moving higher and higher. Kenna went up the stairs and, turning for the next flight, fell over a huddled figure.

"Don't go up there!" someone pleaded. "He's got two guns!"

"That you, Miss Stendahl?" Kenna said.

"Yes. Don't go any further—please!" This girl was no longer a spitfire. She was sobbing and close to hysteria.

"So long, copper!" came Whitey's voice up above.

The reinforcements were outside now. Kenna heard a police car's siren. He ran into a room at the front of the house, the door of which was swinging open. A scared old man sat on the edge of his bed. Kenna raised the window and yelled out. He saw McCue coming across the walk with four cops.

"He's headed for the roof! Him and the dame! Go around back, McCue!"

Kenna went back out into the hall and he could hear more police coming up. Spotlights were centered on the brownstone and the halls flickered with their brilliancy. Cops would be moving in everywhere.

A riot gun began to triple-tongue and Kenna went up the stairway slowly, his gun ready. A woman, her face ghastly under her make-up, appeared at the head of the landing. A gun dropped from her fingers and clattered toward Kenna.

This was Gracie. Gracie LaMotte. This kind of going was too tough for Gracie.

"Don't shoot, copper!" she begged. "Don't shoot. He's—up there on the roof. He's—"

"Yeah?"

Kenna fell against the banisters. Whitey was coming down. All Whitey's paths of escape were blocked and he was taking the only way out. What more could a kidnaper

lose than his life?

Whitey came into view, a gun in each hand. They started mowing a path for him, but Kenna's two shots were deliberate, well-placed. He felt a burning pain in his side as he watched Whitey tumbledown on top of him.

The first thing Kenna said when McCue and three husky cops took over was: "Get those guns of Whitey's. One of them got Ray Darcy, I'll bet my shirt."

Before the sun was up, they had Barney the Big, Gracie LaMotte, and Marcia Stendahl down at Headquarters. The playgirl's father arrived and Pat Kenna explained it all as fast as he could.

"You should have been more understanding with the girl, Mr. Stendahl," Kenna said. "She is really in love with that soldier. She had herself kidnaped so she could get enough dough to start in housekeeping with him and maybe get him into a business of some kind. You should have gone along with the readjustment, Mr. Stendahl. Because of all this, Ray Darcy is dead—not that he wasn't always asking for it one way or another. Your daughter wore a platinum blonde wig and made herself up so nobody would know her when she went out one night to hire an expert in crime. Darcy figured that out too."

Stendahl seemed to shrink inside his clothes. He couldn't say anything.

"Marcia should have figured that they'd cross her," Kenna said. "What could they lose? Darcy got into that flat where your daughter was hidden and he tried to shake the Big down for twenty-five grand. She told me. Barney and Whitey took that

columnist out and gave him the old-fashioned treatment. Before he was taken out, Darcy spotted those diamond ear-rings that Marcia had taken off and put on a table, and he managed to sneak one. It was the thing that tripped up the Big and his crowd.

"Yeah, Marcia said she wanted fifty thousand of the take on that diamond we found on Barney. Where do you think it was? We tore that room up and then Dave here remembered something about the Big. He'd had his big toe shot off in a brawl once. He was using the Koonah for a big toe. We got the name of the fence he was making a deal with. I guess we have about everything."

"What'll they do about Marcia?" McCue said.

"That's up to the D.A.," Kenna said. "He went to college. She abducted herself, so the Big is no kidnaper. She helped in the extortion end of it—or tried to. Gracie said Whitey knocked Darcy off and the Big gave him the orders."

He looked at Stendahl. "You are lucky, Mr. Stendahl. If we hadn't worked this just right, you would not have a daughter this mornin', not even one in jail. I hope you work something out with the D.A., but I'm warning you he is tough."

Pat Kenna got up. "Now I got to get some sleep . . . Oh, I almost forgot." He took something from his pocket and handed it to Stendahl. The diamond ear-ring. "If there's a reward for it, you know where I am most of the time."

He left the D.A.'s office feeling just a little sorry for a lot of things he had said to Ray Darcy.