



Hammond fired as the killer raised his gun

## Another Job for Homicide

By C. K. M. Scanlon

*Gary Hammond tackles a clueless murder puzzle!*

**G**ARY HAMMOND of Homicide did not act or look like a first grade detective, but he was one of the best men on the New York Police Force. He was slender and dark and looked and dressed like a fairly successful young business man. He was polite to old ladies, kind to children, and tough on crooks.

Now he stood near the door of the living room of a Park Avenue apartment and watched the Homicide Squad at work. The police photographer had finished making angle shots of the corpse sprawled out on the oriental rug. Dr. Doyle, from the Medical Examiner's office, was tapping one foot impatiently as he waited for the chalk outline of the body to be made.

"He would die on a rug like this," muttered the man with chalk. "It's like trying to make marks on seaweed or something."

"Hurry up," said Dr. Doyle impatiently. "I haven't got all day." He glanced over at Hammond. "Who was he anyway?" he asked.

"Lowell Malden," Hammond said. "Sportsman, man about town, and now he is just as dead as any other mackerel."

"That never made sense to me," said the fingerprint man. He was busily dusting a table with fine powder from a little blower. "I could never see that mackerels were any more dead than anything else."

The man with the chalk gave up, after making what he thought were marks to show where the corpse had fallen. He nodded to the assistant M. E.

"It's about time," Doyle said. He knelt down and began examining the body. "He was shot through the head with a small caliber bullet—a thirty-two I'd say."

"Not without probing for it, you won't," said Hammond. "You can't always be sure of the size of a bullet by the hole it makes, Doctor."

"Go question your suspects, Hammond," said Dr. Doyle. "You bother me."

"That's what makes this a nice open and shut case," Hammond told him. "There aren't any suspects. Half an hour ago Homicide gets a call to come to this

apartment—there has been a murder. When we get here the apartment door is closed but not locked and there is no one around but the late Mr. Malden. Which makes the whole thing just ducky.”

“Lethal death by person or persons unknown,” remarked Doyle as he got to his feet. “And I don’t mean maybe.” He yawned. “If you’re worried about the caliber of the bullet I’ll do an autopsy, Hammond.”

“It might help,” agreed Gary Hammond. “We haven’t even got the murder weapon.”

“Oh, my!” murmured Doyle, as he headed for the door. “You have got a pretty kettle of fish, and I don’t mean mackerel!”

SOME of the Homicide men were going through the building questioning the other tenants and the employees. Malden had been a bachelor who lived alone. Anyone could have walked in, killed him with one shot, then phoned the police to report the murder, and departed.

Hammond was wondering just how to begin with this puzzle when a slender, gray-haired man came bustling into the living room. It struck Hammond that if this man had been a woman he would have worn old-fashioned petticoats that rustled.

“I’m James Clinton,” the gray-haired man announced pompously. “Representing the Skyhigh Real Estate Company, owners of this building.” He glanced at the corpse once, and looked quickly away. “There must be no publicity, of course,” he told the Homicide man hastily. “Absolutely no publicity, you understand. Might give the building a bad name.”

“Sez he,” drawled a short, stocky man who had followed the real estate man into the room. He wore a press card in his hat band. “Lowell Malden gets bumped off, and the papers are just going to ignore the

whole thing. Oh, yeah, your father’s mustache!”

“Don’t tell me,” put in the police photographer, a man named Clark. “Let me guess. It’s a newspaperman, or maybe he just acts like that because he’s seen too many reporters in the movies.”

“I’m a newspaperman,” the stocky man said shortly, pulling a note-book and a pencil out of his pocket as if to prove it. “Harry Newton, of the *Evening Blade*. When did the murder occur, who killed him, and why?”

“Goody, goody!” applauded the fingerprint-man, staring wide-eyed at the leatherbound notebook in the self-introduced Newton’s hand. “A real journalist! I always wanted to see one. You know I was nearly fourteen before I really believed there were such things as elephants.”

“Who is in charge here?” demanded the gray-haired Clinton impatiently. “I insist that there will be no publicity. I’m warning you if there is we’ll sue.”

“That I must see,” said Gary Hammond dryly. “Go ahead, Newton, write it up. You know—it is rumored that the alleged body of a man believed to be Lowell Malden was found apparently dead in an apartment of what is said to be a building supposedly located on Park Avenue in what is frequently referred to as the city of New York.”

“You mean I’m the only reporter here?” demanded Newton eagerly. “That I’ve got a real beat?”

Hammond grinned and the photographer and the fingerprint man snorted. Then the men from the morgue appeared with the big basket. One of them looked at Hammond for orders.

“All right,” said Hammond. “Take him away.”

The men placed the body in the basket and carried it out. James Clinton looked as

if he felt sick. Newton was standing beside a table with a telephone on it, busily writing in his note-book.

"I was here earlier this morning," Clinton said, after the body was gone. "The front door of the apartment was open a trifle, and I heard Mr. Malden quarreling with someone. They—they seemed very angry."

"Could you hear what they said?" Hammond was interested now.

"Well, I heard Mr. Malden say, 'I'm tired of this blackmail'," said Clinton. And he also said, "'if you keep on bothering me any longer I'll kill you, Lance'."

"You're sure that Malden called the other man Lance?" demanded Hammond.

"Positive." Clinton nodded. "But remember—there must be no publicity about all this."

"Have I got a story!" exclaimed Newton. "Millionaire murdered when he refuses extortion threats of blackmailer!" He headed for the door. "I've got to get back to the paper and write this yarn in a hurry."

"Just a moment, Newton." Hammond stopped him. "We've got police on guard at the elevator and downstairs with orders to let no one in or out of this building. You won't be able to get out unless I have you passed through."

"Nonsense!" snapped Newton. "Why those police downstairs let me right through when they saw my press card. I'll get out all right."

He disappeared through the door before Hammond could say anything further. James Clinton, staring after him, looked perturbed.

"I insisted there would be no publicity, and I—" he began.

"Aw, play another record," said Photographer Clark, as he picked up his camera. "I'm tired of hearing that tune."

"Run along, boys," Hammond told the Homicide crew. "I want to talk to Mr. Clinton. The Squad can go back now."

"Gee, thanks, Teacher," Clark said in a high voice, and then to the finger-print men. "Come on—recess!"

THEY departed, leaving Hammond alone in the apartment with Clinton of Skyhigh Real Estate. Hammond questioned the man for some time, but Clinton stuck to his story that he had heard only those few words of the quarrel between Malden and the unknown "Lance." Then he had left, deciding to see Malden some other time. He declared he was not sure that he would recognize Lance's voice if he heard it again.

"Thanks, anyway," Hammond finally said. "You've been a great help, Mr. Clinton. And tell your firm that they don't need to worry about bad publicity. The owners of a building aren't to blame if one of the tenants happens to be murdered in it."

"I guess you are right," Clinton said reluctantly, and handed Hammond a card. "You can reach me at this address if you should want me for anything."

The two men walked to the door of the apartment together. "About getting out of the building," Clinton said. "Will I have any trouble about that?"

"Don't believe so," said Hammond. "The Homicide Squad probably took off the guard on the building when they left."

Clinton left, and Gary Hammond closed the door and went back into the living room. He opened the drawer of the telephone table and found an address book. Thumbing through it he found the name of John Lance, with an address and telephone number. He blinked when he noticed that the address was this same apartment building. He phoned the

doorman and learned that Lance had apartment 70 on the seventh floor.

"So Lance lives here," he muttered, as he cradled the phone. "And on the floor above this. Guess I'd better pay him a visit."

Hammond reached for his hat and overcoat where he had left them when he had arrived, then decided to leave them there while he went upstairs to see John Lance. Leaving the apartment he went up the stairs to the seventh floor. There he found an apartment door with "Lance" on the card above the bell.

He had reached out a hand to ring the bell when he changed his mind. Instead, he tried the knob. The door was unlocked. Silently he pushed the door open and walked into a small hall. It was dark there, even though it was a bright winter day.

Hammond paused for a moment, then turned to close the door behind him. And at that moment a figure came hurling at him. He was struck with such force that he was knocked up against the door. He grabbed for his assailant, but missed.

The door had been flung back so that he was in the narrow space between it and the wall. He gave a shove and the door slammed shut. And by the time he got it open again his attacker had raced out into the hall and disappeared somewhere along the corridor.

"Nice," muttered Hammond disgustedly. "Had him right in my hands and let him go."

Gary Hammond went back into the apartment and closed the door. Moving along the hall he reached another door and opened it. For a moment all he could do was stand there staring at the still figure lying on the floor of a living room—a young man sprawled on his back near a couch. He was fully dressed, and the Homicide's man's first glance told him the man was dead.

"Another murder!" he muttered tightly.

Dropping to his knees, he examined the man on the floor. It was a corpse lying there all right, the corpse of a man who had been stabbed through the heart, apparently by a knife. But the weapon was missing.

Hammond searched the dead man's pockets and found letters, a wallet containing a good bit of money, and a draft classification card for John Lance.

"Another job for Homicide," thought Hammond, as he got to his feet.

He found a phone and reported the murder.

"Yes, I'll be here when you arrive," he said over the wire.

As Hammond cradled the phone he caught sight of a portable typewriter on a small desk in one corner of the room. A sheet of paper was in the machine. Hammond walked over to it and read what had been typed:

I saw you sneak into M's apartment just before the police arrived, so I know you killed him. I know you did it because M had found that you raised a check you got for a hundred dollars from him to ten thousand and got the money. Is my silence worth five thousand to you?

The note was not addressed and was unsigned. Hammond swung around, and reached for his gun as the doorbell rang. He went to the door and opened it. Harry Newton, the reporter, stood there.

"Oh, it's you," Newton said. "I came back after I wrote my story. I thought I might get something to add to it if I talked to Mr. Lance. Is he here?"

"He's here." Hammond nodded toward the living room. "In there."

NEWTON walked along the hall with Hammond behind him.

The gun was in the side pocket of the detective's coat.

Newton stopped short, and gasped as he saw the corpse.

"Great heavens!" he cried. "What happened to Lance?"

"You know what happened to him," Hammond said coldly. "You killed him—just as you killed Malden, only you used a knife this time."

"What?" Newton swung around, glaring at Hammond. "You're crazy!"

"No," Hammond said, in the same cold tone. "You did it. Like a lot of murderers you've been too smart. You were still in this building when the police arrived after you phoned and reported Malden's murder. You found you couldn't get out, so you decided to bluff it through by pretending you were a newspaperman."

"I am a newspaperman!" protested Newton. "And you're raving mad!"

"A regular newspaperman seldom carries a note-book," Hammond shrugged. "And when he gets a good murder story with no other reporters around he doesn't rush back to his paper with it." The detective smiled grimly. "Not when he is standing right beside a phone as you were in Malden's apartment, and could have phoned in your story."

"All right," Newton shrugged. "So I'm not so hot as a reporter. But what reason would I have for killing Malden and Lance?"

"The motive is over in Lance's typewriter," said Hammond. "I guess you didn't have time to see it since I came in here just after you killed him, and you fought with me while getting away. You raised a check that Malden gave you. He found out about it and you killed him."

"Go on," said Newton, his voice suddenly hard.

"Lance saw the killing, or at least knew you did it," Malden went on. "He was blackmailing Malden, and he decided to try a shake-down on you. But you wouldn't stand for it, and killed him."

Hammond lifted his head as he heard voices out in the hall. The Homicide Squad had returned. He heard Newton snarl, saw the man's hand flash up, holding a gun. Hammond shot him through the right shoulder before Newton could fire. The gun dropped from the killer's hand.

"Hardly the action of an innocent man," remarked Gary Hammond. "And that's a help."

The men from Homicide came bursting into the room. The same Squad who had been in Malden's apartment earlier.

"Here we go again, boys," called Clark, the photographer, as he saw the corpse. "Another job for Homicide."

"Just routine this time," Hammond said casually. "I've already got the killer."