

There Is Slaughter Even When There Is **No Blood**

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HERE was to be no shedding of blood. Because, Alfred Graemlein knew, the shedding of blood had been the undoing of countless murderers before him.

His brother lay sleeping in the next room—a sleep from which he would never awaken, Graemlein was grimly resolved. He went carefully into the bedroom. In his hand he held the hypodermic syringe filled with a pale, deadly fluid of his own concoction.

He approached carefully, on tiptoe, breathing so quietly that the thumping of his heart boomed like thunder in his brain. He would be glad enough when the pulse of his brother no longer fluttered. His brother was a detective—one of those righteous fellows who would have put Graemlein behind prison bars, regardless of kinship. Graemlein was a thief—and that fact had at last been discovered by the detective who, Graemlein knew, meant to expose him eventually. Unless Graemlein made restitution.

Give back all that money—after the risks he had taken? Not a chance! And in that moment of rage shot the needle home.

So slender was the needle-point, so brief the puncture, that the sleeping man hardly felt it, for he did not waken. He turned once—moaned. After a minute he began to breathe loudly—a choking, rasping sound. Graemlein waited, and the sound became feebler—ceased altogether.

It took Graemlein a long time to dig the grave outside. He worked silently, delving into the hard-caked earth with his spade. The pale shroud of the late moon appeared over the canyon as he carried his brother's body to the grave behind the

house. Quickly he heaped the clods of hard earth over the body, and stamped it down until the surface of the grave was level with the rest of the ground, with the same hard-caked appearance....

It was late in the morning when he was awakened by a loud knocking on the door.

"Who is it?" he called out.

"Matchen. Your brother was supposed to meet me at nine. I came to find out what was the matter. Afraid of getting wet, is he?"

"Wet?" Graemlein looked out of the window. It had begun to rain.

He got up to let Matchen in. But when he arrived at the door he saw that Matchen, a detective friend of his brother, was staring beyond the house, toward the shed.

Toward the grave!

In that one spot where the corpse lay, tiny bubbles arose in an area which was the length of—vaguely the shape of—a man!

Matchen turned upon Graemlein. "Somebody must have been digging there," he said. "Recently, too. Because when water gets into ground that's been recently dug up, bubbles are bound to rise—Where's your brother?" he demanded, suddenly eyeing Graemlein narrowly.

As Graemlein stood staring in frozen horror at the telltale bubbles, Matchen went on, accusingly:

"Your brother told me about your stealing—" He did not finish. In wild panic Graemlein flung himself at the detective. But his sudden swing was impetuous, blundering. Matchen felled him with a single blow, handcuffed him—and then went to the spot where the myriad strange bubbles arose.